

# MENON

©online

Journal Of Educational Research

**A National and International Interdisciplinary Forum for Scholars,  
Academics, Researchers and Educators from a wide range of  
fields related to Educational Studies**

Ἐχ ε ι ς μ ο ι  
ε ἰ π ε ῖ ν , ᾧ  
Σ ώ κ ρ α τ ε ς , ἄ ρ α  
δ ι δ α κ τ ὸ ν ἢ  
ἀ ρ ε τ ῆ ; ἢ ο ὔ  
δ ι δ α κ τ ὸ ν ἄ λ λ '  
ἀ σ κ η τ ὸ ν ; ἢ ο ὔ τ ε  
ἀ σ κ η τ ὸ ν ο ὔ τ ε  
μ α θ η τ ὸ ν , ἄ λ λ ᾰ  
φ ὕ σ ε ι  
π α ρ α γ ῖ γ ν ε τ α ι  
τ ο ῖ ς ἀ ν θ ρ ῶ π ο ι ς  
ἢ ἄ λ λ ῳ τ ι ν ῖ  
τ ρ ό π ω

Florina, November 2013

Issue 2b

## About MENON

The scope of the MEJER is broad, both in terms of topics covered and disciplinary perspective, since the journal attempts to make connections between fields, theories, research methods, and scholarly discourses, and welcomes contributions on humanities, social sciences and sciences related to educational issues. It publishes original empirical and theoretical papers as well as reviews. Topical collections of articles appropriate to MEJER regularly appear as special issues (thematic issues).

This open access journal welcomes papers in English, as well in German and French. All submitted manuscripts undergo a peer-review process. Based on initial screening by the editorial board, each paper is anonymized and reviewed by at least two referees. Referees are reputed within their academic or professional setting, and come from Greece and other European countries. In case one of the reports is negative, the editor decides on its publication.

Manuscripts must be submitted as electronic files (by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word format) to: [mejer@uowm.gr](mailto:mejer@uowm.gr) or via the [Submission Webform](#).

Submission of a manuscript implies that it must not be under consideration for publication by other journal or has not been published before.

## Editor

**Charalampos Lemonidis**

*University Of Western Macedonia, Greece*

## Editorial Board

- **Anastasia Alevriadou**  
*University Of Western Macedonia, Greece*
- **Eleni Griva**  
*University Of Western Macedonia, Greece*
- **Sofia Iliadou-Tahou**  
*University Of Western Macedonia, Greece*
- **Efthalia Konstantinidou**  
*University Of Western Macedonia, Greece*
- **Vasiliki Papadopoulou**  
*University Of Western Macedonia, Greece*

**MENON © is published at University of Western Macedonia – Faculty Of Education**

Reproduction of this publication for educational or other non-commercial purposes is authorized as long as the source is acknowledged.

Readers may print or save any issue of MENON as long as there are no alterations made in those issues. Copyright remains with the authors, who are responsible for getting permission to reproduce any images or figures they submit and for providing the necessary credits.

## Scientific Board

- Barbin Evelyne, University of Nantes, France
- D' Amore Bruno, University of Bologna, Italy
- Fritzen Lena, Linnaeus University Kalmar Vaxjo, Sweden
- Gagatsis Athanasios, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- Gutzwiller Eveline, Paedagogische Hochschule von Lucerne, Switzerland
- Harnett Penelope, University of the West of England, United Kingdom
- Hippel Aiga, University of Munich, Germany
- Hourdakis Antonios, University of Crete, Greece
- Iliofotou-Menon Maria, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- Katsillis Ioannis, University of Patras, Greece
- Kokkinos Georgios, University of Aegean, Greece
- Korfiatis Konstantinos, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- Koutselini Mary, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- Kyriakidis Leonidas, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- Lang Lena, University of Malmo, Sweden
- Latzko Brigitte, University of Leipzig, Germany
- Mikropoulos Anastasios, University of Ioannina, Greece
- Mpouzakis Sifis, University of Patras, Greece
- Panteliadu Susana, University of Thessaly, Greece
- Paraskevopoulos Stefanos, University of Thessaly, Greece
- Piluri Aleksandra, Fan S. Noli University, Albania
- Psaltou -Joyce Angeliki, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
- Scaltsa Matoula, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
- Tselfes Vassilis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
- Tsiplakou Stavroula, Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- Vassel Nevel, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom
- Vosniadou Stella, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
- Woodcock Leslie, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

## List of Reviewers

The Editor and the Editorial Board of the **MENON: Journal Of Educational Research** thanks the following colleagues for their support in reviewing manuscripts for the current issue.

