

**Self-Reports from Portraits of Six Greek Adult Trilinguals:  
Growing up as 'Bill 101' Allophone Children**

**by  
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fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This inquiry explores six Greek trilingual adults' perceptions about becoming and being trilingual. The six participants are "children of Bill 101", that is, as allophones (speakers of other languages than English and French) they were formally schooled in the French public school system. The participants received English instruction taught as a second language and attended Greek heritage language schools. I adopted a socio-cultural approach to learning, language and literacy and embraced the tenets of activity theory to describe the participants' development of culture and a trilingual identity. To understand how they came to develop cultural and linguistic skills in English, French and Greek, and describe themselves as trilinguals, I conducted 40 hours of in-depth and life-story interviews over three years. I aimed to access the participants' perceptions of their experiences 'growing up Greek' in Montreal, Quebec, their self-identification with the three languages and their perceptions of becoming and being trilingual. I examined their audio-recorded discussions by first transcribing them and searching for relevant vignettes and themes. These vignettes helped determine the larger contextual and personal factors that influenced and affected the participants' perceptions of the process of becoming and being trilingual. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis's concept of "portraiture" is a useful methodology to illustrate how trilingual adults present and negotiate their life worlds in the three languages and spaces – home, work, social and community events. The results of my inquiry suggest that the six "children of Bill 101" who are now Greek trilingual adults constructed their

knowledge and their identities through their interactions with parents, relatives, teachers and peers within home, school, work, and diverse social contexts in both different and similar ways. Their actions are interwoven with issues of access, choice, identity, power and status in different contexts. The understandings emerging indicate that maintenance of a heritage language is possible when children receive appropriate parental support and guidance and have access to literacy materials. The participants were able to identify themselves culturally and to position themselves in society because they had embraced their cultural roots. The acknowledgement, articulation, expression and representation of their cultural identity was of great importance to their process of becoming and being literate as well as developing a sense of self. The development of multilingual literacies and the construction of identity can be strengthened by the collaborative efforts of and dialogues among educators, policy makers, members of cultural communities and culturally diverse individuals and families.



## RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude a pour but d'explorer les perceptions reliées au fait de devenir et d'être trilingue chez six adultes d'origine grecque, résidant à Montréal. Ces six participants allophones sont des enfants de la Loi 101, c'est-à-dire qu'ils ont fréquenté des écoles francophones. Mais ils ont aussi reçu une formation en anglais langue seconde et également un enseignement de leur langue patrimoniale dans des écoles conçues à cet effet. C'est d'une approche socioculturelle que je me suis servie pour étudier l'apprentissage de leurs langues et leur scolarisation. Pour décrire le développement de leur culture et de leur identité trilingue, j'ai utilisé les grandes lignes de la théorie de l'activité. Afin de comprendre comment chaque participant a développé des habiletés culturelles et linguistiques en anglais, en français et en grec et comment chacun décrit son identité trilingue, je leur ai fait passer des entrevues d'une durée d'environ 40 heures sur une période de 3 ans. Mon but était de saisir ce qu'ils avaient vécu en grandissant avec des origines grecques et comment ils avaient forgé leur identité de personnes trilingues. J'ai analysé et transcrit leurs énoncés tout en soulignant les passages pertinents. Ces parties ou vignettes m'ont aidée à cerner les facteurs contextuels et personnels qui ont influencé et affecté le processus de trilinguisation de chaque participant. J'ai ensuite brossé leur portrait en recueillant les vignettes tirées des entrevues. Puis j'ai présenté mes propres commentaires. Le concept du «portrait» selon Lawrence-Lightfoot et Davis est une méthode particulièrement utile pour illustrer la manière dont des adultes trilingues concilient leurs façons de vivre dans trois langues à la

maison, au travail et dans des activités sociales et communautaires. J'en suis arrivée à la conclusion que les enfants de la Loi 101, maintenant des adultes trilingues, ont forgé leur prise de conscience et leur identité grâce aux interactions avec leurs parents, les membres de leur famille, leurs enseignants et leurs pairs, chez eux, à l'école, au travail et dans leur milieu social. Cela s'est fait de façon à la fois similaire et différente. Les concepts d'accès, de choix, d'identité, de pouvoir et de statut marquent intimement leurs actions dans divers contextes. Il émane de ce qui précède que le maintien de la langue patrimoniale est possible quand les enfants reçoivent un soutien et un suivi parental ainsi qu'un accès à des ouvrages de littérature. Les participants de cette étude s'identifient de façon culturelle et trouvent leur place dans la société en acceptant leur culture. La reconnaissance, l'affirmation, l'expression et la représentation de cette identité est de grande importance pour le développement tant de leur littérature que de leur perception de soi. Le développement des langues et de la construction du soi peuvent être renforcées par les efforts de collaboration et de dialogue venant des éducateurs, des législateurs, des membres des communautés culturelles ainsi que des individus et de leurs familles provenant de divers groupes culturels.

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## ΠΡΟΛΟΓΟΣ PROLOGUE

### Φόντος, Ρόλος και Τοποθεσία του Ερευνήτη Background, Role and Positioning of the Researcher

Σε γνωρίζω από την κόψη	I recognize you from your edge
Του σπαθιού την τρομερή,	I recognize you from your look,
Σε γνωρίζω από την όψη	Which urgently scans the earth
Που με βία μετρά τη γη.	From the bones where extracted.
Απ'τα κόκαλα βγαλμένη,	All that was sacred to the Greeks,
Των Ελλήνων τα ιερά,	But as many times before,
Και σαν πρώτα ανδρειωμένη	We face the world bravely
Χαίρε ω χαίρε Ελευθεριά!	Hail, Liberty! Hail!

The poem titled 'Υμνος τις Ελευθερίας (*Hymn to Freedom*) was written in 1824 by Dionysios Solomos, a distinguished Greek poet from the island of Zakynthos. Inspired by the Greek Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire, this poem became the Hellenic national anthem. The Hellenic national anthem is often recited or sung at the beginning of patriotic meetings or celebrations. This thesis is a celebration of the Greek language and culture and so I chose to introduce my research by presenting it here in a Prologue. I start with a personal memoir.

I remember being in my elementary school cafeteria and reluctantly opening my lunchbox. While the other children had sandwiches, juice boxes and granola

bars, I had Tupperware container filled with baked octopus; one of my favorite meals at home. “Look! The Greek girl is eating snake for lunch!” I hear someone scream out (E.Konidakis personal journal, September 1988).

When I was six years old, I had been attending a French elementary school in Valleyfield, Quebec for barely two years but I was aware of the stark difference between my peers and I. I used to dread lunchtime because that was the time of day where I felt my Greekness was revealed. I am a twenty-eight year old, Canadian adult woman of Hellenic descent. My parents immigrated to Canada in the late 1960s. As a child growing up in a primarily francophone milieu, I often felt that concealing my Greek roots would help me gain acceptance and popularity from both my peers and teachers. With time, I realized that my Greek name, my Mediterranean appearance and my knowledge of the Greek language, history, values and traditions would not only be impossible to hide but it would be wrong for me to conceal my identity. Denying or ignoring my Greek roots would be foolish and limiting because it would be excluding me from a culture with which I feel a strong allegiance.

My doctoral research began as a study of language use and builds from my M.Ed. monograph (2000) entitled Code-Switching of Trilingual Montreals: A Case Study. In my Masters inquiry, I examined the occurrence of code-switching as a phenomenon that is defined as the “alternation of languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent which is often rule-governed and characterized by social functions” (Poplack, 1980 p. 583). Growing up trilingual (Greek, French,

English), I remember how I often questioned the reasons and sequence of the code-switching that I noticed occurred within my own verbal interactions with other trilinguals. For example, one particular context in which I recall code switching repeatedly occurring were social occasions we called “the family gathering”. Friends of the family and relatives would gather at my parents’ house after not having seen each other since the previous festivity. More senior members of the family would use the Greek language to communicate, but among the younger generation individuals, code-switching would be the norm. Discussions about school, work and other non-family related topics would be held in English primarily but with the distinctive flair of trilinguals, including intra and inter sentential sequences of Greek and French.

Greek festivities often revolve around a religious celebration, such as a name day, a wedding, a baptism, a name-day, Christmas, Easter, or Greek political celebrations such as Greek Independence day on March 25<sup>th</sup>, or the anniversary of Greece’s resistance against Italy on October 28<sup>th</sup>. They behaved as if they had seen each other every single day since they were last together. Small groups would form. The men, the women, and the youth would sit in different quarters and begin the stereotypical, lively discussions characterized in the media. The movie “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” offers a parody of typical Greek family get togethers which often borders on reality. Topics of discussion would include issues such as news items, politics, and personal topics such as health, work, activities, school, and entertainment. The individuals with whom I frequently interacted were of similar

age, with similar family and educational backgrounds. They were in their teens and lived at home with their parents who abide by a traditional patriarchal family structure. The traditional Greek patriarchal family is one which is usually led by the father of the family. His leadership includes the responsibility of making important decisions for the family and guiding family members in their life decisions by providing them with whatever they feel is necessary for the 'proper' running of their family. As the principal, and often the sole breadwinner in the family, the male parent is expected to make wise decisions that will lead the family to financial prosperity and happiness.

During the times we would be gathered, family and friends engaged in conversations with each other, I often observed that we would interchangeably switch from language to language (English, French, or Greek). I later discovered, in my M.Ed. research (Konidaris, 2000), that the reasons for the code-switching were dependent on the context (i.e. environment and persons present) and topic of discussion (i.e. work, religion, politics, personal matters) in which the participants engaged. Conducting this M.Ed. research permitted me to uncover interesting findings concerning the frequency, type and contextual situations involved when code-switching occurred. It also sparked my curiosity to inquire further about the struggles, values, beliefs and language and cultural practices of trilinguals and to uncover the factors that influence individual trilinguals.

Having been born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, Canada by parents who emigrated from Greece in the 1960s, I experienced my elementary and secondary



instruction in the French school system. My education in the French rather than English school system can be attributed to the language legislation, Bill 101 that was implemented in 1977. My parents emmigrated to Canada during a time that came to be known as “the second wave” (Ioannou, 1983, p. 28) of migration from Greece. These were immigrants who were in search of better work prospects, opportunities and essentially a better lifestyle. With little formal schooling or money, my parents, just like many of the Greek immigrants at the time, came to Montreal determined to succeed financially in order to send money to help their elderly parents in Greece, to establish themselves and begin a life in their host country.

The Greek poet Konstantinos Kavafis wrote the following:

Έχει άτοπα πολλά βεβαίως και	Most certainly and sadly, the Colony
δυστυχώς, η Αποικία. Όμως	leaves much to be desired. However, is
υπάρχει τί το ανθρώπινον χωρίς	there anything human without
ατέλεια; Και τέλος πάντων, να,	imperfection? And finally, well,
τραβούμ' εμπρός.	we do move forward.

*(Κωνσταντίνος Καβάφης, 1946. In F.M.Pontani, 1991)*

*(Konstantinos Kavafis, 1946, translated by E. Konidaris)*

Learning the language of a host society is perhaps the most important factor in the immigration and integration process. While there inevitably may be concessions to be made, there are innumerable gains, particularly within the multicultural fabric of Canadian society – a society that is noted for welcoming

immigrants and encouraging the building of their cultural institutions such as synagogues, churches, mosques, schools and community centers. However, my research does not focus on the first generation immigrants or their experiences. Rather, I focus on the children of Greek immigrants from what I refer to as the third wave of migration which spans from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Konstantinos Kavafis' 1946 poem filters through the emotions of people who left their homeland, faced challenges but moved forward nevertheless. The parents of those who participated in my research can just as easily have been the people of my dissertation's foci. These individuals molded the values and beliefs that made the trilinguals in my study who they are today. These participants are the children of the courageous and zealous souls who left the Greek motherland in search of opportunities and essentially a better life. That these children became fully functional trilingual adults is the realization of at least one of the dreams of the first generation Greek Canadians. I began my thesis with reference to first generation immigrants because without them, there would likely not be any research participants and no study. The emotions the poet Kavafis evokes in the excerpt about immigrants colonized memories and the need to move on, resonate with the feelings of parents of participants.

### **Defining Triliteracy**

I distinguish between trilingualism and triliteracy as the ability to speak three languages and triliteracy as literacy in three languages that includes knowledge of socio-cultural practices. In this case, it would include knowledge of

the Greek language, culture and history. According to Reder (1994) literacy is conceived as “a set of social or cultural practices” (p. 34). This alternative paradigm for literacy also holds that as a set of socially patterned activities, literacy develops and spreads through “a process of socialization, the means of which may include but are not necessarily limited to formal instruction” (Reder 1994 p.34). Therefore, both formal and informal instructional activities are considered literary practices. A framework for dealing with trilingualism is multidisciplinary by nature.

Montreal is a city where the phenomenon of trilingualism is omni-present but ironically still needs to be addressed. Attracting many newcomers due to its geographic positioning as a large urban centre, Montreal has gained popularity due to its unique historical and political contexts. This fact is primarily due to the reality of it being both a thriving city within the province of Quebec and geographical place within Canada. It is only by examining the federal and provincial issues that we can acknowledge the role of trilingualism and trilingual literacy in this specific context.

## **Memories of Saint-Nicholas**

I attended a heritage language school called Saint-Nicholas Saturday School, between 1984 and 1993. This school, run by the **Ελληνική Ορθόδοξη Κοινότητα Λαβαλ** - *Greek Orthodox Community of Laval*, included courses in Greek language arts, history, geography, mythology and religion. In this school, I was introduced to, and took part in, numerous cultural, theatrical and religious activities and events. These events were organized not only in order to teach youths

of Hellenic descent about their heritage language and culture but also served a social function to bring the entire Hellenic Community together. Operating out of various rented buildings, all Saint-Nicholas Saturday School organized events revolved around the Greek Orthodox church by the same name.

**Picture 1: Saint-Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church – Άγιος Νικόλαος**

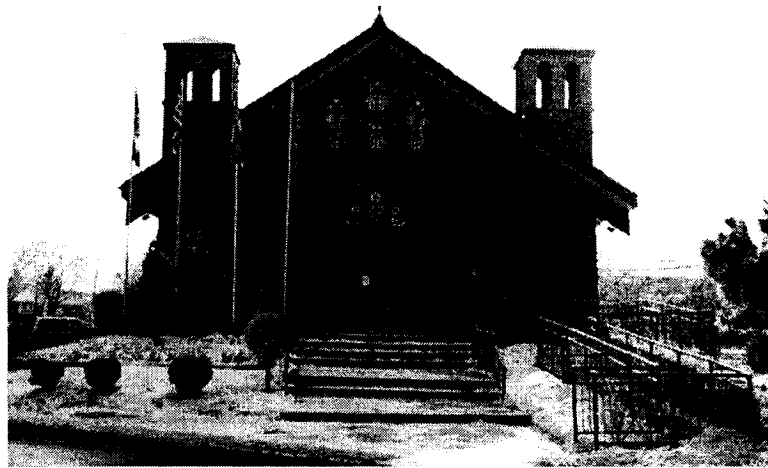


Photo: E.Konidaris, 2003

My parents influenced and encouraged me to participate in the Hellenic community activities such as Greek Saturday school, folkloric dance group, Hellenic theatrical groups, organized social events such as parades, church and community celebrations. These activities ignited my curiosity and an emotional attachment to what a popular Greek proverb calls “Η Ελληνική Φλόγα” - “the Greek flame”. I understood what a privilege it was to be Canadian while remaining committed to remembering and celebrating my heritage culture. For me, my dual identity as a Canadian-Greek means that I am in a uniquely privileged position, one

which permits me to have access to the rich heritage of my Hellenic ancestors and at the same time enables me to live, learn and contribute to a society that stands for everything that is valued in a liberal democratic country. For me, this includes political, economic and social rights that help people thrive in their environments. I am committed to Canada for the opportunities it offered my parents during difficult times in Greece, and for its continued support and commitment to its own people as well as to the people of the world who emigrated to Canada.

Therefore, as a researcher, my epistemological stance, and methodological premises appear to be from an insider's perspective as I am a trilingual (Greek, English, French) Canadian of Hellenic descent, researching the very socio-cultural group to whom I feel I belong and with whom I identify. I believe that I share certain characteristics with my participants. These characteristics include: ethnic consciousness (i.e. the nationality I believe myself to be), and the regional and linguistic experiences (i.e. the actual location I was raised in, as well as the educational institutions I attended). I selected a group of Canadian adults of Hellenic descent using the following criteria:

1. Born between 1960 and 1980 in Quebec, Canada to parents who emigrated from Greece to Canada between 1950 and 1970.
2. Who received formal instruction in the Quebec school system (schools operating under the Ministère de l'Éducation) following the criteria prescribed by Bill 101 (to be discussed in an upcoming section).
3. Who are self-professed trilinguals in English, French and Greek.

These criteria are important for differentiating between this selected population from all possible others in the Canadian from Hellenic descent group who might have participated. In addition, these criteria help understand the participants' self-reported successful development and maintenance of the Greek language (which will interchangeably be referred to as the heritage language) as well as the two other languages - English and French. I also use the term trilingual to refer to those who declare themselves to be trilingual and demonstrate their linguistic proficiency by their reference to their frequent usage of the three languages in their daily lives. The participants' self reported language use inside their home and workplace environments, as well as the choice of educational institutions served as primary evidence of their self-professed trilingual claim and experiences. This inquiry is more than a study on the meanings, the feelings, the purposes or the ways Greek bilingual and biliterate individuals perceived themselves. It focuses on trilinguals and their identity construction. Identity can be defined as how individuals locate themselves in society or as how society locates them. Hall (1990) asserts that identities are the names we give the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past. Hall (1990) points out that identification is a process that is always conditional as "they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (p.394). In other words, I believe identity to be the image and sense of oneself that is a product of one's acts and the recognition of others, rather than a stable and essentialist homogeneous core that an

individual possesses. In this study, both the English and French languages are understood as necessary due to the Quebec-Canada context. The two official languages in Canada, English and French play significant roles in the literacy development of the trilinguals who participate in this inquiry. The third language, Greek, is a 'site of struggle' (Norton, 1997; Weedon, 1987; Weedon, Tolson & Mort, 1980) among the different generations of Greek immigrants. I focus on the self-reported journeys experienced by these six trilinguals, who come from one of the minority linguistic groups living and thriving within a country with two majority languages.

Due to the fact that my parents had not been educated in English or French, they were legally required to send their children to French schools as legislated by Bill 101 (Charte de la langue française, R.S.Q., c.C-11), hence the name *Children of Bill 101*. Therefore, I attended French public schools, and received English as a second language instruction until I graduated from secondary school and decided to attend an English *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* (which will be referred to as C.E.G.E.P. in the dissertation from this point onward) Vanier College. I then attended an English university, McGill University, where I completed both a Bachelor (B.Ed.) and Master (M.Ed.) degree in Education. This type of educational *border crossing* across linguistic institutions that I encountered is not unusual among trilinguals growing up in urban Montreal.

## **ΠΡΩΤΟ ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟ: ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΙΚΟΣ: ΠΡΩΤΟΤΥΠΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΡΔΙΑ ΤΙΣ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ**

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: ORIGINALITY AND THE HEART OF THE INQUIRY**

Helena: I've never really been able to say what I am exactly, am I Greek , am I Canadian, am I Québécoise? The truth is, that I am not just one... I belong to all three... and that has a lot to do with the fact that I have learned the languages and the cultures that go along with each. I can function in all three of them today. Where, I belong... well, I guess it's somewhere among these three, maybe not geographically, but in my head and in my heart.

(Interview with Helena 05-21-2003)

Tilemahos: When I think about my home, where I belong... It's not a simple matter. For me, home is a feeling. The feeling that no matter how crazy the world gets, things will always be the same back home. That's how I feel when I travel. If I'm abroad on business, or on vacation, I feel something special when I return home. I have this same feeling when my plane arrives in Montreal, and the same when we land in Athens. My allegiance is to both places and... that because that's where I'm comfortable. Since I know all three languages... I think that makes it possible.

(Interview with Tilemahos 07-15-2003)



These quotes from interviews with two participants, Helena and Tilemahos illustrate the complex process of identity construction among trilingual individuals. Rampton (1995) makes a distinction between *language affiliation*, *language allegiance* and *language expertise*. Having *language expertise* means possessing the skills, the proficiency and the ability to operate with a language. Having *language allegiance* means identifying with a language, and with the values, meanings and identities that it stands for. Having *language affiliation* means wanting to connect with the people or groups that are considered to be separate or different. Rampton (1995) explains that “language expertise and language allegiance refer to linguistic identities – to cultural interpretations of a person’s relationship to a language” (340). In the previous excerpts, Helena reports belonging to all three cultures, Greek, Canadian, and Québécois, indicating an allegiance, affiliation and expertise. She presents her feelings and knowledge of the languages as deeply intertwined by her repeated statements: “*I belong to all three [...] I belong among these three*”. Tilemahos discussed his feeling of belonging by placing himself geographically and reporting that his allegiance is to both places, Montreal and Athens. Tilemahos’ comfort level, with the three languages he uses while in each of these cities, determines his positioning.

In an increasingly globalized world made up of societies plagued by high paced change and constant instability, explaining our sense of ‘who we are’ and ‘where we belong’ can help ground our self-understanding. Papastergiadis (1998) assumes that defining where ‘home’ is, provides a maternal assurance that reminds

us that despite the geographic migrations, social upheavals, personal crises and cultural differences, there is one privileged place where origin and destiny intersect, a place where security and integrity are not compromised - this place is the home. For Helena and Tilemahos, home is a space and a place that satisfies their feelings of belonging. Tilemahos describes his feeling of belonging as “the feeling that I am where I should be”. Whereas Helena describes her feelings of belonging as a feeling that she is “one of the group, a part of the majority”. Both Helena and Tilemahos reported that defining themselves and their identity was difficult because they do not lack this feeling with either of the three languages. Although Quebec, Canada and Greece may be geographically apart, home is a space and place where both personal and social meanings are grounded in more than one context. Helena and Tilemahos see themselves as trilingual adults from Greek descent.

As participants in my inquiry of Greek adults becoming and being trilingual, for Helena and the other trilinguals, learning the two official languages of Canada as well as learning and maintaining Greek, their heritage language, means being able to call themselves and be trilingual. Being trilingual means being able to position themselves within a ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994). This third space is the location in which hybrid identities are formed. The term hybrid refers to the social process of friction and conflict within individuals and among individuals. Post-colonial theory uses the term to refer to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures. I use the term hybrid to

refer to the integration of certain aspects of individuals' heritage culture and certain aspects of the new-found culture. I refer to cultures that make up a hybrid identity in a loose way as my inquiry involves cases of voluntary migration as opposed to forcible colonization where the distinction between colonizer and colonized is clear-cut. In my inquiry, the hybrid's potential is infinite as it serves as a "lubricant" (Papastergiadis, 1997) allowing trilinguals to traverse from culture to culture and from language to language.

Being a multiliterate and multilingual individual in today's increasingly globalized world has many social, personal and professional advantages. The rampant proliferation of multiliteracies and multilingualism affirms that they are becoming the norm rather than the exception. I draw on the concept of hybridity to argue that multilingual and multiliterate individuals such as the trilingual participants in my inquiry have always been and continue to be of cultural and linguistic concern in countries such as Canada where many cultural groups co-exist. Hence, research in the area of trilinguacy and trilingualism is exceptionally timely. My aim was to determine the contextual and personal factors that influence and affect how members of a selected group of six adults of Hellenic descent perceive they became trilingual in three languages: English, French and Greek-languages they use in their daily activities. I examined these trilingual adults' beliefs and values about their trilingual language learning processes through in-depth and life story interviews which I present as portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

## **Becoming and Being Trilingual**

When I first started thinking about my thesis topic, I was overwhelmed by the possibilities for research on trilingualism. I decided to explore trilinguals' perspectives about their experiences of becoming and being trilingual. I use the term trilingual to refer to people who believe themselves to be trilingual, meaning that they have learned Greek as their mother tongue or primary language of upbringing, who can still speak Greek and who are fluent in English and French, as a result of their academic background and day-to-day interactions. In order to construct holistic portraits of my six participants' experiences, I focused on essentially two inter-related questions: What do a group of six trilingual adults of Hellenic descent perceive as influencing factors in their journey towards becoming and being trilingual? How do these trilingual adults position, conceal or reveal themselves in relation to each of their languages, cultures and communities?

My research originated from the observation that despite the pressure from Quebec provincial law makers and educational institutions to integrate children from diverse ethnic backgrounds into the francophone milieu, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds have managed to maintain their heritage languages and cultures and learn to be equally functional in English and French. Thus, children of immigrants, notably individuals of Greek backgrounds call themselves trilinguals and can navigate from language to language at will and with ease. Furthermore, for many self-professed trilinguals such as those who participated in this inquiry, the Greek language serves as a symbol of their identity. Thus, knowledge of the Greek

language and culture is a fundamental agent of their sense of self and heritage. Some aspects of an individual's *sense of self* may be innate while others may be environmental. Canadian Heritage defines identity as the "values, cultural development, heritage that are significant to the nation" (Canadian Heritage Government Website). I define the term *heritage* as an entity that includes everything of cultural value that is kept alive through sustained interaction among generations.

The participants use the Greek language as an act of identity and along with the English and French languages that may serve as status symbols. In addition to the role the Greek language plays in individuals' construction of a linguistic identity, the French and English languages are also important in their construction of multiple identities. Despite the fact that French encompasses a very large part of everyday life for Montrealers, English nevertheless has a significant presence in the life worlds of individuals in Quebec society and the world at large. The multicultural and linguistic context of Montreal is unique and provides an interesting setting for examining trilinguals' identity construction which may be understood as a hybrid identity. A hybrid identity is a complex way of representing and positioning oneself within larger social constructs of cultural differences. This identity is composed of aspects of newfound culture and the retained aspects of the heritage culture. The central issue is to understand how individuals of Greek descent define themselves and function within a multicultural context. By tapping into trilinguals' perceptions of their upbringing, former and current activities and

discursive practices including cultural and literacy practices, social relations, roots, values and feelings, I aim to identify the roles and factors that participants perceive affect their becoming and being trilingual.

In Canada, and especially in the province of Quebec and the city of Montreal, issues of literacy and the role of heritage language maintenance are acutely felt by immigrants due to the legal and constitutional issues involving language and education rights. Like other Canadian provinces, the Quebec education system operates under the terms of the *Constitution of Canada*, in particular, section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. The system is governed by a series of legislative acts, most notably, the *Education Act*. Except for specialized domains where the Federal Government has authority, the *Constitution Act* gives the provinces exclusive jurisdiction in education. Because of the Quebec government's desire to preserve the French language and culture and to ensure the overall responsibilities for the education system remained with the provincial Minister of Education, the provincial government introduced Bill 101 in 1977. This law affirmed French as the sole official language of Quebec and sought to legislate the language of instruction for immigrants and their offspring.

Bill 101 has been the focus of ongoing controversy, litigation and legislative amendment because some of the provisions of the Act have been found to conflict with the provisions in the Canadian Constitution. For example, there is a provision in Bill 101 that declares French as the only official language of the legislature and the courts. This provision was declared null and void by the courts

for violating certain human rights and freedoms that are protected under the *Canadian Charter*. The provisions regarding the language of instruction have also been controversial. Since the implementation of Bill 101, some provisions were found to violate the minority language provisions of the *Canadian Charter* and were also declared null and void. Despite the adjustments that were made over the years, the principal restrictions regarding access to English language public schools have remained relatively immune from court challenges.

Although trilingualism is now a common phenomenon in many Canadian urban cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, there is little information about how trilinguals themselves perceive and experience the phenomenon. The Greek community and the first Heritage language school dates back to 1910; yet there have been few studies, let alone qualitative studies, that examine the perceptions of Greek trilinguals about their cultural identity, trilingualism, and “multiple school experiences” (Curdtt-Christiansen, 2003, p.226). To my knowledge, my inquiry is the first qualitative inquiry on Greek trilingual adults who were born in Quebec and were children of Bill 101.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

This inquiry is located in the multicultural context of Montreal. What guided my initial assumptions and later, my findings was my inquiry into cultural ways of living, daily activities and practices of trilinguals. Activities and practices constitute cultural references of self, identity, upbringing, relations, roots, values and even feelings. For example, how one perceives oneself, with whom one

chooses to interact and why, the roles that certain influential people play will all affect the way in which one may use a language, as well as the frequency and place of use. When these practices and activities are internalized, they affect individuals' beliefs, preferences, and activities. I investigated the self-reported activities of the trilingual research participants to accomplish the three following objectives:

1. I aimed to make an original contribution to the research of trilingualism by conducting an interpretive inquiry in collaboration with six Canadian trilingual adults of Hellenic descent.
2. I intended to use interview data as a basis for theorizing about the factors that might influence an individual who has a heritage language and/or culture to become and be trilingual;
3. I aimed to identify the roles and factors in the trilingual participants' lives that influence their becoming and later, their being trilingual;

In order to build complex and holistic portraits of the six participants' experiences and address my primary research objectives, I focus on the following four questions.

1. What do a group of six trilingual adults of Hellenic background consider as influencing factors in their trilingual language learning experiences (for Greek, French and English) and why?
2. In what ways do the socio-cultural linguistic contexts in which these adults find themselves affect their values and perceptions about their language learning and language use?



3. What roles do different contexts (such as the family, home, work, social, community, church and other contexts) play in the participants' efforts and engagement towards second and third language acquisition as well as heritage language maintenance?
4. How do a selected group of trilingual adults of Hellenic descent position conceal or reveal themselves in relation to their languages, cultures and communities?

To answer these questions, I explored the factors that these trilinguals perceive as having been influential to their learning of each of the three languages. I assumed that the factors they indicated had influenced their trilingualism would assist me and others in understanding the socio-cultural and linguistic contexts that they report being embedded in and affected by in their daily lives. Their environments such as the home, the work, and the social sphere are all elements that work to influence their beliefs, values and perceptions about language, culture, literacy and construction of a trilingual identity. It is surprising that so little work has actually been conducted about trilingualism in the Montreal context and within the Greek community. The participants are able to recollect and assess the factors from their youth that they now see as having played a role in their trilingual journeys. As trilingual adults, they traced their previous learning trajectories. To my knowledge, no other such qualitative study has been conducted of trilingual adults of Hellenic descent who were children of Bill 101. Therefore, this inquiry makes an original contribution to the field of heritage language learning and

identity construction. The participants' retrospective comments about the factors that have influenced their trilingualism provide insight on the process of being and being trilingual.

## **Cultural Identity & Identification**

In multicultural societies, individual members vary in the degree and extent in which they identify with their cultural group. Individual members of a cultural group express their desire (or lack thereof) to be identified as a member of a particular cultural group through verbal means and through their daily choices and behaviors. For example, identity may be influenced by their choice of spoken and written language, their decision to attend heritage language school, and the extent to which they follow the cultural group's typical cultural pattern. The degree to which individuals will participate in cultural-type behavior, as for instance Greek dance, may indicate the degree of psychological assimilation or acculturation they experience or perceive they have experienced (Ferdman, 1990). Some individuals may perceive that cultural group membership or affiliation with a particular group's cultural practices may be more important or valued than others. Recall my own personal vignette about eating lunch and opening my lunch box in the school cafeteria.

It is also possible that some individuals behave and act in accordance with the situations in which they find themselves. For example, individuals may choose to participate in heritage culture events or display cultural affiliation if knowledge of their participation or affiliation remains of low profile status, hidden within the

cultural group or community. On the other hand, individuals may choose to publicly exhibit and celebrate their cultural heritage roots by openly and publicly engaging in cultural activities and by speaking their heritage language in non-mainstream language and cultural contexts.

What determines the extent of individuals' desire to participate in cultural events and potentially identify themselves as members of a certain cultural group is their perception of what constitutes membership in a cultural group to which they aspire to belong. Each person possesses their own particular image of the values and behaviors that characterize their group's culture, norms for membership and belonging. Ferdman (1990) assumes that "cultural identity involves those parts of the self – those behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms that a person considers to define himself and herself socially as a member of a particular [...] group" (p.193). Thus, cultural identity at the individual level involves an individual's personal perspectives on the cultural group's views about social reality. Individuals have unique perspectives of what they perceive as attributes central to their cultural identity, of the value they attach to these attributes and of the way they see themselves represented by these attributes in a cultural group.

This cultural affiliation and identity is closely linked to the issue of multiculturalism and the 'politics of recognition', in identity politics which I borrow from philosopher Charles Taylor. Taylor (1994) begins with the assumption that identity is partly shaped by recognition, misrecognition or nonrecognition of others. He argues that "a person or group of people can suffer

real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, 1994, p.25). This negative mirroring and representation could take many different forms but is particularly harmful when, as a result of discrimination and suffering, the depreciatory image projected by others becomes internalized by individuals and others.

Becoming and being literate is an on-going process which taps into individuals feelings about who they are culturally and how they behave and interpret the worlds around them. Thus, it becomes obvious that the significance of literacy is inextricably linked to one’s group and individual cultural identity at a particular location in time. Of course, the process of becoming literate plays an important role in individuals’ cultural identity construction. It has the potential of being either constructive or destructive in defining how learners locate themselves. An example of its constructive potential is when learners are encouraged to embrace their cultural roots and relate what they are learning and what they have learned to their heritage culture. This embracing of one’s cultural roots helps individuals answer their own questions about their cultural identity and positioning in society. The institutional spaces of literacy can be destructive if they (i.e. schools, teachers, language laws, etc.) require individuals to disconnect from their roots in order to succeed in the context in which they are striving to succeed. When this occurs, an individual’s cultural identity may become blurred and difficult to understand. This also may lead to issues of self-resentment and animosity toward

the cultural group and possibly toward oneself. Being able to acknowledge, articulate, express and represent is critical to one's cultural identity and is of foremost importance in the process of becoming and being literate and developing a sense of self agency when confronted with conflictual discourses and situations.

## **Overview of the Thesis**

I view cultural identity as a hybrid concept for describing the interrelationship between culture or identity. I consider cultural identity as both a self-contained unit consisting of elements and events that may sometimes remain stable over time and as an ever changing entity which is affected by factors originating in context or within the individual's own self identification. In this chapter, I introduced my research questions and key concepts which when taken together frame the epistemological principles driving my inquiry. In Chapter 2, I present the historical background of the Hellenic Diaspora by describing the waves of migration and trends in building Greek community organizations. I present the relevant concepts that are embedded in the epistemological stance I have chosen for this inquiry. In the last section of this chapter, I describe the socio-linguistic realities of the Quebec context. In Chapter 3, I locate my inquiry within a specific space and place and discuss the epistemological principles driving my inquiry, my role as a researcher, my methodology, including the ways in which I have designed the study, gained access to the participants, and collected and analyzed the data. In Chapter 4, I present my theoretical framework which is focused on theories of learning followed by theories of language and multiple literacies. In Chapter 5, I

present the six participant portraits and I reflect on the concept of *becoming and being* trilingual. In Chapter 6, I highlight key patterns and issues which arose from my analysis and understandings of the participants' portraits. I discuss the implications for further inquiry into the learning, teaching and evaluative orientations of trilinguals. I discuss advancement of knowledge in the area of identity construction among individuals who maintain their heritage language and culture and embrace the language and culture of their country of birth.

## **ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟ ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟ: ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΣΠΟΡΑΣ**

### **CHAPTER 2: THE GREEK DIASPORA**

The Hellenes, or Greeks as they are known to North Americans, boast a historical legacy of 3,000 years. From their native land, consisting of a Mediterranean peninsula ringed by many mountainous islands, large numbers of Greeks have emigrated to all corners of the world. Wherever they have gone, they have proudly called themselves “Hellenes”. They are one of many ethnic groups participating in the multicultural fabric of Canadian society and contributing to its economic and cultural enrichment. (Chimbos, 1980 p.1)

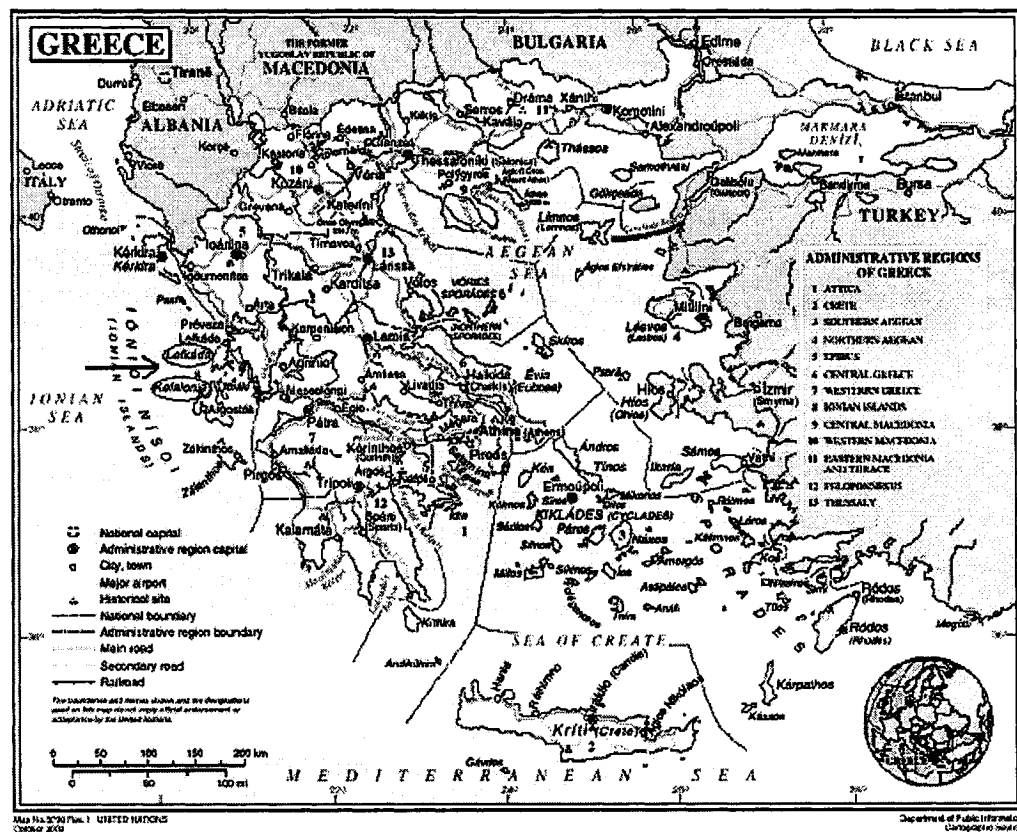
Diaspora, which comes from the Greek word διασπορά, means the sowing or spreading of seeds. It was initially used by the ancient Greeks to describe their dispersal all over the then known-world. For the ancient Greeks, diaspora signified migration and colonization. The concept of diaspora was later used in the Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures to refer to Jewish people living outside of Palestine. Following the Babylonian exile in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., Jewish people scattered all over the world but maintained their hope of establishing a Jewish state. For the Jews, the Armenians and the Africans who later, also adopted the term, diaspora implied more painful meanings of loss of a homeland, violent deterritorialisation and longing for return (Cohen, 1997). As much as the history of migration and settlement for these populations has changed, so has the concept of

diaspora. Today, diaspora has made a dynamic revival in debates about ethnicity, nationality, identity and identity politics. It is a concept that now aims to address and assists the understanding of issues of both forced and voluntary migration, reterritorialisation and people's multiple sense of belonging in a globalized world. Georgiou (2001) argues that diaspora implies a sense of particularity and cultural belonging that can be attached to the experiences of migration. It also possesses an on-going importance for younger generations who have not experienced migration processes but have affiliations or allegiances to some real or imagined homeland. Yon (2000) argues that diaspora implies that particular cultures survive, transform and remain relevant even when members of an ethnic community have not lived in the original homeland. Unlike its traditional meaning, I use the concept of diaspora to refer to individuals whose positions and identities are sometimes juxtaposed with each other. These positions and identities may have occasionally been contested and regarded as ambivalent regardless of whether individuals hold hopes of returning to their homeland or not, in this case, returning to Greece.

Greece is a peninsular country located in Southern Europe, bordering the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, between Albania and Turkey. Greece possesses an archipelago of about 2,000 islands. Map1, a map of Greece, helps situate Greece within Europe.



Map 1: Map of Greece 1



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From the depths of antiquity, Greek people have emigrated from Greece and they have done so with much pride. Citizens of Greek origin live today in more than 140 countries around the world. My parents were born on islands of the Ionian Sea which have been circled on the map. My father was born and raised in Λευκάδα - Lefkada and my mother on an island south of it called Κεφαλονία - Kefalonia. Historical memory of the first immigrants is preserved by the next generations in their efforts to maintain the heritage language and preserve the customs of the Hellenic culture that make up the 'Greek' aspects of their identity.

Over the years, immigrants, students, business people, academics, artists and scholars have played active and dynamic roles in their new host countries. Regardless of the country in which a Greek is born, an attachment to the Greek 'motherland' is inevitable. Love and respect is shared among Greeks for the two countries – Greece and their new country. This affiliation or allegiance could not be more true than for Canadians of Hellenic descent whose presence in Canada can be traced back to the early 1900's and for Greeks in general prehistoric times and diasporic histories.

