**The distance learning of Greek as a second or/ and foreign language: “Hellenophony”, online study and guidance.**

**Summary**

ARNOS online education created the online study and guidance “Hellenophony”, a learning service of Greek as a second or/ and foreign language with the integration of ICT and multimedia tools in the educational process for students from all over the world aged 5/6 and teachers of Greek as foreign/second language. The courses’ organization and design is based on the principles of the communicative approach of language.

Keywords: Greek language, communicative approach, ICT, multimedia tools

**A. Introduction**

Mr. John Krokos is the founder and mentor of ARNOS online education, which integrates Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as well as multimedia applications into the educational process through the website [www.arnos.gr](http://www.arnos.gr/). It is an educational platform which offers access to educational material that covers all the levels of education.

“Hellenophony” is one of its services. Its objective is to offer Greek lessons as a second or/ and foreign language to children of Greek origin, temporarily or permanently staying abroad, as well as to students whose native language is not Greek and they live in Greece or elsewhere, using ICT. ARNOS promotes one of the least taught and spoken languages in the world and contributes to the elevation of cultural issues and the tightening of the relations between the Greek expatriates and metropolitan Greece.

**B) Online Study and Guidance “Hellenophony”**

**a) “Hellenophony”**

The online study and guidance, named “Hellenophony” offers contemporary distance learning courses to students aged between 5/6 and 12 years. It is also a tool for teachers of Greek as a second or/ and foreign language abroad due to the potential of easy access to the educational material. Courses are organized and designed after taking into consideration the students’ age, their learning needs, their special interests, their learning styles, their level of polyglottism, the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and lastly, the multicultural environment in which they live.

Before course commencement, a placement test is offered to each student, so that the level of polyglottism can be traced and re-defined or even the suggested educational material of each level can be renewed according to the student’s learning needs and interests. The levels of polyglottism (A1-C2) are described in detail by the CEFR regarding the necessary skills for communication that each student has to gain and regarding the advisable tools for the assessment of polyglottism.

Students of Greek origin who live abroad, like students whose native language is not Greek and they live in Greece, perceive their social environment as a multicultural one, since they come into contact with people from different cultures. “Hellenophony” does not only aim at contributing to the development of bonds and the preservation of contact with Greek culture, but it also aims at cultivating a positive stance and perception towards otherness and different cultures, as promoted by intercultural education (Markou, 1997).

ARNOS, the electronic platform, hosts “Hellenophony”. After registering on the platform, the user gains access to the video lectures he chooses to attend by typing his e-mail and the required password in the corresponding box. Instantly, he enters the educational environment of [www.arnos.gr](http://www.arnos.gr), where the educational material is presented. Each lecture has a brief description, thus facilitating each student to surf the platform easily. Moreover, students from all over the world can initiate a discussion through the website of ARNOS, making questions and practising Greek language. Lastly, the video lectures are only a few minutes long, so that they can be quickly streamed online.

**b) CEFR and educational material**

During the last few decades, technology tends to dominate all the expressions of human life in Europe and in the western world as a whole. The rapid development of the CEFR contributes to the total utilization and application of it in the educational process by offering the potential of creating “new educational occasions and locations” (Harasim 1993). The advantages of distance learning and the use of CEFR vary, like the 24-hour direct access to it, the access from every spot and from every electronic means (computer, tablet, smartphone), as well as the continuous co-influence between student and teacher and the interaction.

In the case of “hellenophony”, the educational material is organized and designed with the use of multimedia. The computer is connected to the Interactive Whiteboard, on which electronic slides are projected (Power Point). Every slide presentation includes a lesson which has been designed using Storyboard that. Due to the Power Point’s possibilities, every lesson is enriched with pictures, sounds, videos and hyperlinks. A dialogue or a narration in a comic format (Storyboard that) can work as an occasion for the teacher to follow the course of the lesson as if he is present in an actual classroom with students. The contemporary distance learning courses are carried out via the website.

**b) Communicative Approach and Educational Material**

The online study and guidance “Hellenophony” is based on the communicative approach of language. The educational material’s organization, design, and development is premised upon the five principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (Mpella 2007: 225). The use of comics in a dialogical or narrative format helps the student to participate in games/ role-playing and to become familiar with simulations of everyday life situations. Comics are available in an authentic/verisimilar language, but their topics are separated from any kind of authentic/verisimilar communicative situation. Emphasis is put on the message, which is the incentive for the presentation and the clarification of grammatical and phonetic structures that work as the component parts of a broader communicative framework with the ultimate aim to reinforce the student’s communicative ability.