- Anastasia Stamou
- Anna Spirtou
- Charalampos Lemonidis
- Despina Desli
- Efthalia Konstantinidou
- Eleni Griva
- Eliofotou - Menon Maria
- Eygenia Koleza
- Georgios Iordanidis
- Iliadou - Tachou Sofia
- Ioannis Mpetsas
- Konstantinos Dinias
- Konstantinos Nikolantonakis
- Sofia Avgitidou
- Triantafyllos Kotopoulos
- Vasilis Tselfes

Design & Edit: Elias Indos

## Contents

Evipides Zantides Aspasia Papadima	Depicting time: Visualizing the duration of existence and facts in past, present and future	<b>5-19</b>
Charoula Stathopoulou Darlinda Moreira,	Diversity in European school populations: A study in Portugal and Greece with particular attention to Romany cultures	<b>20-31</b>
Anastasia Kappatou	Investigating young people's online discussions from a linguistic and sociological perspective	<b>32-43</b>
Eriola Qafzezi	Linguistic phenomena observed in translating multiple sentences from English into Albanian: The case of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland	<b>44-57</b>
Anna Fterniati Argiris Archakis Villy Tsakona Vasia Tsami	Media and literacy: Evidence from elementary school students' literacy practices and the current teaching practices in Greece	<b>58-70</b>
Iliadou-Tachou Sofia Kalerante Evaggelia Tsigeni Paraskevi	PASOK's education policy about the transferring of Greek students attending Foreign Universities (1982-1991): A Study Case – Florina's Pedagogical Academy	<b>71-85</b>
Charalambos Lemonidis Anastasia Kaimakami	Prospective elementary teachers' knowledge in computational estimation	<b>86-98</b>
Aggeliki Tsapakidou Argyrios Kyridis Eirini Sivropoulou	The effect of a learning group in the understanding of the structure of illustrated short stories for children of a preschool age	<b>99-109</b>
Panagiotis Giavrimis Makrina Zafiri Vasilis Charitos Adamantios Papastamatis	The conception of the "self" in immigrant children: The case of Albanians in the Greek educational system	<b>110-121</b>
Christos Tzikas	The social conditions of educational changes. The case of primary education in Greece 1878-1880	<b>122-138</b>

# Media and literacy: Evidence from elementary school students' literacy practices and the current teaching practices in Greece<sup>1</sup>

Anna Fterniati  
University of Patras  
[afterniati@upatras.gr](mailto:afterniati@upatras.gr)

Argiris Archakis  
University of Patras  
[archakis@upatras.gr](mailto:archakis@upatras.gr)

Villy Tsakona  
Democritus University of Thrace  
[villytsa@otenet.gr](mailto:villytsa@otenet.gr)

Vasia Tsami  
University of Patras  
[tsamibasil@yahoo.gr](mailto:tsamibasil@yahoo.gr)

## Abstract

Mass cultural genres have recently started being part of school curricula, since texts such as TV shows, comics, magazine articles, songs, and webpages form a significant part of students' everyday literacy practices. In this context, the exploitation of mass cultural texts in language arts aims at cultivating students' literacy skills. The present study first offers a brief overview of the literature on whether and to what degree the current Greek elementary school teaching material takes into consideration, and makes use of, students' everyday experiences and habits. Then, it investigates students' access to media where mass cultural genres can be found, as well as their literacy practices related to mass cultural genres. The data presented here comes from a research conducted in 5 public elementary schools in the prefecture of Achaia, Greece, where 165 students of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade participated (11-12 year-olds). The findings of the study indicate that elementary school students have easy access to mass culture media, while their most common literacy practices involve watching TV programs and surfing the net. Such practices, however, have not so far been taken into consideration for the compilation of Greek language teaching material. Consequently, our findings could form the basis for specific proposals concerning the mass cultural genres which could be included in Greek elementary school teaching material.

**Keywords:** *literacy practices, mass cultural texts, elementary school students, language textbooks, teaching material, multimodality*

## 1. Introduction

During the past few decades, mass cultural texts have started being part of school

---

<sup>1</sup> The present study was conducted in the context of the Operational Program "Education and Lifelong Learning" and has been co-funded by the EU (European Social Fund) and national resources. In particular, it is part of the Greek research program Thalys (2011-2015), entitled: "Linguistic variation and language ideologies in mass cultural texts: Design, development and assessment of learning material for critical language awareness" (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Funding ID: MIS 375599).