For example, during the first half of the 3,000 year history of Greece, Athenians and Macedonians sought to acquire new lands, increase trade by gaining access to well-placed harbors and whenever possible, spread Hellenic culture. Throughout history, there has been considerable Greek exodus out of the homeland. It can be attributed to socio-economic and political conditions, as well as many devastating wars which often resulted in foreign and domestic oppression. The most notably destructive event in Greece's history was the lengthy Ottoman occupation which lasted for nearly four centuries (1453-1828) and deeply affected the migration of Hellenic people to other European countries as well as Australia and North America and resulted in a Greek diaspora.

### **A Brief History of Greece**

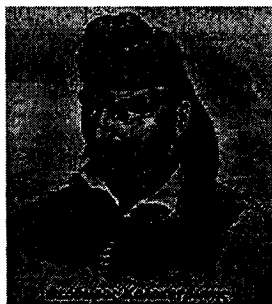
Greece is widely recognized for being the cradle of Western civilization. Its history is rich and involves many influencing discoveries and accomplishments in areas ranging from philosophy to science. Despite its impressive achievements,

Greece's more recent history bears battle scars of invasion, genocide and civil wars. When Constantinople fell in 1453, the Ottoman conquest of the Orthodox Balkans was assured. By that time, most of peninsular Greece was already in Ottoman hands. One after the other, the remaining bastions of Hellenism fell. The kingdom of Trabzon - **Τραπεζούντα** situated at the southeast corner of the Black Sea fell in 1461. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans captured Rhodes - **Ρόδος** and Chios - **Χίος** which are part of the Dodecanese Islands - **Δωδεκάνησα**, Naxos - **Νάξος** which is part of the Cyclades - **Κηκλάδες** and Cyprus - **Κύπρος**. After a lengthy siege, the island of Crete - **Κρήτη** capitulated in 1669. The Greek islands of the Ionian situated west of the Greek peninsula escaped Ottoman occupation but were part of the Venetian Empire.

The Greek world remained an integral part of the Ottoman Empire until 1821, when a small group of proud and courageous Greeks started a revolution of liberation. As knowledge of this movement spread among the West, so did the desire to assist the Greeks in their struggle for liberation. In 1814, Greek patriots founded the Friendly Society - **Η Φιλική Εταιρεία** which prompted a Philhellenic movement across Europe. European intellectuals gained a romantic admiration for ancient Greece and offered their help. Philhellenes included Shelley, Goethe, Schiller, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset and Lord Byron amongst many. They were aristocratic recipients of a classical education who saw themselves as the inheritors of the glorious Hellenic civilization. This fact made them ready and willing to fight for the liberation of the oppressed descendants of those they so

admired. Legend has it that the Greek War of Independence was marked by the hoisting of the Greek flag at the monastery of Agia Lavra – **Αγία Λάβρα** in the Peloponnese – **Πελοπόννησο** by Bishop Germanos of Patras on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1821. A large number of Greek patriots and volunteers formed The Kleftes – **Οι Κλέφτες**, which is the Greek word for thieves. The term **Κλέφτες** – thieves was to symbolize the Greek reappropriation of Hellenic regions. Among them were Kanaris, Karaiskakis, Makriyannis, Boumboulina and Kolokotronis. Figure 2 is a portrait of **Θεόδωρος Κολοκοτρώνης** - Theodoros Kolokotronis; he came from a family of Kleftes who escaped to Zakynthos where he served in the English Army. He returned to Peloponnesos on the eve of the revolution and due to his military experience and knowledge, he soon became the leading figure in organizing the Greek fighters. He lead the siege of Tripolis and its surrender marked the first success of the Greek Revolution in 1821. The following year, with his courage, determination, patience and military acumen, he defeated the Turkish army of Dramalis. Theodoros Kolokotronis is considered one of the most important figures of the Greek revolution.

**Picture 2: Portrait of Θεόδωρος Κολοκοτρώνης - Theodoros Kolokotronis**



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The Kleftes were armed through their links to *The Friendly Society* – **Η Φιλική Εταιρεία** and were determined to re-establish the Greek language and culture by retrieving Greek soil. They lived in rough mountainous regions or other remote areas throughout Greece where they plotted their strategies of retaliation. They proclaimed “Liberty or Death – **Ελευθερία ή Θάνατος**” which became their slogan in all the fierce battles that followed. In 1832, with the *Treaty of London*, Greece became an Independent state. Otho, the son of the King of Bavaria was named king in 1832. The 19<sup>th</sup> century proved to be long and challenging for the Greek population. Greece made efforts to define its national image but could not access its democratic aspirations with an absolute monarchy guided by foreigners. In 1917, Greece entered World War I on the side of the Allies. Since many Greeks still lived in regions that were now part of Turkey, the Greek army marched toward Ankara but was defeated by Turkish forces and was required to withdraw. In 1921, an exchange of populations saw Greece gain 1.3 million Christian refugees from Turkey. Although this was a relief for Christians living in Muslim Turkey, it created enormous challenges for Greece’s economy. The economic upheaval poured into the world of Greek politics. Between World War I and World War II, there was a great power struggle between monarchists and republicans. In 1924, Greece was proclaimed a republic, and in 1935, King George II returned to the throne. In 1946, a plebiscite upheld the monarchy and on December 8<sup>th</sup> 1974, the monarchy was finally abolished by referendum.

Greece's entry into World War II was precipitated by the Italian invasion into Greece on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1940. Despite their superiority in numbers and weaponry, Greece defeated the Italian invaders who retreated into Albania. In 1944, German forces overran Greece. Hitler withdrew from Greece in October 1944. Communists controlled the principle Greek resistance movement. When Greek communist forces refused to disarm, tension broke out in a civil war in 1946. In 1947, American Secretary of State George C. Marshall implemented the Marshall Plan under United States President Truman. The Marshall Plan focused on rebuilding Europe by contributing millions of dollars towards infrastructure, agriculture and industries. In August 1949, communists living in Greece were forced to surrender or flee to Greece's communist neighbors. Evidence of the civil war was particularly evident in the deep political division between leftists and rightists.

Greece became a member of NATO in 1952 and was governed by conservative parties until late 1963. In 1967, Col. George Papadopoulos seized power in a coup d'état which dissolved all political parties in Greece. Civil liberties of the people were suppressed and politicians were imprisoned or exiled to remote Greek islands. The junta's aims and policies were a curious mixture of populist reforms and paternalistic authoritarianism backed by propaganda and terror. In November 1973, students from the Athens Polytechnic University staged a protest which ended in bloodshed.

A year later, Gen. Ioannides replaced Col. Papadopoulos as dictator of Greece. The new head of government, Gen. Ioannides induced a confrontation with Turkey over control of the recently discovered oil deposits in the Aegean Sea, as he believed that a major nationalistic cause such as oil could serve to rally the people behind him but in fact, had the effect of bringing Greece to the brink of war with Turkey. Gen. Ioannides attempted to undermine Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus, by supporting Greek-Cypriot terrorist activity. Months following Gen. Ioannides' attempt, junta-inspired Cypriots engineered a coup against Archbishop Makarios. Turkey immediately invaded Cyprus under its rights as a guarantor of the security of the republic established in 1960 with Britain. For Britain, Cyprus had a special role in protecting British oil supplies from the Middle East due to its strategic geographic positioning. On July 20<sup>th</sup> of 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus and to this day it occupies half of the Greek island. In November 1974, Constantine Karamanlis was persuaded to return from exile in France in order to dismantle the dictatorship and restore democracy to Greece. He became leader of the New Democratic party and was elected Prime Minister. In 1974, a referendum resulted in the rejection of the monarchy, the installment of a new constitution and finally, the establishment of national unity. Noteworthy is the fact that Greece's European orientation predates the linking of the country's course with efforts towards European integration within the context of the European Community / Union. However, the orientation became concrete upon submission of the application for accession to the newly established European Economic

Community in June 1959, an application that led to the Association Agreement between Greece and the EEC, signed in June 1961. This Agreement, which in fact constituted the first step towards Greece's integration into the European Community, *froze* when dictatorship was established in Greece in April 1967 and was re-activated after democracy was restored in July 1974. Since then Greece has restructured its governing bodies and has successfully built its infrastructure. Greece has been an active member of the European Union since March 2000.

### **Diaspora and the Ottoman Rule**

Greece's history includes victories, defeats, accomplishments and failures. Diaspora and movements due to voluntary Greek exodus out of the Greek homeland is nothing new. The most traumatic form of exodus is one that does not involve free will and adventure but fear and a quest for survival. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wars and persecution forced the Hellenic people to emigrate from their Motherland to countries all over the world.

During the years of Ottoman domination (1<sup>st</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), Greek speakers resettled over a wide area inside the empire. They moved in large numbers to Romania, along the coast of the Black Sea and into major cities where they could become merchants and artisans. Important merchant colonies were founded in Venice, Livorno, Naples, Marseilles as well as in Northern European cities such as London, Liverpool and Paris. The diasporan communities played a vital role in the development of Greek culture during the Ottoman occupation. Greek enclaves in foreign cultures reinforced national identity while exposing their



people to new intellectual currents including the ideology of revolution. Many diasporan Greeks gained economic wealth and helped support communities in Greece by founding schools and other public institutions when there was dire need to do so.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman raids had succeeded in conquering the Orthodox Balkans. The Ottoman state was a theocracy based on strict notions of hierarchy and order with the sultan exercising absolute power (Inalcik, 1973). The system first divided subject peoples into the domain of the faithful, the Muslims, and the domain of war, the non-Muslims. An individual's rights and obligations were determined by the position one held within each group. The extent of the empire made control dependent on a complex, decentralized administrative hierarchy. Designated local military leaders called the *σπαχί* - *sipahi* assumed all rights and responsibilities while dependent Greek peasants worked the lands as their slaves (Inalcik, 1973). The Ottoman system discriminated against the non-Muslim population of Greece which was divided into *millet*s, administrative units organized on the basis of religious rather than ethnic origin. The four non-Muslim *μύλεις* - *millet*s were Armenian, Catholic, Jewish, and Orthodox. The Ottoman empire imposed special levies of money and labor while also placing restrictions on personal freedom. At the head of each *μύλεις* - *millet* was a religious leader who was not only responsible for the welfare of his group but also for its obedience to the sultan. This placed the Orthodox Church in a paradoxical situation. It was helpful in keeping the Greek language alive and

used its traditional education role to pass on the Greek cultural heritage and foster a sense of Greek identity. The church was expected to maintain order and was forced to become a conservative institution that protected its role by isolating the Greek populous from the great intellectual currents of the West such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment.

Some parts of Greece were able to escape the direct effects of Ottoman rule by seeking refuge in remote mountainous regions of central Greece. Map 2 locates Mount Olympus, Thessaloniki, Kavala and Alexandroupolis which were the northern regions that Greeks used for shelter until they gained sufficient forces to fight back and regain ownership of Greece.

**Map 2: Map of Greece 2**



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In those areas, Greeks were able to plot attacks on Turkish occupied villages. One such area which gained mythical proportion was called the *Άγραφα* - *Agrapha*, the “unwritten” because the empire had no census or tax records for the region. The

lack of formal records facilitated the organization of gorilla-type attacks for the reclaiming of Greece, village by village. Diaspora communities contributed much to the rebuilding of Greece; however, the process has been a long and often painful one lasting nearly four centuries.

### **Migration: Tradition and Need**

John Ogbu (1987) distinguishes between voluntary and non voluntary migration. The causes for voluntary emigration were not solely based on circumstances. Voluntary emigration can be observed in the long-established traditions of the Greek nation and the character of its people. Greeks as a people established ancient settlements along the Mediterranean basin for economic, political, as well as military reasons. Their spirit of adventure, their business acumen and skilled seamanship have rightfully earned them recognition as one of the best maritime nations of the world (Cahill, 2003).

Early Greek migration to Canada dates back to early pre-WW II migration patterns which took place during a larger North American migration pattern. Emigration into Canada during those times was sporadic and perhaps to some degree, serendipitous. According to Vlassis (1953), the first Greek who arrived to what are now the straits between the State of Washington in the United States and Vancouver Island in Canada was a man named Apostolos Valerianos. He was a native of the beautiful Greek island of *Cephalonia* - **Κεφαλονιά**, situated in the Ionian Sea, that is also my mother's birthplace. Valerianos traveled to Spain where he spent the better part of his life as a ship's pilot. As he sailed to and from many

new lands, including Canada, he went by the name John Focas, which was likely anglicized to facilitate communication with the ethnically diverse people with whom he interacted. Today, the Canadian straits where he navigated in 1592 bear his name *Straits of Juan de Fuca*. Cephalonian folk tales explain that although this curious and travel-passionate man received praise for his long service to the court of Spain, he never received formal recognition or material reward for his discoveries and accomplishments. He returned to his island of birth, Cephalonia, to live his final days away from anyone who might have embittered him. However, just before reaching home in 1594, he stopped in Venice where he met an interested Englishman, named Michael Lock, who attempted to recruit him for the service of Queen Elizabeth of England and to whom he recounted his travels. Vlassis (1953) claims that Lock left records of his encounter with the adventurous seaman as well as manuscripts detailing their conversations. As the voyage of the first Greek man to reach Canadian shores proves, Greeks have always had a curiosity and passion for travel which has often become shaped by their sea travels. According to Greek folklore, Greek sailors sailed up the St-Lawrence River in 1850, deserted their ships in Quebec and married local women. Chimbos (1980) claims that all traces of these people are now gone primarily due to the fact that their offspring were absorbed into the mainstream society of the time which was predominantly Scottish and English. Intense migration to North America did not commence until the turn of the nineteenth century. Greek people tended to settle in cosmopolitan cities such as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago in the United States and Montreal, Toronto

and Vancouver in Canada. Tamis & Gavaki (2002) attribute the massive exodus from Greece to these urban centers to three major direct and indirect factors: the political-economic situation, demographics, and family ties. Family ties was the direct factor for Greek exodus, while demographics and Greece's political-economic situation were indirect factors.

What is anecdotally known as the first wave of Hellenic immigration to Canada dates back to the pre-WW II era (1890s to 1915). Socio-political events born out of the fight for liberation from Turkish invasions in Greece, along with the possibility of thriving in business abroad saw Canada receiving a significant number of Greek immigrants. With the exception of seamen who, in seeking adventure, found themselves on Canadian soil, the other countries of destination were Egypt, Turkey and Russia where Greeks were often given special rights for commerce and trading. In the 1820's, those special rights were revoked and Turkey started annihilating all persons 'Greek'. Many returned to Greece or actively sought to establish themselves in North America and particularly in urban centers. The interval between 1915 and 1950 was a period of Greek initiation to North America. Greek immigrants to North America built the foundation upon which the second and third generation Greeks were able to construct businesses, pursue an education and create families capable of sustaining a comfortable living. War and economic hardships prompted Greeks to obtain employment in the expanding manufacturing industries of the urban centers before amassing sufficient capital to open their own small businesses such as small hotels, supermarkets, delis,

and restaurants. Businesses owned by Greeks in Montreal between the early 1900's and the 1920's included: *The White Star Café*, *The Midway Theatre*, *The Cosy Parlor*, *Matthew's Lunch*, *The Mount Royal Theatre*, *Belmont Theatre*, *The Dominion Floral*, *The Olympic Hotel*, *The Rialto Theatre*, *Geracimos Bros. Bakery*, *The Laurentian Sweets Coffee Shop*, among many others (Florakas-Petsalis, 2000).

The second wave of migration from the 1950s to 1960s involved a new type of immigrant. During the first wave, early immigrants were mostly young, single, often educated males, eager to succeed financially and return to Greece, whereas during the 1950s 1960s and early 1970s, entire families or at least certain members of families, who later hosted their entire family into the country, came to Canada. Despite the fact that both the early immigrants and those of the second wave possessed the common attributes of work ethic, aspirations of bettering themselves and contributing to whatever place they were in, their backgrounds were quite different. This difference involved the fact that most second wave immigrants came from rural areas such as the islands and northern parts of Greece and possessed few or no marketable skills, had minimal formal instruction and were leaving Greece without financial resources. The lack of marketable skill was a serious obstacle on the road they had envisioned in their chosen, adopted, and host country. They became disillusioned because although they may have left behind poverty and devastation, they also left behind their beloved villages which had provided them with a sense of home and a feeling of belonging. Leaving behind the land of their birth, their sense of belonging to the physical and emotional environment, their

cultural and socio-psychological support systems and networks were some of the difficulties they experienced in their journeys to North America.

Therefore, the mass settlement of Greek immigrants in large urban communities like Montreal between the 1950s and 1970s can be characterized as many lived hardships. Most new Canadians arriving during this time worked in the service industry. Many men worked as machine operators in the textile and garment industry, as dishwashers and waiters in restaurants; many women found work as contract seamstresses. Given their *low educational and occupational levels*, Canadians of Greek descent often worked in 'dead-end' occupations that were psychologically unrewarding and low paying. To compound matters, Greek-born Canadians who arrived from rural areas had little if any exposure to manufacturing work. Their unfamiliarity with machinery and the textile industry in general, exposed them to hazardous work that sometimes resulted in chronic illnesses or industrial accidents such as sprains, fractures, and other musculoskeletal afflictions. Chimbos (1980) reports that during the 1950s, the Greek government informed the Department of Canadian Citizenship and Immigration that there were approximately 50,000 Greek workers, farm laborers and domestics available for emigration to Canada. In addition to their availability, the Greek government informed the Department that leaders of Greek organizations and Greek-Canadians were willing to sponsor them. The Canadian government was not willing to admit such a large number of immigrants from one country because it claimed that they lacked skills, were unwilling to live in rural areas, and

would not easily adapt to Canadian society. Tamis & Gavaki (2002) report that in 1952, the Canadian government granted entry to Canada to approximately 1,100 Greek immigrants on a trial basis. Many of the Greek female immigrants from poor economic backgrounds worked as domestics. They would use their new Canadian status in lieu of a dowry and eventually marry illegal Greek immigrants to legalize their status and start families in Canada. With the change of Canadian immigration policies, individual Greeks were allowed to sponsor their entire families to Canada. By the late 1970s most of this type of migration came to a halt. Table 1 indicates that in 1991, of the 126,240 Canadians of Greek descent above the age of fifteen, 90,905 were in the Canadian labor force. An equally high ratio of employment can be observed in Quebec where from the 38,895 Greek-Canadians above the age of fifteen, 26,925 were in the Canadian labor force.

**Table 1: Greek-Canadian Labor Force in Canada, Ontario and Quebec**

Labor Force	Canada	Ontario	Quebec
1. Total Population 15 +	126,240	69,125	38,895
2. Total Labor Force	90,905	50,065	26,925
3. Employed Labor Force	81,310	46,040	22,585
4. Unemployed Labor Force	9,595	4,030	4,345
5. Not in Labor Force	35,335	19,060	11,970
6. Self-Employed	7,615	4,655	1,790
7. Not Self-Employed	73,695	41,385	20,790
8. Participation Rate – Percentage	72.0	72.4	69.2
9. Unemployment Rate - Percentage	10.5	8.0	16.1
10. Employment to population Ratio	64.4	66.6	58.0

Greek-Canadian Labor Force in Canada, Ontario and Quebec 1991

Source: *Statistics Canada, Census 1991.*

Also noteworthy is the reported employment income of Canadians of Greek descent. Tamis & Gavaki (2002) reported that the Greek-Canadians in Montreal stated earning as an average \$3,291 in 1971 and \$8,511 in 1981 a year. The



average earnings of Greek-Canadians were lower than the national earning average in both cases. Table 2 and Table 3 indicate that by 1991, the rates had improved but were still low. Approximately, 13% of men and 3% of women earned \$50,000 or more. The median income of Greek-Canadian men in 1991 was \$25,030 and \$16,680 for women across Canada. Table 2 and Table 3 show the significant discrepancy between the income of Greek-Canadian men and Greek-Canadian women living in Quebec and living in Canada. These figures indicate that Greek-Canadians are largely employed individuals. However, given their occupational levels, their incomes remain low.

**Table 2: Employment Income Distribution of Greeks in QUEBEC by Age\* and Sex 1991**

Age	Total Population		Employment Income					
			< \$19,999		\$20,000	\$49,999		\$50,000
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total	15,335	11,200	7,805	8,040	6,395	2,990	1,125	175
15-24	2,130	1,900	1,740	1,600	600	305	15	0
25-44	6,895	5,715	3,260	3,870	3,125	1,755	510	85
45-64	6,070	3,450	2,690	2,465	2,820	915	550	75
65+	245	135	115	105	85	15	50	10

Mean Employment Income: Male= \$22,885; Female= \$15,290.

Median Employment Income: Male= \$19,670; Female= \$14,145.

\*15 years + with Employment Income.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census, 1991.

**Table 3: Employment Income Distribution of Greeks in CANADA by Age\* and Sex 1991**

Age	Total Population		Employment Income					
			< \$19,999		\$20,000	\$49,999	\$50,000	+
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total	52,115	39,460	20,310	23,890	25,230	14,450	6,575	1,115
15-24	6,585	6,030	4,720	4,485	1,802	1,525	60	20
25-44	24,455	21,085	8,255	11,300	12,845	8,935	3,345	770
45-64	20,045	11,830	6,800	7,630	10,245	3,885	3,005	310
65+	1,025	520	535	390	340	105	165	20

Mean Employment Income: Male= \$28,060; Female= \$18,185.

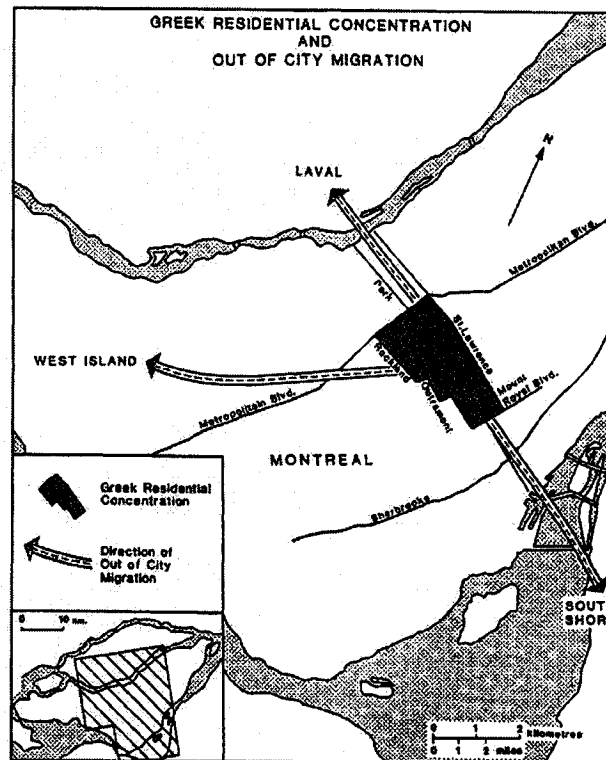
Median Employment Income: Male= \$25,030; Female= \$16,680.

\*15 years + with Employment Income.

Source: *Statistics Canada, Census, 1991.*

As the years passed and Greek immigrants changed their economic status in Canada, they were able to move into higher socio-economic suburban areas like the North and South Shores of the Montreal Metropolitan region. For example, many Greeks moved from Montreal to the Laval, West Island and South Shore areas in the mid-1970s as illustrated by the outward pointing arrows in Map 3.

**Map 3: Greek Residential Concentration and Out of City Migration**



(Tamis & Gavaki 2002 p.125)

During the 1930's, the center of the Jewish community situated around St-Lawrence Boulevard moved northward past Mont-Royal Boulevard. After the Second World War, the Jewish population moved into areas such as Côte Saint-Luc. The Greeks followed by first settling on St-Lawrence Street near Sherbrooke and later also moved northward as illustrated on Map 3. Park Avenue became an axis of the Greek community along its entire length. The Rialto Theatre, also situated on Park Avenue, was purchased by a Greek Canadian family who regularly showed Greek movies. The theatre was known as “Ο Ελληνικός

κινηματογράφος” - The Greek Cinema. As is evident in Pictures 3 and 4, the large lit sign indicated in Greek that Greek movies were being shown at the theatre.

**Picture 3: The Rialto in 1950**



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**Picture 4: The Rialto in 2003**



Photo: Ephie Konidaris, 2003

Today, the Rialto Theatre is owned by a different Greek Canadian owner who maintains the building, hosts concerts and plays while upholding the Rialto's Heritage building status.

Montreal Greek individuals and their families started moving northwards in the mid-1970s. This in turn allowed them to further develop Greek urban structures and organizations which were set up by the first wave generation of Hellenic immigrants to Canada. However, the needs and desires of Greek people living in the motherland differed greatly from those when the country was struggling to rebuild its infrastructure. When the socio-political and economic status of Greece was stabilized, many possibilities for development arose in Greece. Consequently, there was a sharp decline in the Greek exodus. The flow out of Greece into Canada reached its peak in the 1960s and came to a virtual halt by the mid 1970s.

**Table 4: Greek Immigration to CANADA by Category of Admission**

Year	Category of Admission				Sponsored & Nominated as% of	Immigrant Total All Immigrant to Canada
	Total	Sponsored	Nominated	Independent	Hellenes	
	#	#	#	#	%	%
1967	10,650	7,616	-	3,034	72	33
1968	7,739	2,460	3,841	1,438	81	40
1969	6,937	2,041	3,637	1,259	82	45
1970	6,327	1,956	3,024	1,347	79	46
1971	4,796	1,759	2,211	799	83	52
1972	4,016	1,492	1,898	626	84	53
1973	5,833	1,750	2,449	1,634	72	47

Source: Department of Manpower and Immigration, Population Statistics; L. Parai, "Canada's Immigration Policy," IMR 9, 1975.

Table 4 illustrates the decreasing number of Greek immigrants entering Canada by category of admission. The number of Greeks entering Canada in all three admission categories (sponsored, nominated, independent) decreased to approximately half the amount from 1967 to 1973. Although no formal statistics have been tabulated after 1975, it is anecdotally recognized that fewer Greeks emigrated to Canada than in the past. There are approximately 300,000 Canadians of Greek descent. Over 65,000 of these Canadians-of-Hellenic-descent make up the Montreal Hellenic Community.

### **Community Organizations for the Diaspora**

Yon (2000) asserts that diaspora is a term used to theorize and understand the meaning of “being at home in the place where one lives while still living with the memories and shared histories of the place from which one or one’s ancestors have come” (p.17). Whether because of voluntary or forcible reasons, people who have migrated from their homelands have sought to come together in unified groups which may come in the form of community organizations. Community organizations of the diaspora recognize that their traditional homelands are deeply linked with the heritage language, the religion and the culture they so deeply want to maintain and reproduce which in turn reveal their “socio-linguistic capital” (Bourdieu, 1991). For diaspora identities, the process of constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference is common. Papastergiadis (1998) assumes that immigration is best described as a “series of

waves” in which the migrant desires both repetition and difference. The immigrants seek the sensual experience of novelty in their adoptive country while still nostalgically yearning familiarity with and the duplication of traditions.

One reason why Greek immigrants and their offspring have managed to retain knowledge of their history, custom, and traditional practices is through the development of various community organizations. A Greek community- Ελληνική Κοινότητα can be defined as a grouping of Hellenic or Hellenic descent people who live in a country other than Greece and wish to partake in religious or other activities along with those who share a history and culture in order to maintain their identity and Greek customs. For diasporan Greeks in Canada and their offspring, maintaining one’s cultural identity requires the development of traditional Greek values that most importantly include knowledge and pride of the Greek history, language and traditions. For diasporan Greeks and their offspring, March 25<sup>th</sup> 1821, also referred to as Greek Independence Day, represents an allegiance to Greece and the pride that is symbolic of Greek cultural identity. This pride is celebrated and manifested through events like Greek Independence Day Parades. Pictures 5 to 10 are captions from Greek Independence Day Parades in Montreal.

**Picture 5: Greek Independence Day parade – March 25<sup>th</sup> 1985.**



Photo: Courtesy of E.Chiotis personal collection

**Picture 6: Greek Independence Day parade – March 25<sup>th</sup> 1988**



Photo: Montreal Hellenic Community Archives



**Picture 7: Male Greek School students carrying mock rifles in the Greek Independence Day parade of March 25<sup>th</sup> in Montreal - 1990.**



Photo: Montreal Hellenic Community Archives

**Picture 8: Female Greek School students in the Greek Independence Day parade of March 25<sup>th</sup> in Montreal - 1990.**



Photo: Montreal Hellenic Community Archives



Notice in the photographs that cultural dress plays an important role in the cultural events such as folkloric dances, theatre and the Greek Independence Day parade. In the Hellenic culture, the Greek Orthodox Church has historically served as a symbol of nationality and cultural identity. It has been the nucleus for Greek communities, especially in places outside the motherland for many years. During the Turkish occupation of Greece (1453-1828), the church assumed the all-important role of preserver of the Greek language and Greek cultural identity. Following liberation from the Turks in 1821, the Greek Orthodox Church focused its energies on helping to maintain Greek ethnicity in countries where Greek diasporans settled and lived. Theological colleges specifically trained clergymen for service to countries like Australia, the United States and Canada.

The first Greek community was organized in 1906 by approximately 1,000 Greek Canadians in the city of Montreal. The gatherings among family and friends that took place on religious holidays and other events eventually became sizeable enough to make these people into a community. The first Greek Orthodox Church was erected on St-Lawrence Street by parishioners who, after their daytime work, assisted in every aspect of the construction. The name of this church was “*Evangelismos tis Theotokou* – **Ευαγγελισμός της Θεοτόκου**” (Annunciation).

**Picture 11: *Εναγγελισμός της Θεοτόκου*” (Annunciation)**



Photo: Montreal Hellenic Community Archives

Soon after its completion, less than a year later in 1907, the church members purchased a house situated behind it and made it into a school called “*Plato*”. The school had approximately 35 students in its first years of operation in 1931. The school made use of the curriculum that was used in most Montreal public schools but in addition to teaching Canada’s two official languages, taught the Greek language.

By 1925, the political schism which divided Greece between the Royalist (supporters of King Constantine) and Venizelists (supporter of the democratic Elefterios Venizelos) affected the many Greek Canadian communities including the Montreal Hellenic Community. The political schism threatened the unity of Greek Communities just as it had successfully done so in Greece during the 1920’s and 30’s. The geo-political schism is illustrated on Map 4. The shaded area on Map 4

illustrates the contested areas of Greece. The Northern areas illustrated in a darker shade are those which Greece fought to reclaim from 1821 to the present day.

**Map 4: Contested areas of Greece**

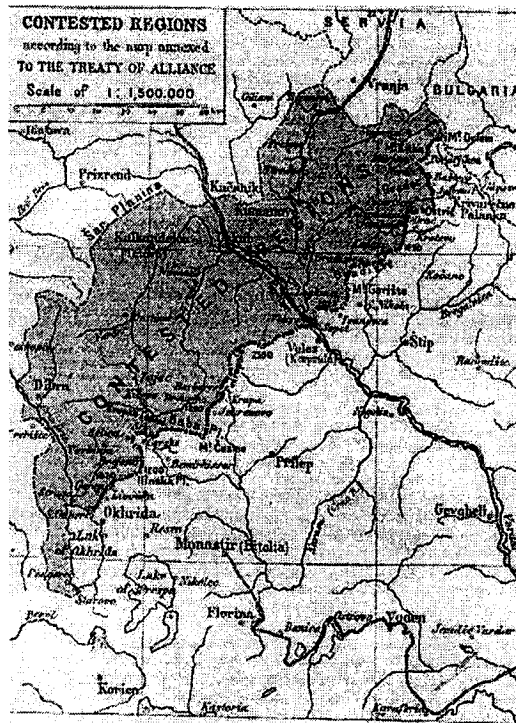


Photo: Montreal Hellenic Community

This resulted in the establishment of a second Greek Orthodox Community. The second community purchased and chartered the “*Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church* - ” which was situated at the corner of two urban downtown Montreal streets, Sherbrooke and Clark. In addition, this community opened the “*Socrates Anglo-Greek School*” in a building next door to their church.

**Picture 12: Anglo-Greek Socrates Day School in Montreal, 1930**



Photo: Hellenic Community of Montreal Archives.

In 1930, through much discussion with the assistance of Archbishop of North America Athenagoras, whose goal had become to diffuse Venizelist-Royalist conflicts and unite Greek communities abroad, the two communities merged. A new committee was formed, (half from one church and half from the other). Only the “Holy Trinity Church – Αγία Τριάδα” and “Socrates School” were retained as Greek schools. School uniforms were not required but schools officials requested that parents dress their children in clean white shirts with navy or grey pants and a navy blazer if they had one. With time, as Canadians of Greek descent established themselves, their families and their businesses, they moved to regions outside urban Montreal established more communities and opened more schools and many more churches in Laval, South Shore and the West Island. In the winter of 1986, a fire destroyed the beloved “Holy Trinity Church” much to the sorrow of all Greek Orthodox parishioners.

**Picture 13: Picture of the outside of the second Greek Orthodox Church to be established in Montreal, Canada in 1925, named Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church**

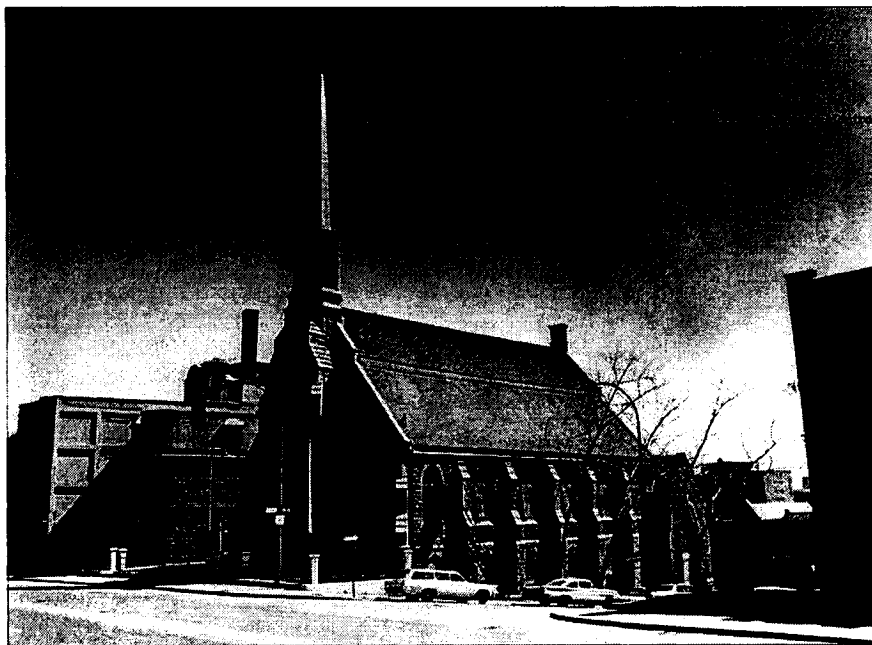


Photo: Montreal Hellenic Community Archives

Among the many Greek societies (σύλλογος - *sylogous*) and associations (κοινότης - *kinotis*) formed in Canada, many had and have philanthropic functions. One of these is the “Φιλόπτωχος - *Philoptochos Society*”. The name of this society derives from the Greek word “φίλος - *philos*”, which means friend and the word “πτωχος - *ptochos*” which means poor. Members work towards ameliorating the situation of the less fortunate within many Greek and non-Greek communities in Montreal. However, most associations that have been formed within the Hellenic Community have had ethnocultural goals in mind. They have encouraged people in general and youth in particular to engage in activities such as field trips, theatre presentations and dances, to promote Greek values, Greek

cultural practices and most importantly, the Greek language. The next series of pictures provide insight into the type of activities Greek diasporan engages. Pictures 14 and 15 were taken during Saturday Heritage Language Greek School play celebrating Greek Independence Day. The elementary school children in picture 14 are dressed in folkloric outfits and recited poetry honoring those who fought to liberate Greece. Older elementary school children (Grade 5 and 6) such as those in picture 15 take part in a dramatic Greek play in which women from a Turkish-captured Greek village chose to commit suicide with their infants rather than succumb to their captors. Picture 16 to 19 exhibits children partaking in Folkloric dancing in traditional Greek wardrobe.

**Picture 14: Saint-Nicholas Theatre Group**



Photo: Courtesy of I Giannakis 1985 personal collection.



**Picture 15: Saint-Nicholas Theatre Group**



Photo: Courtesy of E. Chiotis 1986 personal collection

**Picture 16: Folkloric Dance Group**



Photo: Courtesy of E. Chiotis 1986 personal collection

**Picture 17: Folkloric Dance Group**



Photo: Courtesy of E. Chiotis 1986 personal collection

**Picture 18: Folkloric Dance Group**



Photo: Courtesy of E. Chiotis 1986 personal collection

**Picture 19: Children wearing the traditional Greek dress – 1982**



Photo: Courtesy of E. Chiotis 1987 personal collection

As these photos illustrate, the Montreal Hellenic Community provides children with opportunities and semiotic cultural resources and capital to put into practice the teachings and values of the parents and educators. Folkloric dance groups and plays depicting scenes from Greece during the war allow children to become aware of their ancestor's histories and create a bond and develop an allegiance with the Hellenic culture.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I set the stage for my inquiry into the perceptions of trilingual Greek-Canadians. I discussed the relevant background of the Greek population in Canada and the different waves of migration out of the motherland – Greece. I presented the historical context of four centuries of Turkish occupation

of Grece by explaining the nature of the Ottoman rule and its effects on the Hellenic people. I explained the reasons corresponding to the different time periods in which migration took place which included both economic need and exploratory interest. I then discussed the Hellenic Diaspora's building of community organizations that includes the establishing of churches, community centers and schools. In the next chapter, I locate my study, discuss my role as researcher and explain the process by which I conducted this inquiry.

**ΤΡΙΤΟ ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟ: ΤΟΠΟΘΕΣΙΑ ΤΙΣ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ:  
ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑ ΕΝΤΟΣ ΑΙΣΘΗΣΕΩΣ ΤΟΠΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΧΩΡΟΥ**

**CHAPTER 3: LOCATING THE STUDY: IDENTITY WITHIN A  
SENSE OF PLACE AND SPACE**

**Situating Identity Within a Place and Space**

Whenever one thinks about the link between the symbolic representation of identity and the concepts of space and place, the idea of modernity as a social experience emerges. I use the term modernity to refer to a complex process of abstracting social and cultural practices from contexts of local particularity, institutionalization and relations across time and space (Giddens, 1990). Many people understand their sense of belonging in terms of an allegiance to a specific geographical place of origin such as a country. However, with the complex patterns of movement across national boundaries, the task of clearly and accurately defining forms of belonging has become a challenge. Papastergiadis (1998) argues that one of the objectives of modernity is to move out of the old home and into the new home even if the shape and location of the new home is not specified. The old home often represents closed traditions locked in the past and a sort of unavoidable atrophy. In contrast, modernity promises a sense of present which is open and defined by the dynamism for change. Modernity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has come to be known, Berman (1988) writes, as:

a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by

men and women all over the world [...] To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are (p.15).

Modernity's dynamic forces have fragmented a vision of homogeneity of experience and identity construction. In a culturally diverse and globalized world, it is unrealistic to function with a monolithic mindset because there are no certain, single truths at least from a postmodern perspective.

Postmodernist thought holds a relativistic theory of knowledge where every question may have an infinite number of answers, each being equally as valid as the other. Knowledge need not be based in science that one must 'know' but rather, knowledge can be based in narratives that can be constructed, learned, shared and used to understand identity both individually and collectively. Rather than measuring individuals and societies against all-encompassing universal structures or essentialist labels, postmodernism embraces knowledge as something which can be interpreted according to one's personal experiences and evaluative orientations. In this sense, postmodernity owes much to a related school of thought, post-structuralism.

Post-structuralism is a response to structuralism (Sarup, 1993). Thus, to understand post-structuralism one must understand structuralism. Structuralists follow Immanuel Kant's notion that the mind actively structures perceptions.

Structuralists see the meaning of something as subordinate to its place within a system. For example, language is not just a set of words that are used to refer to things. Language is a system of meaning; that is, the meaning of a word is determined by its relationship with other words in a context. Leading post-structuralists include philosopher and literary critic, Jacques Derrida, historian Michel Foucault, and sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Although they recognize the importance of structuralism in their theories, they fundamentally disagree with it, each in their own way. While structuralism provides “both a way of thinking about the world and a methodology for investigating the world that is concerned with identifying and describing structures that cannot be observed but must be inferred [... it fails] to consider the human or subjective side of culture” (Schwandt, 1997, p.146). Conversely, poststructuralism aims to reverse taken-for-granted binary oppositions by deconstructing the supposed truth on the grounds that concepts are “in a perpetual process of continuous signification” (Schwandt, 1997, p.122). Poststructuralists attempt to “destabilize received conceptions of science, order, society, and the self” (Schwandt, 1997, p.122).

My epistemological stance is founded on post-modern thought which guides me to consider perspectives and identities as both multiple and fluid. The fragmentation caused by globalization has created new forms of subjectivity and identity politics (Taylor, 1992). Identities are shaped by embodied and embedded narratives that are located in particular places – even though those places may no longer be tied to specific countries or locales. It is not sufficient to answer the

question ‘Who am I?’ by identifying a place of origin, because even the most local identities are now influenced by global processes that cross national borders. Due to globalization, traditional territorial frontiers and boundaries are no longer the gatekeepers of culture and identity. Identification is grounded in a space rather than a place. Cultural sociologist, Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) writes that “space was rarely seen as an active part in the field of identity formation” (p.4). In the past, there was a tendency to view space as a vacant category or neutral stage upon which other unexplained forces were at play. However, through observation of contemporary migration, it became evident that space played an important role in the formation of identities. I define space as the *soul* of a place. A space is a vital locale in which identities are in constant interaction with each other. With the interaction of identities, a sense of space is transformed into a sense of place.