The students constantly strive for communication. In order to reach his goal and learn the language, the student has to actively participate in language activities. For example, a student is asked to compare and contrast some pictures and find the possible similarities and differences, to describe a certain picture and the illustrated people’s psychological state or to draw some maps, buildings, faces, according to the spoken or written instructions of the teacher or of one of his classmates.

Like the use of CEFR/multimedia applications in the educational process, the Communicative Language Teaching encourages the autonomy of the student regarding the learning process inside and outside the school environment, but it also encourages him to become responsible for his assessment. In contemporary distance learning, the teacher gives advice and suggests some processing approaches, as well as the answers to the video lecture’s exercises. The student contacts the teacher via e-mail and forum.

**c) Modern Greek for children – A1 Level**

The A1 Level consists of two basic parts. The first is an introductory one, in which the Greek alphabet is presented as well as combinations of letters with colourful pictures, movements, and sounds. Every letter is followed by a brief children’s story and a song. The second part consists of twenty-two (22) lessons. The following are suggested lessons’ titles: *First day at school*, *During Break Time*, *My family*, *I could eat a horse,* etc. Every lesson consists of three sections; Communication, Grammar, and Phonetics.

The section of Communication is also based on the Communicative Approach of Language and the Intercultural Education’s principles. Therefore, five classmates from different countries and their Greek teacher appear. The five classmates are the following: Josephine from England, Irina from Russia, Indila from Ethiopia, Jason from Greece, and Antoine from France. The little heroes interact with one another in authentic/verisimilar communicative episodes and simulated everyday life situations, in which a student aged 6-12 years can be present.

After the dialogues or the narration for communicative purposes, Useful Expressions follow. Then, short answer questions or closed-ended questions with their answers follow for the comprehension and production of spoken and written language. The aforementioned questions contribute in an entertaining way to the best possible consolidation of the target language’s vocabulary so that it can be used in the next lessons and in authentic communication environments.

In the *Grammar* Section, the grammatical phenomena are elicited through the comics in a dialogical or narrative format and are presented with enriched examples, applications, and exercises. Lastly, the section of *Phonetics* includes certain phenomena regarding phonemes and combinations of letters, guidance regarding the pronunciation and the condition of sounds, but also other phonological rules.

The three basic sections are accompanied by a Workbook and Additional Activities. The Workbook includes comprehension questions and questions for the production of spoken and written language as well as revision exercises that follow each lesson’s structure. The Additional Activities comprise a corpus which consists of rich and colourful illustrations of fairy tales, virtual navigations to sights and educational games. The activities mentioned above include closed-ended questions with automatic correction, but they are also available in a PDF form. These activities do not only aim at a deep comprehension of communicative and linguistic occasions, but also at the adoption of certain practices and stances of the target-culture.

**D) Assessment**

The assessment process is related to the comprehension and production of spoken and written language. For the assessment of the ability to comprehend spoken and written language, closed-ended exercises are proposed, such as matching and multiple-choice and true or false exercises. Additionally, for the assessment of the ability to produce written and spoken language, there are some short answer questions related to the comprehension of a text, the production of a text of limited length, and closed-ended or objective type questions, with which the grammar and dictation of the particular language system are assessed.

The assessment of the learning process is absolutely necessary. The student, with the gradual learning of the language and the teacher’s discreet guidance becomes able to proceed to self-assessment. Particularly, he controls the level of comprehension and production of spoken and written language and proceeds to corrections. If a difficulty arises, he is able to repeat the questions and the exercises as many times as and whenever he wants. The ultimate aim of the assessment is to render the student responsible and autonomous for his speech production, so that he can assess and correct himself.

**C. Conclusion**

The ultimate aim of teaching Greek as a foreign language is not related to the mere memorization of dialogues and their mechanistic repetition, but to becoming familiar with the Greek way of life and the students’ attempt to live “in a Greek way” as much as possible. In a reasonable period, the planning and the development of educational material for all levels (A1-C2) is estimated to take place, according to KEPA. Lastly, the quantitative and qualitative results of the statistical analysis pertaining to the fulfilment of “Hellenophony’s” goals will be presented, together with the profiles of the students participating in the learning process.

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