The authors would like to thank John Katsillis, Professor at the Department of Primary Education of the University of Patras, for his helpful suggestions on the questionnaire design.

curricula (see, among others, Alvermann et al. 1999, Stevens 2001, Morrell 2002). Texts such as TV shows, printed material in wide social circulation, songs, and webpages form a significant part of students' everyday practices (Facer et al. 2003, Rideout et al. 2003, Marsh et al. 2005, Snyder et al. 2008, Koutsogiannis 2011), hence their *recontextualization* (in Bernstein's 1996 sense) seems to contribute to enhancing students' creative participation and involvement in language courses, and their ability to understand abstract scientific concepts (Duff 2004). In general, the exploitation of mass cultural texts in language arts aims at cultivating students' literacy skills, whereby literacy is viewed as the ability to process oral, written, and multimodal texts in an effective and critical way in a variety of contexts (Barton 1994, Baynham 1995).

In Greece, the need to update the teaching methodology in language arts has led to the revision of the curricula and teaching material<sup>2</sup> used in elementary education (5-12 year-old students; see Fterniati 2007a, 2007b). Since the academic year 2006-2007 new teaching material (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute 2006a) has been used. The guidelines included therein (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute 2003, 2006b) allow for this material's constant updating and improvement, while special emphasis is placed on teachers' abilities and attitudes. Teachers are considered responsible for formulating specific teaching goals, allocating time to diverse literacy activities, and designing the teaching material. Given the above, school textbooks provide only some main points for elaboration in class, while they also allow for establishing connections with other school subjects (besides language arts) and school activities. What is more, in-school and out-of-school contexts of language use are connected: school literacy practices are expected to interact with out-of-school ones during language courses based on cross curricular activities and projects (Fterniati 2007a, 2010).

The current curricula and teaching material seem to underline the importance of taking into consideration students' experiences with texts coming from their everyday social environments (Fterniati 2009, 2010). This is compatible with some of the main principles of what is defined by the New London Group (1996) as *situated practice* within the multiliteracies framework (see also Kalantzis & Cope 1999). Situated practice involves the use of various students' cultural, socio-, and text-linguistic experiences in designing the school material and in language teaching in general.

The present study first offers a brief overview of the literature on whether and to what degree the current elementary school teaching material and practices (as proposed by the Greek curriculum and the teachers' manuals) take into account, and make use of, students' everyday experiences and habits (section 2). It is in this context that we investigate students' access to the media, where mass cultural texts can be found, as well as the frequency by which they come into contact with mass cultural texts. Our study involves elementary school students of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade (11-12 year-olds). The methodology and the data collection medium and process are described in section (3),

---

<sup>2</sup> The term *teaching material* refers to both students' textbooks and teachers' manuals. Teachers' manuals together with the curriculum for language arts (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute 2003) provide the directives and guidelines teaching practices are expected to be based on. To the best of our knowledge, there do not seem to be any studies investigating teachers' *actual* teaching practices in Greek elementary schools since 2006-2007, that is, since the introduction of the new teaching material. Hence, here we will limit our discussion to the teaching material and the curricula available to Greek teachers.

while the results appear in section (4). The final section (5) presents some concluding remarks based on the comparison between the mass cultural literacy practices included in the current teaching material (as discussed in the relevant literature), and those which are actually on the top of the students' choices.

## **2. The current teaching material and the proposed teaching practices**

In the present section, we provide a summary of the main studies exploring whether and to what extent the compilation of the contemporary language textbooks used in Greek elementary schools is based on students' literacy practices involving mass cultural texts. The present summary will form the basis for the comparison between the mass cultural literacy practices included in these textbooks and those which seem to be common among elementary school students. Such a comparison will further lead us to suggestions concerning the mass cultural genres which could be exploited in language arts (see section 5).

First of all, Fterniati & Goloni (2009) and Fterniati (2010) aim, among other things, at establishing to what extent elementary school language textbooks include texts coming from students' everyday lives and social realities, so that they become attractive to students and increase their interest in learning in class. Both studies investigate whether these textbooks conform to the main principles of what is called *situated practice* in the multiliteracies framework of language teaching (see section 1). Their findings suggest that the majority of the texts included in the textbooks are authentic and are not written especially for educational purposes. Among them, literary texts are less than half of the number of non-literary texts, that is, texts belonging to informative and persuasive genres. In other words, it seems that these textbooks have been enriched with texts in wide social circulation and that the proposed teaching practices do no longer favor the use of literary texts for language teaching. Nevertheless, Dinas & Xanthopoulos (2007) claim that, although the percentage of authentic texts in elementary school textbooks has indeed increased, it is not high enough for textbooks which are supposed to follow the communicative-genre based approach to language teaching.