A sense of place is a factor that makes an environment psychologically comfortable. Psycho-geographical theorist, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) describes a sense of place as the relations, perceptions, attitudes, values and world views that affectively bond people and places. He explains:

We take delight in physically distinctive, recognizable locales and attach our feelings and meanings to them. Place character is often recalled with affection; its lack is a frequent subject of popular complaint. People are pleased to “know” a great city, or to understand its history. Indeed, a strong sense of place supports our



sense of personal identity. For that reason, familiar features of a landscape are often fiercely defended (Tuan, 1974, p.187).

Human geographer, Edward Soja (1996) offers possibilities for exploring relationships among spaces, identity politics and heritage languages by his concept of third space. Third space is the space between collectives and individuals and historical periods in which identity may be constructed. For example, human geographer, Soja (1996) asserts that space is “simultaneously objective and subjective, material and metaphorical, a medium and outcome of social life; actively both an immediate milieu and an originating presupposition [...]” (p.45). Postmodern cultural geographers, Morley & Robins (1995) argue that a space becomes a place by being invested with meaning, a social signification that produces identity, by being named and by “embodying the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population” (p.12).

This space-place relationship is evident in a multicultural setting such as the city of Montreal. Despite the linguistic realities of a city that includes both French and English as mainstream languages, as well as significant geographical distance from the motherland, in this case, Greece, the Greek language and culture are being learned in heritage language schools. Greek heritage language schools, operating in and around Montreal, are used by many groups of Greek people inside and outside of local communities. Developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as migration, diaspora, and the integration of immigrants and their offspring, have led to the idea

that cultural identity is not necessarily firmly located in a particular tangible place but rather exists in community of practices (Wenger, 1998), shared traditions, experiences and perspectives that can shift.

During the 1990s, British geographer, Doreen Massey's works (1994, 1999, 2000) added a crucial dimension to the rethinking of the relationship between migration and globalization. Before this time, migration was referred to in mechanistic terms of causes and consequences. Space was rarely seen as playing an active role in identity construction. Papastergiadis (2000) assumes contemporary migration to be an ongoing process with no single origin and no single end; hence migration needs to be seen as "an open voyage" (p. 6). Space can be considered a dynamic field in which identities are in constant interaction. I use the term space to mean the spirit of the place in which trilinguality is fostered. Take for example, the space in which my own trilinguality developed.

My experiences as a child developed my interest in understanding how language and culture makes individuals different from one another. As an individual of Hellenic descent, I knew that there was something that made me different from my "québécois" counterparts and that speaking a different language like Greek was just the tip of the iceberg! I also knew that identifying the factors that made me feel different from my peers could open my eyes to many world views and perspectives. My cultural background and experiences thus motivated this inquiry, as I attempted to identify trilingual adults' perceptions of their

trilingualism and maintenance of English, French and Greek in a particular context and place such as Montreal, Quebec.

Gonzáles (2001) writes that “because language has been seen for many years as being tightly bound up with culture, language and culture have been regarded as an impenetrable fusion of two domains.” (Gonzáles, 2001, p. 173). However, Gonzáles (2001) argues that “language is not coextensive with culture, and nor do the limits of one language coincide with the limits of one’s mind [...]” (Gonzáles, 2001, p. 173). Instead, it is through and by language that selfhoods are constructed, identities forged and social processes enacted. Recall that in Chapter 1, I use the term trilingual to refer to people who consider themselves fully functional in English, French and Greek. I also use the term to refer to those who learned Greek as their mother tongue, or primary language of socialization and upbringing, who can still speak fluent Greek as adults, and who identify themselves as trilingual speakers. In a climate of globalization, and cultural diversity, the phenomenon of trilingualism has become quite apparent. However, few studies focus on adult Greek trilinguals who grew up in Montreal during the 1980’s and 1990’s, post Bill 101. Although the education system in Quebec shares many characteristics with other systems, it is unique because of its status as an officially francophone province.

## **The Quebec Context: Language Policy and Beyond**

The realization of a discrepancy between the political and economic advantages of Quebec Anglophones and Francophones in the 1960s led to much upheaval. According to sociolinguist Fishman (1991), it is in this very period, the late 1960s and early 70s that Quebec-French (R.L.S.) Reverse Language Shift efforts began. Fishman (1991) defines the expression Reverse Language Shift (R.L.S.) as a socially patterned and organized approach used in effort to veer a language back to its former status [which is often considered a more advantageous status to the one present] (pp. 381-415). Gibbins (1994) states that although “francophones in Quebec made up 80 percent of the population and controlled the electoral process at the onset of the Quiet Revolution, they earned considerably less than anglophones in the province and shouldered virtually the entire burden of bilingualism”. (p.136). The former was observed when jobs that were in more specialized, higher paying, prestigious work spheres, were disproportionately held by Quebec Anglophones during the sixties. The Quiet Revolution refers to a period of rapid evolution in Quebec. Although there is no consensus as to when the Quiet Revolution began and when it ended, it is widely believed that it began with Jean Lesage’s Liberal provincial win in 1960 and ended in 1966, at the end of his tenure as leader of the Liberal Party.

Underlying the concept of the Quiet Revolution were feelings of collective entrapment resonating across the province. Prior to 1960, the fiercely conservative Union Nationale leader Maurice Duplessis, along with the highly influential

Catholic Church, controlled the political, educational, economic and social spheres of Quebec. Corruption and electoral fraud were rampant. The Catholic Church openly campaigned for the Union National with slogans such as *Le ciel est bleu, l'enfer est rouge* (Heaven is bleu, hell is red – referring to the colors of the Union Nationale and the Liberals). From rural and urban pulpits, the Catholic Church preached conservatism and a rural lifestyle which included the rejection of contemporary ways and values. During the height of the Duplessis era in 1964, less than half of the province's population had attended secondary school, and the discrepancy between francophones and anglophones was considerable. On an economic level, the province's natural resources were sold at ridiculously low prices to foreign investors which put Quebec at the mercy of others in the market place.

The beginning of the end of what is anecdotally referred to as the *Grande noirceur* (the period of Great Darkness) came within a year of Duplessis' death in 1959. The Liberal Party campaigned under the very evocative slogan *Maître chez nous* (Masters of our own house). With Jean Lesage as the head of the Liberal Party, Quebec's energies were unleashed. The Lesage government championed change on a grand scale. In 1960, legislation was introduced to modernize the provincial education system and ensure instruction of the Quebec population. In 1961, the *Parent Commission* brought forth recommendations which led to the adoption of several reforms. Most noteworthy was the secularization of the education system. Although schools maintained their religious (Catholic or

Protestant) affiliations, the Quebec government took charge of the school curriculum, making schools secular public learning institutions. Other reforms included free instruction which was compulsory until the age of sixteen. In 1967, the government created C.E.G.E.P.s which offered free post-secondary professional programs across the province. The government also created the Université du Québec network of universities in order to give francophones in the province both a place and a space to pursue university studies in French. As a result of this change, the Catholic Church lost its dominating influence on the beliefs and value systems of Quebecers. Public figures such as René Levesque and Pierre Elliot Trudeau “replaced the clergy and the media replaced the altar” (Smith, 1993). The interest of francophone Quebecers shifted from a concern about their salvation to a concern about the survival of their language and culture.

## **Language in Quebec**

Chevrier (1997) states that the first law of a linguistic nature to be created in Quebec was the *Office de la langue française* in 1961. The Bertrand government adopted Quebec’s first language law in November 1968, the *Act to promote the French Language in Quebec* (Bill 63) which was touted as contradictory by the media. The reason for this impression may be attributed to Bill 63 which called on school boards to provide instruction in French. It gave parents free choice in the language of instruction. The purpose of this law was to assure that newly arriving immigrants who were settling in Quebec were learning the French language and assimilating into the French culture. Evidently, this bill was unable to yield the

results desired, especially in Montreal, where English-language schools attracted many immigrants and where the free choice of language of instruction had set anglophones, francophones and persons of varied ethnic backgrounds against one another. The reason for this conflictual discourse was primarily due to the provincial imbalance the language issue was creating. In 1974, Robert Bourassa's Liberal government adopted the *Act respecting the official language* (Bill 22) which not only aimed to improve the status of French in social life but to do so through coercive measures. In its preamble, the intention of the Quebec legislator was clearly expressed:

[...] the French language is a national heritage which the body politic is in duty bound to preserve, and it is incumbent upon the government of the province of Quebec to employ every means **in its power** to ensure the preeminence and to promote its vigour and quality. (Chevrier, 1997, p. 76)

This law paved the way for subsequent language legislation. Declaring French, as the official language of Quebec was just the beginning of the scope of more powerful language legislation to come. A number of measures were designed to bolster the use of French in commerce, public administration and of course, in education. These measures affirm that the *Act respecting the official language* maintained the principle of free choice but in a full and complete manner. Parents had the legal right to have their children receive instruction in the language of their choice but had to submit them to language tests in order to assess their knowledge

of the language they sought to receive instruction. In other words, access to English instruction would be limited to students who had “sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction” (Henchey & Burgess, 1987 p.29). The desire to send their children to English public schools was always present as many parents, including immigrant parents were aware of the hegemonic power of the English language and believed that formal English instruction would be the optimal way for their children to learn the language. However, as one of the many *children of Bill 101*, I can attest to the fact that I became literate in English as well as two other languages, French and my heritage language - Greek - despite the language legislation.

Many children of kindergarten age were unfamiliar with testing and incapable of demonstrating the level of English which was required through such formal testing. Parents resorted to desperate tactics such as training their pre-school age children to respond to proficiency tests. Conflicts arose especially between members of the Italian community in St. Leonard and the local Catholic school board. Policy analyst, Henchey (1972) notes that due to widespread media coverage, what started out as a local squabble reached the status of a “*cause célèbre*” (p.112) and prompted actions of compromise in the form of a different law referred to as Bill 63. Greek parents in Montreal did not oppose the legislation to send their children to French schools because they were not directly affected by it. Although not formally documented, the vast majority of Greek parents sent their children to the Greek day school Socrates and educational places such as trilingual



school offering curricula in three languages. In contrast to Italian communities, it is rather interesting that the Greek community did not resist pressure to have their children attend French schools. This could likely be due to the period in which the bulk of Greeks immigrated – the “Second Wave of Migration”. The 1960s and 1970s were politically as well as socially volatile times in the province. Perhaps some Greek immigrants likely realized early after their arrival that integration into Quebec society would require learning the French language, hence they sent their children to French schools.

However, the English community accused law-makers of violating basic human rights while the French community was upset with the “ease with which many immigrants were seen to circumvent the intention of the law” (Henchey & Burgess 1987 p. 29). The legal loopholes did not foster the development of trilingualism or trilateracy as Bill 22 had little, if any, impact on the pattern of school enrolments. Jack Jedwab, the executive director of the Association for Canadian Studies and teacher at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada writes: that “approximately seventy seven percent or almost four out of five of allophones attended the English language system [...]”. (Jedwab, 1996, p.89) which generated significant growth of bilingual population.

The next political phase in the Quebec linguistic situation occurred in 1976, when the Parti Québécois was elected to power with a majority government. At this point, politicians and law makers were determined to not only fill the gaps of the previous language law in the province (Bill 22), but to go “considerably further

perhaps than any language legislation anywhere in the free world” (Fishman, 1991 p. 309). In 1977, the famous Bill 101, Quebec’s French Language Charter (*Charte de la langue Française*, R.S.Q., c. C-11) was passed. This legislation was intended to protect and promote the French language in Quebec by strengthening the application and extension of Bill 22’s principles into Quebec society. Interestingly, Bill 101 “became a landmark measure that not only spelled out an all-encompassing language policy but that defined and fostered the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada in an adversarial and anti-diglossic direction” (Fishman 1991, p. 310). Although conflictual discourse about language issues is still presented in the media, I still espouse my parents’ beliefs – that include the value of learning and viewing the acquisition of languages as tools that will enrich my life.

This legislation placed strict restrictions for eligibility to attend English schools. These include the following restrictions. A child can only be declared admissible, hence eligible to attend English language school through elementary and secondary education if he or she meets one of the following criteria: If a certificate of eligibility is granted to one child, it also entitles this child’s brothers and sisters to obtain their eligibility certificates which may be passed on to the next generation.

1. A child whose father or mother is a Canadian citizen; That parent received elementary instruction in English in Canada; That instruction constitutes the major part of the elementary instruction received by that parent in Canada.

2. A child whose father or mother is a Canadian citizen; The child has received or is receiving elementary or secondary instruction in English in Canada; That instruction constitutes the major part of the elementary or secondary instruction received by the child in Canada.
3. A child whose father or mother is a Canadian citizen; A brother or sister of the child has received or is receiving elementary or secondary instruction in English in Canada; That instruction constitutes the major part of the elementary or secondary instruction received by that brother or sister in Canada.
4. A child whose father and mother are not Canadian citizens; The father or mother of the child received elementary instruction in English in Quebec; That instruction constitutes the major part of the elementary instruction received by the parent in Quebec.
5. A child of a parent who, in his/her last year in school in Quebec before August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1977, received instruction in English in a public kindergarten class or in an elementary or secondary school.
6. A child whose father or mother was residing in Quebec on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1977; That parent had received elementary instruction in English outside Quebec; That instruction constituted the major part of the elementary instruction received by that parent outside Quebec.
7. A child whose father or mother attended school after August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1977, the father or mother would have been eligible to receive instruction in English under any of the criteria (1 to 6) above, but did not receive such instruction.

8. A child who has serious learning difficulties; The brothers and sisters of that child.
9. A child whose parent (or parent's spouse) has been assigned to Quebec on a temporary basis.
10. A child, for serious family or humanitarian reasons.

(Bill 101, R.S.Q., 1977, c. C.-5)

This legislation regulated the language and institutional places in which Quebecers could have their children receive public education in English or French. It also reaffirmed French as the official language of the province. The only legislative reference to English is a passing mention of "other languages" in use in Quebec. In doing so, Bill 101 abolished English as an official language of the legislature and the courts, a provision overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1979. Therefore, Bill 101 had an extreme impact and continues to have on the Quebec population and the province's literacy and linguistic status and economy.

Jedwab (2000) states that "the provincial government's Charter of the French language directed almost all immigrant children to French language public schools' "[but most interestingly] the motivation and the opportunity for allophones to learn English remained" (p.55). As a consequence, both, trilingualism and trilingualism are realities in the province with a concentration of it in the regions, such as Montreal that are populated by many ethnic minority groups. According to

Jedwab's (2000) statistical/quantitative findings, trilingualism amongst Montreal's allophone population is "considerably higher than it is in any other major urban center in Canada or, for that matter, in North America"(p.55). He explains that of the other major urban areas of the country, only the national capital region of Ottawa-Hull contains a "relatively significant number of persons who are trilingual [...] probably because the residents of that region have had to contend with growing expectations with regard to official bilingualism over recent decades." (Jedwab, 2000, p.55). Instead of rejecting bilingualism by fleeing the province or enrolling their children in private educational institutions where they would be able to study in English, many allophone Quebec families have simultaneously embraced three languages. Parental choices for their children's academic learning and educational trajectories may be based on reasons that range from their financial situations to their values concerning the knowledge of more than one language and its links to diverse cultures. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of trilinguacy in the province of Quebec is a reality in the lives of many Quebec families.

### **Methodology and Methods: Epistemological Stance**

To understand the multiple factors (i.e. contextual, cultural and others) that influence how trilingual individuals maintain Greek as their heritage language and develop and maintain both French and English as their second and third language, I adopted a socio-constructivist approach to language and identity. My epistemological stance is based on my belief that a culture is not internalized in the form of an integrated and highly general structure, such as overall mentality,

worldview, or value orientation, but rather that culture is internalized in the form of a loose network of domain-specific knowledge structures, such as categories and implicit theories (Bruner 1990). I analyzed my participants' self reports through in-depth interviews and participant observations of their language learning and maintenance journeys in their different contexts.

My aim to uncover, critically examine and understand the multiple factors that influence how six Canadian-born Greek adults became trilingual can be best addressed through use of a qualitative, phenomenologically based methodology. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are located in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity with emphasis on the importance of personal perspectives and interpretations. In the role of a phenomenological researcher, I aimed to understand the participants' specific experiences as expressed in their own words in order to gain insights into their motivations and actions. I believe that by cutting away the clutter of generalized assumptions and grand meta-systems, I would highlight participants' experiences and perceptions from their personal vantage points. In this inquiry, the use of a phenomenological research methodology enabled me to specifically determine the "nested contextual factors" (Maguire 1999) of the social, cultural, political and human *phenomena* of trilingualism. It required me to commit to an *emic* perspective which refers to the type of information being reported and written into an ethnography when the researcher reports the views of the informants, '*what the natives think*' rather than the researcher's perspective on a priori determined concepts and ideas – referred to

as the *etic*. A phenomenological research methodology assumes that rich descriptions of the social world are extremely valuable, especially when conducting research where human understanding is sought. A qualitative phenomenologically oriented research methodology allowed me, to build complex and holistic portraits of six Greek participants' experiences of reflections about growing up in Montreal as *children of Bill 101*.

In order to understand the phenomenon of trilingualism, I focused on three research questions:

1. What do six trilingual adults of Hellenic background perceive to be influencing factors in their language learning experiences (for Greek, French and English) and why?
2. In what ways do the socio-cultural linguistic contexts (including, home, work, religious, community and leisure contexts among others) in which these six adults find themselves, affect their values and perceptions about their language learning?
3. What perceived roles do different contexts (such as the family, home, work, social, community, church, and other contexts) play in the participants' effort and engagement towards second and third language acquisition and heritage language maintenance?

According to Lincoln & Denzin (2000), qualitative inquiry is properly conceptualized as a "civic, participatory, collaborative project which joins the researcher and the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue". (p.1049). There are a number of principles which define a qualitative methodology that make its use for

me compelling. One of the principles is that qualitative research involves a studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as personal experiences, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, observation and cultural texts just to name few. Surprisingly few qualitative studies of Greek trilinguals in Quebec have been conducted. Research on trilingual participants' behaviors and practices are either non-existent or largely conducted through quantitative means that rely on "objective" remote, inferential empirical methods that do not capture the participants' perspectives or perceptions (i.e. Gergiannakis, 1975; Karamanos, 1975; Giannacopoulos, 1977; Ioannou, 1983; Gavaki, 1979, among others). A qualitative approach permitted me to emphasize my double role as researcher and active learner. Rather than acting as the "expert" who passes judgment on the participants and their reports, I was able to view the phenomenon of trilingualism in a natural setting from my participants' perspectives. In doing so, I was able to reflect on my own journey through the different education systems. During my educational trajectory, I switched from the French to the English system and learned about how other trilinguals thought and acted when they chose to cross over from French to English and back again as is the case of two participants, Katerina and Helena.

While poststructuralists and postmodernists have contributed to the understanding that "there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual, [...] and that any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.19), a



phenomenological research methodology offers an opportunity to hear and learn from the actors' experiences. I presented and described myself to my participants in order to remove the power differential that could have been present by being the research interviewer and to connect their experiences with my own to open up conversations as I illustrate in the next section.

### **Dealing with Subjectivity**

Issues of identity abound in past and current social, cultural, philosopher and natural discourses. From a postmodern perspective, there is no consensus on a definition of identity. Some see identity as social constructions; others define it with respect to functional roles individuals play or are perceived to play in a particular socio-cultural linguistic community. Since my aim was to authentically examine the experiences of others from their perspectives, I needed to address trilinguals' perceptions of agency and subjectivity. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) write that "all inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer" (p.871). Therefore, the first task I faced was to acknowledge my own subjectivity as a researcher. For example, I reflected in my researcher journal on my subjectivity as the following excerpt illustrates:

#### **Reflecting on Interview with Periclis**

Today I interviewed Periclis for the second time. It is strange how he was only two years ahead of me in Greek Saturday school but I do not remember him in the halls of the large Polyvalente. St-Nicholas Greek school was ran out of a rented building where very little seemed to

belong to our school. The posters of the walls and announcements concerned other students whom I think were Anglophone and in high school... So it probably made sense that I didn't get to meet any students other than those from my class. The school was so big! Or maybe it just appeared that way to me then... Despite not knowing each other, we have tremendous similarities in our educational journeys. Periclis also attended French elementary and high school and when he got the chance, he switched into the English system. He explained that he feared never learning the English language. It was amusing to hear him talk about how his francophone teachers didn't know what to do with him in class. Even if his language skills in English were weaker than those of students in English schools, they were stronger than those of his peers in both the francophone elementary and secondary levels. I too felt that way. My elementary school English teacher seemed to struggle a great deal in English which often made me wonder what quality of English instruction I was receiving. I knew that English was important and was aware that if my English communication skills did not improve, I would be limiting myself in a very serious way – as my father often reminded me (Personal memoirs E. Konidaris. 07-04-2002).

Bruner (1993) maintains that a qualitative researcher is “historically positioned and logically situated [as] an all-too-human [observer] of the human condition. (p.1).

Because of this “*all-too-human*” quality, I realized that in order to pursue my research goals through this ongoing moral, personal inquiry, I had to question both the historical and the contemporary elements of oppression, liberation and expression that make up a trilingual’s identity as a *trilingual* within the Bill 101 context which denies allophone children access to the English public school system. In order to do so, I spoke to my participants about my feelings and experiences while pursuing my studies in francophone public educational institutions. For example, I spoke about how when growing up, I often felt excluded from classroom activities which dealt with cultural practices that I was not familiar. An example that still resonates for me is when students would discuss skiing and engage in whole class discussions about this winter sport, I was unable to contribute and was often ostracized by classmates for my lack of knowledge or familiarity with this sport. However, ever since I was a student in elementary school I have kept a diary and still do. The amount of time I spend writing and the depth in which I wrote varied according to the activities and situations in my life. Sometimes I could write twice in one day and other times I could go six months without writing. Most of the time, my diary entries take the forms of a personal discourse on memories. In this dissertation I refer to them as personal memoirs. Writing my personal memoirs was one outlet which permitted me to reflect upon who I was when I took on the role of phenomenological researcher interested in the

lived experiences of other Greek trilinguals. I welcomed the reality that I was neither entirely objective, nor politically neutral in the research I was conducting. For example, I began my interview sessions with participants with the underlying assumption that they too had experienced similar encounters which occasionally rendered them feeling excluded or discriminated. Being aware of my own subjectivity, I focused on the fact that participants' voices needed to be heard. Thus, I believed that any observation, knowledge or positioning I would gain from my research would reflect my unique position as a 'child of Bill 101' and now a Greek trilingual adult living in Montreal, Quebec and researching trilingualism.

I acknowledge that I was involved in this study in two roles, including that of researcher and as a Canadian of Hellenic descent – an allophone. I also acknowledge the fact that there is a likelihood that in uncovering and reporting on the findings that I discovered through my contact with the six participants, I am sharing information about both the participants and myself. Clandinin & Connelly (1994) describe this sharing phenomenon:

[w]hen we enter into a research relationship with participants and ask them to share their stories with us, there is the potential to shape their lived, told relived, and retold stories as well as our own. These intensive relationships require serious consideration of who we are as researchers in the stories of participants, for when we become characters in their stories, we change their stories (p.422).

By clearly stating and embracing both the positive and the negative aspects of my stance as a researcher-insider, I was able to recognize the importance of revealing who I am as a person as well as a researcher. I engaged myself in a process of critical reflection and questioned assumptions and matters I subconsciously purported to be 'facts'. For example, the topics I discussed with my participants were often familiar to my life as well. Indeed on a number of occasions, I was tempted to draw parallels to my life despite some of the dissimilarities in our backgrounds. Just as Villenas (1996), the self-professed *Chicana* ethnographer who studied the rural North Carolina Latino community of Hope City, was forced to question her assumptions and re-strategize her position (as a Latino and a researcher) into this southern Latino community, I too engaged in self-reflexivity about my role as a twenty-eight year old, Greek Canadian as illustrated in the following excerpt from my personal memoirs:

### **No Longer the Little Greek Girl**

Walking into the Montreal Hellenic Community as I had so many times in the past was a totally different experience. It was no longer the little Greek girl going to church or to some community organized event who was walking through those doors. And I don't think I would have felt it as acutely as I did if it weren't for the reaction and response I was given by those I spoke with in the community center. I was not spoken to as a student or as a child of the Greek community, I was spoken to as an outsider because I

was there for a different reason and with a different purpose  
(Personal memoirs, E. Konidakis. 09-27-2003).

Upon realizing that individuals whom I encountered in the heritage language schools and the Montreal Hellenic Community Centre that I visited reacted differently when I explained why I was visiting them, I started understanding that I was in fact the same person but one wearing a different hat – which was that of the researcher. I do not believe that a researcher is embraced with open arms first hand when gaining access to “her own community” until she explains who she is and what she is seeking. For example, when I informed Hellenic Community representatives of the fact that I was conducting a study and that I would be interested in speaking with them, they seemed to pull back and I realized I was no longer an insider. They wanted to know specifics about the research and why I was interested on the topic. This reticence may have possibly been an attempt to protect themselves or an uncertainty about my motivations as researcher. After I presented myself and started sharing my thoughts, history, research goals and interests, some individuals lowered the barriers and became more willing to engage in dialogues with me. Thus, my three research questions mirror my goals as a qualitative researcher to frame the topic and gain a coherent understanding of the ways and reasons the participants accomplished and maintained their trilingualism from their own perspectives.

## **Participants: Crossing Linguistic Boundaries**

As argued earlier in this chapter, Montreal is an urban place that allows for individuals to cross linguistic borders. All participants were adults born in the province of Quebec to parents who emigrated from Greece to Canada during the second wave of migration between 1960 and 1970. As “Bill 101 children”, they have all received formal French language instruction because the language legislation prevented them from accessing and attending Anglophone public schools. They all received English language instruction taught as a second language starting in grade 4 elementary school as well as throughout their secondary school years. All participants experienced formal Greek language instruction through their attendance at Saturday heritage language schools. All used the Greek language with parents, siblings and close relatives within their home environment as well as in other social contexts such as when going to the cinema, theatre, for a walk, shopping etc.

Table 5 provides relevant background information about the focal participants. The four participants at the top of the list are the focal participants – Helena, Tilemahos, Alexandra, Periclis. I collected multiple data sets with each of them. The other two participants – Katerina and Christos whom I interviewed in the same in depth fashion as the others, provided interesting complementary insights into their perceptions about their trilingual identity construction. Although the latter two participants were not the primary focus of the study, they did provide a comparative

lens to critically examine the unique learning trajectories of Greek trilinguals as Bill  
101 children and now adults living in the Montreal, Quebec context.

Table 5: List of the participants and an overview of their backgrounds

I—NAME—II		SCHOOLING			
	Elementary	Secondary	C.E.G.E.P.	University Undergrade (institution)	University Graduate (institution)
<b>Helena</b>	PUBLIC, FRENCH	PUBLIC FRENCH	FRENCH	ENGLISH	N/A
<b>Tilemahos</b>	SEMI-PRIVATE, TRILINGUAL	PUBLIC FRENCH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	N/A
<b>Alexandra</b>	SEMI-PRIVATE, TRILINGUAL	PUBLIC FRENCH	ENGLISH	FRENCH	N/A
<b>Periclis</b>	PUBLIC FRENCH	PUBLIC FRENCH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	N/A
<b>Katerina</b>	PUBLIC FRENCH	PUBLIC FRENCH	FRENCH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH
<b>Christos</b>	PUBLIC FRENCH	PUBLIC FRENCH	FRENCH	FRENCH	FRENCH

Noteworthy in Table 5 is the participants' movement back and forth between English and French educational institutions. All six attended elementary and secondary school in the French sector, either in public schools or trilingual semi-private schools where French is taught as a mother tongue – the latter being the case for Helena, Tilemahos, and Alexandra. However, the participants choice of post secondary institutions varied. Helena attended French C.E.G.E.P. but later switched to an English institution for her university level studies. Following graduation from the French system, Tilemahos pursued both C.E.G.E.P. and university in English



institutions as did Periclis. Alexandra attended an English institution for her studies at the C.E.G.E.P. level and then returned to the French system and attended a French university. As for the two non-focal participants, Katerina completed her studies at the C.E.G.E.P. level in a French institution but then went on to pursue both undergraduate and graduate degrees in English institutions. Christos's entire educational journey thus far was accomplished in French institutions. The movement between English and French educational institutions was purposeful. All participants are Canadian of Hellenic descent, that is they identify themselves as Canadian because of their place of birth and their written and spoken knowledge of Canada's two official languages, English and French. Their ethnic affiliation is strong as they self report that they are also speakers of Greek, possess knowledge of the Greek culture, and view Greek as their primary language of upbringing and socialization. All participants still know and use the Greek language as their mother tongue on a daily basis.

Helena, a trilingual lawyer in her early thirties, was born and raised in Montreal. She mostly attended French learning institutions (elementary, secondary, C.E.G.E.P.) until she decided to attend an Anglophone university where she studied law. She is currently working in a law firm where she is predominantly required to use the French language because of her client base and the fact that French is the language most often spoken within the legal court system.

Tilemahos, a marketing coordinator for a food manufacturing company, is also in his early thirties. Born and raised in Montreal, he is able to put his trilingual

abilities to good use as his work requires him to communicate with individuals of varied backgrounds especially in French, English, Greek and Spanish, the latter of which he feels he possesses a working knowledge. Tilemahos attended a semi-private trilingual elementary school (Ecole primaire Socrates) where his primary instruction took place in French but also included, English and Greek classes in the curriculum. The semi-private Greek day schools are schools that received funding for the regular elementary curriculum, as prescribed by the Ministry of Quebec Education. The Greek portion of the curriculum is funded by the parents of the children who attend these schools. Parents wishing to have their children receive trilingual education may send their children to either five of the Socrates elementary schools or either of the two Demostenes elementary schools by defraying the Greek portion of the curriculum. Tilemahos then pursued his C.E.G.E.P. diploma and university studies in Anglophone learning institutions.

Katerina, an audiologist in her early thirties, is also a trilingual professional who attended Francophone public elementary and secondary and French schools. She pursued her studies at the C.E.G.E.P. level in a Francophone institution but then chose to study sciences (B.Sc. in Physiology) in Anglophone universities for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Periclis is a mechanical engineer who studied in the Francophone public education milieu for both his elementary and secondary studies and then went on to pursue C.E.G.E.P. and university studies in Anglophone institutions. While considering himself a trilingual, he thinks he is fortunate to be working in a bilingual

firm where he can use both English and French in his daily practices. In addition to speaking Greek with his family and some of his friends, he occasionally interacts with Greek speaking associates abroad in North America and Europe.

Alexandra is a registered nurse currently working in a large Montreal hospital. She attended a semi-private trilingual elementary school (Ecole primaire Socrates) and later to a public Francophone high school. Alexandra pursued her studies at the C.E.G.E.P. level in an Anglophone institution and then decided to pursue her university studies in a Francophone university.

Christos is a thirty-year-old pharmacist. He works in a milieu in which he puts both his English and French language skills to daily use. He studied in French learning institutions throughout his schooling career. Christos attended public French schools for his elementary and secondary school years because of Bill 101 which legally forced allophones to attend French public schools. Christos continued his studies at the C.E.G.E.P. level, university undergraduate level and university graduate level in Francophone institutions despite the fact that there is not law enforcing language of instruction at the post-secondary level.

All six participants have experienced formal literacy experiences in all three languages: English, French, Greek, and identify themselves as a trilingual and trilliterate. They all received formal instruction in the heritage language by attending a Greek heritage language school in a particular area of the city where they lived. At the time of the research, the participants resided in Montreal or in several of the suburban metropolitan regions. Although I was successful in finding three male and

three female participants, gender, sexual orientation, age, and social class were not my initial selection criteria. However, these factors undeniably play a role in the participants' social construction of identity as well as their perceptions about culture, language literacy and learning.

Their backgrounds are varied with regard to gender, schooling, experiences, level of study, and current area of work. However, their commonalities, such as their trilinguality, their formal and informal linguistic education and cultural and linguistic backgrounds were very helpful in generating relevant comparative insights about growing up as 'children of Bill 101'. My primary participants were among those who exhibited the most enthusiasm in participating in a dialogical inquiry into their perceptions and experiences about culture, language, literacy and their self-professed and evolving trilingual selves. It was evident that they enjoyed sharing their experiences and insights into trilingualism by participating in in-depth interviews with me.

### **Gaining Access to “Bill 101 Children”**

I realized that given that Bill 101 has been so controversial, gaining access to *Bill 101 children* could be complex. Therefore, I relied on informal contacts and seized opportunities through visiting relatives, attending social venues such as food festivals or through spontaneous occasions when a participant volunteered to participate or through Greek key informants I met at the Montreal Hellenic Community Center. I met Helena, a corporate law attorney in 1999 when I visited a relative who was working in the same law firm. Helena was young, bright and

confided that she had always had a love for languages and the processes involved in learning them. When I narrowed down my area of research and began thinking about my choice of participants, I tried to get into contact with her through my relatives. She had moved to a different law firm since we had last spoken but my relative managed to get me her e-mail address. In November 2000; I e-mailed Helena about my planned project of research, and asked her about her possible interest in participating. Helen agreed to participate and a first interview was scheduled later that month.

I met Tilemahos, a marketing and internal sales coordinator in July 2000 when I attended an international food festival. He was at a kiosk presenting and offering samples of appetizing chicken souvlaki hors d'oeuvres which the company he works for specializes in producing. When we started talking about our backgrounds, I was not only struck by Tilemahos' enthusiasm about culture and language but by the fact that he was a “child of Bill 101” and was fluently trilingual in English, French and Greek. We exchanged contact information and I phoned him in December 2000, he accepted to participate in my research project. We scheduled the first interviews later that month.

I met Alexandra, a registered nurse while I was paying a visit to a sick friend in the hospital. The elderly family friend I was visiting had raved about the exceptional treatment she had been receiving from “a young Greek nurse”. A chance meeting in the summer of 2000 later evolved into occasional coffee breaks whenever I was in the neighborhood visiting my sick friend. Alexandra spoke about her

experience working in such a large French hospital and often mentioned her love of being able to treat patients in their own language. I presented my research project to her and she offered to participate. She participated in an audio-taped interview several weeks after our initial meeting and had consistently been generous with her time and her discourse on her perceptions about growing up trilingual. I met Christos, a pharmacist with a Masters degree in Health Economics through a mutual friend. He had studied in a Francophone C.E.G.E.P. along with my friend and although I had met him in the early 1990s, it is only when I started searching for participants that his name came up as a possible participant. Contacting him by telephone the first time in February 2001, Christos proved to have potential as a participant because he was a proud trilingual who clearly expressed interest in discussing his perceptions and experiences with me after I described my inquiry. We communicated informally by telephone at first and in person then conducted an audio-recorded in-depth interview two weeks following our in person meeting.

Katherina, an audiologist was following the progress of a child in an elementary school in which I was substitute teaching. The public French school was situated in the east end of Montreal and was attended primarily by Francophone students. While I was chatting with a fellow teacher, Katherina passed by to drop off a report and we were introduced to one another. After introducing ourselves to one another, I asked her for her e-mail address in hopes of learning more about her research of children with hearing disabilities and telling her about my own research.

We communicated via e-mail a few times. When Katherina agreed to participate, a first interview was scheduled later in the month of March 2001.

I met Periclis, a mechanical engineer after chatting with a few Greek community representatives. During the month of March 2001 while taking part in Greek Independence Day festivities, I was fortunate to meet interested elders who wanted me to tell them about my research project. I described my project to them and they were kind enough to suggest I contact people who might be interested in participating. One individual's profile offered by one of the community elders seemed particularly interesting. He was a young professional who was fluent in all three languages. I realized that would make him a trilingual eligible for my research. I telephoned him and we spoke a great deal about Greek culture, religion and the efforts he had put into becoming a trilingual. At that time, Periclis expressed interest in participating in my study. Following this initial contact, we spoke a few more times on the telephone and eventually scheduled a series of face-to-face meetings where I was able to conduct audio-taped in-depth interviews. After the initial interview, Periclis and I met for follow-up interviews and have had numerous telephone conversations as well.

By November 2002, I had collected interview and participant observation and telephone conversation data from the six research participants, four of whom were extremely committed to the inquiry and available for follow-up interviews. The following factors helped me select the research participants.

1. Identifying oneself as a trilingual of Hellenic descent (English, French, Greek).
2. Having been formally schooled in the French language through the legal enforcement of Bill 101.
3. Possessing a personal interest and commitment to learning and maintaining Greek as heritage language.
4. Being interested and willing to explore oneself as a trilingual language learner and person.

My reason for selecting participants who were self-professed trilinguals was based on my desire to have individuals who had reflected upon their identity as trilinguals and thus had come to see and identify themselves as trilinguals. The criteria concerning their formal education was important because my aim was to research individuals who were “children of Bill 101”, in other words, who were formally schooled in French, had received English instruction taught as a second language, and maintained Greek as their heritage language. Thus, I deliberately sought participants who had a strong attraction and affiliation to their Greek heritage language.

Rampton (1995) distinguishes between *language affiliation*, *language allegiance* and *language expertise*. Having *language expertise* is possessing the skills, the proficiency and the ability to operate with a language. Having *language allegiance* is possessing identification with a language, and with the values, meanings and identities that it stands for. And having *language affiliation* is possessing a connection with the people or groups that are considered to be separate or different. All my participants possessed language affiliation, language allegiance and language expertise to varying degrees. The most relevant



relationship to language my participants needed to have to be eligible to participate in my inquiry was language affiliation as I believe it to be most closely linked to an individual's feelings of identification. For example, it is possible that an individual possesses language expertise and is capable of functioning in a native-like fashion in his daily life but does not feel connected to the language and speakers of that language. Rampton (1995) explains that "language expertise and language allegiance refer to linguistic identities – to cultural interpretations of a person's relationship to a language" (p.340). The participants are individuals who "renegotiate the relationship between language and group membership" (Rampton, 1995, p.4) in the course of their daily interactions and activities.

Gee (2000) asserts that when people see themselves as sharing a set of related identities and relationships, these affiliations create "affinity groups". These affinity groups may share practices, patterns of consumption, and ongoing relationships to specific individuals, and organizations. The participants are members of a "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998) because they are affiliated with one another in terms of shared culture, language and history as well as in terms of a common endeavor to maintain their heritage language and culture. Their commitment to learning the Greek language and maintaining links to the heritage culture are indicators of their personal interest in the heritage language. Lave & Wenger (1991) claim that communities of practice are everywhere and individuals are generally involved in a number of them – whether that is at work, school, home, or in our civic and leisure interests. Lave & Wenger (1991) also claim that in some groups,

individuals can be core members and in others they may be more at the margins.

Wenger (1998) writes:

[...] we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. In other words we learn. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore to call these kinds of communities *communities of practice*. (p.45)

A community of practice may be formal while others may be fluid and informal and may not even have a name. Unlike communities of interest, or geographical communities, communities of practice involve shared practices.

I hoped my perspective participants would be interested and willing to explore themselves, their pasts, and their perceptions about their trilinguality as well as to be willing to discuss and share this information with me. I considered myself fortunate to have accessed such a committed and enthusiastic group of individuals.

### **Major Tool of Inquiry: In-depth Interviews**

Although I collected different types of data such as archival resources and observations, my main tool of inquiry is in-depth interviews as illustrated from this excerpt from Helena.

*I should tell you that something that really helped me, that really helped me and my siblings, and probably even my mother was the fact that we lived very close to a library. My mom didn't drive so I think it was a major advantage being able to just, you know, walk to library and get books. Interestingly, and I think you'll like this, it was a Bibliothèque Multiculturelle, so we had access to English and French books, but also... to Greek books. My mother mostly got Greek books because it was easier for her to read those, but I also did... it was always useful, like for Greek school projects (Interview with Helena 08-14-2002).*

Using audiotaped in-depth interviews, I was able to tap into the life histories of the six participants by asking them to describe their linguistic repertoires and the mediational tools, both social and material, that they perceived they used to achieve their trilinguality. Gubrium & Holstein (2002) assume in-depth interviewing seeks “deep information and understanding”(p.105). As the researcher/interviewer, my goal was to achieve that deep level of knowledge and understanding of the participants' actions that lead them to become trilingual individuals. By subjecting myself to the set of contingencies that were described by the participants, I was able to physically and ecologically enter into their circle of responses concerning their social, work or ethnic situations. For example, due to the fact that my own personal background as a trilingual individual resembled that of the participants and that the criteria I used to select the participants essentially fit me as well, I took the time to reflect upon my own upbringing, education and perception about my trilinguality. Recall how I described earlier in this chapter how I felt about being placed in a French school when I started kindergarten. I still remember the

reactions of the other children, my teachers, my parents, and asked my participants to recollect those similar experiences. Moreover, I visited the participants in their homes, chatted with their family members and arranged visits to their work places. By learning about the participants' home, work and social lives, I was able to understand the contexts that they described during the interview process.