What is more, Fterniati & Markopoulou (2008) and Fterniati (2009, 2010) suggest that elementary school language textbooks include a significant number of multimodal texts (almost half of the texts included therein) as well as some activities involving the production of multimodal texts by students. Thus, these textbooks seem to be adapted to current communicative settings and practices, where multimodality, namely the production of meaning via the simultaneous use of different modalities (e.g. language, still or moving images, sounds, music), prevails.<sup>3</sup> It therefore seems that the changes observed in contemporary communicative contexts and affecting children's lives have influenced the selection of texts which become part of such textbooks. The fact that multimodal texts have been included in the textbooks indicates that students' literacy practices have been considered as one of the main criteria for selecting the proposed teaching material.

On the other hand, the multimodal texts included in elementary school textbooks are actually printed texts combining only written language and still images, while texts using

<sup>3</sup> On multimodality, see Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, 1998, 2001), Kress (2003, 2010), van Leeuwen (2005).

other modalities (e.g. oral language, music, moving images) or digital texts are more often than not absent from language textbooks (Fterniati & Markopoulou 2008, Fterniati 2009, 2010, Dinas & Koukourikou 2011). In addition, the role of, and the interaction between, the different semiotic modes are not adequately discussed in class. Even though students are taught about how they are expected to process different semiotic modes and media, they are not often asked to produce a variety of multimodal texts nor asked to use different modes and media. In this context, Dinas & Koukourikou (2011) argue that the linguistic mode still prevails in Greek language teaching and that students' preexisting experiences with multimodal texts are not sufficiently exploited, and further developed, in class.

At this point, it should be noted that, before the compilation of the current teaching material, there was no research on Greek students' out-of-school literacy practices involving mass cultural (or other) genres. Since such practices appear to be an important part of their everyday social experiences (see, among others, Alvermann et al. 1999), they could, in our view, become part of contemporary, updated school textbooks. It is in this context that we consider these practices worth investigating.

As already mentioned (see section 1), the aim of the present study is to explore if and to what degree elementary school students have access to mass culture media and how often they come into contact with mass cultural texts. More specifically, we will try to investigate how often students watch TV programs, surf the net, read printed mass cultural texts, and listen to the radio and, most importantly, what kinds of TV shows, webpages, books, magazines, music, songs, etc. they are particularly interested in. The findings of our study could form the basis for specific proposals concerning the mass cultural genres which could be included in elementary school teaching material.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Sample**

The data examined was collected using stratified random sampling techniques: the sample was selected so that there is stratification in students' social background which is established, on the one hand, by the social milieu of the area where their school is located and, on the other, by the educational background of their parents. The research was conducted in 5 public elementary schools in the prefecture of Achaia and 165 students of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade participated (11-12 year-olds). During the sample selection, we made sure that our informants are boys and girls coming from diverse social groups (high, middle, low) and from Greek, Greek Roma, and non-Greek (immigrant) communities (see Archakis et al. to appear). The distribution of the students of our sample by gender, ethnic background, and the social milieu of the area where their school is located, is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the sample by gender, ethnic background, and the social milieu of the area where each school is located

			Social milieu of the area of each school					
			High	Middle to high	Middle	Middle to low	Low	Total
Student population	Greek students	Boys	17	22	17	14	9	79
		Girls	11	11	16	16	10	64
	Non-Greek (immigrant) students	Boys	0	2	3	1	0	6
		Girls	0	3	5	3	1	12
	Greek Roma students	Boys	0	0	2	0	0	2
		Girls	0	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>165</b>

### 3.2. Research instruments and procedure

Literacy practices are more often than not investigated via ethnographic methods, whereby the researcher gains access to informants' everyday lives, so that s/he can observe and record their behavior. In the present study, however, emphasis is placed on how the students themselves perceive and record their own literacy practices involving mass cultural texts. Hence, anonymous questionnaires were considered the most suitable tool for data collection (see also Marsh 2004, Marsh et al. 2005).

Students' questionnaire consists of 55 open and closed questions. Students' access to mass culture media was established via a yes/no question (see Table 2 in section 4). In other closed questions however (some of which are presented below), a 5-grade scale was used to measure students' habits concerning mass cultural literacy practices (see Tables 3-7 in section 4).

The research was conducted from the end of April 2012 until the end of May 2012. Students' questionnaires were filled in by the students themselves while at school and in the presence of their teacher and one of the researchers. For the statistical analysis of the data, SPSS 20.0 was used.

### 4. Results and discussion

The questionnaires elicited a variety of information concerning students' mass cultural literacy practices.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, due to space constraints, only a limited part of the data collected is presented.

Table 2 refers to students' access to mass culture media. Most students have access to a television set as well as to printed mass cultural texts. A small percentage of them do not have access to a computer and/or the internet, while it seems that the radio is the least common medium of all. Students' limited use of the radio could be due to the fact that

<sup>4</sup> For example, students' mass cultural literacy practices appear to correlate with their gender, ethnic and social background, and their performance in language courses (see Archakis et al. to appear).

they can tune in to their favorite radio stations via the internet. What is important here is that the vast majority of students have easy access to mass culture media, hence mass cultural literacy practices are expected to constitute a more or less significant part of their everyday lives.

**Table 2:** Home access to mass culture media

<b>At home, you have:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
TV set	0.6 %	99.4%
Printed mass cultural texts	8.0 %	92.0%
Computer	12.1 %	87.9 %
Internet connection	16.4 %	83.6 %
Radio	17.8 %	82.2 %

Table 3 shows the frequency by which students engage in mass cultural literacy practices. It seems that their most common practices involve, first, watching TV and, second, listening to songs. Surfing the net is their third choice, while reading printed material is their last one. It could therefore be suggested that students mostly engage with multimodal texts which involve still or moving images, music, and oral discourse, while they are less fond of texts involving only written discourse and still images. In other words, students focus more on mass cultural texts which are closer to their everyday multimodal experiences: language in most authentic contexts of use is multimodal, hence we are usually expected (actually we learn from an early age) to process words, images, and sounds simultaneously (Gee & Hayes 2011: 1, 111).

These findings confirm previous research suggesting that music and songs seem to form a significant part of children's everyday lives since preschool age (Rideout et al. 2003, Marsh et al. 2005). Simultaneously, they are compatible with studies underlining children's strong preference for multimodal media environments, where they tend to concentrate on the visual aspects of digital texts rather than on the verbal ones (Facer et al. 2003, Koutsogiannis 2007). In addition, the present findings are in line with studies indicating that the time students spend in watching TV has not decreased despite the widespread use of the internet (Snyder et al. 2008). In particular, Koutsogiannis' (2011: 355) observations that Greek adolescents spend an important part of their leisure time surfing the net and watching TV rather than reading printed material which is not related to their school activities, are confirmed by the present study.

**Table 3:** Mean scores of students' engagement in mass cultural literacy practices

<b>How often do you engage in the following activities?</b>	<b>Mean average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Watching TV shows	4.48	.816
Listening to songs	4.45	.817
Surfing the net	3.87	1.252
Reading printed material	3.53	1.078

In order to shed more light on students' mass cultural literacy practices, Table 4 includes the most common kinds of TV shows among students. In general, students watch entertaining programs more often than they watch informative ones. Comic series appear on top of their choices, thus suggesting that humor is an important criterion for selecting

what they watch on TV. Students also watch animated films, reality shows, and films (whether Greek ones or not). They also watch advertisements, TV game shows and quiz shows, although such programs are not among the most common ones. Furthermore, it is interesting to note here that, although listening to songs is a particularly common literacy practice among students (see Table 3), watching music shows on TV is not.

In addition, students do not appear to watch TV news broadcasts or other informative programs, which means that they are not interested in sociopolitical debates and topics. This is compatible with, and reinforced by, findings concerning, on the one hand, their online literacy practices, where students do not use the web to get information but only to entertain themselves (see Table 6 below); and, on the other, their reading literacy practices: reading newspapers is students' least common mass cultural literacy practice related to printed material (see Table 7 below). Students' age could account for such lack of interest.

**Table 4:** Mean scores of students' watching TV programs

<b>How often do you watch the following TV programs?</b>	<b>Mean average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Comic series	4.16	.935
Animated series or films	3.95	1.171
Reality shows	3.74	1.080
Non-Greek movies	3.71	1.184
Greek movies	3.66	1.139
Advertisements	3.34	1.466
Game shows or quiz shows	3.27	1.333
Sports shows	3.15	1.562
Documentaries	3.10	1.208
Music shows	2.94	1.326
Drama series	2.64	1.210
Cooking shows	2.61	1.320
News shows	2.56	1.217
News broadcasts	2.31	1.279

As to the kinds of songs students listen to, Table 5 reveals that they usually opt for hip-hop, pop, rap, and rock songs. Children's songs are not common among them, most probably because such songs are typically composed for younger children. Greek popular songs, art songs, folk songs, and rebetika are the least common choices among elementary school students.