Secondly, Gubrium & Holstein (2002) argue that in conducting in-depth interviews, the researcher must seek to uncover what is "usually hidden from ordinary view or reflection [and] to penetrate to more reflective understandings about the nature of that experience" (p.106). To achieve the depth of understanding I needed to be able to build participant portraits, I noted my observations in field notes and followed up by discussing these notes with each participant. I took observational notes when I visited participants in their homes or work environments and I also used information from my own personal memoir journal I kept and have written in since I was a child. I wrote:

In Alexandra's home I am able to see that education is valued just by the physical environment. A common living area with her parents, the basement walls are adorned with artwork from a woodcarving course Alexandra had taken in high school. The kitchen area had a table with chairs that Alexandra's mother tells me all her children used to sit at to do their homework. There are dictionaries and a large mug containing all sorts of pens and pencils (Excerpts from field notes collected 07-27-2003).

Oftentimes, my participants corroborated my observations, or discussed the observational elements which coincided with their realities as illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview with Helena.

### **Chosing French**

*H: I always thought that no matter what job I'd be doing, I would need to use French, and I would need to use English. That's probably why I decided to go to a French C.E.G.E.P.. Although my French was strong, I felt that if I left the French system I would lose something.*

*E: What did you feel you would lose?*

*H: Well... maybe not my ability with the language... because I always read in French, I read novels mostly... that was not an issue. The fact that I loved the language made me feel confident about my abilities, but I think that I feared losing my ability to socialize in French. You know, the Québécois have their own little world, probably the same way the Anglos do in our province. They have their own little distinct culture. Their music, their food, their own television programs... things that you're just not, you're just not in contact with if you are not a part of the French, the Québécois scene. I know many people who just don't concern themselves with the culture of Quebec, the Québécois scene. For example, being familiar with local artists, singers, actors, the Québécois theatre. If you live in Quebec and you are not familiar with these things, I feel that it's very hard to speak, and to socialize with a French person and really have anything to talk about... well, maybe you'd have something to talk about but you would be missing something.*

*E: Something?*

*H: Yes. You would be missing that common link. It's the ability to socialize with someone, with ease, I say with ease because you share something. For me being able to talk about what I did, where I went what I saw is important.*

*E: Well, when I was waiting for you last time in the reception area you seemed to be chatting about a movie premier.*

*H: Actually, yes. I got tickets to the premier of Le Collectionneur, it's a movie directed by Jean Beaudin. You see, little things like that make me able to be apart of the Québécois scene. I like that and it has become very important to me because I feel apart of the French society (Interview with Helena 05-03-2002).*

Noteworthy here is the fact that Helena knew the importance of the French language as a child and attributed to it a feeling of belonging to the Québécois culture. For Helena, knowing the language was not enough, she wanted to be a part of the “Québécois scene” which describes in the following excerpt: “[...] *If you live in Quebec and you are not familiar with these things, I feel that it's very hard to speak, and to socialize with a French person [...]*”. Helena made reference to the movies, music and the local art and entertainment scene to explain that without a knowledge of these things, there are few elements in common that could foster conversation and eventual camaraderie with francophone Quebecers. I not only questioned my participants about their perceptions and understanding of the linguistic and cultural experiences which lead them to become trilingual. I also aimed to understand the contextual boundaries of their experiences and explored the nature of the emotions that lie underneath and fuel their actions that lead to their *trilinguality*.

## **Role of the Researcher**

After my interview session today I truly feel that I made progress with my participants. I am impressed with how much they are actually willing to share. Christos, one of the participants talked about his experiences in Greek school. Although he seemed unwilling to get into great detail at first, the conversation transformed into a heartfelt account of his experiences (E. Konidaris personal journal entry 06-28-2002)

I began my inquiry aspiring to access personal in-depth accounts of participants' perceptions about growing up as children of Bill 101. Nevertheless I was pleasantly surprised at their candid responses and willingness to share personal stories and private thoughts about their upbringing, experiences and perceptions. Johnson (2002) assumes that one of the main goals of qualitative research has always been to understand the words and perceptions of informants. Malinowski (1922) describes this goal as grasping "the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his visions of his world" (p.25). Despite the fact that my participants and I are trilingual, all communication, including interviews were conducted in English. This was not a formal conscious decision on the choice of language. My initial contact with all participants was made in English and all follow-up interactions took place in English as well. However, as our comfort levels increased in our interactions, so did the instances of code-switching into French and Greek.

I produced a verbatim record of what participants reported during the interview sessions. The use of audiotaped in-depth interviews permitted me to

analyze the participants' points of view as they had specifically phrased them in their own words. For example, in the next excerpt from an interview session which I named "*Music as Metaphor for Culture*", Periclis explained his experience and shared his interest in Greek music with his colleagues.

### **Music as a Methaphor for Culture**

*E: When did you interact in Greek?*

*P: I interacted in Greek, in the Greek language... with my friends, with my family. I watched some television shows sometimes...nothing too attractive to me, but I still watched it cause it was in Greek. It was interesting to see what was on. Music! Yeah, music, we'd listen to Greek music with my dad especially...in the car.*

*E: Okay.*

*P: If we'd go on a trip, Greek music was always on and... also growing up you tend to like some songs, you know, understanding what they're all about and I have no shame in playing it loud in my car. You know, sometimes someone non-Greek may come in my car, I may be giving a lift to a colleague, a co-worker... especially lately, I'm working on a part... It's a motorized part and we have... I work closely with some French assembling specialist. We work late on things together, sometimes we grab a bite together, we hop in my car... and I have Greek music on I'm comfortable, you know... I don't feel like oh no! These people are gonna think I'm different, or weird or something. I feel good about sharing my culture.*

*E: That's nice. What do you think made you feel that way?*

*P: Well, one thing's for sure, I wasn't always this comfortable. I became comfortable. I became comfortable with time. I saw that some people actually do like learning about different cultures, or being exposed to them. I can't say that something influenced me to think this*



*way. It was a part of growing-up I guess. I consider listening to Greek music like another form of entertainment, you know, T.V, radio. I like it because it's there I can listen or watch Greek stuff because I'm lucky enough to have learned my mother tongue but... but I should say that no one ever forced me. I read newspapers, I don't too much in Greek...unfortunately, but when I was in Greek school, I used to write a lot...letters and cards. I still do, but maybe I have to use a dictionary to check the spelling of some word.*

*E: Yes.*

*P: I'd probably have to read some books, you know?*

*E: Yeah!*

*P: To get back into the groove, but it's not difficult for me to catch up.*

*(Interview with Periclis 08-10-2002)*

Noteworthy here is Periclis' openness about how he reveals his Greek culture to colleagues, and yet only partly explicable, his sense of comfort with sharing his interest in Greek music with his colleagues. Periclis referred to Greek music during many interview sessions and I came to understand that he used music as a metaphor for culture. In the excerpt, Periclis points out that he no longer feels the need to conceal the fact that he listens to Greek, because he realized that there are individuals who may genuinely be interested in him as an individual of Greek cultural background. The excerpt is a typical example of the in-depth interview sessions I had with participants. Although I may have felt like interrupting and breaking-up his conversational flow in order to find out more details about his perceptions on the relationship between music, culture and identity, it was clear

that Periclis would eventually explain what I was wondering about and create a more complete picture for me.

Fowler & Mangione (1990) explain that traditional interviewers are trained to be impersonal by avoiding self-disclosure or revelations about personal beliefs, values and opinions that might influence respondents. From my experience, I learned that in order to be an effective in-depth interviewer, I would be most successful if I worked collaboratively with my trilingual informants. They could become, as Johnson (2002) calls “collaborative partners” (p.112) in my inquiry. I built trust progressively by developing a mutual and collaborative self-disclosure which is often associated with building actual friendships while still maintaining my professional conduct. This is illustrated in this next excerpt titled:

### **The Ups and Downs of Greek School**

*T: You went to Greek school right?*

*E: Yes I did.*

*T: You know how it was. It was brutal. The teachers always wanted it their way (laughter) well you know, it was tough to be a kid, especially a rowdy kid, wanting to play pranks on people, have fun... around these really strict traditional Greek teachers.*

*E: Yes, I remember.*

*T: You do huh? I know, they'd get physically violent sometimes, nothing too serious like when my dad was in school in Greece... They used to get beatings with the ζώνη [belt] , I remember some really frightening tales... but you know, we were trouble-makers... we'd flood the school toilets, some kids would kill the goldfish... 'cause a lot*

*of the classes had these big aquariums, and we'd overfeed them until they'd explode.*

*E: Oh no, that's terrible!*

*T: (laughter) yeah, well, like I said we were a rowdy bunch. The sad part was that we were never punished in a way that would make us think, you know?*

*E: Yes. I remember this one kid was left outside after recess, not a big deal. But it was like 30 degrees below Celsius and the kid came back, well, when he was invited back inside, he was so pale, had blue lips and was shaking... I think that that rattled pretty much anyone who saw him even if you had no intention of flooding the school toilets.*

*T: Oh my God! Yeah! They would be cruel right back, so kids have different reactions to that, and it isn't always pretty. For example, we continued doing the same things, we were back to our old tricks. They'd pull our ear really hard, they'd slap us in the back of the head. It got bad... I remember many kids crying (Interview with Tilemahos 09-14-2002).*

When Tilemahos described his punishment in school, I realized that it was something he had rarely spoken about in previous interviews. I felt that if I listened actively and carefully, he would describe his feelings and the events in detail. I achieved a collaborative partnership by recollecting events from my own youth and discussing my own up-bringing, opinions, experiences and relationships. For example, I shared personal experiences at Greek school as illustrated in the previous excerpt from my interview with Tilemahos. This created a bonding effect around our similar upbringing and experiences as well as our common cultural identity as Greeks. Thus, a certain bond was created when the participants would

realize that our backgrounds were similar. This realization had the effect of *cracking open* the interview and encouraging my participants to discuss their past experiences. My participants discussed their past experiences by elaborating on the personal terms and topics I had broached. The name I have given this transcript is 'Fitting In'.

### **Fitting In**

*H: Sometimes it was hard to be accepted by others when it was obvious that you were not like them.*

*E: I remember... because I was not really athletic, I was often the last person to be picked for the ballon-chasseur team.*

*H: Yeah! Me too. Not only was I the Greek girl, but I wasn't athletic at all. The way I raised was, that sports are for boys!*

*E: Yes, I am familiar with that concept (laughter).*

*H: So... (laughter) I became kind of the education physique reject. Oh! It was terrible. I really felt left out because I was excelling in school, it was maybe expected that I'd excel in sports but that was so not the case. I think that made me stick out in the crowd much much more than anything else...*

*E: Really?*

*H: Well, it certainly didn't help to be the kid that sucked in sports. I wanted to be accepted by my peers but it was very difficult when I had so many differences with them.*

*E: Yes, I understand.*

*H: You know a lot of the other kids had fancy winter gear. Like, I remember these one-piece pants and jacket combos.*

*E: Well, maybe they skied?*

*H: Well, that's just it, they were into these things and so it*

*was a normal thing for them, whereas for me... if I'd ask my mom to get me an outfit like that, forget it. She didn't even know what it was.*

*E: I remember those winter pants that were lined that all the kids wore - were referred to as σκιδού [skidoo] in my family.*

*H: Wow that's so funny, I think my father used to call them that too. Maybe it was a Greek thing (laughter).*

*(Interview with Helena 12-09-2002)*

Here, Helena and I discussed growing up without having much exposure to sports and physical education. In-depth interviewing enabled me to elicit specific information that included personal information, personal feelings, perceptions and reflections. Furthermore, having built what I perceive to have been trustworthy interviewer-interviewee relationship, I was able to conduct subsequent and/or follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews were conducted via telephone or informal meetings with the participants as well as with additional participants to verify the interpretive validity of my research analysis and my understanding.

I conducted mini life story interviews in order to learn more about the lives of these participants. Atkinson (2001) writes that "life stories are central to human development, [...]" (p.130) as they permit the revealing of individuals inner lives while offering glimpses of the sometimes hidden human qualities and characteristics. My primary concern in conducting mini life story interviews was to create the appropriate setting for participants to feel comfortable enough to discuss how they saw themselves at given points in their lives as well as how they want others to see them. In order to engage them in mini life story interviewing, I shared

with them the personal benefits I believed their life stories possessed. These benefits included gaining a clearer understanding of personal experiences and feelings, obtaining greater self-knowledge through the “releasing” of certain burdens of the past, and obtaining validation of experiences or life events. The following excerpt is an example of this occurrence which I’ve named:

### **Teacher Effect**

*A: I don't know if I ever told you this story but there was this one teacher who really had it out for me. Anything I'd do, she had me on her radar... now what kind of radar this was... who knows... anything we'd do in class I would fail, well if not fail always, always get a really really low mark.*

*E: Really?*

*A: This woman was relentless. I think she may have hated Greeks and for some reason, me in particular. She embarrassed me in front of the class almost during every French class. She was French, Québécois and was simply horrible with me. She made me feel incompetent... it came to the point where I was afraid to write because I didn't believe in myself.*

*E: You didn't believe in your writing?*

*A: I didn't believe in my writing, in my ability to read French, do to anything. And the sad part is that I felt guilty so I never even told anyone. I believed her. “Am I?”, I felt... I was so ashamed. She was our French teacher for grade 5 and grade 6, but she left after Christmas in grade 6. It was a part of my life that I think really marked me. For years following my experiences with her... I became an introvert. I didn't say much in class. I'd be shy to say something, even if I knew the answer or the... or if I had a statement or comment*

*to make I'd shy away. Φοβόμουν να πω το όνομα μου! [I feared saying my own name!] because I was so negatively programmed.*

*E: How did you deal with this situation?*

*A: Well, obviously, I did quite poorly in French, but I really think that what saved me was the fact that I was good in other things, like math, English, Greek. And when the new French teacher came in January, I started healing. I started healing but it took a long time. I gained confidence probably, when I went to an English C.E.G.E.P. because it was finally a place where I could express myself really freely. No matter what I said, I felt that there could be some... I don't know... some validity to it. Nobody knew me in C.E.G.E.P. so it was a chance to start something new. I went on from there, my life was... I knew the damage that she had done, and I knew that if I let it haunt me it would haunt me... probably for the rest of my life.*

*E: Did you ever end up telling anyone about this?*

*A: No. This is the first time, except that I sometimes wrote my thoughts in a journal and that helped a little but it mostly made me cry so I can't really say that that was really something I did. This is the first time I get to tell my story.*

*E: Oh, no, that's so sad... Well I'm glad we're getting the chance to discuss this and that you're willing to tell me about your life this way.*

*A: I'm alright now, and... well, it's nice to talk about it.*

*(Interview with Alexandra 12-14-2002)*

In this excerpt, Alexandra shared her experience about her French teacher's attitude towards her and about how this affected her life. It was obvious to me that discussing her experience in her elementary school years was difficult but at the same time cathartic as she had never discussed her feelings of shyness and discomfort in a setting such as the one in which we conducted many of our

meetings. Our interview session was the first opportunity she had had to voice her feelings and tell her story of hardship to a person whom she did not know very well. In encouraging participants to discuss stories of their past struggles that pertained to their trilingual identity, I realized that how individuals tell stories and what they chose to reveal and to conceal is mediated by our cultures, our styles, and our personalities. Life stories serve as an “excellent means for understanding how people see their own lives and their interactions with others” (Atkinson, 2001, p.137). My role as research interviewer transformed me into a facilitator for participants to self-disclose. Collecting data became a personally rewarding experience because the interview sessions were open sharing experiences. In the next section, I discuss the data collection process.

### **Data Collection Process**

When I first contacted the participants, I was elated with their candor and willingness to share so much of their lives as trilingual adults of Hellenic decent. Ten self-professed trilingual adults accepted to hold an initial telephone discussion with me. Over the period of approximately two years, from February 2001 to February 2003, I had the pleasure of getting to know each participant through the means of telephone discussions and informal one-on-one meetings. The goal of these telephone discussions and informal meetings was to become comfortable with each other. We spoke of childhood memories, family structures and situations as well as former schooling experiences. For example, Tilemahos spoke to me about



his close-knit family; he explained that his parents had worked hard to provide for the entire family and even sent money to relatives in the motherland. He reported that from their selfless actions, he had learned about the importance of family. Tilemahos expressed that through his parents' example, he learned the value of helping others and maintaining strong links to the family. He felt his family has molded his personality as he reveals in the following excerpt: "I am who I am today because of them... I owe them a lot... I don't know what kind of person I'd be?!". (Excerpted from telephone conversation December 27<sup>th</sup> 2001).

Initially, I had not expected that telephone encounters would allow me to yield much into such personal territory. I always viewed the telephone as an impersonal tool in which much of the non-verbal communication would be lost. However, the use of the telephone was useful for accessing participants whenever I wanted to confirm my understanding of comments they made during the face-to-face interview sessions. Moreover, the telephone was a useful mediating tool in accessing participants and asking short follow-up questions that often only arose well after I had completed the transcription. I sometimes pictured myself walking on a tightrope. Like an acrobat, I walked on the rope that separated my two selves – my self as a trilingual adult with much the same background and myself as a researcher. Writing in a personal journal helped me understand my position as a qualitative researcher as illustrated in this example:

[...] Today I met with another of my participants. I admire her for her ambition. When she spoke about the way she felt when even her peers and her teacher mocked her about her pronunciation of a certain word, it really

hit home. I remembered when I was in grade 5 and we were asked to talk about the way we celebrated Christmas I used a word “carême” to mean the Christmas fast that takes place, and was mortified when everyone in my class – led by Madame Brulotte, started laughing. What insolence! Laughing because the term was used to signify Easter, not Christmas fast. I told my participant about this event and felt my incensed feeling awaken. Soon after, I did this, I realized that I was sharing things that were personal and sometimes hurtful. I realize that sharing my own experiences is not an easy thing to – I mean, who is this person I am confiding in... wait a minute, that’s probably what their thinking when they share personal stories with me. Yes, sharing helps open the lines of communication but I cannot forget that I am supposed to not let myself get carried away (E. Konidaris, Personal journal entry, 09-16-2002).

As this excerpt reveals, on the one hand, I saw myself as the researcher dutifully collecting interview data for her doctoral dissertation. On the other hand, I also knew that I was a trilingual adult of Greek or Hellenic descent who had many things in common with the participants that a feeling of closeness and acquaintanceship was almost palpable. I often wrote in my personal journal about the joy I experienced from my exchanges with my research participants as well as my fears as a researcher who needed to stay focused and elicit the information that I thought I should be collecting.

During the two-year span when I kept in regular contact with the all participants, I encouraged them to reflect on their identity as trilingual adults by thinking about what we had discussed and possibly writing how they felt in a personal journal. I asked participants to reflect on the roles that different individuals (parents, relative, peers, teachers, etc.) played in their personal

development as well as their personal thoughts about what their literacy and diverse cultural learning. Soon after my suggestion about keeping a journal, I learned that four out of the six participants had begun reflecting upon the issues discussed during our meetings and writing down their thoughts. Periclis was one of the participants who started writing in a personal journal. Although he chose to keep his journals private he explained:

### **Thoughts on Paper**

*P: You know, I really find it helpful to write about what we discuss.*

*E: Oh, I'm so happy!*

*P: Yeah, well, I realized that when I talked about certain things...I remembered a lot of things that I never actually had forgotten...about my youth. Nothing really bad but because I'm so busy with work it's sometimes difficult for me to dig into old memories. When I write about the things I told you, I sometimes remember certain things that I may have otherwise forgotten.*

*E: Does that mean you're not annoyed when I call you to clarify? (laughter)*

*P: Actually! (laughter) No I'm not! (laughter). I am happy because Μπορώ να συμπληρώσω [I can complete] my ideas. It's true. I can do this because I write things down in a journal afterwards.*

*E: I think that's great. In what language do you write?*

*P: Well... mostly, I'd say, mostly in English but sometimes I use French and some Greek. It all depends on what I'm thinking about and... and of course, how I feel (Interview with Periclis 02-04-2003).*

Periclis explained that writing in a journal permitted him to gather his thoughts and complete his ideas for our interviews. Whenever I followed up with questions about his commentary during the interviews, he was prepared to respond because the time and opportunity to write privately about the matters we discussed gave him greater insight into his identity construction. In-depth interview data totaled approximately 42 hours that resulted in approximately seven hours per participant, depending on the frequency and length of meetings, in addition to approximately 36 hours of life story interview data, which averages approximately six hours of discussions with each of the six participants. In the next excerpt from an initial sit-down interview I had with Christos, he briefly recounted his journey through academia:

### **Journey through Academia**

*E: Hello! Welcome. Thank you very much for taking part in my study.*

*C: Thank you, the pleasure is all mine! It's great to actually get the chance to meet and talk again.*

*E: You are a trilingual adult of Hellenic background. Is that right?*

*C: That is correct.*

*E: Tell me a little bit about yourself.*

*C: Well I'm going to recap, to kind of remind you of my background.*

*E: Thank you, that would be great.*

*C: Well, my parents immigrated from Greece and I'm obviously from second generation, Canadian born in Montreal. I've lived here all my life in Quebec...and um...let's see now, my schooling was done, well...was done in French and from kindergarten on to my Masters and English was picked up along the way through different courses, so*

*my background is, I've studied health sciences and then moved on to pharmacy. So I have a Bachelor of Pharmacy and a Masters in Health Economics, which is the study of the value of drugs.*

*E: Interesting.*

*C: Well, I think so... the factors that I think influenced me...well, definitely on the English side, there was always...friends, so I guess, with friends, we used to hang out on the street...our common language, 'cause we were all from diverse ethnic backgrounds, was English. Therefore it was obviously a push to learn that language and it's a fairly simple language to learn. So back then we were little tiny kids playing hockey in the streets, where we all spoke English.*

*E: Okay.*

*C: So very simply from that...and I learned through T.V. as well and through school.*

*E: Tell me about your schooling.*

*C: Well, for English I had second language instruction and can't remember when it started...I think it most probably started officially in high school. I can't remember. I can certainly tell you that if I hadn't gone to French school [for elementary and high school I would be, I would definitely be, in a different place today.*

*E: What do you mean?*

*C: Well, I don't believe I would have been able to study at a French college because you, did you go to a French C.E.G.E.P.?*

*E: No, I didn't.*

*C: Well, I think studying in French would have been real hard. Anyway, you can probably confirm this by looking at the Anglophone student body the average C.E.G.E.P.. It's probably very small (Interview with Christos 11-12-2002).*

In these excerpts, Christos described the reasons behind his choices of educational institutions following his completion of public French secondary. He described his journey through the system as something that he did because he felt it would facilitate him as student if he would pursue studies at the university level. He chose to pursue C.E.G.E.P., undergraduate and graduate degrees in the French system. He attributes his ability and facility in pursuing studies at the university level, to the strong linguistic background he acquired throughout his academic career which he pursued in French.

My encounters with participants always required initial conversations where we would discuss news in our lives. I often spoke about my progress in the work and would bring up comments and topics discussed during previous meetings and telephone conversations. These initial conversations served as conversational openers. For example, whenever I met with Helena, we would begin by discussing issues that came up during our day. She would tell me about interesting encounters she had in court and I would tell her about what I was reading and how I had understood certain things we had discussed during our previous session. This type of exchange refamiliarized participants with the topics discussed the previous time and functioned as a spring board to the present conversation which focused on new dimensions of their perceptions and experiences about their trilinguality.

## **Transcription of Data**

I transcribed and analyzed all audio-recorded data and written notes I took during in-depth interviews. The following excerpt is a segment of an interview response.

I guess I never thought about what the repercussions would be if I would leave the French system. All I thought about was the fact that I would finally get the chance to study in English. You know, it was not always fun to be immersed in French, I felt that I needed to explore the world... to see what else was out there... even if "out there" meant out of my school and out of the small suburban city I was living in. As it turned out, it wasn't all I had dreamed it would be. Even in courses like math, I had to, I had to... kind of think twice... I had to sit back and sort of translate what was being asked ... even in math...could you imagine?! I got...I got used to it but it was hard, that's something I wouldn't necessarily advertise happened, especially if I was talking to a young person who is... who would be... interested in switching into English as some point. (Life story interview with Tilemahos 09-14-2002)

The initial interviews allowed me to access the logistical information and to obtain a feel for participants' conversation styles and attitudes towards participating in the study. I then followed-up with sessions of open-ended conversations in which participants discussed personal matters and recollected private experiences. The next step involved me absolving control and direction of interview sessions and simply listening to participants talk about their life stories. I listened actively, and took written notes of the instances of non-verbal communication. The in-depth interviews allowed me to ask questions on issues and topics that were brought up in their mini life stories. This sequence was not followed with all participants on the

first attempt. During the first life story interviews, the participants showed signs of apprehension. This may be attributed to the fact that my previous questions were very structured and guided questions during the initial meeting.

In order to accurately transcribe my interview data, I developed a set of criteria to distinguish one occurrence from another. I transcribed discourse as it was uttered. For example, if contractions were used, I transcribed them as such. I used commas, periods and exclamation marks as they are used in regular sentence construction. I represented pauses lasting approximately less than three seconds by three dots [...] and any pause lasting over three seconds by the word pause in square brackets as such [pause]. Overlapped speech was represented by two sets of slashes as in the next excerpt.

R: Good. Let's discuss the home environment.

E: Yes. I wanted to add//

R: //Sure! At home, well...well...it's Greek with my parents and Greek and English with my brother umm... cause we still [pause] we're all in the same complex, and we urn...it's mainly Greek in my household

R: O.K.

E: Mainly Greek. Cause most of the time, well you know.. .it's my parents and I and we are used to using Greek, we like it, it's comfortable

R: O.K. What about!!

E: I land sometimes in French

R: Oh! Yes?!

E: Yeah! We sometimes speak in French at home...you know...if we wanna say something in French. . . or you get a word, or you wanna say a joke in French

R: So you sometimes use French?

E: Yeah, yeah, I do! Sometimes, yeah, mostly with my brother.. .if I'm not at work.



R: Because he's also trilingual?

E: Yup!

R: So how about with people outside of work?

E: Um...outside, I could say...with my friends [...] it's the three languages, if they speak them that is. ..English umm... and Greek and French... but... most of my close friends are Greek of [pause] of Greek background

The data I collected from in-depth interviews served as my primary data source for the construction of the individual participant portraits. I used data gathered from the life story interview sessions to elucidate the sequences of events discussed during the telephone conversations. I used the set of research questions that I outlined earlier but always followed-up with unscripted questions and comments. I used these in combination with the notes I took while the interviews were in progress. These additional questions were not identical for all research participants as they were adapted according to each interviewee discussion.

The time requirement and personal nature of my research unfortunately meant that not all ten participants were able and/or willing to commit to my research. When I completed the transcriptions of all data sets, I read each interview session carefully. After several readings, recurring topics slowly started surfacing. I wrote down each recurring topic which I named “theme” as soon as it occurred in more than one individual. Some participants had themes that others did not. For example, Helena constructed the *microcosm* theme in which she compartmentalized her life inside three microcosms which she called the French, the English and the

Greek microcosm. In this excerpt, Helena explains how she viewed and dealt with the three languages in her life.

### **My Three Microcosms**

*H: I actually wanted to keep my worlds separate.*

*E: So you were trying to keep them separate?*

*H: Yes, yes. I would not want to mix them up. It was kind of like an anathema, you know?*

*E: Yes. But why is that? Did you ever ask yourself as a kid or maybe now?*

*H: No never! I never wanted to mix the three languages because that that meant that one of them would probably suffer, become weaker. I don't know which one but it is something that I feared so I kept the languages within the microcosm. The French was for school and for school friends... sometimes for the French television programs I read. The English was for, was only for English class and for some... for playing or hanging-out with my Anglophone friend or friends who were not French. I protected my Greek within the **Greek microcosm** which included home, we only spoke Greek at home... with my parents, with my siblings..with other Greek kids, at Greek school... and of course for my, for the summers I'd spend in Greece.*

*E: That is so interesting!*

*H: Yeah! I was actually very proud that I could do this... no other kid, French kid could because all they'd speak was French... I definitely considered myself lucky.*

*E: And now?*

*H: Well, now those microcosms have kind of blurred. They*

*aren't so well defined because my husband doesn't speak Greek as well, so we use English a lot. My office is multiethnic... well we have a few trilinguals (laughter) which is how we met right?*

*E: Right.*

*H: And so it's not such a big issue for me anymore because I am more confident in my knowledge of each of the languages. (Interview with Helena 10-22-2002)*

Noteworthy here is Helena's comment about being fearful. She explained that separating each of the three languages – keeping them separate, was her way of protecting her knowledge of “the knowledge”. She feared that using it in a different context could possibly weaken its use and that this would work against her efforts toward language maintenance. She explained that her fear of language loss was born out of her lack of confidence. During several informal follow-up telephone conversations, Helena explained that she no longer feels protective of the languages she knows. In the next excerpt she comments about this:

*Now, I am much more natural in my approach. I use the language I feel I should use, regardless of time of day or setting... of course... well, I want you to understand that I don't just psychotically switch into, let's say... Greek when I'm representing a client, you know, and I'm in front of the judge! I mean I don't make excuses... excuses to myself... to others... for using English or or, French or Greek when that's what I feel like speaking. (Excerpt from telephone conversation with Helena 12-21-2002)*

I looked for themes in each session with a participant. Doing so required me to look into the meaning of their discourse and interpret their words. In order to be

respectful of my participants' words, I consulted each of them in order to assure the appropriateness of their intended meaning from their perspectives.

### **Participants' Role**

Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not the sitter. The sitter is merely an accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter, who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my soul (Wilde, 1890, p.127).

During my encounters with the participants, I noticed them taking on increasingly revealing and self analytical roles. While at first, they responded to my questions in a perfunctory manner, they quickly turned into storyteller extraordinaires and highly intuitive conversationalists and started to reveal their souls. In the next excerpt, Tilemahos speaks openly about his feelings about office relations.

#### **Taking on Revealing Roles**

*T: I was not, well, I don't think I was a problematic child. I was a good student, maybe not strait A but I did well so I felt I deserved certain thing.*

*E: What do you mean?*

*T: I felt entitled to the same respect the French people received, not only in school but in society. I felt that the discrimination that existed,*

*and unfortunately that still does, in Quebec society was just not fair and so sometimes I tried to even the score by being rude or discriminating against francophone. I know that it's probably hard for you to believe this... and I've never actually ever shared this with anyone but... I remember when I first graduated and was recruited to work in a mid-size engineering firm. From our graduating class... it was basically just the two of us. They hadn't accepted anyone else to work there as a... it was kind of like a stage. Our immediate superior was a Francophone who, from the get-go seemed to prefer Jean-Guy, the other guy. I would work so hard at projects that I knew little about. I'd stay up late and study, do over-time... the whole nine yards. But Jean-Guy would be the pretty boy who wore the fancy suits and barely ever touched anything. I think that this guy, either did not know much or was afraid of the machines we needed to use. He'd nod and pretend to be interested in the work and then he'd bail, he'd go hang out in the bathroom... smoking... I don't know... And it was always at the perfect time, when we'd have to do something important. He'd only show up to pretend that he contributed.*

*E: In the bathroom? That's weird, did you have offices?*

*T: No we were in the cubicles and he couldn't really hide there (laughter). I remember... anyway, regardless of all the hard work and time I'd put in, our boss always ended up congratulating him. One day I decided, I wanted to get this guy in trouble... nothing too serious but, Jean-Guy deserved it. Oh yeah! He deserved it.*

*E: Oh no, What did you do?!*

*T: Don't worry! I clogged the toilets with thick absorbent paper towel. This was the place he'd hide out, so it was perfect! (laughter)*

*E: Oh no! (laughter)*

*T: Yup! I did it! The toilets overflowed, he ran out! It was hilarious! And most importantly it was at the right moment. Our boss was furious and asked him what he was doing, how he had managed to flood the bathroom... because it was all four stalls that were overflowing.*

*E: Then what happened?*

*T: Well, I think that Jean-Guy suspected it was me but I'm not sure...He stopped making the public bathroom his hiding place from then on. (Interview with Tilemahos 09-10-2002)*

This excerpt shows how Tilemahos became candid and shared even embarrassing tales from his youth. He later explained that taking matters “into his own hands” by subjecting his colleague to a nasty prank was a thing of the past.

*T: I no longer feel the need to do anything like that. That was me then, I was much more insecure and had trouble expressing my concerns. I would not deal with such a situation like that anymore. (Personal communication with Tilemahos, 09-13-2002)*

Although Tilemahos appeared comfortable sharing this story, he contacted me by telephone to discuss the story he had told me and to add details to help my understanding of his mind frame at the time. He explained that his action was a prank which he did in order to informally “teach his colleague a lesson”.

This takes us back to Oscar Wilde’s quote at the beginning of this section. Oscar Wilde’s claim that portraits reflect more about the artist than about the subject is both true and false. It is true in the sense that it is me, the researcher, who decides on what questions I will ask, listen to responses, take notes and make

assumptions about the different issues. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis (1997) state that “the voice of the researcher is everywhere [...] overarching and undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors and echoing through the central themes” (p.85). Wilde’s fear of revealing his soul can be seen as irrational, because a researcher-portraitist reveals his or her thoughts, his or her beliefs, as well as a large part of his or her identity. This revelation allows the portraitist to produce a thorough examination of the participants experiences and perspectives – just by the act of conversing in a dialogical fashion. A researcher’s self is present in the work, because “she is the instrument of inquiry and the lens of description, interpretation, analysis, and narrative, [...] while] the actors sing the solo lines, the portraitist supports their effort at articulation, insight, and expressiveness” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis 1997. p.85-86). At the heart of each portrait I present in this dissertation, is my attempt to present, represent and interpret the particular participant’s voice. Their thoughts, beliefs and observations were the palettes I used to paint each portrait.

I sensed that participants flourish within the in-depth interview processes because of their desire to share their stories. I believe that the physical environment (i.e. the setting and atmosphere), I created in which to conduct our meetings fostered the candid openness that was needed to discuss issues concerning cultural identity and perceptions about upbringing, schooling and trilinguality. Because of the many meetings I had with the participants, I was able to learn about their different conversation styles and decipher the moments when talking would

optimize or hinder what would come of our exchange. For example, during a telephone discussion I held with Alexandra, she discussed her feelings of pride and elation about being able to assist her patients in the language that they best understood. In this instance, I sensed that she sought my approval or perhaps my opinion about this fact.

A: Helping out people, is what makes me happy especially when I can provide my service in the language they know and are comfortable with... you know, you get a sense of this sometimes". (Interview with Alexandra 07-27-2002)

This is an example of a time when my commenting was needed and had a positive effect on the pace and the depth of our current discussion as well as the discussions that were to come. Contrastively, during the moments when participants were absorbed in their own emotional stories, I realized that silence would be most appropriate. This need arose on many occasions, for instance when Periclis who discussed his feelings of embarrassment when he could not recognize his name written in French when it was presented to him in his kindergarten class as he could only read and write in the Greek language.

Following the audiotaping of each session, I transcribed all recorded material by listening to the audio-cassette and transcribing verbatim all utterances expressed during the sessions. Following the transcriptions, I read and interpreted the information that had been expressed during the encounters. In order to clarify my understanding of the matters discussed, I contacted participants by telephone. The telephone conversations were informal and not recorded. I took written notes



of the elements that dealt with my inquiry which was usually the focus and purpose of my call. When I deemed that the information was complete I analyzed combined material collected by searching for themes and sub-themes which started surfacing after numerous readings. I first started by writing the themes in the margin of the print-outs and then used different color highlighters to differentiate each theme within the text. Themes were the “topics” which arose during the interview sessions. When the “topics” surfaced and re-surfaced during the interview sessions, they became what I refer to as “patterns”. By scrutinizing my participants’ stories and their responses during the in-depth interview sessions, patterns started to surface. A different set of colors was used to differentiate the patterns from the themes that had surfaced in the previous level of data examination. I then took the recurring emerging patterns and turned them into pattern codes that I created in order to pull together the data into thematic units of analysis. The units were then written into vignettes which included quotations excerpted directly from the collected data, and my own interpretation and vision of the issues discussed. I called these *participant portraits* as illustrated in the next excerpt from Christos’ portrait:

### **Linguistic Comfort Levels**

It was not until Christos improved on his French that he started feeling comfortable being in a francophone environment. Despite this fact, Christos explained that he was “*always on his own*” when it came to learning French and doing his schoolwork. He often felt that he had to

work *"twice as hard"* as his peers did to achieve the success that he sought. He explained: *"[...] they could help you up to certain point... my parents could do math a bit... you know. But the more you went on in school, the more you were on your own. You know?! Good luck! I can't help you! And that was actually another drive... it's what... the reason why you wanna achieve is because you're basically on your own. You're not babysat. I mean, to succeed you need to... you had to push yourself. More so for the first kid in the family, the second kid had it easier."* Christos' desire to succeed in school was fueled by primarily two sources. The first source was his desire to maintain his parents' approval, and the second source was to prove to himself that he could achieve his dreams on his own. In high school, Christos reported completing a *"[...] bilingual diploma which was a kind of certificate proving that I had successfully completed a certain number of French course, and a certain number of English courses, that... that the average kid, just the average regular student did not do. It was an advantage to be able to complete this diploma"*. He further described it as an opportunity to study literature in an advanced setting for both English and French. *"We had more literature more grammar... or least more advanced grammar... and this in both the languages we studied"*. He explained that he loved the challenge because it fuelled his desire to accomplish more and excel in it. He said: *"It encouraged me to see that I was doing well in those classes and although*

*it was kind of tough, it was nice to get the recognition for our work... and our efforts... with the bilingual diploma.” Upon completion of his secondary level studies, Christos made the decision to attend a French C.E.G.E.P.. Although some of his trilingual peers may have viewed the end of secondary schooling as their first opportunity to escape from the French system, Christos thought of it differently. He explained: “My decision to go to a French C.E.G.E.P. stemmed from the fact that I wanted to continue on to the health sciences and I figured that if I do... of I continue on the French side, I could do French and then switch to English. Whereas I felt that if I continued on the English side it might be difficult to hit the French universities later on. Because... well I thought that there might be some discrimination. Or... I don’t know, I felt that the reverse was true, you know?! All these French kids would eventually find themselves in McGill but... not many English students would find themselves in the French universities.”*

Christos’ perception of possible discrimination by French universities pushed him to attend a French C.E.G.E.P. and work hard in his studies to be able to choose where he would pursue his university degree. However, when the time came to apply to university Christos stated that: *“You didn’t really feel like switching, even if it wasn’t a problem... I was comfortable in the French system and even decided to take a fourth language. Yeah! I decided to take Spanish... it was really just for fun, but*

*still another language in its own right. I enjoyed it actually, even if I didn't take as many courses as I wanted... you know, there just wasn't enough time".* Once again, I saw that Christos was driven to learn and to succeed. The three languages that make him a trilingual were merely the tip of the iceberg for Christos.

Notice how the portrait includes both Christos' voice in the form of direct quotations where he recounts his experience in the French school system as well as my own voice in which I narrate and describe my understanding of his story. In the excerpt, Katerina's portrait provides readers with insight on the participants direct speech and perceptions while being complemented by my own testimony from the interview session. Katerina told me that she loves the French language and does make efforts to use it whenever she can to primarily accommodate her patients but also to interact on a daily basis with those she encounters. *"My father wanted me to go to an English school, but he was not allowed to do, it's alright because I got the chance to learn French which is so important!"* I was interested in Katerina's choice of words, when she told me that her father had wanted to send her to an English school but that it "was not allowed". Katerina seemed to refuse to project any negativity or animosity toward the law that had forbidden her from studying in English public schools. She is in fact quite content with having learned French and being capable of interacting with her patients and being an active member of Quebec society. During her elementary and secondary schooling, Katerina was surrounded by

many anglophones and allophones due to the geographic location of her school in a culturally diverse neighborhood.

Katerina interacted with her peers in all three languages. Her social interactions have made her the trilingual she is today. She explained: *"[...] I used French in school with friends... and on the streets as you would say... when you're playing with your friends... unless my friend was French, then I'd speak to them in French. And, as for other friends... even if my friend spoke three languages I'd associate a certain language with them and that was it! If I was asked to speak another language with them, it'd be hard to do, because if you associate them with a certain language, you can't switch to another language"*. Katerina explained that she found it "unnatural" to speak a language other than the one she associated to the particular individual she was speaking to because the language-person association is so strong that it would make it nearly impossible to make a change. I have experienced what Katerina described but not to the extent where I find it difficult to speak a certain language with someone. I believe my training as a language teacher has made it easier for me to communicate with people even if it is not in the language I associate with them initially. Katerina offered the following example: *"[...] it is so unnatural that, for example, an English speaking friend of mine married a French Canadian, so when would go there, he would speak to me in French. I'd reply in French and when I'd turn to speak with my friend, I'd speak in English... I'd I'd, I just could not speak to her in French and then of course I had to I had to translate for the husband. I'd translate... but I couldn't speak in French it would be very unnatural."*

Katerina told me on numerous occasions that she always loved the French language and although it was “an extra language to learn, it was an extra language to have”. Although many of her friends were taking “*the back exit out of French high school*”, she wanted to pursue the language and learn it more in-depth instead of leaving the French school system at the first opportunity. With the help of a very influential high school teacher, Katerina took the plunge and went to a prestigious highly-ranked Francophone C.E.G.E.P.. This C.E.G.E.P. was not only academically challenging but proved to be an arena reinforcing her French language skills and her desire to continue studying in French. The details I included in each participant’s portrait are personal and situated in a carefully constructed background I built with the information each participant shared with me. My role as researcher-portraitist was ultimately shaped through the use of the multiple dialogues I had with each participant. The building of each portrait required me to carefully navigate through their voices and their visions. This required me to first make my own interpretation, second consult each participant as to the accuracy of my interpretations and third, return to my drawing of each portrait. I consulted my participants on many occasions because I wanted the shaping of each evolving image to be as accurate and as close to their reality as possible. The role of each participant was to assist me in expressing their point of view.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I described the methodology and the methods I used to undertake this research. Specifically, I discussed my epistemological stance and

how I designed the research as a set of interrelated portraits of six trilinguals of Greek cultural background who were “children of Bill 101”. I presented the nature of my critical inquiry and my epistemological orientation as a researcher concerned with the role of language, literacy and culture in the construction of a trilingual identity. I presented myself as a researcher of similar background to that of the participants, as well as my role in the study. I presented the research participants and discussed how I selected them. I explained how I conducted my epistemological initial telephone interviews and described the purpose for conducting life story interviews and thorough in-depth interviews. I discussed how I analyzed my data by identifying themes and patterns. I also discuss how the participants voice, along with mine provide the melody with which the participant portraits were built. In chapter 4, I examine the theories that are relevant to the theoretical framework of my dissertation.

## **TETAPTO KEΦΑΛΑΙΟ: ΘΕΩΡΗΤΙΚΟΣ ΣΚΕΛΕΤΟΣ**

### **CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I examine the theories of learning, language and literacy which are relevant to my theoretical framework. I discuss two *theories of learning* that I drew from to examine the trilingual participants and perceptions of learning. I discuss social constructivism from a Vygotskian perspective which espouses that language is brought about by social processes that make thought possible. This theory argues for the active role individuals play in the construction of their social and psychological worlds. I present activity theory that offers explanations of how material and psychological tools mediate between individuals' actions and their surrounding worlds. I discuss language development with reference to Halliday's functional semiotic theory of language use. I then define heritage language and discuss heritage language schools with a particular focus on Saturday Greek schools in Quebec. I deal with *theories of literacy* that pertain to my research on trilinguals, their perceptions and experiences.

#### **THEORIES OF LEARNING**

##### **Social Constructivist Approach to Culture**

Broadly defined, social constructivism is an educational philosophy that assumes learners ultimately construct their own knowledge about their surroundings in particular contexts. Learning is viewed as a process of mediation



accomplished through social interactions and use of mediational tools. Schwandt (1997) defines social constructivism as a philosophical perspective that has “great affinity with theories of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology which emphasize the actor’s definition of a situation” (p.19). Qualitative researchers, such as ethnomethodologists like Harvey Garfinkel who base their theoretical foundations about learning on social constructivism, seek out ways in which “human beings individually and collectively interpret [and] or construct the social and psychological world in [the] specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts” in which they find themselves (p.19). Schwandt (1997) explains that in order for this type of interpretation to be accomplished, one must research and attempt to understand how social actors recognize, produce and reproduce social actions, as well as how they come to share an intersubjective understanding of their specific life circumstances.

Changes in mainstream theoretical perspectives regarding the nature of learning often arise from unrest and dissatisfaction with existing assumptions and explanations. In the early 1920’s, Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky challenged the prevalent psychological views of Pavlov and Kohler, which seemed to erase the traditional distinctions between humans and animals. Vygotsky specifically noted that “within the confines of evolutionary theory itself one cannot ignore the fact of essential differences that exist between the human organism [that of apes], in particular, differences in the human brain and the brain of the ape” (Vygotsky, 1960, p. 440). He (1978) argues that humans possess an

*adaptive capacity* to alter their environments, unlike animals that can only *react* to their surroundings. Von Glaserfeld (1995) notes that behaviorist philosophies have had “unfortunate consequences” (p.4) for education, as they have placed undue emphasis on the outcomes of particular teaching and learning strategies rather than on the processes involved in achieving a certain outcome. Indeed, constructivism, however defined, challenges certain prevalent scientific assumptions about teaching and learning. Social constructivism, which is often linked to Vygotskian constructivism, emphasizes the critical importance of culture and the importance of socio-cultural historical contexts for the development of higher mental functions.

I draw on social constructivist theory to interpret participants’ personal views of language and culture and beliefs about their learning and maintaining of their culture and three languages. Since participants in an inquiry construct their own learning through the multiple interactions and contexts in which they find themselves, tapping into what these are can be accompanied by asking them about the what, the how and the why. Social constructivist theory helped me appreciate the contextual factors that influence and affect the six participants’ individual learning trajectories. A social constructivist view of knowledge construction which I embraced throughout my research assumes that each individual is unique and is influenced by particular contexts. Although individuals are intrinsically linked to their surroundings and backgrounds, they are ultimately the ones who construct their own knowledge about language and culture because they interact and function in the contexts they choose to acknowledge and engage in their daily activities. For

this inquiry, the most relevant contextual factors include participants' socio-economic situations, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, family and home beliefs, practices and perceptions. This view of knowledge differs from more traditional, reductionistic views that assume knowledge exists independently of individuals and that the mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank canvas upon which a picture can be painted.

A fundamental assumption of Vygotsky's developmental theory is that language is made possible because of culture and is central to human activity. Vygotsky (1983) argues that:

[..] culture creates special forms of behavior, changes the functioning of mind, constructs new stories in the developing system of human behavior... In the course of historical development, social humans change the ways and means of their behavior, transform their natural premises and functions, elaborate and create new, specifically cultural forms of behavior. (p.29)

Vygotsky (1981b) suggested "culture is the product of social life and human social activity. That is why just by raising the question of the cultural development of behavior we are directly introducing the social plane of development" (p.164). He understood culture as something that becomes concrete when social processes are present. For example, he stated that "[...] the word "social" when applied to our subject has great significance [...] in the widest sense of the word, it means that everything that is cultural is social" (Vygotsky, 1981b, p.164). This life long

process of development is dependent on social interaction and social learning which in turn leads to the development of higher mental functioning.

Vygotsky believed that the *Zone of Proximal Development* bridges “the distance between the actual development level as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, a student can perform a task under adult guidance or with peer collaboration that could not be achieved alone. The Zone of Proximal Development is a key concept in Vygotskian theory because it helps individuals bridge the gap between what is known and what can be known. He proposed:

[...] that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when a child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90).

The learning of language is brought about by social processes that make thought possible. Vygotsky espoused that when children are infants, at the preverbal stage of development, their intelligence is at a purely natural capacity. In other words, children make use of “elementary mental functions” that include sensing and hunger. The higher mental functions such as memory, thinking, attention, perception, problem solving and of course, language evolve in children's

developmental trajectories through their social interactions with significant others.

Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky assumes that language plays a central role in the development of higher mental functions. Vygotsky (1978), argued:

[that the...] central characteristic of elementary functions is that they are totally and directly determined by stimulation from the environment. For higher functions, the central feature is self-generated stimulation, that is, the creation and use of artificial stimuli which become the immediate causes of behavior (p.39).

As children begin to speak, their thought processes also begin to develop. It is language that helps them self-regulate their behaviors and social actions and vice versa. Knowledge is seen as a movement from the interpsychological plane between individuals to the intrapsychological plane.

A third relevant concept is *social action*. Vygotsky argued that psychological tools develop in connection with the development of social interaction. He claimed that “only when we learn to see the unity of abstraction and social interaction [that] we begin to understand the actual connection that exists between the child’s cognitive development and his social development” (p.11). Vygotsky’s concept of social action is that children actively construct their knowledge; therefore, as a result of these constructions, they create cultures. He argued that “like all functions of consciousness, [culture and language] emerge initially from action (Vygotsky, 1978, p.93). For example, if children engage in pastoral activities within their community, they will likely form a familiarity with

the aspects of that particular activity and the activity is likely to become a culture in their reality which in turn influences and affects the life choices they make or can make. Thus, contexts shift and individuals develop in and evolve through them. These cultures have extremely powerful influences on learning; they take the form of social interactions that are mediated by parents, teachers and books and other mediating tools. Cultures influence what children learn, can access and need in order to function in ways that reflect their aspirations, intentions and learning trajectories.

### **The Active Role of the Learner**

A fundamental epistemological assumption that I draw from Vygotsky's theory of learning is that children create their own realities when they create and actively interact with the complex worlds that surround them. Goodman (1984) asserts that "there is no prefabricated world, fully structured, waiting for learner discovery" (p.54). An individual's manipulation of an environment as a mediator brings about cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that mental activities are mediated through social relationships between individuals, mediators and mediational means accessible in their environments such as symbolic systems that include instruments and signs. For Vygotsky, the signs are artificial incentives with the purpose of mnemonic aid. These signs work as middle ground for adaptation and are driven by an individual's own self-regulated social actions. In other words, signs act as instruments of psychological activity. They are the means that are guided by individuals and serve them in situations where learning or

problem solving is required. The function of mediational means is to serve as tools between the workers and the objects of their work. For example, a musician uses a musical instrument to play a melody for a musical concert. In a similar way, environments in which individuals operate serve as mediational functions.

A learner can reach higher mental functions through the use of mediational tools such as language and through mediated activity such as the use of a computer program in electronic learning environments. Vygotsky distinguishes between mediated activity in which a learner engages and the distinction between material (also referred to as technical) tools and psychological tools such as language. There is no doubt that for an individual to learn three languages, both material and psychological tools are required – each for different reasons. Material tools such as books, computer programs and other learning tools are indispensable for the formation of elementary functions. Elementary functions may include anything from perception and attention to will through sensori-motor contexts and are basic requirements for the subsequent development of higher order functions. However, Vygotsky cautioned that signs and symbols are not automatically tools. They “become” psychological tools by “virtue of [their] use as a means of influencing the mind and behavior (p.87, 1997). These tools serve to mediate between an individual’s actions and the environmental objects. Whereas material tools influence the external object of activity, psychological tools are internally oriented and influence the individual’s self regulated behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). Arguably

then, language is one of the most important tools for the development of higher mental processes and cultural functions.

The development of more than one language and more than one culture, requires that higher mental functions be in place and in order for them to be in place, social interactions must occur. Language is a means and an end for transforming experience into cultural knowledge and social actions. It is mainly through the medium of spoken and written language that successive generations of a society benefit from individuals' past experiences. It is also through the use of language that each new generation shares, disputes and defines their own experiences. The trilingual participants attributed much of their language and cultural learning to the various interactions they had with individuals, such as their family members, teachers and peers. As I illustrate in chapter 5, their self-reports confirm that language learning is a social process in which individuals act and interact within their environments.

Learning is one form of activity and perhaps the most fundamentally human activity. Although formal education certainly plays a role in trilingual individuals' learning of languages and cultures, it is also relevant to focus on what Vygotsky calls, cognitive activities which occur in everyday social interactions with people. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that social interactions with people who are more adept in the use of the material and conceptual tools of the society is thus an important 'cultural amplifier' to extend children's cognitive processes. What the learner does with language influences what, when and how something will be learned. Social



constructivism as a view of learning acknowledges the importance of both the individual and social factors in meaning making. In addition, a social support system that may include parents, peers, teachers, and other influential persons, all of whom play a part in an individual's learning trajectory and journey towards trilingualism. In the next section, I examine the concept of culture within a socio-constructivist frame.

### **Defining Culture within Socio-Constructivism**

Definitions of culture are informed by researchers and theorists in a variety of fields and from different perspectives. Second language researcher, Nieto (1999) assumes that culture consists of "the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion" (p.48). Nieto's definition of culture provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the identity construction of trilingual individuals because it takes into account the transformable and influenced nature of culture. A worldview is the way in which individuals perceive and react to the social-cultural contexts that surround them. Thus, culture can also be associated with the concept of worldview. A worldview is constructed through the shared patterns of behaviors and associated meanings that are attributed to the groups to which they belong. It is a social construct that varies according to cultural contexts.

The Belgian philosopher, Leo Apostel, devoted much of his career to the development of an integrated worldview. By gathering wisdom from different scientific disciplines, philosophies and religions, Apostel (1989) claimed a worldview framework could be developed. Theoretically, this framework would allow individuals to understand society, the world, and their place in it as well as help them make critical decisions about life. But the complexity of this task proved quite challenging even with the help and collaboration of individuals in various scientific and cultural fields. Apostel developed a series of questions in order to define the concept of worldview. These questions included: *Who are we? Why is the world the way it is? What is good and what is evil? How should we act? What is true and what is false?* Such questions remind individuals that the concept of worldview cannot be summarized in the form of simplistic answers to these questions. Rather, the complexity of worldviews can be found in many existing theories, models, concepts, guidelines, and values, scattered over different disciplines and ideologies.

Vygotsky assumed that learning is culturally influenced and a social rather than an individual process. He states that: “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89). Thus, individuals’ worldviews include life worlds that they construct through their interactions with the world that surrounds them. A life world is a world that is complete in many ways and is the center-stage of everyday life as it relates to multiple contexts. Life world refers to spaces for

community in which local and specific meanings can be made. Worlds of literacy refers to the distinct literacies which exist alongside each other in complex societies – each world possesses its own literacy practices and events and historical moments (Barton, 1994). By extension, multiple contexts are representative of an individual's life and identity. For example, home and family life environment could constitute a life world, while the world consisting of the work environment and the social-professional life of an individual could constitute another. Within the Quebec socio-linguistic political context, an interesting question emerges about cultural and L2 learning: Do trilinguals embrace one or many worldviews?

Second language researcher Nieto (1999) lists several attributes that are relevant for understanding the connection between culture and learning: "Culture is dynamic; multifaceted; embedded in context; influenced by social, economic and political factors; created and socially constructed; learned; and dialectical" (p. 49). This definition may be applied to the ways in which the Greek Community of Montreal deals with the concept of learning culture as a Greek trilingual. I believe that there is a tacit understanding that each of us is a member of multiple cultures. For example, a trilingual individual can be a Greek speaker, an English speaker and a French speaker, Canadian citizen, a member of a particular political party, a member of a professional association, and at the same time belong to more than one cultural worldview. This assumes diverse cultures which can be further defined by race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, occupational status, socioeconomic status, family backgrounds and personal positionings. An individual's participation in

society and its various forms (i.e. communities, organizations, etc) is influenced by diverse, culturally prescribed or expected beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of socio-cultural development assumes that the development of mental functions in an individual is "social in nature"(p.69). The patterns and levels of thinking are the product of the cultural and social environment in which an individual lives. Thus, from this perspective, culture is the existence of differences between species (intra-specific differences) in some pattern or patterns of behavior or practices which are learned and transmitted cross-generationally, and which are not simply the result of the differential ecological availability of resources. Consequently, where and how children are raised fundamentally influences how they will think about culture and about themselves and others.

From a cultural anthropological perspective, Geertz (1973) emphasized the importance of the symbolic significance of form as it relates to culture because "the concept of culture is essentially a semiotic one" (p.4). For Geertz (1973) "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he has spun "(p.5). He takes culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be [...] not an interpretive science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (p.5). Geertz sees two perspectives in this process, an insider perspective and an outsider perspective. An insider perspective, which is also referred to as an *emic* perspective requires the researcher to attempt to describe a culture according to the ideology underlying the codes and conventions of the particular group that is being researched. Rather than

attempting to analyze a code (meaning-capturing), the insider perspective attempts to describe a culture by establishing knowledge through dialogic (meaning-making) means. For example, creating a dialogical relation between researcher and participant in which experiences, beliefs and issues are shared by the informant and guided by the interviewer. An outsider interpretation, which is also referred to as the *etic* perspective requires researchers to take more of an authoritarian role and describe the culture being observed according to their own cultural schema and codified conventions.

Geertz assumes that culture is “a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life” (p.5). Geertz’s definition of culture relates to socio-constructivism because he assumes it to be semiotic in nature. Culture is a complex term that defines among other things, a way of thinking, feeling and believing that is not inherited but learned, sharpened and changing over time. In conducting this qualitative inquiry, I defined culture within the socio-constructivist frame I described earlier in this chapter. I consider the learning that takes place to be a social process that is culturally influenced. By establishing a dialogue with the participants, I aimed to access and understand the lived experiences of trilinguals from their perspectives. Building on Vygotsky’s works in the 1920’s, *Activity Theory* emerged. Activity Theory has its roots in the work Vygotsky and other scientists of the post-revolutionary period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Activity Theory

[...] in the end, man uses nature and the tool-kit of culture to gain control of the world and of himself. But there is something new in his treatment of this theme or perhaps it is my new recognition of something that was there before. For now there is a new emphasis on the manner in which, through using tools, man changes himself and his culture (Bruner 1987, p.176).

In this excerpt, Bruner (1987) explains that Vygotsky's reading of Darwin draws parallels to modern primatology. It is a concept used to argue that human evolution can be modified by man-made tools, whose use may then create a technical-social way of life; modern primatology is an intrinsic part of change. Vygotsky argued that once change occurs, 'natural' selection becomes dominated by cultural criteria and favors those able to adapt to the tool-using, culture-using ways of life. Therefore, it is evident that for Vygotsky, all tools, practical or symbolic, are external at first and are used in various settings in order to achieve inter-personal communication and self regulation.

From the 1920's, Vygotsky, along with his principal collaborators Luria and Leont'ev, worked to develop a revolutionary cultural-historical psychology based on the dialectical materialism theories of Marx and Engels, which in turn had roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century classical German philosophy of Hegel. Dialectical materialism presumes the primacy of economic determinants in history from which a classless society would eventually emerge. Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'ev determined that

activity can serve as a central explanatory principle in an understanding of human consciousness. Vygotsky's successors, namely Leont'ev, further developed the theory of activity and used the term *activity* to denote human behavior that is socially formed and involves elements of consciousness. In contrast with the stimulus-response models of Behavioral theorists such as B.F. Skinner, in activity theory, a subject's relationship with the objective world was understood as always being mediated by an activity. Instead of passively absorbing and reacting to stimuli for the outer world, individuals actively engage in activities through motor and mental actions. The well known activity theorist Engeström assumes that in order to understand a transformation such as the acquiring or formulating culture, "we need a methodology [which] is best developed when researchers enter actual activity systems undergoing such transformations" (1999, p.35). Individuals are involved in an active process where by actively exploring and transforming their social and material environments, they produce and reproduce their consciousness and culture (Engeström, Miettinen & Punamäki, 1999).

Cole (1996) argues that activity theory is a philosophy and multi-disciplinary theory for studying human beings as actors in cultural-historical contexts. The most fundamental principle of activity theory is the notion of unity of consciousness and activity. This principle holds that human consciousness arises with language as part of the process of individuals' active collective reconstruction of the world through labor. Kaptelinin (1996) assumes that "consciousness" in this expression means the human mind as a whole, and

“activity” means human interaction with the reality. Human consciousness is a form of “subjective reflection of objective reality” (Leont’ev, 1978: 142). Human consciousness is the internal movement of its “formative elements” geared to the general movement of activity that affects the real life of individuals in society. In other words, people do not simply passively absorb and react to stimuli from the ‘outer world’, they actively explore and transform their material and social environments. In this active process, individuals produce and reproduce their cultures and their consciousness. Vygotsky (1983) assumed human activity to be a structured, dynamic system, motivated by needs and objects. Activities are realized through motor and mental actions that are directed by conscious goals. Human activity is the substance of human consciousness and emerges and exists as a special component of human interaction with the environment. Thus, the mind is best understood within the context of activity.

Work on activity theory succeeded at a time when the prevalent dominant psychological theories were based on reflexology and psychoanalysis. The latter traditions were aimed at eliminating the concept of consciousness by reducing all psychological phenomena to a series of stimulus-response chains. (Engeström, Miettinen & Punamäki, 1999; Hedegaard, Chaiklin & Jensen, 1999). Kozulin (1986) explains that Vygotsky and his colleagues objected to the mentalist tradition as it confined itself to a vicious circle in which “states of consciousness are ‘explained’ by the concept of consciousness” (p.23). He maintains that “if one is to take consciousness as a subject of study, then the explanatory principle must be



sought in some other layer of reality” (Kozulin, 1986: 25). The alternative to this idea was that socially meaningful activity may play this role and serve as a generator of consciousness. Hence, according to Vygotsky’s conceptualization, as discussed earlier individual consciousness is built from the outside through relations with others through mediated activity.

Activity theory is based on the assumption of a dual process of human activity, together with artifact forming and being formed by the social and physical environment. There are three theoretical generations that are identified in the evolution of activity theory. The first generation, centered on Vygotsky and focused on his idea of cultural mediation. He argued that “the relationship between human and objects of the environment is mediated by cultural means, tools and signs” (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky considered language an important mediational tool for negotiating processes between the people of a culture, shaped by the customs of that culture and to be internalized through thought. Gadamer (1975), a hermeneutical scholar, proposed that the object of conversation is understanding; all understanding is interpretation and all interpretation takes place through the medium of language.

During what came to be known as the *second generation of activity theory*, Leont’ev, a colleague of Vygotsky, shed more light on and emphasized the emergence of “the division of labour as a fundamental historical process behind the evolution of mental functions” (Engeström, 1990: 76). Engeström states that Leont’ev explained that “mediated by tools, work is also performed in conditions of

joint, collective activity” (Engeström, 1990: 78). Therefore, the notion of activity mediated by tools, and the distinction between activity, action and operation became the basis of Leont’ev’s model of activity. Activity theorists such as Engeström, Bannon, Bødger, Miettinen, and Nardi view language and symbol systems as psychological tools for developing the human condition. Artifacts are believed to be there when we are introduced into a certain activity, but they are also a product of our activity, and as such, they are constantly changed through the activity. Activity theorists Bannon & Bødger (1991) view mediation as essential in the ways in which individuals can understand artifacts through activity theory. Following the second generation of activity theory and due to an international interest in activity theory, in the late 1980s, a third generation of activity theorists emerged. With this new wave, surfaced issues about diversity and dialogue between different traditions and perspectives. There was a push to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogue, multiple perspectives and voices as well as complex networks of interactive activity systems.

In the process of critically examining Activity Theory, noteworthy is the unstable nature of activities. Lantolf (2000) explains that “[a]ctivities, whether in the workplace, classrooms, or other settings, do not always unfold smoothly; [w]hat begins as one activity can reshape into another activity in the course of its unfolding” (p.11). In other words, Lantolf (2000) goes on to explain that in any given setting such as a home environment or classroom, “not only can activities change from one moment to the next, but different activities might be underway at

any given time, despite the fact that all of the participants display the same or similar overt behaviors in a task” (p. 12). To understand this element, Gillette (1994) offers the example of students in her university French class. Some students’ personal history with foreign situations and matters was negative, that is, they devalued involvement with anything foreign. These students spent their time and effort coping “with the ‘imposition’ of having to study a foreign language rather than learning the language” (Lantolf, 2000, p.12). Meanwhile, other students, who reported histories in which their families were intently interested in different cultures and languages, showed strong evidence of strategies specifically directed at learning the French language.

Therefore, even if individuals find themselves in the same setting and may be engaging in the same task, they may *de facto* not be engaging in the same activity. Ultimately, individuals must decide how they will engage with each task as an activity. This decision making process actually shapes and defines the activity. In Gillette’s (1994) example, it is obvious that despite the use of task-based instruction in a classroom setting, overt parental teaching, language learning will most likely take place if a student decides to engage herself with the task as an activity.

Activity Theory allows researchers to focus on the social interactions among individuals, system of cultural artifacts and other individuals in a particular setting. Leont’ev (1981), argues for the inseparability of human mental reflection required in the learning and maintaining processes from those aspects of human

activity that engender it. It is through the activity process that knowledge is constructed - as a result of personal (and subjective) experiences of an activity.

### **Relevance and Usefulness of Social Constructivism and Activity Theory**

Vygotskian theory assumes that human beings are agents who act upon the worlds, engage in activities and construct their environments in unique ways. In conducting my inquiry, I drew on social constructivist theory as well as Activity Theory. These theories were useful in helping me form an understanding of the social and personal processes involved in learning and maintaining Greek as a heritage language and learning the French and English language. As mentioned earlier, social constructivism holds that learners construct their own knowledge in particular aspects and places much emphasis on learners own definition of a situation. I did not attempt to assess my participants quality or level of trilinguality nor did I draw conclusions about “what” knowledge or “where” they believe they have acquired it. I embrace a Vygotskian view of the socio-genesis of knowledge construction as situated and contextualized. I believe that the socio-genesis of knowledge rooted in the social constructivist view which holds that the individual and the mind exist in conjunction with knowledge. Thus, I placed special emphasis on participants’ definition(s) of situations. In order to do this, I aimed to identify and understand the individual and collective mediational means that they used to interpret and construct the various contexts they determine as relevant to their language and culture “learning” experiences.

Furthermore, in trying to deconstruct and understand my participants' journeys into trilingualism, it became necessary for me to use a broad definition of culture as it related to their learning. Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of culture is useful as it assumes that culture is the existence of differences between species (intra-specific differences) in some pattern or patterns of behavior or practice which are learned and transmitted cross-generationally. Therefore, through the participants' social interactions, cultures among other things, are passed on. To become trilingual, one must not only develop or learn the languages but the cultures in which they are embedded. My major premise is that behavior and social actions influence an individual's language "learning" and that conversely, language directs their behaviors and social actions.

Nardi (1996), an anthropologist specializing in the study of technology, views activity theory as a philosophical and interdisciplinary framework that allows for the studying of different forms of human practices as developmental processes. In exploring the mediational means trilinguals make use of to reach the point where they consider themselves fluent in the three languages and knowledgeable and/or comfortable in the three cultures, I asked them about the types of social practices which served them in their development as trilinguals. Activity theory asserts that the human practices which function as developmental processes come from three domains. An individual domain (i.e. from within one's self), a social domain (i.e. all potential external sources such as a learner's peers, school, community etc.), and an amalgamated source that would likely include unique interlinked domains (i.e.

when there is a sort of collision or overlap in trilinguals' multiple origins of influence and learning). I found this central tenet of activity theory on human practices and interactions which function as developmental processes useful for examining each participant's self-reported practices.

Activity theory is a philosophy and multi-disciplinary theory for studying the human as an actor in a particular context (Cole, 1996). It is obvious that activity cannot exist as an isolated entity. Activity theorist Bannon (1997) states that the very concept of activity implies that there is an agent who acts as an individual or a collective "subject". Any activity is directed at something, so there should be things the agent is interacting with. In activity theory terminology, activity *mediates* interaction between subjects (agents) and objects (things). The importance attributed to the role of the actor within a context is of definite relevance to my inquiry of trilinguals due to the fact that the very source of my participants' trilinguality are their contexts and their perceptions of roles in these contexts. The uniqueness of the Quebec provincial language legislation, as well as the cultural policies of federal and provincial governments that impact on an urban center like Montreal, present a unique context for understanding trilingualism in this context.

One implication of Activity Theory is that human development cannot be adequately understood from a universal or a uni-dimensional point of view. Development means learning to participate in human activities by making use of the cultural resources and mediational means available in particular contexts that

either enhance or constrain access to them. In order to adequately discuss how participants managed to learn and maintain the three languages that make them call themselves 'trilinguals', I focused on the cultural resources participants perceived that they used in order to participate in activities.

Nardi (1996) discusses how activity theory incorporates strong notions of intentionality, history, mediation, collaboration and development in constructing consciousness. She claims that activity theorists argue that "consciousness is not a set of discrete disembodied cognitive acts (decision making, classification, remembering...) and certainly it is not the brain; rather consciousness is located in everyday practice: you are what you do" (p. 87). Nardi (1996) adds that what individuals do is firmly and inextricably embedded in the social context of which every person is an organic part. This social context is composed of both people (i.e. parents, educators, community leaders, and peers) and artifacts (i.e. physical tools, or sign systems such as human language). Since language is assumed to play a major role in an individual's learning trajectory, in the next section, I examine sociolinguist's Ben Rampton's view of language and Halliday's social semiotic theory of language and language learning as relevant theories to my inquiry.

## **SOCIAL THEORIES OF LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY**

### **Language, Values and Identity**

A language is much more than just a means of communication. Language can act as a symbolic marker of identity (Rampton, 1989, 1991, 1995) and hold such powerful symbolic value that it can be perceived as an institution, an entity in

its own right (Oakes, 2001 p.18). As previously mentioned, Rampton (1995) uses the terms 'expertise', 'allegiance' and 'affiliation' to refer to the cultural interpretations of an individual's relationship to language and the formation of his or her linguistic identity. When individuals become experts in a language, it does not necessarily mean that one will feel close to what they know. Individuals possessing language expertise may use their knowledge to demonstrate their allegiance or feign incompetence to express contempt for the target language. For example, Helena explained that she used the Greek to demonstrate her allegiance to being Greek:

*When I am close to someone or want to express understanding and and... make them feel welcome into our group... like in a get-together, at a party... I will use Greek to show that I am Greek too, and I acknowledge that you are also Greek. It's like giving the green light, to be open about my culture and the other's culture. (Interview with Helena 04-11-2002)*

In another interview excerpt, Periclis described situations where he felt that his "not knowing a language" was useful to him.

*When a telemarketer calls and is clearly a francophone... you know, he asks, Parlez-vous français? I sometimes say no. Not because I don't know the language... just because I don't want to deal with someone trying to sell me aluminum siding or something. Sometimes, the person may make an attempt to speak in English so then I just try to end the call by saying that I'm not interested in whatever product he's selling. You know, I could probably do that all the time, but*



*it's nice to also see how people react to me not knowing French. Sometimes they get rude or angry, or just hang up on me. When I'm face to face it's a little more difficult because I think my face betrays what I'm feeling... I've never been a very good actor! (Interview with Periclis 17-10-2002)*

Particular contexts and social situations determine if and how individuals will display their language allegiance. The notion of language expertise emphasizes *what one knows* about a language and culture rather than how one will choose to use it. The use of one's expertise lies in one's own hands. Language affiliation refers to the connection between individuals and the groups who are more directly linked to the language at hand. The notion of language affiliation is closely linked to the notion of inheritance. Inheritance means receiving a language from one's parents or family and connotes one's affective and linear ties to a particular language. When one "inherits" a language, it is often within social-cultural boundaries. However, inheriting a language does not necessarily mean that one's affiliation to the language is the strongest. It is possible that a stronger affiliation may be formed without the presence of language inheritance. The following excerpt reflects Periclis' observation about language affiliation without language inheritance.

*It was strange but I remember when I was growing up there was someone in my life called Θεία Πολάντ [Aunt Rolande] which was so bizarre... she was francophone and spoke Greek as well as any Greek person I knew back then! Of course, her name Rolande was totally not Greek so that's what gave her away. Apparently, when she went to Greece*

*with my uncle, she wouldn't come back (laughter) she loved it there! We kind of lost touch now but I think she even taught Greek. She really loved Greek! (Interview with Tilemahos 09-12-2002)*

In this excerpt, Tilemahos expressed his surprise but also his delight with his aunt Rolande, a woman who developed her ability to use Greek and formed a strong affiliation with the language. Rampton (1995) underlines this possibility by giving the example of bond between lovers. “[...] it may be more powerful than the link between parents and children” (p.343).

There are many ways in which individuals construct their linguistic identities. The construction of a linguistic identity is a phenomena that can be seen in multiple cultural groups, especially within linguistic minority groups, who may experience and envision “language shift”, “language loss” or “language death” on the the horizon (Fishman 1991). There are two relevant concepts that relate to these issues - *language crossing* (Rampton, 1995) and *code-switching* (Gumperz, 1982). Unlike “code-switching” (Gumperz, 1982) which functions as a device to claim membership and solidarity with a particular cultural group, crossing is a code alternation device “used by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language they employ” (Rampton, 1995: 280). This kind of switching involves alternation into languages that are not generally thought to belong to the individual. Rampton (1995) assumes that such switching creates movement across social and ethnic boundaries and raises issues of social

legitimacy. Thus, in order for crossing to be legitimate, speakers need to assess the situation and negotiate the “right” circumstances for language crossing.

In Rampton’s study of adolescents, he concluded that young people communicate through orientations to peer group norms in that they reproduce the peer group and situate it vis-à-vis other peer group norms and society at large.

Woolard (1989) conducted a study on the use of Catalan and Castilian in Barcelona. Her fieldwork showed that the choice of which language to use “was strongly influenced by the identity of the interlocutor” (p.55). With rare instances of conversational codes-switching, Woolard (1989) discovered that code-switching was inhibited by “generalized anxiety about ethnic boundaries” (p.56). For example, Woolard showed that Catalan was only addressed to people whose primary linguistic allegiance was to Catalan, and in mixed company and in public arenas, Castilian was chosen. Thus, language choice is intrinsically linked to issues of identity. Rampton (1995) explains that sense of origin and of place, language ability and allegiance are intricately tied up and will continuously be at issue. The reason for this ever-renewed reality is the fact that one ultimate definitive explanation, definition or solution cannot be applied to individuals whose experience are as unique as their perceptions of languages and cultures, their rationalizations and particular contexts.

## Language and Culture

Without the Greek language, there would probably not even be a Greek culture... everything would be lost! Except maybe the Greek blood that runs through our veins. (Tilemahos, personal communication, 09-22-2001)

Tilemahos, one of the participants, explains that language possesses a very strong connection to culture, even going as far as to say that without language, there could not be culture. Through my interviews with trilingual individuals, I was able to see that there indeed exists a symbiotic relationship between language and culture. For each of the three languages to be learned, developed and maintained, there exists a ubiquitous interaction between each language and its respective culture. The link between language and culture is mutually advantageous because it allows both to thrive. According to Fishman (1991), the link between language and culture can be described in three major ways: “indexically, symbolically and in part-whole fashion” (p.20).

*A language is indexically related to its culture*

Sapir (1921) was one of the first theorists to talk about the indexicality of language. This indexical link is described as the historical and intimate association that exists between a language and its culture. Fishman argues that “since the two [...] have ‘grown up together’ over an extensive period of time, they are better attuned to each other [...] than is any other language to that culture at that time” (Fishman, 1991, p.20). It is the language most closely associated with the culture that permits the expression of a culture’s artifacts and sociocultural concerns and

values. This is the case with the Greek language's culture-specific kinship systems within the Greek language. For example, the Greek word for the relationship between a couple and their *bestman* is **κουμπάρος** (m.) / **κουμπάρα** (f.) (pronounced – koubaros (m.) / koubara (f.)). However, this kinship terminology holds much more importance than the English term *bestman*. In the Greek culture, a **κουμπάρος** (m.) or **κουμπάρα** (f.) possesses rights, responsibilities and obligations towards a married couple that encompass those of a *best man*. It also includes financial contributions for certain aspects of the wedding, spiritual guidance and support for the couple and the future responsibilities towards the offspring of the couple. No other word could be used to describe the role played by this person because it plays a specifically Greek ethnocultural role thus affirming Fishman's (1991) claim of the indexical link between language and culture.

*A language is symbolically linked to culture*

This statement may appear significantly obvious because of the anecdotal popularity of symbols. Fishman argues that a language and a culture are symbolically linked “[b]y dint of long-term association, the two are not only well attuned to each other, but they stand for each other in the minds of insiders and outsiders too” (Fishman, 1991, p.23). Because language makes up a large portion of who we are, what we say, what we do, it represents our entire beings and our identities within many aspects of society. Just as how we say something conveys social meanings about our position and role within the higher social structure, the language we use says something about the cultural group we are a part of or aspire

to belong. Critical works by Gee (1996), Giroux (1992), Hall (1996, 2003), Rampton (1995) among others have stressed the fact that language use and identity cannot be considered in isolation from social practices and membership. In attempting to define identity from cultural theorist Hall's (1996) perspective, the recurring notion is that identity is never fixed and is always subject to change. Identity is multifaceted, in complex and often contradictory ways because knowledge of self emerges in relation to others in contexts that can shift. Hall (2003) stressed that identities function as points of identification and attachment because of their capacity to selectively include or selectively exclude particular groups of individuals. More often than not, the language we use stands for the particular culture it is linked to. Identity is tied to a sense of belonging which is often felt as a feeling that we are *insiders*, or that we are *outsiders*.

Socio-linguist Downes (1998) claims that speakers are expressive of identity by "intentionally yet unconsciously communicating affiliation or difference with a hearer or a group" (p.144). The symbolic link between language and culture is so strong that the use of a certain language allows the speaker to manifest and display cultural solidarity – that is referred to as a cultural act of identity (Rampton, 1991). According to the sociolinguist Gee, individuals shift their identity positions and discourses in order to express solidarity with a particular cultural group. Individuals vary their language use and their varieties of language to demarcate social identities by taking on "a particular social role that others will recognize" (Gee, 1996, p.127). When individuals are recognized by other members, this

recognition signals that they are insiders to that group. In most ideal situations where socio-political or linguistic issues do not negatively affect a language, the language stands for the truest form of the culture. Because language is the “major symbol-system of our species [... it is no surprise] that almost all of the languages of the world have come to stand for the particular ethnic collectivities that speak them” (Fishman, 1991 p.23).

*A language is linked to its culture in part-whole fashion.*

When the Greek poet Homer produced oral epics such as the Iliad and the Odyssey, he embedded within them, cultural knowledge, norms and traditional values of the Greek culture at the time. This link between cultural knowledge, norms and values can be understood by the fact that a partial identity exists between a language and a culture and its traditionally associated culture. In thinking about what constitutes a culture, one cannot help but list the traditional “songs, prayers, proverbs, tales, greetings, curses, blessings, the history, its teachings” (Fishman, 1991, p.24) which are verbal in nature. When a child grows up in a particular culture, he may or may not be taught these verbal forms in the specific culture’s associated language. However, the teaching of these verbal forms is customary in Greek family structure. Although a translation may be used to facilitate the comprehension of certain non-material cultural elements, one cannot for example, teach a child a traditional Greek saying in any other language than its original one.

I remember when I was a student in C.E.G.E.P. and decided to take a course on Ancient Civilizations. My non-Greek instructor lectured on the course matter with which I was more or less familiar. The lecture generated a strange feeling in me. I had never before heard something concerning Ancient Greece referred to in any language other than Greek. It seemed to lack the flavor, the charm and magic it held when I learned about Ancient Greece years ago as a student in Saturday Greek School in the Greek language. This personal vignette offers evidence of the fact that every language possesses figures of speech that are specific to the specific content of its associated culture. It is important to realize that to know a language, one must know its associated culture as they are linked in ways that are symbiotic in nature and thus are inseparable. With language, culture is a process that encapsulates so much of our identity, our values and essentially, it is the element that makes us human. Language has the function of bonding individuals to their culture by transmitting it to those who value and use it.

### **A Functional Theory of Language**

Becoming trilingual involves a learning process which is a complex, dynamic, and relational process (Maguire, 1999). In order for the learning to take place, language needs to be used as a mediation tool that will permit further learning. In considering language as tool of mediation for further learning also assumes that language is a social process, one that involves interactions between a child and family, teachers and/or a peer group. Halliday (1978) as well as many



other sociolinguists (Bernstein, 1971; Malinowski, 1960), systemic theorists, (Firth, 1969) theorized that language and social beings are linked.

In the case of the trilingual participants, their language use “in the context of familiar and frequent interactions with significant others” (O’Connor, 1998, p.91), may not only ensure the learning of the three languages but also ensure the learning of the social realities of which each language is a part. Halliday believed language learning to be a progressive process of meaning potential. Language is the principle means of cultural transmission. Therefore, although each context may possess potential, the meaning-making potential that will be constructed by each individual will be unique; different orientations exist in different environmental situations for different purposes with different interlocutors and contexts of situations (Halliday, 1978; Maguire, 1997).

The essential factors and conditions for learning involve the systematic relationship between two very important information systems, culture and language. Halliday (1978) theorized that individuals develop a set of meaning options realized in the semantic system because of their social participation in contexts of language use. Reaching the status of ‘trilingual’ is just like reaching a certain level in any field (i.e. in mathematics, to be able to solve algebraic equations). Language is socially constructed through the exchange of meanings during the entire journey of one’s life. Halliday (1985) argues that “[...] it is the uses of language that, over tens of thousands of generations, have shaped the system”(p.xi).

Halliday, a systemic linguist, developed his beliefs about the semiotic nature of language development within the framework of Firthian functionally oriented linguistics. Functional linguistics provides a descriptive framework in which semiotic realizations on the grammatical level are not treated as a mere formal phenomenon, but as semiotic resources that contribute to the communication processes and have some particular significance in relation to the cultural environments in which they are used. Deriving from functional linguistics, this semiotic view of language is based on the tenet that language is an integrated system that has evolved over time to satisfy the human need to convey meaning. For functional linguists such as Halliday (1978, 1985), and Martin (1984), language is organized in a functional way with respect to its uses and needs in particular contexts of situations.

The term *semiotic* signifies *meaning-making*, thus, a social-semiotic approach is one where meaning-making is embedded in a social context. Social semioticians view “meaning” as an active process which is generated through social interactions. Halliday’s account of the ontogenesis of language development includes continuity and transformation. Children’s language development is a process of actively learning how to mean – developing a meaning-potential together with the people they interact with in social contexts. Children do not acquire a language as a ready-made product. Halliday & Matthiessen (1999) argue that language evolves “emergently” as a higher-order semiotic system within an

ordered hierarchy of systems of increasing complexity which include physical, biological, social and semiotic systems.