**Table 5:** Mean scores of students' listening to various kinds of songs

<b>How often do you listen to the following kinds of songs?</b>	<b>Mean average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Hip-hop songs	3.97	1.170
Pop songs	3.90	1.298
Rap songs	3.66	1.380
Rock songs	3.45	1.373
R 'n' B songs	3.08	1.442
Metal songs	2.75	1.452
Greek popular songs ( <i>laika</i> ) <sup>5</sup>	2.46	1.377
Children's songs	2.30	1.421
Greek art songs ( <i>entechna</i> ) <sup>6</sup>	2.29	1.238
Greek folk/traditional songs	2.23	1.280
<i>Rebetika</i> <sup>7</sup>	2.19	2.029

Table 6 is dedicated to students' online literacy practices, most of which involve entertainment. First, students usually listen to songs online and watch videoclips, whether music ones or others. It seems that the internet provides them with easy access to visualized versions of their favorite songs. Furthermore, among their most common practices are digital games (played either in groups or solo). It should be mentioned here that playing digital games constitutes a more frequent activity than watching TV ones (cf. Table 4).

Students also visit various websites in order to retrieve useful material for their homework, but they do not often look up words in online dictionaries. Sometimes they surf the net without any particular purpose in mind. Reading online blogs and newspapers is not a very common literacy practice among students, a fact which highlights the use of the internet predominantly for entertainment and not for information. This could be related to the fact that the majority of Greek newspapers address an adult audience, thus their format and topics are not designed to be attractive to younger people. Finally, students are not particularly interested in expressing their views on the web and in participating in online surveys.

**Table 6:** Mean scores of students' engagement in diverse online activities

<b>How often do engage in the following online activities?</b>	<b>Mean average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Listening to songs	4.58	4.157
Watching <del>videoclips</del>	3.84	1.244
Watching music <del>videoclips</del>	3.81	1.263
Playing games solo	3.70	1.216
Playing games with others	3.61	1.302
Visiting various webpages	3.23	1.391
Looking for material to help you with your homework	3.06	1.310
Participating in online social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	2.92	1.682
Using the web for some other activity	2.86	1.658
Visiting <del>chatrooms</del>	2.46	1.446
Reading various blogs	2.41	1.348
Downloading ringtones for your mobile phone	2.33	1.452
Looking up words in dictionaries	2.22	1.232
Surfing without any specific purpose	2.10	1.372
Expressing your opinion in various topics	2.10	1.393
Reading online newspapers	1.76	1.137
Participating in online surveys	1.76	1.188

In Table 3 above, we have seen that reading printed mass cultural texts is the least popular activity among elementary school students. By elaborating on this, Table 7 shows that students usually read comic books or magazines, namely multimodal texts combining still images and written discourse. Their second choice is reading literature and their third reading magazines other than comic ones. Consulting encyclopedias and reading science books for children are less common activities at that age. Fairytales are not very common among elementary school students, most probably because such mass cultural texts are predominantly written for younger children (cf. children's songs in Table 5). Students' last choice is reading newspapers. In general, informative texts do not attract their attention either in their printed version or on TV or the web (see Tables 4 and 7).

**Table 7:** Mean scores of students' engagement with activities involving printed mass cultural texts

<b>How often do you read the following printed texts?</b>	<b>Mean average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Comic books or magazines	3.18	1.347
Literature	3.04	1.224
Magazines (other than comic ones)	2.92	1.303
Encyclopedias and children's science books	2.89	1.146
Fairytales	2.85	2.749
Dictionaries	2.57	1.114
Newspapers	2.17	1.236

In sum, the results presented in this section bring to surface a wide variety of mass

cultural literacy practices and genres that belong to Greek elementary school students' everyday experiences. Multimodality appears to be a salient feature of most of these genres, hence school curricula and teaching practices aiming at attracting students' attention and cultivating their literacy skills would be expected to place particular emphasis on multimodal texts. More specifically, texts combining oral discourse, moving images and music would be expected to prevail in language teaching material rather than those involving only written discourse and still images. In addition, entertainment texts would also be expected to be used in language teaching rather than exclusively informative ones.

### **5. Concluding remarks**

The present study reveals that the majority of Greek elementary school students of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade have easy access to mass culture media, hence mass cultural texts become an integral part of their everyday literacy practices. In particular, texts combining language, still or moving images, music, etc. appear on top of their choices, thus engaging them in diverse activities. While watching TV, students choose entertaining rather than informative genres. The most common songs among students are performed by hip-hop, pop, rap, and rock artists, while they also watch videoclips online, whether music ones or others. They do not, however, read printed mass cultural texts very often, but, when they do, they usually opt for multimodal texts such as comic books or magazines. Although these findings are based on a limited sample of informants, they offer us a first glimpse on the students' out-of-school mass cultural literacy practices. Needless to say, more research is required along these lines in order to cover a larger sample of students as well as elementary school students of different ages (i.e. 6-10 year-olds).