Halliday (1980) assumes three attributes to language development: *learning language*, *learning through language*, and *learning about language*. *Learning language* is a process of mental construction in which others actively engage in. The language creating process cannot be successfully achieved alone. Children's first interactions are primarily with their parents, relatives or primary caregivers. Then, children move beyond the home into wider social groups that may include neighborhood and school friends as well as teachers. Language itself then becomes dealt with as educational knowledge and a tool for further learning. A school in particular then may take over responsibility for extending linguistic resources. Children continue to adapt their language to the different functions that they need in school and that they will need in life. *Learning through language* refers to language in the construction of reality. Halliday assumes that learning through language is the way in which children use language to build up a picture of the worlds in which they live. These include, the world that is around them, the world that is inside them, the world of their consciousness and the world of their imagination. Much like the construction of language itself, *learning through language* is an interactive process. *Learning through language* is the process of mental representation of a child's world view. The construct that is shared with others is that of the meaning potential – the language. How children develop and use that meaning potential to structure their experiences is unique to them.

*Learning about language* is the process of understanding the nature and function of language itself as a system. Just as knowledge of language is an unconscious understanding that all humans possess, knowing about language is tacit knowledge which allows users to talk, listen and understand. Halliday (1980) claims that language is “knowledge stored in the gut, so to speak (which is where many cultures locate true understanding), rather than knowledge stored in the head” (p.16). Language development is a continuous process which is complex in nature and which cannot be achieved outside of children’s contexts, or without their active roles in language and literacy events at home, at school and in other contexts.

In sum, Halliday (1980) argues that in any meaningful language event, children have the opportunity to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language. They learn language through the “doing” of language which includes, talking, listening, reading, and writing. They learn about language as they explore how language functions and the conventions that support communication. They learn through language as they focus on what it is they are learning. The three aspects of language development do not occur sequentially. Rather, Halliday (1980) argues that all three operate together within meaningful contexts thus fostering the supportive learning environments that are needed for language learners’ development. This social, semiotic, functional view of language learning has implications for learners who must function in more than one language and learning context, especially heritage language contexts.

## Defining Heritage Language

Teacher: Quelle est ta langue maternelle? Est-ce  
le français ou l'anglais? Student: Ma langue  
maternelle? Je parle le Grec à la maison... avec  
mon frère, ma sœur et mes parents...

(E. Konidakis personal memoirs 05-05-1999).

When I was in elementary school, I received formal French instruction, taught as a first language because of the fact that I attended French schools as a 'child of Bill 101'. Recall that in 1977, provincial language legislation affirmed specific provisions under which persons where eligible for instruction in Quebec. The provisions in Bill 101 did not allow parents who had not received instruction in English in Canada to send their children to English schools. This legislation was targeted at immigrants, which was what my parents were at this time. Prior to being asked about my mother tongue overtly by my grade 2 elementary school teacher, I remember having found something very intriguing about the way languages were labeled and referred to. In the student report card issued by the local school board of the region (under the supervision of the Quebec Ministry of Education – M.E.Q.), indicated grades for each course. The French language arts course was not listed as *Français* but rather as *langue maternelle*. I remember remarking on this fact as a child and wondering whether that meant that I should be speaking French at home and that the fact that I wasn't, did that mean that I was "doing something wrong". I grew up in a household where Greek was the primary language of communication.

My parents expressed the importance of maintaining our cultural roots and heritage language because it was a part of our identity. My father often told me that rejecting 'your Greek background was in fact, rejecting a very big part of yourself and your identity'. My parents signed me up for Saturday Greek school while I was in regular French elementary school during the week. At first, I felt indifferent about attending Greek school but soon learned, from my peers, that Saturday school was not the "cool" place to be on a Saturday morning. Like many of my peers, I felt that sleeping in and watching Saturday morning cartoons, while eating sugary cereal was a much easier and relaxed way to spend my time. Most of the peers from my regular school were francophone and not only did not need to attend heritage language school but rarely understood why I needed to do so. Because I was unavailable for play dates or sports on Saturday mornings, the gap that separated me from my francophone peers widened. While I always wanted to be a part of the 'mainstream group' by being just like them, I soon realized that this was not the case and would likely never be.

By the age of 10, I embraced everything Greek. I grew to love learning about my cultural heritage, even if attending Saturday school was demanding on my time and taxing on my friendships. Attending Greek Saturday school permitted me to learn how to read and write in Greek, as well as about my ancestors' history, religion, traditions and most impressively, accomplishments. The Greek culture's richness fed me what I had been missing while trying to be like my francophone peers. If I had not been strongly encouraged to speak Greek at home and with

relatives and had refused to attend heritage language school, my knowledge of the Greek language would not be as strong as it is today. The issue of heritage language maintenance or loss and family languages policies is virtually unexplored.

On the surface, the term *heritage* appears quite simple in meaning. The Canadian Heritage Language Institute Act (1991) even provides a simple definition: “Heritage language means a language, other than one of the two official languages of Canada that contributes to the linguistic heritage of Canada”. However, the concept of heritage language has not always had this neutral-to-positive connotation. Over time, the Canadian government has become increasingly welcoming and overt with respect to its position about the contributing role that heritage languages play within the Canadian mosaic. However, this is not the case with other countries (Valdes, 2000) such as the United States, for whom a heritage language speaker is defined as a speaker of a non-English language who has been raised in a home where the language is spoken, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English. Rather condescending and parochial, this definition gives the impression that the language spoken in the home environment is something other than English, and may perhaps be an impediment or hindrance to the acquisition and use of the English language. This ideological assumption underlies the politics of the English-only movement in the United States and created a deficit view of second language learners.

However, current researchers of heritage language contexts and multiple literacies (Maguire, 2001; Beer & Maguire, 2001; Cummins, 1983, 1989, 1993,

2000, 2001) among many others take a very different stance. Languages, especially heritage languages, are being seen as a “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Bourhis, 2001) and resourceful “funds of knowledge” (Moll & Dworkin, 1990) that can be highly beneficial to children’s development especially in a multiliterate and increasingly multilingual society. While multilingual literacies refers to literacy in multiple languages, multiliteracies refers to the multitude of literacies, such as computer literacy, media literacy, and mathematical literacy which are literacies that add to one’s knowledge and may assist them in contexts in which these multiliteracies are used. Funds of knowledge are inherent cultural resources such as cultural artifacts and bodies of knowledge, which underlie day-to-day activities, found within households and outside the school setting. Cultural capital can offer a wide range of functions that makes it difficult to define. In examining Bourdieu’s writings, Lamont & Lareau (1988) proposed to define cultural capital as:

[...] institutionalized, i.e. widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion, the former referring to exclusion from jobs and resources, and the latter, to exclusion from high status groups (p.156).

Cultural capital relates to specific groups of people who have certain characteristics that make them successful or not. The assumption is that academic culture provides a reproduction of society in the way that values are realized in use.



The inequalities of cultural capital lie with the responsiveness, structures and values of educational institutions. By realizing the benefits of maintaining a heritage language, individuals can attain the cultural capital that will enable personal empowerment and psychic equilibrium. This can be evidenced in a statement made by a participant during one of the interview sessions:

*When I embraced all the good things that were available to me as a Greek person... as a member of a Greek community, I sort of flourished! I became more open and willing to learn. Not only to learn about the Greek aspects of myself, but the... all the learning that could be had. I realized that I was in fact a part of several groups – that I belonged and that it would be foolish of me to ignore (Interview with Alexandra 12-21-2002).*

I consider a heritage language to be more than just a language other than English or French that contributes to the linguistic heritage of the country. A heritage language is a tool for reaching into a higher level of cultural conceptualization. A heritage language is a tool for embracing those newcomers, immigrants or refugees who make the effort and struggle to maintain their literacy in a heritage language and culture, as well as the language(s) and culture(s) of the country that welcomed them or those before them. In the next section, I discuss the relationship between the Greek language and literacy and the cultural allegiance to the Greek culture.

## Greek Language and Literacy

The Greek language and literacy must be appreciated in their historical context. For the Greeks, language has been of prime importance ever since approximately 300 A.D. when three learned men (Μέγας Βασίλειος, Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος Γρηγόριος ο Θεολόγος) known as Οι Τρεις Ιεράρχες (pronounced *E Tris Ierarhès*) were named the protectors of the Greek language. The Greek Orthodox Church has since raised these three religious figures to the level of saints who are revered by all Greek Orthodox persons and celebrated by the Greek Orthodox Churches on January 30<sup>th</sup> of every calendar year.

**Picture 20: Religious Icon of Οι Τρεις Ιεράρχες ( *E Tris Ierarhès* )**



Montreal Hellenic Community Archives

During the four century long Turkish occupation of Greece, the Turkish language was imposed as the official language of Greece. Schools and churches were burned to the ground while books, documents and anything pertaining to Greek

literacy, language or culture was confiscated and destroyed. This period marked the turning point for the Greek language to be considered as a core value of the Greek identity. Greek individuals' affective ties to the Greek language perpetuate their affiliation. Rampton (1995) claims that a genetic inheritance of a language can affect one's affiliation. This is true with children of Greek Diasporan individuals because of their cultural practices. Cultural practices include the expression of a desire for cultural and linguistic continuity. This desire was often manifested in the form of discussions with parents or elders about the history of Greece as well as the meaning of preservation of Greek. I remember when I was growing up, discussions about our ancestors' struggles to maintain Greek were common and effective in encouraging me to pursue studies in heritage language Greek school. Language expertise was never a goal for my parents but they along with heritage language teachers championed the idea that the better students would be in Greek, the more chances students would have of gaining language affiliation and belonging to a Greek community.

During Greece's Turkish occupation, students were forbidden to study the Greek language or anything pertaining to the Greek culture. This restriction prompted Greek Orthodox priests to create “**Κρυφά Σχολεία**” (hidden schools). These hidden schools were secretly being operated after the sun set by priests in the region who changed location almost every night to keep from being discovered. Locations were usually well-forested mountain tops or caves lit by candles and the light emitted by the moon. The following Greek poem expresses the children's experiences and hopes as a child.

Το Κρυφό Σχολειό

Φεγγαράκι μου λαμπρό, φέγγε μου να περπατώ,  
Να πηγαίνω στο σχολείο, να μαθαίνω γράμματα,  
Του Θεού τα πράγματα.

The Hidden School

My dear little moon, please light my way,  
To safely walk to school where I can learn many things  
God's wonderful things.

(Excerpt from my personal memoirs. Translated by Ephie Konidaris)

The strenuous circumstances that plagued Hellenic people between 1453 and 1828 forged an indissolvable link between them and their language. Even if the Greek language is no longer an object of persecution, the link has been formed. Taking together the pride of having defeated their suppressors and maintained the Greek language and culture within Greece, the Greek language has become a core value for Greek people. It is this profoundly engrained linguistic consciousness, generated by all these factors that builds the Greek aspects of a trilingual's identity. Being literate in Greek, a language whose existence "dates from 1400 B.C." (Horvath & Vaughan, 1991), also holds a great deal of prestige. The prestige of the Greek language stems from the exemplary works of philosophers and writers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle among many others in many additional fields. These works not only provide Greece with a great literary heritage that has continuously served as a model for future generations, but it has made the Greek language an aspect of 'Greekness' which commands respect, pride and a deep desire among

Greeks to preserve its existence. As a trilingual, myself, I remember my parents and Greek school teachers encouraging me to learn the Greek language.

### **Working Hard at the End of the Week**

*I remember dreading the end of the week because it meant working hard on the material for Greek school. Every Friday night I had to re-read the texts that were assigned as well as prepare for the dictation our teacher would give first thing in the morning... following the prayer. I stayed up late with my mother reading and preparing. I remember her dozing off and then abruptly waking up and telling me although it may be difficult at times, it would pay off in the summer when we would travel to Greece. I needed to be able to speak and read and write in Greek and my mother often used this as a reason for me to keep working. Summers in Greece were like living on an oasis where I would be free to run and play until the sun set. The sun always seemed to set really late in the day (Personal memoirs, E.Konidakis. 2000).*

In those young formative years, I now realize that they were helping me form the part of my identity that makes me the trilingual Canadian that I am today. I can see that the teaching of Greek not only worked for the maintenance and spread of a beautiful language and literature, but for strengthening Hellenic unity within a country in which English and French are its official languages. The maintenance of Greek language was accomplished within family settings and Heritage Language Saturday schools.

## **Heritage Language Schools**

The Hellenic Community of Montreal was established in 1906, and in 1910 the first Greek school named “Platon” was established. The first of its kind in North America, “Platon” was organized as a regular day school which required parents to provide for part of the expenses in the form of tuition fees as well as school uniforms. Many Greek parents chose to send their children to regular public school to avoid the extra expense and to still have their children formally instructed in the heritage language.

In 1988, Parliament passed the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. The intent of the Act was to foster the development of a society based on inclusion and social cohesion, regardless of race, ethnic origin, or religion. With this Act many ethnic communities across Canada received federal government subsidies to help fund the teaching of heritage languages in the form of after-school language programs. Hellenic communities across Canada (namely the Greek Communities in Ontario) took advantage to this offer and responded to the demand of parents to have Greek language classes. In Montreal, the Hellenic communities opted to use the funds to establish their own afternoon or Saturday schools where the teaching of Greek was under community control and the curriculum went beyond language instruction to include the teaching of the Greek Orthodox religion, Greek history, geography and culture. With the help of federal government subsidies, the Hellenic Community of Montreal provides courses in which children can learn the Greek language and culture. Heritage language Greek schools in Montreal are privileged to receive

textbooks which are donated by the Greek Education Ministry. They are organized by subject and grade. For example, there are reading anthologies such as the following title: Η ΓΛΩΣΣΑ ΜΟΥ. Για την τρίτη δημοτικού. ΟΡΓΑΝΙΣΜΟΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΣ ΔΙΔΑΚΤΙΚΩΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΩΝ. (115 pages). [translation - My Language, for children in elementary]. This reading anthology is geared towards children in grade 3. It contains both originate stories and stories based in Greek mythology. The textbook contains colorful illustrations on every page to accompany every story. There are questions at the end of each story as well as space for children to write their responses.

Thus, instruction of Heritage Languages in Canada is encouraged and for a certain time was even financially assisted by the Canadian government. This was not always the case. With the implementation of the 1988 *Multiculturalism Act*, it was recognized that ethnic communities in some provinces would benefit from heritage languages being taught within the public school system. This recognition was due to the fact that the entire ideology of ethnic relations in Canada shifted. In 1969, both French and English became officially recognized as being of equal status and were given the title official languages of Canada with the 1969 *Official Languages Act*. This act enabled all Canadian citizens to be served in either of the official languages within Federal institutions, and to educate their children in the school of their choice. Just as the *Official Languages Act* seemed to be remedying the linguistic situation of the country, francophones realized and spoke out about how this act did little to benefit them, especially Francophones outside Quebec.

This public outcry for linguistic recognition led by the country's Francophone population, incited ethnic groups to make requests for the protection of their languages by way of heritage language education within the public school system. Therefore, the *Act of Multiculturalism* was a reflection of the new face of Canada, as the policies clearly stated that it would treat ethnic groups as bearers of Canadian cultures and assist them to maintain their languages (Cobarrubias, 1983).

For the Greek communities in Canada, the *Act of Multiculturalism* was truly beneficial. Public schools throughout Canada started offering after school heritage language programs in the Greek language, which included the study of the language and its grammar, as well as history and religion and other courses. However in Quebec, Greeks took a different route, as the Montreal Hellenic community received funds from the federally run program, they established Greek Saturday schools. The longer hours permitted them to teach Greek language, culture, religion, history, mythology, geography and even Greek folkloric dances, in a much more intensive manner. The Greek government graciously donated and still does, all the textbooks used in Greek Saturday schools in Canada. Within Canada, it is the Montreal Hellenic Community that has exhibited the most zealotry in establishing schools where the children of Diaspora could learn the Greek language and culture and build links to Hellenism. In addition to the Saturday Greek schools, they established semi-private elementary day schools partially funded by the Quebec Ministry of Education and partially by the parents of the attendees. While Greek trilingual day schools offer the curriculum prescribed



to all public French schools in the province, they additionally offer Greek classes. Parents or caregivers sending their children to Greek trilingual day schools finance the Greek portion of the curriculum as well as uniforms and activities pertaining to the Greek language and culture.

Four Socrates school campuses and one École primaire Démosthène offered the same curriculums taught in schools of the provincial public school system (M.E.Q. curriculum). In addition, 27% of the class time is devoted to Greek language instruction and other Greek studies such as Greek history, philosophy, geography, mythology and Greek Orthodox religion. They provide students of Hellenic descent with unique learning opportunities which include up-to-date textbooks approved of by the Hellenic Board of Education which is a branch of the Greek government, and highly qualified teachers, many of whom are hired from Greece in order to maximize exposure to Hellenism. For those students who decide to pursue post-elementary Greek studies, they may attend either the *Platon*, *Aristotelis* or *Omiros* schools, which offer approximately six hours of courses per week to students who attended Greek day schools.

The largest wave of Greek migration to Canada took place during the 50's, 60's and early 70's. Since 1981, there have been very few new immigrants from Greece. Tamis & Gavaki (2002) even go so far as to call "immigration from Greece, closed" (p.126). With scarcely any Greek immigrants and the low birth rate in Canada, the number of students attending Greek school has drastically declined. During the 1970s, the Greek school system was at its peak and operated

over 60 schools whereas today, the number of schools is now down to 20. The onus of maintaining Greek communities, churches and schools and ensuring their existence and continuity, lies with the current members and their offspring. Since most things change over time, it will be interesting to see how the Greek Heritage Language and Greek Day school situation will change and what effect this will have on the learning and maintenance of the Greek language and culture. Maintaining Greek Day schools and Saturday Greek schools undoubtedly takes effort. The promise of being able to use the Greek language in Greece to communicate with family and relatives is definitely an attraction to attend Greek school. The possibility of studying the Greek language and culture at the college and university level is also quite appealing. According to the local community media (Montrealers can access two bi-weekly Greek language radio programs), an agreement was signed between Greece and three Montreal universities (McGill, Concordia, and Université de Montréal) for an Inter-university Center for Hellenic Studies. This increased recognition of the importance of Hellenism along with the generous donations from the Canadian federal government and the government of Greece are helpful in supporting programs which draw individuals who are of Hellenic background to learn the Greek language and auspiciously, the Greek culture and maintenance of Greek literacy.

## **THEORIES OF LITERACY**

The complex issues surrounding language, literacy and multiliteracy are increasingly so in Quebec for many reasons but particularly because of the

province's language policy enacted in 1976. A few demolinguistic facts must be borne in mind when discussing literacy and multiliteracy or theories of literacy in this context. The province of Quebec was negatively affected from a cultural standpoint when in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a sharp decline in the province's birth rate. What this meant was that the Quebec Francophones risked losing their demographic advantage over the Anglophones and Allophones who were immigrating and settling into Quebec. The Anglophones saw their "group" grow with every year that passed due to fact that the offspring of immigrants enrolled in English language schools. According to Levine (1990), if the low birth rates were to prevail, Francophones risked becoming a linguistic minority in Montreal – the economic heart of the province. The realization of this fact prompted the enactment of language legislation. This legislation did not only make French the only official language of the province, but mandated that the children of immigrants (allophones) be educated in French language schools. Indeed, the enforced language policy impacted the province's approach to literacy and children's access to literacy in different languages. In the next section, I examine the concept of literacy practices within the "New Literacies" studies framework.

### **Literacy Practices: "New Literacy Practices"**

What has come to be termed the "New Literacy Studies" (Gee, 1991; Street, 1995) is a tradition that focuses on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice. "New Literacy Studies" researchers are interested in school literacy, multiple literacies and in smaller scale literacies, such as those of resistance and

power. They use understandings of individuals' emerging experiences with literacy in their particular milieu to address broader educational questions about the learning of literacy and the need to switch between literacy practices required in different contexts. A social practice view includes the recognition of multiple literacies that vary according to time, space and place. "New Literacy Studies" addresses the issue of what can be considered as literacy practice at any time and in any space and examine power relations as they pertain to dominant and marginalized groups in society.

Literacy theorists (Street, 2000; Gee, 2000; Brandt, 2001; Coles, 2001; Barton 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000) built conceptual frameworks to explore the meanings of literacy and define literacy as social practice. The notion of literacy as practice may be characterized as either "autonomous" or "ideological" (Street, 1984). The "autonomous" model is one which is both limited and limiting. It assumes that literacy in itself will have effects on other social and cognitive practices and blindly imposes western conceptions of literacy onto other cultural groups. Street (2003) suggests that the autonomous model of literacy "disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it so that it can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal and that literacy as such will have these benign effects" (p.1).

The "New Literacy Studies" theorists repudiate this stance because it is limited to formal instruction. Rather, they propose a more flexible and expansive view that literacy practices vary from context-to-context and from one culture to

another, thus making the uses of literacies context specific. Central to these assumptions is the notion that literacy is more than merely a set of individual and autonomous skills but rather a set of social practices mediated by the use of language. Ivanic, (1998) a cultural theorist argues the following:

Practices is a much broader and more powerful term than 'skills'. Social practices are ways of acting in and responding to life situations, and literacy practices are a subset of these. Some people's social practices in response to some life situations including literacy ('using written language') those social practices are their 'literacy practices' (p.65).

Cultural groups use and interact with language for specific social and personal ends. They achieve this complex interaction by using social and literacy practices which are socio-culturally shaped, ideologically patterned, and historically situated (Barton & Hamilton, 1999).

Street's 'ideological' model of literacy begins with the premise that literacy is a social practice, not a neutral technical skill. This assumes a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices. The concept of literacy practices entails the "social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" (Street, 1984, p.1) as well as the literacy events which Anderson, Teale & Estrada (1980) define as occasions during which individuals "attempt to comprehend graphic signs" (pp.59-65). Heath (1982) characterized literacy events as "occasions in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative

processes” (p.93). However, Street argues that literacy practices is a proven concept which encompasses events and patterns of activity surrounding all literacy events. The action of bringing concepts and social models of literacy events, i.e. describing the nature of the literacy event, explaining what makes it work, is what gives literacy practices/events meaning. Literacy is a set of socially patterned activities that develop and spread through a process of socialization. Street (1995) argues that engaging with literacy is entirely a social act. Thus, literacy practices are the ways in which individuals think about and engage in speaking, reading and writing and other modes of communication within their cultural contexts. However, in dealing with literacy practices, it is imperative to acknowledge the inter-relationships of literacies with the workings of power and authority in particular contexts. Devine (1994) claims that “all literacy behavior reflects attitudes, values and practices of particular social, cultural, and/or ethnic groups” (p. 225). In this sense, the Quebec context is an interesting one to explore different manifestations of literacy.

## **Manifestations of Literacy**

The Brazilian literacy theorist Paulo Freire (1970, 1976) assumed that literate people held a decided advantage over illiterate people. Much of his work centered on dismissing the pedagogical *banking education* model in which educators owned knowledge and deposited it in the minds of students. He sought an education model that focused on *consciousness-raising* which meant that students prior knowledge would be valued and encouraged. Freire (1970, 1975,

1976; Freire & Machado, 1987) inspired students to “read the word and the world”, in other words, to learn to read and at the same time, to critique social relations of inequality. Freire believed that to be literate is to become fully human. Critical literacy emphasizes students’ places in the world both physically and intellectually. Freire holds that a critical literacy as such can enable students to understand themselves as becoming and as capable of constructing and therefore capable of changing their reality (1970). Literacy is a means of gaining and holding power.

In societies that are print dependent, individuals who are incapable of reading and writing find themselves at a tremendous disadvantage in school, in the job market, and even in personal interactions thus making personal growth and self-fulfillment difficult. In this sense, literacy is detached from specific social contexts and considered an acquired skill. When this skill is mastered, it can be transferred to “new encounters with print, exclusive of the social or cultural context in which that print is found” (Devine, 1994, p. 221). Thus, attaining those context-free skills can be seen as a personal achievement, a personal quality or even as a characteristic of that culture. Not mastering those skills in the autonomous model, becomes a personal failure. When considering literacy in this light, the connection of literacy to power and social context is confounded through the distance that is placed between social contexts and literacy attainment and access to practices.

The autonomous view has long been debunked by many literacy theorists, (Gee, 1985; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole; 1981) who show the importance of

social contexts in understanding literacy. For example, when Heath (1983) studied three different socio-economic groups in a rural community of North Carolina, she discovered that while each of the three groups acquired literacy skills, they did so for very different uses and in different ways. Although all three groups had acquired literacy skills, only one of the three groups succeeded in the conventional reading and writing exercises offered in the school setting. From the point of view of mainstream culture, only this group could be considered literate because it was the only one capable of engaging in *proper literacy behavior* in the classroom. Heath (1985) argues that the groups who were considered literacy failures needed to be studied by examining the social and cultural contexts in which reading and writing takes place for them. Scribner (1986) asserts that literacy must be regarded as “a social achievement” (p.8). In order to understand literacy behavior within minority groups, social context must be examined carefully because not only does it reflect attitudes, values and practices but it is tied to the set of values that are particular to them as a group. Each cultural group and community views and deals with literacy in ways that are unique to them. Both dominant and minority cultural groups’ literacy practices are embedded in their own particular world view. Each is “but one cultural way of making sense among many others” (Gee, 1986, p.731). By examining learners’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as their relationships and attitudes towards the mainstream literacy practices of the dominant culture, educators, researchers and policy makers may gain insights into



understanding literacy and its different manifested forms among members of linguistic and cultural minorities in multilingual contexts.

### **Forms of Literacy**

The term “multiliteracies” is a term used to reflect the diversity of modes of communication as well as the diversity of cultural referents. A group of international educators from around the world known as the “New London Group”, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, regularly gather to discuss emerging issues in the field of literacy and multiliteracy. They assume that multiliteracy “emphasizes how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of [our] working, civic, and private lives” (New London Group, 1996, p.60). It is important to be able to live, work and play in a diversity of cultures and in a multitude of representational forms. Multiliteracies is a term used to signify two facets of contemporary social studies of literacy: “the multiplicity of communication channels related to literacy, and the “increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires the mastery of many more literacies (multiple literacies) than were required even just a few years ago especially in a multicultural society like Montreal, Quebec.

Multilingual literacies refers to literacy in multiple languages while multiple literacies implies literacy in a whole array of modes. For instance, media literacy is one of the literacies considered relevant to learners both young and old. The Canadian Association for Media Literacy considers media literacy to be an

expanded version from the traditional view of literacy. Media literacy is the ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings and how they are organized. Essentially, media is a term used for discussing matters concerning communication therefore, media literacy is an attempt to make individuals more comfortable, more critical and more conversant in methods of communication such as computers, art, television, billboards and many more.

Ivanic (1998) points out, the word *literacy* is often used to refer to “the ability to use written language” (p.57). This view of mere functional literacy has been critiqued. For example, the expression “literacy campaigns” refers to campaigns aimed at developing “the ability to use written language” (Ivanic, 1998, p.57). Over time, literacy has come to signify “the ability to use” certain types of texts or “the ability to function in particular types of environments” (Ivanic, 1998, p.58). Thus, the expression “oral literacy” means the ability to use oral texts, and the expression “computer literacy” means the ability to use computers. A growing population, combined with greater mobilization, has created a more diversified society thus increasing exposure to multiple cultures, languages and literacies. Trilinguals in contexts such as that of Montreal, encounter both multiple literacies and *literacy in more than one language*.

Researchers such as Cummins and Sayers (1999) and Williams & Capizzi-Snipper (1990) distinguish a variety of forms of literacy such as functional literacy and critical literacy. *Functional literacy* implies a level of reading and writing that enables people to function appropriately in social and employment situations

typical of late twentieth century industrialized countries. Cummins (1994) notes that “functional literacy is also sensitive to changes in the status of languages in a particular society” (p. 326). For example, Cummins (1994) describes the status of the French and English languages within Quebec. During the past fifteen years, French has gained significant strength. Hence, it has become considerably more difficult for those with limited literacy in French to function adequately within Quebec society. Prior to this, high levels of literacy in English may have been sufficient for competent functioning and advancement in the workplace. Clearly, the changing status of the language has rendered a certain proportion of non-Francophones - whose literacy skills were weak - “functionally illiterate”(p. 326).

*Critical literacy* as earlier discussed in the works of educational activist Paulo Freire, highlights the potential of written language as a tool that encourages people to analyze the division of power and resources in their society and work to transform archaic and discriminatory societal structures. From the *critical literacy* perspective, one must question who defines the criteria of “adequacy” with respect to the different forms of literacy. One must also question the social purposes that are aimed at by making use of such definitions. McLaren & Lankshear (1993) argue that:

[...] critical literacy becomes the interpretation of the social present for the purpose of transforming the cultural life of particular groups, for questioning the tacit assumptions and unarticulated presuppositions of our current cultural and social

formations and the subjectivities and capacities for agenthood that they foster (p. 424).

What constitutes literacy and the ways of using literacy differ dramatically from one society to another and from one social group to another. However, even within the same cultural and linguistic group, there may be immense differences in the uses to which literacy is put. The way individuals speak, the language(s) individuals use and the interactions individuals have with others are what help shape them. Shor & Pari (1999) assume that it is through words and other actions that individuals build themselves in a world that is building them. The world affects the different identities individuals build and carry throughout life. It encourages the challenging of the status quo in an attempt to locate an alternative path for the social construction of self. Thus, *critical literacy* is a process of learning that allows individuals to become conscious of their experiences and to view these as historically constructed within power relations. A critical individual is able to examine one's own ongoing development while making sense of the contexts that shape them.

## **Literacy and Littératie**

Ethnographic research on literacy began in Canada in the early 1980s. In the mid-1990s, research in literacy expanded into research in multilingual contexts (Maguire, 1995) and more recently, in heritage language settings (Maguire & Beer, 2002; Curdt-Christiansen, 2001; Yoshida, 2001). Issues of literacy and multiliteracy in the cosmopolitan city of Montreal, and the province of Quebec are

at the forefront for good reasons. Quebec is a context in which French is spoken by a large majority of the province's population and Montreal is a city where communities speak in languages from all over the world. The interacting contexts offer a diversity of sites where examining multilinguals' expression of self and identity construction is possible and interesting.

According to D'Anglejan (1994), these omni-important issues of literacy had been obscured by the province's intense preoccupation with the teaching and learning of French. Over the past three decades, the priority of Quebec policymakers have placed what appears to be all their energies towards protecting and improving the quality of spoken and written French – and of course to make it as widespread as possible in all facets of public life. As D'Anglejan (1994) states: “the focus has been primarily on the code itself” (p.284). Interestingly, the issue of terminology surfaces in this discussion. D'Anglejan (1994) explains that in the French language, there is no true equivalent to the English term *literacy*. In French, *alphabétisation* is commonly used; yet it denotes the acquisition of basic skills that leads to an autonomous view of literacy. According to D'Anglejan (1994), “many Francophone specialists feel [that this term] is inadequate to deal with the very much broader range of concepts dealt with in contemporary writings on literacy”. (p. 282). Therefore, many university researchers have taken it upon themselves to use the term *littératie* rather than alphabetization to suggest a more expansive view of literacy.

Since education is under provincial jurisdiction in Canada, the responsibility of dealing with literacy in Quebec rests with researchers and provincial policymakers. With the changing demographic patterns in Quebec and the demands of new technologies in the workplace, educators, researchers and policymakers have begun addressing these issues. However, in conducting any research where the goal is literacy for all, in a multiethnic society, it is imperative to acknowledge the connections between literacy and culture. According to D'Anglejan (1994) there are two major factors that have resulted in the scarcity of literacy programs in Quebec geared to the specific needs of immigrants are as follows. First, D'Anglejan (1994) states that this lack may be a reflection of the high level of government intervention in "virtually all aspects of social life, which has characterized the process of nation building in Quebec over the past three decades" (p. 286). Second, since immigration, education, manpower and social services come under different jurisdictions, there may have been "a little cross-fertilization among the governing bodies involved hence prompting the administrative priorities to take precedence over the pedagogical concerns" (p. 287).

Literacy, multiliteracy and multilingual literacies have emerged as the priorities due to the realization that the *face of Quebec* has changed dramatically. In a culturally heterogeneous society, literacy ceases to be a characteristic inherent solely in the individual. It becomes "an interactive process that is constantly

redefined and renegotiated, as the individual transacts with the socially fluid surroundings [...]" (Ferdman 1990 p.187).

### **Literacy Development by Means of Practice Engagement**

Literacy has been described as a set of social or cultural practices and its participants as a community of practitioners. It is a set of socially patterned activities which develop and spread through a process of socialization which may include but are not limited to formal instruction (Reder, 1994,p.34). Within the relevant literacy literature for my inquiry of trilinguals is *Practice Engagement Theory*. Reder (1994) states that this theory "assumes that the development and organizational properties of an individual's literacy are shaped by the structure and organization of the social situations in which literacy is encountered and practiced" (p.48). Thus, it is assumed that individuals acquire literacy skills through their participation in various kinds of literacy such as reading, writing, and other practices occurring across different situations.

Moreover, practice engagement theory holds that literacy development "is driven by qualities of individual's *engagement* in particular literacy practices" (Reder, 1994, p.48). Engagement includes a complete range of elements which may include the role of literacy within the home environment and inside the classroom and other environments. This "engagement" can either contribute to the prospering of the learner's literacy development or contrastively hinder this acquisition and development. This particular theory seeks to account for the rich variety and patterning of literacy within as well as across cultural groups by emphasizing the

patterns of individuals' access to and participation in various roles within specific literacy practices. Reder (1994) identifies three aspects of literacy practices: *technology*, *social*, and *social meaning*. He assumes that individuals may engage with any or all of these three aspects in shifting and often unequal ways.

Members of different societies have different ways of incorporating literacy into their lives. This fact is affirmed by the many cross-cultural studies which have been conducted over the years (Goody, 1968, 1986; Heath, 1983; Reder, 1987; Maguire, 1994; Schieffelin & Gilmore, 1986; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). These ethnographic studies demonstrate the often dramatic cultural variations that exist in the ways individuals deal with literacy in their daily lives. The focus of these studies has primarily been based on the individuals' interactions with written text. Thus, there is a need to explore interactions between learners and influencing elements such as influencing persons (i.e.: parents, siblings, teachers, role models, etc.), activities (i.e.: community organized events, extra curricular activities, etc.) and contexts (i.e.: home, school, community center, church, etc.). Scribner & Cole (1981) argue that the literacy practices of a cultural group may be as specific to them as are their religious practices, house-building practices, medical practices, and so forth.

Language is often used to display or to hide affinities to certain groups in society. Sociolinguists such as Fishman (1972) used the concept of social meaning to describe the social motivations guiding multilingual individuals' language choice in specific contexts. Because multilingual individuals are members of multiple



social groups they balance multiple roles and status. Multilingual individuals become aware of the social meanings of language choice for each context in which they find themselves. However, little is known about how they accomplish and do this let alone their own perceptions and evaluative orientations.

Reder (1994) states that “there have been [...] attempts to extend and apply this concept of social meaning to literacy, i.e.: Fishman, 1972; Reder & Green, 1983; Spolsky, 1981; Stubbs, 1980; Szwed, 1981) (p.45). Social meanings are associated with literacy choices the same way that social meanings are associated with language choices. Individuals may engage in literacy practices for reasons they believe will bring them closer to the particular social or cultural groups or avoid certain literacy practices if it is distance they are seeking (Rampton, 1995). This situation could be manifested in their choice of reading material, their choice of language when they communicate and write, as well as their choices of activities and contexts which themselves contain social meanings. Street (1984) assumes that literacy is constitutive of a society’s power structures. Any literacy practice one chooses will indicate something about one’s social positioning, access or lack of access to that society’s power distribution and thereby the social distribution of literacy and literacies.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I examined theories of learning and theories of literacy that were relevant to my theoretical framework. In the first section on the theories of learning, I examined social constructivism and activity theory. In the second

section, on social theories of language and identity, I examined the inter-relationships among language, values and identity. I located myself within Halliday's theory of language development which permitted me to discuss the way in which I linked the concept of language to that of culture. In the third section titled Theories of Literacy, I defined literacy practices, world views and raised pertinent issues concerning literacy. I discussed literacy development, social meanings, cultural practices and explained the concept of identity as it pertains to becoming and being literate. In chapter 5, I unveil the six participant portraits. Each portrait is as unique as its subject yet similar to the other in its thematic segmentation and richness in presentation.

**ΠΕΜΠΤΟ ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟ: ΕΞΗ ΠΟΡΤΡΑΙΤΑ ΤΩΝ  
ΣΥΜΜΕΤΕΧΩΝ ΠΟΥ ΕΓΗΝΑΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΡΙΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ:  
ΔΗΛΩΣΕΙΣ ΕΞ ΤΟΠΟΘΕΤΗΣΕΩΣ ΤΩΝ**

**CHAPTER 5: SIX PORTRAITS OF BECOMING AND BEING  
TRILINGUAL: POSITIONS OF ENUNCIATION**

**Overview of the Chapter**

[...] there is the issue of how each person we encounter is more than the totality of his or her exposure to context and culture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Hall (2003) assumes that “cultural identities come from somewhere, [and] have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation.” (p.236). Bakhtin (1981) distinguished the meaning of the utterance in discourse from the signification of the utterance. He claimed that signification signifies nothing, but possesses the potentiality of signifying in a concrete theme. Bakhtin observed that “no utterance in general can be attributed to the speaker exclusively, it is the product of the interaction of the interlocutors, and, broadly speaking, the product of the whole social situation in which it has occurred” (Todorov, 1984, p. 30). The theme or meaning of an utterance should be defined as *unique* since it results from the encounter of signification with a context of enunciation that is equally *unique*.

I constructed six participant portraits by examining the data collected over the span of two years of regular dialogue via telephone and in-person audio-recorded interviews. The in-depth interviews that became narrative interviews that I

conducted with each participant enabled me to examine the trilingual identity each adult constructed. Becoming trilingual and being trilingual is an ongoing process of identity construction. Identities are, as Hall (2003) asserts, “the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (p.236). The six portraits invite an examination of the names the participants attribute to themselves today and those they had attributed to themselves in the past.

Becoming trilingual and living as a trilingual individual in a multicultural setting such as Montreal is a complex, on-going negotiated process of socio-cultural and linguistic identity construction. To some extent, identities are constructed by social structures. An important aspect of identity construction is the past-present relation and its reconciliation (Sarup, 1996). The past is something that affects self-representation because it is through recollections of the past that individuals represent themselves to themselves. The past is made up of the stories and the events individuals experience in their lives. The present is marked by past experiences but can never fully be defined because it is constantly evolving.

There are two different ways of thinking about cultural identity (Hall, 1996, 2003; Grossberg, 1996). The first position defines cultural identity in terms of one shared culture while the other explores points of difference that are often deep and quite significant. The first position is culturally unique and relies mainly on cultural codes such as folk traditions, religion, rural dialects and the ‘sacred’ geography of the land. One’s true self hides inside the many other, more superficial selves which

individuals with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. This position on cultural identity works on the premises of a common history, a common ancestry and shared cultural codes. The second position relies heavily on the individual's experience of their culture and defines cultural identity as a matter of *becoming* as much as it is a matter of *being*. Researchers who embrace the second position think of what constitutes *what or who one really is*, must take into account the points of similarity, as theorists who embrace the first position of cultural identity, but also, the points of difference that are born out of the "continuous play of history, culture and power" (Hall, 2003. p.394) and which constitute *what we have become*.

Researchers who embrace the second position do not see cultural identity as a fixed monolithic concept but rather as something that is fluid because the world is in constant flux. It is not possible to speak of *what we used to be* without considering the fact that history has intervened between then and now. I use an adapted model for describing cultural identity. It is a hybrid model that is made up of the two positions on cultural identity I described. I use the first position on cultural identity to discuss the Hellenic culture as a self-contained system which consists of certain attributes and historical experiences which are neither malleable with time nor with events. These include a common history, a common ancestry and the feeling of pride that is attached to a diasporic Hellenic identity. I use the second position on cultural identity to show that each individual speaks from a particular place and a particular time and context. Both history and culture are specific to that individual even if there may be commonalities with the larger community. Each individual speaks and

writes from what Hall (2003) assumes to be “a position of enunciation”. Cultural identities may include certain immutable realities such as cultural practices and beliefs but they can never be perceived as finished historical facts. Building a trilingual cultural identity requires individuals to reflect on the common cultural codes and traditions but by the same token, also requires them to examine and reflect on their own life trajectories in order to construct those points of identification that will define their own personal cultural identity.

### **A Portrait of Helena: Three Microcosms and Excelling**

*“I come from a hard-working family”* says Helena. Her family is neither affluent or privileged and has experienced struggles and triumphs. She is proud of her family because without them, she thinks that she probably “wouldn’t be who she is today” - a happy, successful, self-confident trilingual lawyer making plans for her future. When I first meet Helena, it was clear that she had a lot of things that she wanted to share with me. I recall when she sat behind the large mahogany desk in her downtown law office, and smiled as she told me about how excited she was about being a participant in my project. I vividly remember that she told me that she had to work hard to get to where she is today especially considering the fact that neither of her parents spoke much English or French. Helena describes her hometown as *“a typical small Québécois town.”* She said: *“I was obliged to learn French, to... to be... to become trilingual”*. Helena makes reference to “Bill 101 children” who although they may have had an affinity for languages and may have wanted to learn French

and become trilingual, they were legally forced to attend French schools and could not access the English public school system.