If we compare these findings to the genres already included in contemporary elementary school language textbooks (as presented in section 2), we could suggest that there seems to be what Luke (2004) calls a *home-school mismatch*: students' out-of-school literacy practices are not compatible with the ones proposed, encouraged, and eventually imposed by language textbooks. Even though texts combining written discourse and still images tend to be more common in language teaching in class, they are not preferred to the same extent by students in their out-of-school literacy practices (see section 4). Hence, students' mass cultural literacy practices could be exploited to develop new teaching material or to supplement already existing textbooks, so as to foster their involvement in language courses. Besides, the recent curriculum (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute 2011), whose pilot implementation has already begun (during the academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013), encourages language teaching via the use of new technologies, which will provide both teachers and students with the opportunity to process and produce various texts. More specifically, this curriculum offers the possibility of replacing the texts included in the textbooks with different ones coming from TV shows, radio programs, webpages, films, magazines, etc., provided such texts are recently collected and reflect students' interests. Consequently, teachers are expected to be familiar with students' most common choices concerning mass cultural genres and related activities.

The new teaching material would no longer need to be in a printed format. Such a format precludes the exploitation of texts involving sound or moving images, which form a significant part of students' everyday out-of-school activities. Instead, the teaching

material could be enriched with online and digital texts recorded on cds or accessed and/or downloaded from websites. Such genres combine moving images, sound, and oral discourse, that is, modes that prevail in students' mass cultural literacy practices. The use of texts other than printed ones could enhance students' experiences and skills related to processing multimodal genres.

Finally, according to the New London Group's (1996) definition of the situated practice (see section 1), it is students who are expected to choose the teaching material and then bring it to class. Teachers' involvement in the preparation of the teaching material is restricted to assisting students in preparing, implementing, and evaluating the learning process. Hence, teachers' training on such a role is deemed necessary, since the need to cultivate students' literacy skills becomes increasingly important.

## References

- Alvermann, D. E., Moon, S. J. & Hagood, C. M. (1999). *Popular Culture in the Classroom: Teaching and Researching Critical Media Literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association and the National Reading Conference.
- Archakis, A., Fterniati, A., Papazachariou, D., Tsakona, V. & Tsami, V. (to appear). Mapping elementary school students' preferences for mass cultural literacy practices. In the proceedings of the International Conference *Education across Borders*. University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece.
- Barton, D. (1994). *An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Baynham, M. (1995). *Literacy Practices: Investigating Literacy in Social Contexts*. London: Longman.
- Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Dinas, C. & Koukourikou, A. (2011). Producing multimodal texts in the new language textbooks of elementary schools. In M. Pourkos & E. Katsarou (Eds.), *Experience, Transfer and Multimodality: Applications in Communication, Education, Learning and Knowledge* (online edition, 22 pages). Thessaloniki: Nissides. Retrieved October 1, 2012 from the World Wide Web: <http://nissides.gr/greek/parts/44.pdf> [in Greek]
- Dinas, C. & Xanthopoulos, A. (2007). Teaching genres in new elementary school language textbooks (Grades 3, 5 and 6). In G. D. Kapsalis & A. P. Katsikis (Eds.), *Primary Education and the Challenges of Our Times* (pp. 588-596). Ioannina: University of Ioannina. [in Greek]
- Duff, P. (2004). Intertextuality and hybrid discourses: The infusion of pop culture in educational discourses. *Linguistics & Education*, 14(3-4), 231-276.
- Facer, K., Furlong, J., Furlong R. & Sutherland, R. (2003). *Screen Play. Children and Computing in the Home*. London: Routledge.
- Fterniati, A. (2007a). Methodological directions of the new curriculum and the approaches adopted in the new elementary school Greek language textbooks. In G. D. Kapsalis & A. P. Katsikis (Eds.), *Primary Education and the Challenges of Our Times* (pp. 588-596). Ioannina: University of Ioannina. [in Greek]
- Fterniati, A. (2007b). The new Greek elementary language arts textbooks: Teaching written discourse production. *The International Journal of Learning*, 14(9), 111-122.
- Fterniati, A. (2009). Teaching multimodality in Greek elementary school language arts. *The International Journal of Learning*, 16(4), 299-326.
- Fterniati, A. (2010). Literacy pedagogy and multiliteracies in Greek elementary school language arts. *The International Journal of Learning*, 17(3), 319-350.
- Fterniati, A. & Goloni, V. (2009). Literacy, multiliteracies and citizenship. Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International South-European and Mediterranean Conference on *Citizenship, Culture and*