*It created some negative feelings, it's like when you are a child and your mom tells you to clean up your room...when you're planning to clean up your room (laughter) you do it, you were going to anyway, but you do it with spite. (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

In this excerpt, Helena talks about her feelings toward having been subjected to the constraints of Bill 101. She explained that regardless of the existence of laws determining her language of instruction, her inclination would have been to become trilingual. In the excerpt, she gives the example of being told to do something – as a child, cleaning up her room - which she had already set out to accomplish. At the end of the excerpt, Helena shows her feelings toward the law by saying “[...] you do it with spite” because she claims to have intended to learn French. Helena explained that for her, learning French would have been something she would have done because of ‘my parents’ influence and eventually, I saw that without French, life would be quite difficult, especially in this province”.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: French Experience**

*I knew that I needed to learn French... from a very young age... very early on. [...] in order to make friends, in order to excel in your work, in order to excel in your studies, to be part of the group (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Growing up in a small town that was predominantly Francophone had its challenges. Helena often spoke of her struggles to fit in with the other kids. Helena exudes confidence now but her reflections about when she was growing up tell a different story. She speaks of times when she felt that she did not quite fit in with the other children.

*I was always the smallest, the shortest kid in class...and I was never a bossy child, a bossy person. I was always told, by my parents, well, mostly by my mother...to be polite and to show kindness, no matter what (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Her petite frame and her mild-mannered ways undoubtedly may have made it difficult for her to stand up to the bullies whom she felt used to ridicule her about her differences. Helena explained that as a person of Greek background, many of her habits were different from other students. She recalls:

*My mom made most of my clothes, so I never really wore anything anyone else wore... the cool kids had... I remember they had Natalie Simard clothes. But, there's more...the way I dressed and the lunches I had where just... it was not such a big deal you know? Other things, made even more difference. The biggest thing was the way I thought, what was important to me was not usually what was important to other kids. I had very strong family values and a very strong desire to succeed... in whatever I was doing. My goal as a child was to learn, and improve myself... not so much to play, to have fun...or to you know, to get candy, like Jerry Seinfeld says in one of his shows, my only purpose was to get*



*candy, no no, that's just a joke (laughter. (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

In this excerpt, Helena describes how her socio-cultural and economic frame of reference as different from that of her peers. Because there were additional obstacles for her to surpass in order to reach both simple goals such as completing her school year and her personal goals which included learning to speak French as well as native speakers in her town. I return to her explanation: *"The other kids, the majority were French, Québécois... saw the elements that made me non... not fully ... like them, plus, I was a straight A student so... It wasn't always easy to deal with them"*. She describes times when she wished she were not of Hellenic descent.

*I didn't want anyone to know that when I left school and the school yard, entered my parents' house I... I didn't speak French... I didn't want anyone to say that that girl doesn't even speak French with anyone else... but us! (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Helena spoke of her need to feel loved and accepted by her peers and her teachers. This was a weight she regards having had to bear: how to be accepted. Her solution was to work hard and excel. For Helena, excelling in whatever she undertook became a major value because she perceived hard work and excelling would permit her to reach her goals. She explains: *"[...] you have to understand that excelling in whatever you do is very important for me regardless of what the thing I was doing was... Whatever it is that I'm doing, I have to excel at it."* Helena's drive to excel was and still is remarkable. When she self-reported this drive to me, I wondered about

the effects such pressure likely had on her and questioned her about this drive to excel during a number of our meetings.

The first time I questioned her about this issue, she recounted several stories. in a series of quick vignettes. One vignette that was particularly revealing included Helena's feelings about her identity as a trilingual, as illustrated in the next excerpt:

*When I realized that I was a person with a more complex background I didn't really like it. I couldn't explain it then... not even to myself because... it wasn't easy to even, to even grasp as an idea! I realized that that in order to succeed, I needed to work much harder. That included... in school, in sports, which I was never really good at... but even with people. The other kids who were Francophone, had it pretty much made. Things came naturally to them, what to say, what to react to, how to react to certain things and course all the obvious things like dress code, food, expressions, et ainsi de suite. My natural inclination was...basically was what I had learned from my parent... from my Greek parents, in a Greek home. That meant that if I wanted to fit in, I had to stop going against the tide... which is what having a Greek background meant. I, maybe I couldn't become French like my peers but I had to become someone who, whom they would respect as well...part of the group (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

This particular vignette exemplifies Helena's struggles to fit in and motivation to be the best she could be in all that she involved herself. During her elementary school years, Helena realized that she was not like her francophone Québécois peers and would likely never be just like them because she was in fact of Greek

cultural background. She sought respect and acceptance from her peers by learning the French language and familiarizing herself with the interests of her francophone peers. *"I watched the television programs they watched, like in the earlier years... Bobino et Bobinette, Passe-Partout... I read the magazines they read and... basically tried to become acquainted with their interests"*. She wanted me to know that there were a variety of reasons that had affected her but that her identity construction project for success was the one that propelled her forward. I took note of what I thought at the time to be peripheral information, with the intention of bringing this matter up again at our next meeting. When I did, Helena's focus shifted to her parents.

Having emigrated from their villages in Greece to Montreal during the early 1960s while they were in their late teens, her parents tried to integrate themselves into their new and very different surroundings. Helen's father had sought to learn French and improve his English by registering for courses offered by the provincial government at the time. Unfortunately, he encountered obstacles such as discrimination.

*My father tried to become a civil servant. He wanted to get a job working for Canada Post but he often told me that he didn't stand a chance because he wasn't permitted to write the exam and be tested (Interview with Helena 12-14-2002).*

He felt the urgent need to earn money and send it to his family in Ithaki, Greece.

Helena talks about how although people of Hellenic descent are typically represented in Hollywood movies as restaurateurs; in her case, it happened to be true. After they

were married in Montreal, her father opened a Mediterranean restaurant in the small town he and Helena's mother had moved to. Living in a town where French was the predominant language proved to her parents that as her father had often told her: "You cannot function without French." Learning French therefore became a group effort, the entire family made calculated attempts to learn the French language. For example, Helena reported that:

*Although my mother, my father and I were all at different stages of learning, we all needed to learn French... so we were kinda all in the same boat. I would go to school, my mom would help me with my homework, so she was indirectly learning with me and my dad worked... I don't think you get more immersed than that... he worked with Francophones! Unilingual Francophones, his employees were Francophones, his chef, the waitresses and most of all the customers (Interview with Helena 12-13-2002).*

She recalls that her father often interacted with patrons and read the local French language paper. With his busy schedule, this was the only realistic way for him to learn French. Helena attributes much of her learning of the French language to her mother. She said: "We kind of learned French together." I observed how Helena's eyes seemed particularly expressive when she mentioned her mother; she knows how lucky she was to have someone with her during the start of her journey. She recounted the following vignette about learning new words in French:

*I remember often being in school, being in class, and umm... learning new words and if I didn't know the meaning of a word, sometimes I wouldn't ask the teacher, I would write it*

*down and bring it home... and my mother would look it up in the dictionary... this big dictionary. I believe we still have it... it was so so useful! It was French-Greek therefore we could see the pronunciation next to the French word, so I would learn the pronunciation with my mother and I would also learn the Greek word. My mother would know exactly what the word meant as well! (Interview with Helena 12-13-2002)*

Learning new words was just the beginning of Helena's journey. Helena is well aware that although Bill 101 forced her to attend elementary and secondary school in French. In retrospect, the Bill 101 law has now benefited her in her day-to-day living and the work place. Helena is extremely well versed in French literature both from France and Quebec. "*I loved to read Jules Verne, Georges Bayard, Cécile Aubry!*" I remember when I looked at Helena with a knowing smile as she listed her favorite children literature authors and recalled that I too had been schooled in French but was not familiar with all of the authors she listed. This embarrassed and impressed me at the same time. I was happy to learn that Helena enjoyed reading as a child and felt ashamed about the fact that I had not been as avid a reader growing up. Helena was proud of the fact that she was well versed in French literature and wanted to share this fact with me. I finally remembered the *Comtesse de Ségur* Collection and mentioned it to her. She enumerated *Les bons enfants; Après la pluie, le beau temps; Les malheurs de Sophie*; all books with which I was familiar. This self-disclosure seemed to convince Helena that I understood the depth of her desire to learn French. For Helena, it was more than learning French, it was to "*really really know the*

*language*” as she often said during our meetings. Halliday (1978) theorized that individuals develop language in a functional way in accordance with their needs and uses in particular contexts. In order for Helena to participate in the francophone context, she made use of her knowledge in French, these in turn got stronger and permitted her to integrate more deeply and feel accepted among her francophone peers.

Helena discussed how she often “*accommodates*” individuals around her by drawing on abilities to speak in three languages. Her trilingual linguistic abilities allow her to help others as much as she helps herself in social situations. She listed among others, her clients, other lawyers, judges and even store clerks as the people with whom she can and does speak French. Although they may speak English, as soon as she detects an accent or difficulty Helena switches to French. When I questioned Helena about her ‘technique’ of identifying individuals’ strengths and weaknesses, she insisted that she had rarely failed. Rampton (1995) asserts that language expertise emphasizes ‘*what you know*’ and may place a person in a position where he/she uses their skills to position themselves according to particular situations. One may use language expertise to show allegiance to group, assist individuals who lack proficiency or to position oneself as superior to someone who lacks expertise. This code-switching ability may put Helena in a powerful situation in which she has language expertise others do not.

*I love the fact that I can function just as well in French...as in English...and in Greek... as well. I believe language is power and the knowledge of languages makes me powerful.*

*You know what I mean? I have this ability that not too many people have, I am so lucky to have had this, the chance to learn three languages (Interview with Helena 12-13-2002).*

From this excerpt, it is evident that she herself acknowledges “language as power”.

Her knowledge of languages gives her agency. Helena helps others even in situations where others should be helping or assisting her. She explained:

*When I go shopping, or to the bank or to any other place where... I am a customer listen and I try to accommodate them. The sales people are often better, more fluent in French, or just in one language so I speak to them in their native tongue... the language they are more fluent, comfortable with (Interview with Helena 12-13-2002).*

Aside from this example, Helena did not verbalize much about observing the code-switching phenomenon but I recognize it well.

It is something common to the trilinguals with whom I have interacted and something I find myself doing as well. I know that it awakens in me a sensation of accomplishment and strength. For Helena, language expertise represented an achievement she is proud of and so she chooses to use her expertise to help others. Her assisting others renews her pride and perpetuates her desire to use the French language whenever she gets the opportunity. Helena explained: “*Although my native language is not French, I have learned it despite any adversity*”. When Helena code-switched into French a few times during several of our meetings, I questioned her about this shift. Despite the fact that all the interviews were conducted in English, code-switching became more prevalent among participants as we got to

know each other better. This confirmed what I had uncovered in my Master's level monograph about code-switching among trilinguals. (Konidaris, 2000). I uncovered that code-switching took place when individuals were comfortable with their interlocutors and wanted to establish a closer connection. Since Helena knew that I am trilingual, she comfortably shifted from language to language on occasion as illustrated in the following example.

*Growing up in a totally French environment was actually...was actually a good thing... με βοηθεισε παρα παρα πολυ! [It helped me very very much] Pis là j'suis trilingue, c'est vraiment grâce au système, [and now I'm trilingual, and it's thanks to the system,] and where, the place I lived, it certainly made, it certainly played a role.*  
(Interview with Helena 12-04-2002)

Helena's comments here brought me back to the time she in which she grew up that she often referred to. She reported that even at the a very young age, when she was in grade 1 elementary school, she knew how non-native French speakers spoke and she did not like it. She says: *"I wanted to fit-in. I didn't want to learn French with an accent. I wanted to be just like the Francophone students in my class."*

Edwards (1982) argues that people's reactions to language varieties often reveals their perception of the speakers of these varieties. Some individuals use dialect, variety or accent according to the context they find themselves (Trughill, 1983). Helena possesses specific views about what she terms the *"Québécois accent"* and the *"neutralized accent"*. Interestingly, her accent did not sound to me what I would consider to be a Québécois accent so I wondered how successful she



actually was at escaping this fate she seemed to dislike so much. And then I wondered, what is a Québécois accent anyway? Does not differ from region to region? And is any language learner ever accentless? During a subsequent meeting, Helena told me that she worked hard towards what she calls “*neutralizing the Québécois accent.*” She explained that a more neutral accent was one where words endings were “*not so slurred*”. She confided that she preferred having what she calls no accent at all. “*I preferred it that way... there's no particular reason for that. I just didn't want to be associated with any particular group*”. It was clear that although Helena spoke French fluently, she did not appear to identify with the “Québécois ways of speaking”.

Helena became interested in speaking this accentless “*neutralized French*” she spoke of during our meetings when she graduated from university. This interest emerged around the time she started networking and going to interviews in law firms where she met fluent bilinguals and people of various backgrounds who were using the French language as a means of communication rather than an act of identity. Helena’s perception of the use of French changed dramatically when she no longer was in an academic environment. She explained that:

*[l]earning was always the goal with... while you're in school, even in university... things start to change when you're in the work force. Your job is to complete a file, to get things done, to win a court case, you know? Not to prove anything or to do well on a test, real life doesn't really care about accents (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Helena lives in the city of Montreal. She views Montreal as predominantly Francophone and she is happy to be able to be part of this society while still maintaining her knowledge of practicing and functioning in the two other languages and cultures. The process of becoming and being trilingual in a French context has been and still is a struggle for Helena. While she may no longer be struggling with learning French and integrating into her work surroundings, Helena struggles with defining her place as a trilingual in a predominantly French context. She is proud of the fact that she is fluent in French but has not forgotten how hard she needed to work to reach this point. Helena's complex social identity includes multiple social desires. She invested time and effort into learning French because she understood the "cultural and linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1991) literacy in French possesses. In addition to the pragmatic value of learning French, Helena used her "language expertise" (Rampton, 1995) to display her loyalty towards the French language and culture. Her loyalty to the French language was her way of gaining access to and acceptance from peers in her formative years.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: English Experience**

As I mentioned earlier, when I first met Helena, I spoke to her in English and she responded in English and during many of our subsequent encounters, conversations switched to French and Greek. Helena credits her learning of the English language to two factors: watching television and reading books. She said:

*I learned English at a very very early age even though my parents never spoke to me in English. I learned English from*

*watching Big Bird and Mr. Dress-Up or even more adult shows like Happy Days, The Love Boat and sometimes... when my mother wasn't around, soap operas (Interview with Helena 09-25-2002).*

Helena explained that English would be a language she would learn anyway, so it did not matter that her English schooling was not very intensive. Even at an early age, Helena sensed the power of the English language and its worldwide omni-presence. She expresses her discontent with the English teachers she had in the public French schools she attended. *"They didn't speak to us in English... they taught English in French, they would speak in French to us, that's no way of learning a language!"* Nevertheless, Helena learned English as did many others just like her.

Unfortunately, teaching English "through the use of French" is something that happens frequently in public French schools in Quebec. It is a phenomenon in which teachers use French to discuss the English language. For example, instead of speaking in English during English class, certain teachers speak French and often explain material solely in French.

The issue of teaching English through the use of French is considered taboo because it alludes to the possibility of sub-par teacher-training in the area of T.E.S.L. Helena did a great deal of reading on her own because she had been taught by her parents the importance of knowing languages.

*I absolutely loved Nancy Drew books, I think... I think I must have read all of them... the entire collection... actually, it's funny but I often wanted to be Nancy Drew. My English class was really elementary, I mean even the teacher didn't*

*pay attention to me, she knew my level was so much higher than everyone else's so... sometimes she would send me off, send me to the library to read on my own... pretty pathetic huh?! Well, I made the best of it, and totally devoured English books and they had magazines too, it was a good deal, it's just too bad I couldn't have done something more... like activity based, in class with the other students (Interview with Helena 09-24-2002).*

Helena used it as a lingua franca with other friends of diverse ethnic backgrounds in order to communicate among each other in a language that all would understand.

Helena perceives English as an international language “*the language you can use if you meet someone from abroad because they are likely to at least know certain words, making communication possible*”. Helena recounts a time when she was six years old and had fallen ill. Her mother brought her to the local clinic. Her mother spoke to the receptionist in English who proceeded to respond to her in French in spite of the obvious difficulty Helena's mother was experiencing. Helena explained:

*The receptionist told my mother that our appointment was at “midi moins dix”. My mother pleaded with her to tell her the time of the appointment in English. As a child, I felt my mother's desperation and could not understand why the lady was being so unhelpful and what I perceived at the time, vicious, she didn't even look at us as she spoke. A man sitting in the waiting room got up and told my mother the time. I remember the annoyed look he had on his face when we glared at us, it sure wasn't a gesture of...of pity maybe.. I don't know. I guess he, maybe he felt bad for the treatment we were receiving but maybe thought we kind of deserved it.*

*He helped us but όχι με την καρδιά του [not with his heart]*

*(Interview with Helena 09-24-2002).*

Helena's passionate retelling of this story, I inferred that this critical incident had marked her perception of the usefulness and importance of languages or being able to have a functional expertise in the language in a crisis situation. It is unfortunate how some individuals deal with power issues in vulnerable situations. When Helena's mother revealed her limited "linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 1991) – the mediational means that allow her to engage in different social activities that occur in day-to-day life, she has made feel ineffective and humiliated.

*I know how humiliating that was, and you know, I have the chance... so many chances to do the same... but I don't, I would never do that! I know how bad people can be... but it doesn't mean that I will do... I am not looking for revenge, I just want fairness. Probably why I became a lawyer. I use English whenever I see fit, with people and the rest of the time I function as a please, in any of the three languages  
(Interview with Helena 09-24-2002).*

During Helena's waiting room experience there was a defining moment in which she realized the complexities involved in being a person from a different culture living in Quebec. It was the first time Helena saw the mother she loved and looked up to being challenged because of her linguistic shortcomings. Although this was a negative situation, Helena does not see it as such now as she says, "[...] all negative, no it's not...it's probably even a good thing that it happened the way it did because I actually learned a lot from it!" Not being able to function in French meant that she could be humiliated, ostracized and unable to reach her goals. Helena did not want to

be a victim in the way she felt her mother had been on that day. Her experience made it clear that knowledge of both the French and English languages is the “linguistic capital” (Bourdieu, 1991) that would allow her engage in in the different social activities that make up living in a cosmopolitan city like Montreal. She became determined to learn French to be able to function just as well as those whose mother tongue was French. She perceived English to be the language of the world and she still believes this to be true but not the world in which she lived. English is an international language of communication and an important language to know but within the province of Quebec, French is even more important - even if all you want to do is obtain the time.

English is the most widely used language for international communication. Because it is used as a common medium for international communication, it is also a language that possesses hegemonic power in the world (Crystal, 1997). The dominance of English has caused and continues to cause consequences that include issues such as cultural imperialism as well as linguistic and communicative inequality (Pennycook, 1994). Countries and individuals who are less secure in the status of their national linguistic identity particularly feel these observations. Helena realized this fact early on through her day-to-day experiences however, instead of building resistance toward the French language and focusing on learning English, Helena gave French *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1977). Helena invested in English and in French because she understood that she would acquire a wider range of *symbolic and material resources* (Bourdieu, 1977). “I knew that at some point, I

would be thankful for having learned these languages, it was tough, but it did pay off" (from interview with Helena 09-24-2002). Ogbu (1987) explains that the return on investments made often needs to be seen as commensurate with the effort expended on learning the other language. For Helena, the return gave her access to otherwise unattainable resources. She was able to pursue studies in both English and French and become a valued contributing member of society as well as constructed her trilingual identity.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: Greek Experience**

The language Helena appeared to most proudly know is Greek. It is the language of her ancestors and she hopes that she can pass it on to her future offspring. During an earlier interview session, Helena had expressed an obligation to become trilingual. She explains: *"Yes! I was obliged to learn Greek, there wouldn't be any communication between my parents and myself otherwise."* Helena calls *"learning Greek"* the *"natural thing to do."* She expressed her disappointment with parents who chose to speak to their children in English or French. Her concern with this practice which is a common phenomenon as a family language policy among immigrants is clearly evident because she went on to say *"what a waste not learning your mother tongue is"*. She explained: *"These kids are losing so so much... you need to know the Greek language to really understand the Greek culture."* For example, Helena lists attending church ceremonies and taking part in community organized events such as the Greek Independence Day Parade, Christmas and Easter festivities as well as the celebration of Greek Orthodox Saints. I know from

experience that one can easily partake in all these events if one can only communicate in English.

Surrounded by people who partake in cultural events usually involves casual verbal interactions and observations. Most people use cultural festivities as opportunities to get-together with friends and family and reminisce about the previous time they had gotten together and whatever else is new in their lives. It is my experience that these settings provide opportunities to code-switch openly and frequently. The frequent occurrence of code-switching is likely due to an increase in comfort level and a preoccupation with content or the message rather with the medium (Konidaris, 2000). There is a strong social component to partaking in these events. However, one cannot truly feel included if one cannot comprehend what is being said around them. Because the Greek-English, English-Greek code-switching as well as the fact that religious ceremonies and public forum discussions are predominantly held in Greek, a unilingual English speaker may feel as if he /she is not benefiting fully.

The English language is often used by members of the Hellenic community in order to exhibit their openness and acceptance of individuals from the newer generations, or offspring of intermarriages whose knowledge of the Greek language may not be as strong as their knowledge of French or English. Children of mixed cultures have a tendency of choosing English or French or sometimes both languages as a lingua franca to communicate within the family. This is often the result of parents' ignorant belief that they will confuse their children if they expose them to



more than one language. Many parents chose to not expose their children to their heritage language may be explained by their belief that their own knowledge of the heritage language is insufficient, making it unworthy of being passed on by them. Other reasons for not passing on Greek as a heritage language are often those which are out of one's control, for example, it is difficult to transmit a language if there lacks consistency of context, persons, or relationships. Factors such as access to a positive atmosphere, amount and depth of exposure to the heritage language are also noteworthy influencing factors.

However, there is something more subtle that cannot be expressed in any other language but Greek. Wherever a diaspora community exists, there need to exist factors that help to keep a group united. One of the most important factors is language. When individuals identify with a language, with the values, meanings and identities that it stands for, *language allegiance* is formed (Rampton, 1995). In order to truly belong to the Greek Diaspora, one must be able to function in Greek. It differentiates those whose background and experiences are similar from all others. The “buzz” is always in Greek, Helena said. I recognize what Helena describes as “the buzz” as the feeling of excitement, comfort and satisfaction in meeting individuals who are similar in language affiliation and language expertise. This “buzz” permits individuals to share thoughts more openly and does not require additional explaining or commentary. There is a common linguistic ground which is specific to each diasporan group. Helena explained that even when something is translated, it is considered parenthetical to the Greek version. Helena explained that

the original version of a statement always appears to be “*the legitimate one*” as there is no chance of it being altered by a translation. Throughout her explanation of the “buzz” issue, Helena appeared concerned about my understanding of the issue she is raising. She frequently asked me: “*do you understand what I mean?*” I believe she often did this to find out if we had similar views of the world and if I identified with ‘Greekness’ the way she did. My appearing fair and non-judgmental was important to Helena, but it did not stifle her willingness to share her beliefs, her perceptions and her experiences with me.

Because Helena grew up in a rural area in Quebec, she did not attend Saturday Greek School or any of the trilingual semi-private elementary schools operating in Montreal and its surroundings. Her mother taught her the basics of the Greek language. With the assistance of textbooks sent from Greece by an aunt, Helena's mother taught her how to read and write in Greek, as well as some mythology, philosophy, geography and religion. In Helena's life, the Greek textbooks served as cultural artifacts that created the socio-cultural material conditions for learning the Greek language and culture.

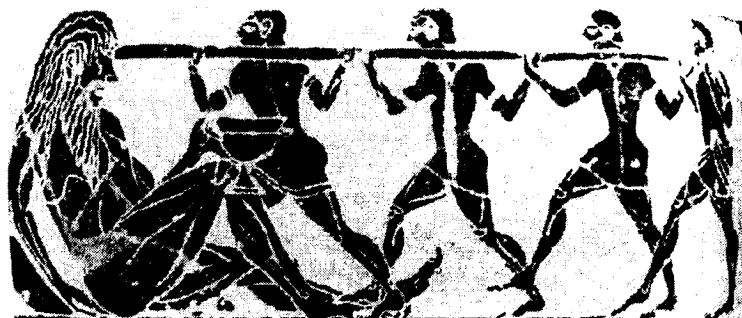
*We always had plenty of Greek books around the house. My mother loved, and... actually still does... loved mythology, so...she often read **Ιλιάδα, Οδύσσεια** [Illiad, Odyssey] and others... just for fun when I was younger, and then when I was older, she'd quiz me after we discussed something. We talked about religion, usually after listening to the **λειτουργία** [liturgy] on the radio or if we happened to drive to the city on a Sunday...it was important for me to learn, I*

*remember her saying it all the time. (Interview with Helena  
12-04-2002)*

Greek textbooks are donated by the Hellenic Education Ministry and reflect the ideological beliefs that are taught to Greek students in the motherland. Ideological beliefs include the importance of learning about Greek culture and being proud of one's Hellenic background and identity. Greek textbooks used in Heritage Language Greek schools in the Diaspora present Greek mythical and actual triumphs as whimsical affairs worthy of reverence and pride. The following is an excerpt from a secondary 1 mythology textbooks:

*Έτσι κοιμόντανε ο θεϊκός πολύπαθος Δυσσέας κομμένος από κούραση κι αγρύπνια. Αυτή την ώρα έφτασε κι η θεά Αθηνά στη χώρα των Φαιάκων, που στην απλόχωρη απ' αρχής Υπέρεια κατοικούσαν, γειτονικά στους Κύκλωπες, ανθρώπους διαστρεμμένους, που όλο τους κλέβανε, επειδή πιο δυνατοί των ήσαν.*

*Picture 21: Η τύφλωση του Κύκλωπα [ The blinding of Cyclops]*



*(Excerpted from ΟΜΗΡΟΥ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙΑ. 1990)*

*An exhausted Odysseus was sleeping. Athena, daughter of Zeus and the goddess of Wisdom arrived at the land of Faikon where the Cyclopes where ruling unjustly. Athena's*

*goal was to help Odysseus and his crew from place to place and defeat their adversaries*  
(Translated by E. Konidakis).

When her family moved to the city, Helena was tested in order to be placed in the appropriate grade level. She did better than children her age and was placed in a grade higher than her peers. This placement made Helena's mother very happy because just like with French, a lot of the coursework material, which included reading exercises, grammar exercises and other homework, was new to both Helena and her mother. Reading Greek story books, παραμύθια [stories] as they are called in Greek was an evening practice Helena could not go without. Helena and her mother created an opportunity to practice Greek. In the summer time, she and her mother sat on the balcony and sang old Cephalonian folk songs her mother recollected from her own childhood. It was a sort of investment in the Greek language (Norton Peirce, 1995). During one interview, I was pleasantly surprised when Helena offered to sing her favorite song entitled *Πολυ αγαπιμένη πατρίδα* (Beloved Country).

“Τώρα που θα φύγω και θα πάω στα ξένα και θα ζούμε  
μήνες χρόνου χωρισμένοι άφισε να πάρω κάτι κ’απο  
εσένα γαλανή πατρίδα πολι αγαπιμένη άφισε’ να φιλακτό  
μαζί μου μόνο λύγο χώμα Ελληνικό. Και αν εκει στα ξένα  
τύχη και πεθάνω θα θαντεί μαζί μου στήν καρδιά μου  
επάνω και το ξένο χώμα θάνε πιο γλυκό”.

*Now that I have gone to a different country to another  
motherland, the time until we meet again may be long,  
months, years... I take with me, some soil from the*

*motherland whose sky is so blue. It will be my keepsake from  
the country that will always be in my heart. If by chance I  
die in my new motherland, my death will be sweeter because  
I will have been buried with both soils.*

*(Translated by E. Konidakis)*

At the time, as Helena sang in a gentle low voice I could not help but be impressed by her love for Greek literacy. A great deal of what she had said during this interview session was confirmed by her singing this Cephalonian song. It became clear to me that being trilingual and trilliterate is not about first learning a language, it involves being exposed to the cultural stories, folk literature and songs and being engaged and passionate about the culture and homeland. Helena's family experiences reflect her own individual "ways of taking" (Heath, 1983) from the different cultural and literacy practices in Greek an identification with the diaspora and Greece as homeland.

Learning Greek not only permitted Helena to communicate with her parents and relatives but to attain what she seemed most eager to attain: approval and acceptance in her home environment. The following statement confirms this observation:

*Family in general was very important for my learning of the  
Greek language because whenever I would go to church, for  
example, Greek was very important... I wanted to feel like I  
fit and I wanted to understand even though some of the  
ceremonies were... were words that I didn't understand  
cause they're in καθαρεύουσα... Katharevousa, which  
means pure language... you know, right? I thought that  
Greek was very important and I figured that from... basically*

*my parents... my parents at first and my extended family  
(Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Without a doubt, from Helena's perspective, her family influenced her in many ways. She reports the importance of passionately maintaining the heritage language and views Greek as a language that helps her in the preservation of the culture. Helena was convinced that learning Greek was the right thing to do. She believes very strongly in the importance of a Greek presence in her life, of Greek language learning, and in learning and maintaining Greek as a strong personal value. Not only would learning Greek earn her respect and admiration from her immediate family but it would also permit her to communicate with her extended family in Greece. She explained:

*Whenever I went to Greece... it was very nice that I spoke Greek because people knew that I came from Canada and they were surprised to see me speaking in Greek. So... so that sort of fuelled my learning of the Greek language. So, it was a factor that I had the approval from my relatives in the motherland and um... here as well. (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002)*

Helena's frequent reference to *the motherland* is something that may be influenced by personal experiences with her mother.

*My mother, and a lot of people's moms... play a very big role if... if a child will actually learn Greek. It's thanks to my parents, yes! But my mom is the one who would really do the teaching. Moms are important in a Greek family, the way Greece is important, Greece is a mom too, you know what I mean?! Even if the traditional Greek family structure is*

*patriarchal, the mother is the one one who will determine the child's future, if he will learn about the Greek traditions and culture... and language as well (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Indeed, Helena's mother played a strong role in her identification with the Greek language and culture. She realized the discrepancy between what something is named and what it is in actuality, in other words, the difference between identity and identification.

For Helena, learning Greek bridged the potential gap that might have separated her from her extended family in Greece and made her feel not only a part of the family but belonging to the Greek cultural group of the world. Her identity is partly Greek to the point where she seems to live in a world that is geographically separate from the other worlds in which the language of communication is French and in another, in which the language of communication is English. She calls these worlds, "**microcosms**". Helena describes this phenomenon:

*I was actually very proud that I knew something that the other kids didn't... Because when I was learning from that **microcosm** which was the school back then, I used to go in the other one... my other **microcosm** which was... it was a separate world, where... where there, I was Greek. You know there I can speak Greek. I can express myself with different terms and I, I was **Greek**. (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Helena's world is made up of what she calls "*the three microcosms consisting of the Greek, the French and the English*". Since she was a child, she acknowledges that

she wanted to be assured that she would “*fit into*” each respective microcosm. Despite her wish, she always tried to keep the microcosms separate. She explains that her desire to keep microcosms separate was most prominent with the French microcosm and the English microcosm. This was because part of the reason why her friends and relatives in Greece were so impressed and proud of her acquisition of the Greek language was likely because they knew that she was learning French and English in school. She said: “*The Greek microcosm is the one where my heart is.*” Helena perceives herself to be trilingual and this early dichotomous separation among three microcosms seems to have disappeared. In the next excerpt it is evident that for Helena, language learning is of longer a site of struggle (Norton Peirce, 1995).

*I don't have that baggage anymore, I mean I don't carry around my hurt childhood feelings. I know... I understand that things cannot always go the... the way I would like, that's just the way things are. Let me put it this way, I no longer struggle the way I used to with feelings concerning what language I speak when and what it means, of course being trilingual has its fair share of challenges, but it's different now that I actually am trilingual. The three languages that make me a trilingual have merged, they've meshed (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002).*

Helena intertwined her fingers. She called them “meshed” because a lot of the strong emotions about identity she had felt throughout her childhood have turned lukewarm. Helena is a strong woman who became who she is today through hard



work and perseverance. She knows who she is and is quite proud of her identity as a trilingual, trilliterate individual. As referred to earlier, the Greek poet Kavafis (Pontani, 1991) wrote: Εχει άτοπα πολλά βεβαίως και δυστυχώς, [...]. Όμως υπάρχει τί το ανθρώπινον χωρίς ατέλεια; Και τέλος πάντων, να, τραβούμ' εμπρός.” [Translation: Most certainly and sadly, the Colony leaves much to be desired. However, is there anything human without imperfection? And finally, well, we do move forward].

No life altering experience such as learning three languages can be without difficulties. Helena’s portrait confirms that despite hardship, forging ahead as Kavafis impels, can move one forward.

### **A Portrait of Tilemahos: Self-Made Man**

*“I’m happy to be me. I’ve worked hard but it has been worth it... I can’t imagine how my life would be if I hadn’t learned my mother tongue, or hadn’t learned French or English”.* Tilemahos is in his early thirties. Having studied and graduated from an English university has afforded him opportunity to become employed in a company where he can practice in his area of expertise. He is a marketing coordinator of a successful medium sized prepared and frozen foods company in Montreal. He is proud to be trilingual because: *“it has opened many doors for me, not only for my career but for personal reasons too.”* Tilemahos speaks quickly and many of his statements are packed with multiple ideas that require me to slow down. His wit and linguistic ability was clearly noticeable to me in an exploratory meeting; his communication style made me wonder how I would be

able to keep up. Tilemahos was eager to participate in my research because he confided that he had never actually gotten the chance to discuss how he feels about his trilingual identity; “[...] *finally, an outlet! (laughter) I always wanted to... seriously, seriously discuss, who I am, how I became who I am... I guess this is my chance!*”. Little documented first hand self-reported data from trilinguals exists about how they perceive their trilingualism. This lack is surprising given that many members of the Greek community or other “allophone” communities in Quebec are trilingual.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: Greek Experience**

Tilemahos attributes learning the Greek language to his parents. They who made decisions that made him the man he is today. *“I considered myself lucky and successful in many respects.”* Although one might initially perceive his direct statements about who he is, what he has done and how he sees himself as arrogant or conceited, he is actually neither. He is a young man who definitely knows himself. Tilemahos believes in the importance of introspection and reflection. *“I am in touch with my spiritual side and that allows me to unleash my true self... to really, to really know who I am! I know myself”*. However, in attempting to truly ‘*know thyself*’, as Socrates proclaimed, one may find oneself even more in question. My conversations with Tilemahos awakened issues about his identity as a trilingual that dated back to his childhood.

Tilemahos is a Canadian; he was born in Canada yet also considers himself to be Greek.

*Regardless of how I call myself, the truth is the truth. I was born in Canada but my parents were born in Greece. Nothing could, change that... it's a fact, so for me, I consider myself both, part of both countries. I have Greek blood but my home, where I live, work... and... is here, in Canada (Interview with Tilemahos 12-02-2002).*

Tilemahos does not spend time thinking about labels. He may not have been born in Greece but being Greek forms a very large part of his identity. He confesses that sometimes, when someone asks him what he is, he responds: “*I'm Greek.*” For Tilemahos, being Greek means “*having our culture, our language... language is very important... practicing our customs, feeling connected to things that have to do with Greece as a country*”. Undoubtedly, Tilemahos is very proud of being a Greek speaker because his knowledge is not simply of the language but knowledge of a culture. On numerous occasions, he expressed that learning the Greek language was just the beginning of being Greek. “*If I want to be able to function in Greece or in Greek settings, I need the basics... know how to read, to write and, and to speak in Greek*”. For example, in this excerpt he made the following analogy:

*To build a solid building you need, first of all, a solid foundation or else anything you try building will be weak. The same thing goes for my Greek... the Greek part of my identity, who I am... that's the building. The language was the foundation... that of course... our parents help... actually, even initiated constructing (Interview with Tilemahos 09-02-2002).*

For Tilemahos, learning the Greek language started from the home. His home was the social context that permitted him to develop his “higher mental functions” (Vygotsky, 1978).

Social Constructivism assumes that learners construct their own meanings through the multiple interactions and contexts in which they find themselves. Tilemahos’ primary context for language socialization was his home. He was exposed to the Greek culture through his interactions with his parents and siblings and cultural activities in these home surroundings. His familiarity with Greek cultural activities influenced his life choices and made learning the Greek language possible. Tilemahos recalled that the language he spoke with his parents and sister has always been Greek: “[...] *it was always Greek at home, that’s just the way it was*”. Tilemahos explained that although it may have been more challenging than speaking English, he stated that “*it was all for my own good*”. Tilemahos speaks affectionately about his parents and jokes about how when growing up they would tell him and his sister hardship stories: “*They would tell us we came with only one suitcase and a dream for a better life’ and because we had heard that line a million times already... we’d imitate them... basically all in good fun... of course!*” Tilemahos returned to his serious self and recounted the following story:

*My parents came to Canada with very little in terms of financial security... but I think what saved them was the fact that they were really, I mean, really hard workers. My father worked day shift and night shift as a cook in one restaurant and a waiter in another... on the side he was*

*learning the... what he needed to learn to be an electrician. It wasn't easy and he got very tired but his belief was that he had, he had to succeed no matter what. No job was bad as long as it was, of course, legal! And that he was able to earn money and of course learn at the same time, working was not, could not be shameful as long as it was honest. That's why I worked as a waiter while I was a student in university to, cover my expenses. It's something my parents taught me not by, not just by telling me, but by showing me through their own actions (Interview with Tilemahos 09-02-2002).*

For Tilemahos, learning Greek meant learning about the history, the religion, the literature and the philosophies that were Greek. For Tilemahos, to be Greek one must learn and understand “*the entire picture*”. For example, he explains:

*You know, the Greek culture is very rich, but to make it... learning Greek, part of your values... your value system, you can't limit it to one thing, Greek is present in so many fields, there are so many philosophers, scientists... and also the language... let's not forget... along with Latin, is the basis of other languages, like French... especially in the science and math fields (Interview with Tilemahos 09-02-2002).*

I agree with Tilemahos, speaking and understanding the Greek language provides benefits for communication purposes but in order to feel fully part of the Greek culture one must learn much more about the country and its people. For example, it would be difficult to understand the willingness of Diaspora Greeks to learn and maintain the Greek language and culture without learning about the complex history of the Greek people and the role religion played in the sustenance of the language

and culture. Along with that knowledge, it is useful to learn about Greek folklore and literature and anything that may fill in the gaps with color.

On many occasions, Tilemahos spoke about his values. He thinks that holding on to Greek as a heritage language and his mother tongue; learning about the customs, the history, and the religion (Greek Orthodox) is a way of maintaining alive the Greek aspect to his identity:

*[...] you absolutely need to have knowledge of religion...just because anything... anything, most things tat have to do with culture... that is cultural is centered around religious events or organized by the Hellenic community which, which is of course linked to the church, in most cases (Interview with Tilemahos 09-02-2002).*

Doing all this is valued by Tilemahos and he hopes to be able to pass on Greek family values to his future offspring.

When Tilemahos invited me to his house, I was impressed with the number of framed pictures and photo memorabilia of his extended family. Pictures of his parents, grandparents, cousins and friends.

*Feel free, please feel free to look at my stuff... I have so many pictures! At lot of my friends ask me why I put them out like this, but, you know, it's special, it's like having them around me. I'm gonna make some coffee, or... you like tea right? Oh! I'm sorry actually I only have coffee, I hope it's fine... I'll be back (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18- 2002).*

As Tilemahos prepared the coffee, I browsed the living room walls and table-tops.

The pictures on the walls told a very interesting story but I wanted to ask him about

their link to him. Before walking back into the living room, Tilemahos put on some traditional Greek folk music from a CD he told me was recently given to him by a friend who spent his holidays in Greece.

*I love this music! When we hear a Greek song, we know the meaning of it, we understand why the singer is saying what he's saying... that's why we need Greek, to not forget, who we really are and where we came from. (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)*

Tilemahos embraces all that is Greek because he is proud of his ancestors. He showed me the picture of his great grandfather who fought against the Turks in 1917. He held the picture frame containing the old cracked black and white photograph of a stern looking man in military garments as if it were a precious treasure and at that moment, I knew that in his heart, it was.

Tilemahos perceives that his learning of the Greek language was helped a great deal by the school his parents sent him to. He attended a semi-private trilingual elementary school in Montreal (these are schools partly funded by the Ministère de l'éducation du Québec and partly funded by the students' parents or caretakers which he believes to have been very beneficial to his learning of Greek. He said:

*I was able to thrive in there... surrounded by other kids who came from the same background... I didn't feel ostracized as the... well... some people that I know went to French... just regular public French schools and it was tough... to be accepted amongst the masses of French Québécois students. That was not the case for me... I loved studying at that*

*school... we were all on the same page (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002).*

This meant that the similar background and cultural frames made Tilemahos' childhood years pleasant and effortless as compared to those who were surrounded by individuals who did not understand or wish to understand a different culture. I understood what he meant because my other participants had spoken about the isolation and discrimination they experienced in French schools.