- Identity*. University of Patras, Patras, Greece. [in Greek]
- Fterniati, A. & Markopoulou, M. (2008). Multiliteracies and teaching material for elementary school language courses. In P. Georgogiannis (Ed.), *Scientific Dialogue on Greek Education. Typical, Non Typical and A-Typical Education in Greece. Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference: Vol. 2* (pp. 367-378). Patras: KE.D.EK. [in Greek]
- Gee, P. J. & Hayes, R. E. (2011). *Language and Learning in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge.
- Kalantzis, M. & Cope, B. (1999). Multiliteracies: Rethinking what we mean by literacy and what we teach as literacy in the context of global cultural diversity and new communications technologies. In A.-F. Christidis (Ed.), *"Strong" and "Weak" Languages in the European Union. Proceedings of an International Conference* (pp. 667-679). Thessaloniki: Centre for the Greek Language.
- Koutsogiannis, D. (2007). Adolescents' digital literacy practices and (language) education. Thessaloniki: Center for the Greek Language. Retrieved August 13, 2012 from the World Wide Web: [http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/files/document/practice/tecnologikos\\_grammatismos\\_3.pdf](http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/files/document/practice/tecnologikos_grammatismos_3.pdf) [in Greek]
- Koutsogiannis, D. (2011). *Adolescent Digital Literacy Practices and Identities*. Thessaloniki: Center for the Greek Language. [in Greek]
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the New Media Age*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality. A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1998). Front pages: (The critical) analysis of newspaper layout. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to Media Discourse* (pp. 186-219). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse. The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Luke, A. (2004). On the material consequences of literacy. *Language & Education*, 18(4), 331-335.
- Marsh, J. (2004). The techno-literacy practices of young children. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2(1), 51-66.
- Marsh, J., Brooks, G., Hughes, J., Ritchie, L., Roberts, S. & Wright, K. (2005). Digital beginnings: Young children's use of popular culture, media and new technologies. University of Sheffield: Literacy Research Center. Retrieved August 19, 2012 from the World Wide Web: <http://digitalbeginnings.shef.ac.uk/DigitalBeginningsReport.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute. (2003). Official Gazette, issue 2, no. 303/13-03-03, volume A. *Curriculum for Greek Language Teaching in Elementary Schools*. [in Greek]
- Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute. (2006a). *Language* (for the 6 grades of the Greek elementary school, 17 volumes). Athens: Organization for the Publishing of Educational Books. [in Greek]
- Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute. (2006b). *Language. Teachers' Manual* (for the 6 grades of the Greek elementary school, 6 volumes). Athens: Organization for the Publishing of Educational Books. [in Greek]
- Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-Pedagogical Institute. (2011). *Curriculum for Greek Language and Literature Teaching in Elementary School*. In the *Digital School*. Retrieved October 23, 2012 from the World Wide Web: <http://digitalschool.minedu.gov.gr> [in Greek]
- Morrell, E. (2002). Toward a critical pedagogy of popular culture: Literacy development among urban youth. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 46(1), 72-77.
- New London Group. 1996. A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.

- Rideout, V. J., Vandewater, E. A. & Wartella, E. A. (2003). *Zero to Six: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*. Washington: Kaiser Foundation.
- Snyder, I., Wise, L., North, S. & Buffin, S. (2008). *Being Digital in School, Home and Community*. Melbourne: Monash University.
- Stevens, L. (2001). *South Park* and society: Instructional and curricular implications of popular culture in the classroom. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 44(6), 548-555.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London: Routledge.

### Brief biographies

#### **Anna Fterniati**

Anna Fterniati is Assistant Professor in Language Education at the Department of Elementary Education of the University of Patras in Greece. She has participated in various research projects and published papers and books in the field of language education and specifically in the field of literacy pedagogy and written discourse instruction, as well as in the field of multiliteracies. She also has experience and publications in curriculum design, development and assessment.

#### **Argiris Archakis**

Argiris Archakis is Associate Professor in Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics at the Department of Philology of the University of Patras in Greece, where he has been working since 1997. He has carried out research and published extensively on the analysis of various discourse genres, such as youth conversational narratives, classroom discourse, (adult) students' literacy, parliamentary discourse, and media discourse.

#### **Villy Tsakona**

Villy Tsakona is Assistant Professor (ministerial approval pending) in Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis at the Department of Education Sciences in Pre-School Ages, Democritus University of Thrace, Greece. Her main research interests and publications involve the analysis of humorous genres, political discourse, and literacy education.

#### **Vasia Tsami**

Vasia Tsami is a Ph. D. student in Linguistics at the Department of Philology of the University of Patras in Greece. Her research focuses on mapping elementary school students' literacy practices and their utilization for the design, development and assessment of teaching material.