*My parents were happy to be able to afford sending me to the semi-private trilingual school, it's not all kids who were this lucky... the parents had to dish out for the uniforms, for the shoes, cause you couldn't wear just any kind of shoes... in general, it was an added expense for the family (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002).*

Tilemahos had a good experience studying in a trilingual school. He referred to a very influential teacher in his life: *"It was nice to see that a teacher was Greek... teachers make good role model... well actually, good teachers make good role models..."* Tilemahos had a good teacher who was known to everyone in the community as Kirio Pandeli which is Mr. Pandeli. He not only taught physical education but also about what it meant to be Greek by actions and frequent speeches about the importance of maintaining a Greek identity and using the Greek language in their daily life. Tilemahos reports that Mr. Pandeli was involved in all cultural festivities organized by the school even if he did not really need to be. Tilemahos explained:



*He was a very patriotic Greek and um... he did influence... pretty much the entire school... in being proud of their heritage. He'd be there... the Greek Independence Day parade, Christmas, Easter festivities, no matter what... he would be there, cheering us along. I remember one time, he had broken his leg, but, sure enough, he was present... even if he was on crutches, he'd hop along (laughter), basically he all knew he was making efforts to help us embrace our heritage and we... we loved him for that. (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)*

By reminding students of the luxury of maintaining their Greek as one of the languages they spoke and should be proud of, he encouraged his students not to take the easy road and speak English or French to each other but to put in that extra time and effort to speak and write in the Greek language. Tilemahos remembers his teacher bringing Greek comic books that also contained word games and puzzles and lent them to the students. *"He had a kind of small library he ran out of his desk, he was amazing and and... we all loved him."* Tilemahos knows that without such a teacher's influence and Greek resources like Mr. Pandeli, many youths may not have had the opportunity to be mentored and led onto the path of trilinguality. His knowledge of the Greek language could have easily been swept aside, especially after the completion of grade six when students attending trilingual schools begin studying in regular francophone schools where Greek is no longer part of the curriculum.

*When you're in high school, you're not with Greek kids anymore... now you have a majority, a large part of the school being francophone and then of course, you have all*

*the other ethnicities. Our group of friends disperses just by sheer numbers... in high school, especially public high school was really big and people made different friends, socialized with people from every background you could imagine. My group of friends in high school was like (laughter) like the United Nations, every nationality, name it... so using Greek was more difficult because you didn't want to speak Greek in front of people who didn't speak Greek because then you risked looking, like you were talking about the other people, basically it's just, it's just impolite. (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)*

Most students attending these semi-private trilingual schools went on to public French secondary schools. Tilemahos did so as well. However, he continued his formal instruction in Greek through attendance at the Saint-Nicholas Saturday Greek school I described earlier. This was a school organized by the Saint-Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and run out of rented building for many years. Tilemahos confesses: *"I wasn't very thrilled about spending my Saturday mornings to go to yet another school"*. Tilemahos laughed and told me: *"It wasn't something, you know... I'd turn around and say... I'd love to go to school on Saturday morning for... for four hours but it was forced upon us!"* He explains that the situation for many youths was that the parents needed to work on Saturdays and although some may have been able to teach their children what they knew, time did not permit them to do much formal teaching.

*My parents, as most Greek parents had restaurants or worked in factories, in the garment industries... and*

*Saturday was just another work day, sometimes there was even more work on Saturday... trying to wrap up the week required that extra day. (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)*

For Tilemahos, looking back at this experience brings back many good memories. He said:

*Both of my parents preached the importance of learning about our culture, our religion... our history... and of course, the Greek language and that was really the only place where they... could help us with our school work and spend time with actual books... you know... learning in a formal way... was Thursday and Friday nights... before we had to go to Greek school. (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)*

The nights Tilemahos studied for Greek school were Thursday and Friday because

*[...] that way I wouldn't forget everything that I had done, I mean... we had *Ορθογραφία* [orthography - which was dictation], and that you really had to remember, and a lot of other things... you had to remember to kind of learn by heart. Like Greek mythology, we had retell in class and let me tell you, it's not easy remembering who did what and what kind of special powers he had, so I'd study for Greek at the end of the week (Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002).*

Despite being enforced, the Greek school experience became something that Tilemahos is fond of having gone through. He knows that parents, caretakers, teachers, and community elders wanted him and many like him, to be strong, functional and proud trilinguals.

Discussing Tilemahos' experience learning Greek reminded me of the boys in my Greek school classes. Although they may have been more rowdy than the girls, their drive to learn was always evident. Much of their drive came from the positive influence of Greek school teachers from both the Saturday heritage language school and the trilingual day school Tilemahos attended. They were very much like parents but parents who cared less about whether you finished dinner or made your bed, and more about whether you learned the Greek language and understood what it meant to be of Hellenic descent.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: English Experience**

*My parents and family... always knew that we'd learn English... they came from Greece and were barely educated and learned English... it was pretty much a sure thing, the struggle was becoming... essentially... becoming a trilingual.*  
(Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)

Tilemahos explains that regardless of his language of formal instruction, English would be learned "*because it figures pretty much everywhere*". Much of his belief stemmed from his view that the American entertainment industry is pervasive. He explained that although "*we as Quebecers, no matter what ethnic background we belong to, or if we are des francophones de souche, want to believe we are a distinct people, we are in fact, very much influenced by the United States*". Tilemahos perceives that American television programs, movies, English music, and sports industries are overpowering the Canadian industries. Tilemahos is a man with many interests, he is quite opinionated about provincial and federal politics. He strongly

believes that the anglo-Canadian culture is profoundly affected by the American culture and lifestyle. He told me that most of what he read and watched for entertainment as a youth, was and still is, in English. When I asked him why he said that it had a great deal to do with what his parents and peers did. He explained:

*Whenever my parents would watch T.V. it would be in English. My dad watched the news in English, he sometimes watched American westerns... of course... in English and... our family has been a long-time subscriber to National Geographic, which we all pretty much read at some point.*  
(Interview with Tilemahos 10-18-2002)

For Tilemahos, the English language was the element that glued things together. It was the language that he spoke whenever he could not speak in Greek, and did not speak in French. When we started to discuss how English influenced his life and his identity as a trilingual, he brought out a picture of his junior soccer team. He explained: *"I am ten years old in this picture"*. He impressed me by naming all of his former teammates in the photograph. Not everyone in the team is of Hellenic descent as Tilemahos pronounces names that sound Jewish, Asian, Italian and Eastern European to me. He told me: *"We all came from different backgrounds and no matter what, the one thing we had in common was English... everyone more or less spoke it and of course understood it!"* For Tilemahos and his peers, English had become a lingua-franca. They could do what they wanted to do with whomever they wanted to do it in the English language.

As soon as Tilemahos graduated from his French language public high school, he switched into the English school system because the law could no longer

force him to attend a French post secondary instruction. He explained that because he wanted to optimize his choices for his future university education, he should strengthen his knowledge of English at an English medium university. He is happy to report that the transition from a French to an English language institution was quite smooth. He attributes this successful transition to the fact that he always tried to develop his use of English on his own by reading, writing and of course, interacting with his many peers in English. Tilemahos went on to study in an Anglophone university. He says this decision brought him experience and peace of mind about his linguistic skills. He says: *"English is the language of the world, it doesn't matter where you travel, what your business is, you will need English otherwise you are, I believe, a very limited individual."* Tilemahos was very passionate in his delivery of this statement. I attributed his mild hostility to the fact that our meeting took place at a time where there were many talks on provincial language issues. Today, Tilemahos works in an environment that requires him to communicate effectively in English and in French. On rare occasions, when he encounters someone who is of Hellenic descent, he pleasantly puts his knowledge of Greek to good use.

For Tilemahos, the English language is of high importance because it permits him to identify with the world outside the province of Quebec – something that makes him feel proud. Being equally functional in Anglophone environments as in Francophone environments confirms that despite having been forced to study in French during a large portion of his schooling, his desire to learn English was not suppressed. Tilemahos is trilingual due to his perseverance and hard work.

## Becoming and Being Trilingual: French Experience

Throughout my numerous meetings and conversations with Tilemahos, I was fortunate to speak with him in French. He would often code-switch in French mid-sentence or start a conversation in French. *“On commence? Ben... on peut parler en français... puisqu'on... puisque tu es trilingue aussi! C'est bien, j'aime ça parler en français même si on pou... pourrait parler en, en grec ou bien en anglais, vraiment!”*. Tilemahos' knowledge and comfort with this language was clearly evident in the encounters we had. Having received formal French instruction from his elementary to his secondary schools years, Tilemahos knows the intricacies of the French language and is careful *“not to get sloppy with this language”*. He gives the example of the word *cheval* which changes to *chevaux* in plural. He says: *“Many people take the easy road and don't care if their syntax or conjugation is wrong... but... but that is in fact what weakens the language... it's poor usage.”* I like Tilemahos' explanation and agree with him because I know that using grammatically correct French sometimes requires extra effort. Tilemahos gives an example:

*Like when you wanna write a verb that end in é sound, you have to ask yourself the question fini or finir, which one matches, matches in the sentence, if it's finir, then you write the end, the ending of the verb with an er... you know? Rules like that take, require you to think, and they... they take time, but you kind of have to if you wanna write in French (Interview with Tilemahos 10-30-2002).*

Tilemahos explains to me that he learned the French language for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. *“Internal reasons are those you... you do for yourself and external*

*reasons are those enforced by others, like in my case, having to learn it if I wanted to move up in... to the next grade".* He regards internal reasons as those that were taught to him by his parents who spoke very little French. Even if his parents could not help him in any tangible way, they always preached the importance of learning the French language. In fact, his parents taught him that learning languages in general was a true opportunity to better oneself.

*My parents saw learning French as an opportunity, the way learning to speak in public, knowing how to use computers was... just another way to better yourself... but of course, they knew, at that point (laughter) that it was also required by law, so that's what they preached (Interview with Tilemahos 10-30-2002).*

Tilemahos frequently stated that the language law that forced him to learn French was also the law that helped him become a trilingual. In the late 1970s, the semi-private elementary school Tilemahos attended started offering French as part of the curriculum was evenly split with English and Greek. School officials realized that the emphasis on French had to change when they realized that their graduates struggled with French when they started attending high schools where French was the medium and primary language of instruction. When trilingual school officials announced that more French needed to be added to the curriculum, not all parents rejoiced. Many parents and concerned Hellenic community members felt that the time designated to studying Greek would be reduced in order to make more time for French. This was not the case, and time designated to the teaching of French was indeed increased. Tilemahos however grew to love the French language even more:



*I loved French, plus we had a great French teacher, she was a québécoise, but unlike many of the French teachers who seemed to just be doing their job... you know, teaching French as if they were in any kind of school, this teacher loved the Greek culture. I think she even ended up marrying a Greek guy... anyway, we loved her and she... kids can tell if they are liked... it's like a sixth sense! That made me want to learn French... after all, it is the language of diplomacy (Interview with Tilemahos 10-30-2002).*

Throughout his elementary and secondary years, Tilemahos often read books in French, he says: *"I used to hide this fact from my friends at school, but I liked French class and I often read the supplementary reading our high school French teachers offered us."* He tells me that he did not know why he felt the need to hide this fact but he did nevertheless and politely asked me not to speculate. I wondered whether it could be that he did not want to appear to be studious. During a later interview, he expressed:

*A lot of the cool people were not really good in school, they were riff raff, they were rebels, I was a cool kid but that certainly didn't mean that I was going to do poorly in school. First of all, my parents would be devastated and the truth was that I, that I liked school, I wanted to succeed (Interview with Tilemahos 10-30-2002).*

Tilemahos' interest focused primarily in bettering himself and learning French allowed him to do just that. He often spoke of accommodating others. In his work, Tilemahos is often required to communicate with colleagues and clients in French, and says that he is equally comfortable in either French or English. He is proud of his

ability to switch into French; he says that he feels his interlocutor is more proficient or fluent in French - which he says happens quite often with clerks and salespeople.

*"I love to just walk in to a dépanneur and start speaking to the cashier in French... I don't mind accommodating... actually I prove to myself that I am indeed a functional guy, a trilingual functional guy, it's a good feeling."*

Even after leaving the French school system, Tilemahos continued making efforts to improve his French. He tells me that he not only took French in C.E.G.E.P. but in university as complimentary courses *"to round off the rough edges"* that may have been created since he formally stopped attending Francophone academic institutions. He explains in a very serious tone that this was a rare practice amongst individuals who had been forced to study in the French system. Although I was not convinced of that due to the fact that I know of many individuals in his position who also chose to continue studying the French language, I was nonetheless impressed with his zeal to be a true trilingual – meaning a genuine ability to function comfortably in each of the three languages.

During another meeting, Tilemahos interestingly commented: *"No matter what hardships we went through in our youth, we are grateful for having had this chance."* When I asked him to explain what he meant by the word "chance", he seemed a little surprised. He explained that he considers himself lucky for having been born in Canada, a country that is open-minded and entirely embracing of cultural diversity. He knows the different life that he may have had if he had not been born in Canada, especially in this province, he stated:

*[...] where could I have lived to have had such a rich learning opportunity?... I don't think I'd become a trilingual.. it is because of the need to preserve French that other minority languages are protected in Canada, we have the French fighting to preserve their rights and benefits and, and so along with that we can protect every other language... I mean all the benefits, Greeks have had, to open schools, to associate freely, to have so many churches in every, well in pretty much every major city... these are all things we must appreciate because it's not common practice everywhere. Just look at the States, their melting pot society forces everyone to become one homo... homogenic group, to be American, who cares where your ancestors came from, the important thing is that you integrate. You see, we don't have that here, well... I'm sorry, I know I'm exaggerating a little but I believe Canada's system embraces ethnic people in a way that is not threatening and I like that. I think it works (Interview with Tilemahos 10-30-2002).*

This statement excerpted from an interview genuinely impresses me because I have wondered on countless occasions about whether other trilinguals actually felt this appreciation of the freedom a multicultural system affords member of different cultural groups. Tilemahos believes in the power of effort and the value of learning multiple languages and these are the reasons that Tilemahos is the trilingual man he is. Calling himself a “self-made man” seems to be a way for Tilemahos to remember the struggles he went through to reach his goals. He may have been alone in his efforts but influential teachers and family members gave him that extra push which propelled him to the place in which he finds himself now. The next portrait is of

Alexandra, a woman who much like Tilemahos focuses on hard work and self-improvement.

### **A Portrait of Alexandra: High Pace for Good Reason**

Alexandra is in her late twenties. She is currently employed in a large English Montreal hospital. She appears to be dedicated and hardworking. Alexandra is a beautiful statuesque woman yet the dark circles under her eyes betray her public face of cheerful, energetic veneer. She works in the intensive care unit a large Montreal hospital and cares for approximately three patients. When she tells me about her work I am surprised to hear that she only cares for three patients but she explains:

*The I.C.U. is a place for patient who are in...in a precarious position, they usually, well always, they have special needs and we have to monitor their breathing their heart rate and anything else, anything else that relates to their condition. Sometimes it's due to trauma, sometimes it's due to an illness... usually a terminal illness... all this to tell you that the I.C.U. requires much more, the health care providers have to, need to be extra alert and have a whole range of things they must follow up on. It's different from working in as a nurse on the floor because you can deal with the particular problem the patient has and then... and then you move on to the next patient until it's time to give them their meds or change their bandages. With patients in I.C.U. you have to know what going on with your patient around the clock... we also need to really detail what we did how the patient reacted for the next nurse. You never know how*

*things will unfold with an I.C.U. patient (Interview with Alexandra 08-05-2002).*

When she leaves work, she sometimes wonders about the well-being and progress of her patients. She cares for them as her patients but also as individuals who have families and friends praying for their recovery.

*Sometimes when you look at a patient, you don't know much about him, maybe he's a dad, a husband, a brother, a colleague... it's my job to speak to the family and try to explain in layman, in... in simple non-medical terms what is going on. You must empathize with them and do the best... whatever is in your power, for the patient... to be comfortable and taken care of... you know? The families, sometimes, the entire family is counting on you... doctors can't do what we do, they have no time, they have so many patients to see, they have to... they must go see the next patient, these inter-personal things fall into our hands (Interview with Alexandra 09-05-2002).*

Alexandra appears to me to be the quintessential nurse, she is genuinely concerned about her patients and their families. She knows her job like the back of her hand but is consistently amazed by the new things she learns everyday: “*My job is extremely... but extremely high paced, it's definitely never boring, and there is something new to learn everyday*”. In order for her to communicate with her patients and their families, Alexandra uses her most powerful semiotic resource tool, her knowledge of languages. She makes good use of her trilinguality and during our interview sessions, she outlined how she feels about being trilingual as well as the process that made her who she is.

## Becoming and Being Trilingual: Greek Experience

Alexandra grew up in a Greek neighborhood in Montreal where everyone in her household always spoke to her in this language. *"It was always Greek at home, it didn't matter what I spoke outside, but at home, with my brother and my parents, we spoke Greek but... and we followed the traditional Greek culture."* She considers Greek to be her mother tongue but also the language that gives her the opportunity to renew her connection to her roots. Alexandra attended the semi-private trilingual elementary school Socrates that she considers as the place which allowed her to learn the Greek language in a formal way (i.e. to write Greek in a grammatically appropriate way). She explained that although her parents possessed knowledge of the language, the history and the culture in general, they were not responsible for her learning. She explained:

*They had a basic knowledge, yes, they did. But... they couldn't, they could certainly teach us the basics, but that would be pretty much it! They couldn't... one person cannot do what a school can... I mean we had all sorts of course, literature, history, geography, of course... religion, no to mention, dance course... plus my parents were very busy. They worked long hours, so attending Socrates was a really good thing (Interview with Alexandra 08-05-2002).*

Both of Alexandra's parents worked long hours and when their workday was completed they would have to do housework, and prepare meals and lunches for the children. In spite of that, she believes that she was given all the tools to succeed and therefore is grateful to her parents. She said: *"I am who I am because of my family,*

*they were a tremendous influence on life.”* Even as a child, Alexandra was able to appreciate her parent's efforts. She said:

*Their work ethic was exemplary. I'd see my mom come back from working in the factory all day and she'd immediately get into home-maker mode. She'd make all... all the things we liked... typical, traditional Greek meals but she'd always make them with love... plus she always made scrumptious desserts, mmm... I'm getting hungry thinking, talking about this! (Interview with Alexandra 05-05-2002).*

Actually, it was hard not to get hungry with the mention of all this delicious food. Dishes such as **παστίτσιο** (pastitstio), a lasagna-like pie topped with béchamel sauce, **γέμιστά** (ghemista), stuffed tomatoes and peppers, **ταραμοκεφτέδες με πατάτα** (taramokeftedes me patata), potato and carp roe patties, are usually healthy yet quite time consuming to prepare. Alexandra explained that a great deal of her interactions with her parents took place during supper time. This was her mother and father's chance to interact with her and her siblings. She explained:

*[...] it was my parent's opportunity to teach us about their belief, their... their expectations... basically... their dreams for us. They never really got the opportunity to, to go to school and actually... learn something... that could help them build a future so they... always told us about how important it was for us to learn whatever we could. For... for a better future (Interview with Alexandra 08-05-2002).*

They never lost sight of the fact that a better future should include knowledge of the Greek language and culture. Alexandra explained that these were the tools she needed most:

*I don't know if I'd feel complete without the Greek culture, the language and... of course, the Greek Orthodox religion. Something would be missing... a big part of who I am... it is very precious to me and it is precious... because I learned that... that's what my parents taught me (Interview with Alexandra 08-05-2002).*

She embraced her roots, heritage language and culture because of her upbringing. She witnessed her parents struggling and succeeding in their endeavors and took their advice to heart:

*Their desires, their values became my desires, my values because I knew they had my best interests in mind, although I didn't always like it, for example, I remember my father always saying anything you learn to enrich yourself is good for you (Interview with Alexandra 08-05-2002).*

Alexandra knew that her parents loved the motherland but loved their new country as well and that to be successful, their daughter would need to learn the languages of the new land but to never forget her roots. To do so, she would need to embrace who she was. Alexandra's parents preached about what they thought was important for Alexandra's future but did so by giving her the tools to succeed by teaching her the value of hard work, and perseverance. They sent her to a semi-private trilingual school and created a home environment enriched with many Greek books (such as **“Γυναίκα από βελούδο” – Woman of Velvet - by Φρέντυ Γερμανός, Οι**



περιπέτειες του χαμόγελου – The Adventures of a smile - by Μαρώ Λουϊζου)

magazines, newspapers and television programs broadcasted directly from Greece.

Alexandra told me that even as an adult, she gets together with her parents and watches Greek movies via satellite. She said:

*With my busy schedule I like to take time out and watch a Greek movie or, program with my parents. It brings us together... physically... cause we're we're all sitting together (laughter) but... it creates a sort of intimacy. Because after that, we sit together, have some coffee... and, and discuss ideas, opinions... about the film... well not only about the film... but often the film works just like a springboard for other discussions... I mean... other topics... it's great. I enjoy it... it's good for me but also for them and our relationship, we still haven't watched My Big Fat Greek Wedding, that's a comedy... I know that it's exaggerated stuff, so... it should generate quite the discussion with my family, especially my father who likes older movies (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

From my many conversations with Alexandra, it is clear that she benefited from her parents guidance but it wasn't always easy. She explained that although her parents told her what “the right thing to do” was, they never really helped her with the problems she faced in course matters in which she had difficulties.

*They were only able to help me with my Greek homework... sometimes my father would help me with math... but I remember sometimes feeling very alone in my experience because I'd refuse their help for... for Greek since they were*

*not able to help me in other courses... I... guess it was a form of rebellion (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

Hearing Alexandra talk about her parents made me realize how strong their intergenerational link was and still is to this day. She appears to have come to an understanding that she may have benefited from in her teenage years.

*Yeah! I mean we are close... I love my parents, they are everything to me. Even through my rebellious years...you know, wanting to wear short skirts, minis, going out with boys... nothing really diluted our bond. Actually, we are, we are even closer today... and we do things together more now... than, than when we were kids (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

Alexandra went on to attend Saturday Greek school when she completed elementary school. She said that although many of her peers disliked having to wake up early on Saturdays and go to school for an extra day, she enjoyed attending heritage language school. She explained that it gave her an opportunity to develop her artistic side:

*I loved taking part in plays... we had... our school had a mini... a sort of small theatre group led by this fantastic lady Kiria Marguarita [Mrs. Marguarita]... we, were able to... we were given the chance to learn about Greek comedies... and tragedies! And hone our acting skills (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

I was very impressed with Alexandra's enthusiasm concerning her participation in Greek theatre. She in turn shared that she was also involved in Hellenic folkloric dances. She explained that although Saturday Greek school offered a half hour of dance class every week, her true learning of folkloric dances was with

her mother's parochial association. Alexandra referred to this association by its Greek name σύλλογο (silogo) because she, like I, knew that this word possessed a much more comprehensive meaning than a parochial association. A 'silogo' is usually formed by individuals coming from the same island or region in Greece who often have specific interests, traditions and often times dialects that differentiate them from other more general or philanthropic associations.

A 'silogo' is usually under the jurisdiction of the greater community of the region (as in this case, the Hellenic Community by Montreal) and aims to preserve the practices that are particular to the region. My own parents are members of the Cephalonian Association, which follows traditions from the island of **Κεφαλονιά** (Cephalonia) although my father is originally from the island of **Λευκάδα** (Lefkada), which is a smaller island than the former situated north of it in the Ionian Sea. These associations focus primarily on their own activities but always come together with the larger community for certain symbolic Hellenic days where a parade may be organized or for solidarity when presenting themselves to others.

In describing the way she built this Greek aspect of her identity, Alexandra consistently attributed most of the decisions and choices she made in life to her parents. She said: *"They came from Greece... and kept their culture very much alive. This to me is an achievement... because of that, that influenced me a great deal."* Alexandra's cultural knowledge is now, as she said, *"implanted"* in her and even if she was to be extracted from her current environment and placed in a different one, it is the Greek part of her identity that she would be most concerned about maintaining

because she feels it is so precious. When Alexandra expressed this thought, she was careful to clarify that although an effort must be made, *“it is a pleasure to do it!”* as she said during one of our meetings. As a child, Alexandra engaged in correspondence with one of her cousins who was learning English at the time. Although Alexandra has spoken lovingly about her family, on one occasion I saw that the pride she possessed due to her linguistic success was peppered with feelings of superiority over a cousin of hers in Greece. Alexandra said:

*At first, my relatives in Greece weren't sure we could actually do it... writing letters with my cousin Maria... who was... I think, yeah! My age. They thought that perhaps my Greek wasn't to the level... to the level of... but I tried so... so hard... I got the dictionaries and worked real... real hard at writing fabulous letters... I was a very good and my relatives were surprised! Impressed! That really pushed me, even more! Maria's English was so weak! (laughter) there was no comparison. It's too bad I didn't keep them... it would have been nice to look at them (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

Alexandra spoke as one whose pride was justified. I saw how that feeling was still very much present by her tone and excitement in reporting this fact. There is no doubt in my mind that Alexandra has become the trilingual her family had wished or expected her to become. She used her parents and extended family's words as fuel to propel her to develop the Greek identity she possesses today.

## Becoming and Being Trilingual: French Experience

Alexandra is a very intelligent, sensitive woman. Every time she spoke about the fact that she was trilingual, she explained the reasons why she thought about what she was saying was useful for my understanding. This is the type of woman she is. She views her knowledge of the French language as a blessing because it fits her role as a caretaker. She said:

*We live in Quebec, and it's inevitable... that we'll have a lot of patients who only speak, who only understand French. Actually, it happens all the time, I want to be able to explain to my patients... to... and to to their families that this... that... that is the treatment. These are our plans to help them get better. I can't imagine not speaking French in the hospital. And... a lot of the other nurses speak French and we need to communicate so... so we do. In French (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

Although Alexandra works in an Anglophone hospital and interacts with the primarily Anglophone doctors there are nonetheless many Francophone patients and staff which she is happy to be able to linguistically accommodate. It appears that Alexandra's linguistic ability reinforced her belief about the importance of language that was taught to her by her parents at an early age. Her statement: *"I love my three languages and I will always work... try my best to become better at them and never lose any of them because they are implanted as values."* This is indicative of the way she views her journey as a trilingual. Alexandra explained that each language makes up a part of her self and removing it by stopping its use would be like cutting away a

part of whom she is. Alexandra chose to pursue her university studies in a Francophone educational institution because after having completed her nursing degree in an Anglophone C.E.G.E.P. she feared that her French had suffered. She said:

*I used to read a lot in French, watch French films... but during college I just... was so busy. I never got to do the things I loved in French so I was determined to... to do my next degree in a French school, a French university because I wanted to be good in French and not forget what I learned all those years in the French schools. Just like any skill, you can forget a language if you don't use it. (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002)*

Alexandra's concern was authentic. She often used a Greek expression her mother used to say: “αυτο που απαρατάς, θα σε απαρατίσει” which translates to “whatever you abandon, will eventually abandon you”. She linked this expression to her learning of languages and fuelled her desire to always remain a trilingual. However, Alexandra's journey was plagued by one particular hardship which haunts her still. When I brought up the topic of influential people in her life she told me about a French teacher she had during her elementary years. Alexandra told me:

*I did have a very influential teacher, but it's not as rosy as you'd think. Whenever I'd make a mistake, or...in my writing or speaking, she would embarrass me... but not just embarrass me, it was brutal! She made me feel very bad about myself... I mean... I was really affected by it but... you know, I still remember it, it was pretty powerful (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

Alexandra's discomfort was evident to me. I appreciated her telling me about it because it uncovered another reason for her desire to excel in the French language. Before Bill 101, the children of immigrants were sent to English schools for the most. Public schools in Montreal were very homogeneous; Anglophones and children of allophones attended English schools while Francophones made up the majority of the population in French schools. Alexandra fought the feelings of inadequacy that were born out of her negative encounter with an elementary French teacher by working harder, studying for many hours after school and trying to never lose track of her goal. I was very impressed with the strength with which she undertook the hardships she faced growing up with three languages. I have no doubt that this strength is real and present in her life as a nurse today.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: English Experience**

When Alexandra and I discussed her journey of learning English she began by sharing an expression that she said pushed her to develop her knowledge. She said: “*Knowledge is power*”. Although she grew up in a home that used Greek as the heritage language for most communications she learned early on that English was the language of the world. She said:

*One of our English teachers back in high school... it was funny because she was also ethnic... of a different... because we often had Francophone teachers who spoke English worse than us! She used to show us pictures, photos of all the places she had traveled and tell us... if you want to be able to get around... you know... you need*

*English! That influenced me a lot (Interview with Alexandra 09-26-2002).*

Alexandra alludes to the problem of Francophones teaching E.S.L. in some French schools:

*Although they may have known how to teach, sometimes we wondered if they actually knew the language they were trying to teach us, you know!? It happened a lot in our high school... not a good thing, no not a good thing because we.... I mean ethnic people would eventually learn English and get a pretty good accent... thatt... resembles the majority of Anglo... of English speaking people in the city, but the francophone, the French people, they never really stood a chance of learning English...because of the sub-par teachers we had. No offence I know you're a teacher... so I'm kind of attacking your group (Interview with Alexandra 09-29-2002).*

She explained that she often loves to imagine herself in foreign lands, exploring, learning about the world. Whenever she pictures herself there she wonders whether she would have any trouble communicating. After assessing this matter Alexandra explained the following: *"With English, I could go anywhere and do pretty much anything I please... if I could communicate with the locals."*

Alexandra's desire to help others allowed her to travel to Africa and South America with *Doctors Without Borders*. Although she did not get into detail about her experiences, she said that it is thanks to her knowledge of both French and English that she was able to have pleasurable experiences.



*I really don't think I could have made it without my knowledge... my ability with languages... you know a lot of people may speak their native language... in Africa, but when they need to communicate with foreigners, they use English... or French, they end up getting the message across but... I know that some of my francophone, like québécois colleagues had trouble sometimes, airports they were... tsé y-en arrachaient! (laughter) but no, no I shouldn't say that, well the truth is that they did have issues come up and needed a translator... more so, more so than people, like nurses and technicians who did actually speak English. Sometimes I helped out, but you know... you always risk appearing like, like a know-it-all...and then there are all these internal politics and things and it gets tedious to work in such, in such an environment (Interview with Alexandra 09-29-2002).*

At this point, I was reminded of the hegemonic power of English globally. It is a language that is considered official by over 60 nations and used internationally as a medium of international communication. For Alexandra, having learned English permitted her to explore subjects and locations she may not have without this knowledge. She does however attribute her accomplishments to the whole of her linguistic ability; *"The choices that I made were influenced by my being a trilingual and my wanting to be trilingual... affects the choices... I made [...]".*

When I asked Alexandra to give me an example of this, she discussed her choice to attend an Anglophone C.E.G.E.P. after completing her studies at the secondary level. She spoke about how being forced to attend a French high school made her wonder

whether she would ever be able to master the English language. She said: *"I always watched T.V. in English and spoke... spoke with my friends in English but... but I had, yeah, I had some doubts."* Alexandra's older brother had been schooled in the same way. He had attended all the same schools and had decided to switch to an English C.E.G.E.P. She said: *"Although I was sort of worried... when I saw my brother choosing to... deciding to go to an English C.E.G.E.P., it kind of made it alright, like oh, it's ok for me to do that."* Alexandra could not explain why she was uneasy about switching into the English system: *"I don't really know, you know? Maybe, it may be because I wasn't confident about how much... the level of, of English that I had received up to that time... when I, it came time for me to attend college"*.

Alexandra's feelings of inadequacy concerning her linguistic abilities in English most definitely stemmed from her perception of the formal instruction she received in the public French school she attended. Alexandra had mentioned that many of her 'English as a second language' instructors were Francophone and had a noticeable accent she neither liked nor wished to acquire. Although Alexandra was placed in what she called an "advanced" English class she was resentful about the fact that she was never taught English literature. She only started studying English literature when she went to C.E.G.E.P.. Calling herself a *"novice"* she told me that she was very proud to see that she could keep up with her peers who had previously been instructed in Anglophone academic institutions.

Alexandra confided that she felt a little strange studying biology, chemistry and mathematics in English but that the transition was quick.

*It felt weird at first. It was unnatural, I know it sounds strange but, but... for me those course matters were originally taught to me in French, and... that was how, how should I say this, how they were recorded in my brain. So it took some time for me to get used to it, but I did... at that point, I didn't really have much of a choice. I wasn't going to back out of studying in an English C.E.G.E.P. so... I did my best and and this is where I'm at today (Interview with Alexandra 09-29-2002).*

English suited Alexandra because she had spoken it as a child among friends, had watched films and television shows and had always had that deeply ingrained desire to be a trilingual. Living in Montreal provides a linguistic space and place for language learners just like Alexandra to cross linguistic boundaries in situations at school, at work and even in social situations. Alexandra has achieved her goal to be trilingual and to use her skills to help others – she is definitely an accomplished and hard-working individual.

### **A Portrait of Periclis: Making Connections**

Periclis is in his late twenties. He graduated from university only three years prior to my meeting him. He is currently working in the department of research and development of a large mechanical engineering firm in Montreal. As a mechanical engineer, Periclis was trained to solve problems and create mechanical parts using his mathematical skills and scientific prowess. Instead, Periclis finds himself in multiple situations where his linguistic knowledge is his most useful tool in his daily workplace. He is a trilingual who can effortlessly switch from one language to the

other. He is happy to do so and believes that what appears to be his mindful attempts to maintain his heritage language and his French and English are in actuality, his natural way of being. Periclis explained that the fact that he is trilingual today simply requires him to go about living according to his values as he has done from the time he was a child.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: French Experience**

Periclis started learning the French language in a formal setting when he started kindergarten in a French school. He explained that although the law forbade him to attend an English school, his father had made many efforts to circumvent the law and sent him to public English school when it was time for Periclis to start kindergarten. The only other way Periclis could attend an English school was for his father to send him to a private school. This would incur additional financial strain on the family so Periclis was obliged to attend a public French school even if it was not his father's wishes. He explained:

*He wasn't happy at first, I remember, I remember that even as a child, he would blast them... in Greek of course (laughter)... about not permitting us to go to the school of our choice. Yeah! He wasn't happy but, but he came around, by the time I was in Grade 2 he would never talk about it. I think, I think he realized that it was, actually for our own good. I was getting, I got the chance to learn French. He liked that, he was, I think he was proud (Interview with Periclis 01-22-2002).*

Although many immigrant parents had attempted to circumvent the law, many realized the benefit of actually studying in French; unfortunately only after much publicized public protest and upset. Periclis explained:

*My dad wasn't sure things would work out for me in a French school... in the French system but... in the end he... well... all of us... realized that it it was a very good thing! I learned not, not only two language... but three ... now, I'm trilingual now (Interview with Periclis 01-22-2002).*

Periclis is a warm and friendly person, who spoke candidly about his youth. He told me that the first time he realized he needed to learn French was his first day in kindergarten. He said: *"Our teacher asked us to write our name on a card, a piece of cardboard she had given us... and I wrote my name in Greek because that's the only way I, I knew how to write it. I realized I had to learn French... and fast en plus (laughter)!"* I was fascinated by how Periclis had conceived such a keen awareness of what he needed to learn at such a young age. His explanation confirmed child language research which assumes that children have a good social linguistic radar for this. But through my many discussions with him, I learned that it was in fact, his upbringing that had brought him such keen awareness. From the time he was a toddler his father, who had found employment in a Francophone manufacturing company, would read the local French newspapers at the dinner table after supertime for practice, which is an example of parents' use of cultural capital. He would talk to Periclis about the importance of French within the province of Quebec and this is something that really stuck with him.

Throughout my conversations with Periclis, one point that he always insisted on was the fact that he felt that he never had to be influenced to learn and to want to maintain any of the three languages. He explained that it was ingrained into him: *"It's just something that is natural to me,"* he would say. He explained that the fact of being able to communicate with fellow classmates, make friends, and understand his teachers made it impossible to do otherwise. And so Periclis learned French with the pleasures and hardships that come along with with learning a second language. He said:

*When I was learning... when I was in school, elementary and high school, I loved the fact that I could have so many friends. I mean, I had my little Anglophone friends and ethnic background friends I played sports with, we'd go out to... to parties with and then at school, I blended in well. I had a lot of French, I mean Francophone friends, and that was really great (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*

Periclis enjoys being able to interact with fellow engineers and associates in their language in his current place of work. He says that he often switches to French when their English is weak and does so with pleasure. Periclis also uses his French with sales clerks, bank tellers and anyone else he feels he can get better service from if he accommodates them by using the language in which they are most comfortable using. He used the phrase *"a happy employee makes for a happy customer"* to describe why he often uses the French language, instead of the English to communicate with people in his everyday life.

Furthermore, Periclis described his thoughts about how his identity came to be. *“I became a trilingual, you know... with the Greek, the French and the English not just because I was taught certain things, it’s more than that! I behaved, it’s the way I conducted myself, the way I behaved with others”*. Periclis learned, and then applied his beliefs and values in his everyday life.

*That’s it! I was taught to honor my heritage and so that made it alright for me to do Greek things, to go to Greek events, to speak Greek and and... to want to continue these traditions, no one made me want to do it, I did! These things became important to me (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*

I realized that the reason he felt the need to accommodate others in the language of communication was more than just getting good service, it was an act of identity and a propagation of his belief system. He identifies himself as a Quebecer rather than Québécois which has a particular connotation, as well as a Montrealer. He said: *“You cannot call yourself a true Quebecer or even a true Montrealer if you don’t speak, you don’t understand French point final!”* He explained this statement by telling me that Quebec is the most bilingual province in the country and that because this is so, denying the French factor would be a delusion. Periclis also said:

*We’re not like Saskatchewan or B.C. who say...they are bilingual but no one really... you can’t really communicate properly with anyone in French, I don’t want to be unfair... but I mean, you know, the way you can talk French in this province... that’s what I mean. English is a given... the States are right there...and it’s an international language...*

*So, if we want to call ourselves a bi... bilingual country  
we've got to have French otherwise ça marche pas  
(Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*

Periclis' work permits him to interact with individuals throughout Canada, the United States as well as abroad. Crossing borders gives him the opportunity to make use of the languages he knows,

*You can't imagine how great it is.. wait, yes you can  
(laughter) you're a trilingual too! To be able to go pretty  
much anywhere in the world and be able to function, to  
communicate... that's thanks to my having learned the  
languages I learned, in school and at home, with friends... I  
can switch comfortably from language to language  
(Interview with Periclis 03-14-2002).*

Periclis is very outspoken and he expressed himself very clearly, although not all his stories were positive ones. I questioned him about what he meant when he said that he had “*come a long way*” to be able to speak openly about his beliefs. He made it clear that becoming confident about his trilingual identity had been a difficult progress. Periclis stated the following:

*Teachers often treated us different, graded us unfairly...  
more strictly, we... we had to often... work I think, much  
harder than the Francophone students to get ahead in our  
courses. That made you learn about the way things were  
pretty fast... that's the world... out there... outside your home  
you gotta work, no! You gotta work extra hard, to prove  
yourself (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*



I was saddened by Periclis' story but it made me realize the origin of his jaded view of the state of languages within Canada. Discrimination and maltreatment are common practice in racist environments. Unfortunately, classroom settings have not proven to be free of such occurrences. Periclis expressed that most of the hardships he had endured were during his elementary and secondary school years.

### **Me and Another Ethnic Kid**

*I remember when I was in grade 5, in elementary school and the teacher asked me and another ethnic kid, I think, I think he was Chinese... I'm not sure... anyway, I know he Asian... so, the teacher asked us to return a projector he had used during class. You know, even back then, I wondered why he sent us and not any other French kid as he usually did... les responsabilités were mostly given as a reward... or when the teacher liked you. The Asian kid and I were the only non-francos, so it, it struck me as odd, I said Hum, maybe he actually likes us. That evening we got, well my parents got a call from the school saying that we had... we were accused of vandalizing school property... that we were the only two who had access to that room and that we would be suspended. I was shocked, I'm telling you! I couldn't believe it. I thought... how is this possible, to this day I believe we were set up... maybe by this nasty teacher. Luckily my father, well, both my parents believed me and my father spoke to principal. I don't know how he got me out of it but, but I was innocent and thank God nothing else happened... I wondered what ever happened to him. I never hear from my little Asian friend after that. It was Christmas holiday, so*

*maybe he changed schools or moved... anyway, things were not always rosy, let's just say! (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002)*

Periclis still harbored feelings of animosity towards what he calls “injustices due to racism”. He spoke with such anger as if he was brought back to the very day it happened. Nevertheless, Periclis is no longer a child and does not face as many such challenges. *“I sometimes wish I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't... I would speak up, more, I wouldn't be shy about things like that!”* His negative feelings did not make him reject the French language. When I reminded him of the well documented accounts of racism Canadian francophones suffered at the hands of the British Colonial forces, Periclis said the following: *“Racisms is a sad reality, and we've all been victims at some point or another. My hope is that we learn from these experiences and stop repeating them... they are so destructive.”* Periclis is proud of knowing the French language because it brings him a sense of belongingness to the city, to the province and beyond.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: English Experience**

Periclis learned English at an early age. He explained that other than Greek, the language in which he interacted was English:

*Many of my childhood friends spoke Italian, Armenian, Arabic at home so when we got together to play... soccer, baseball, softball... whatever, we'd speak in English. Cause... well that, that was the language, the other language everyone knew (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*

Periclis said that many of the childhood friends he spent time with while growing up were also attending French schools but that, it is English that they chose to use regardless of the language of instruction in school. Although Periclis could not explain why this was the case, he did tell me that most of the television programs, cartoons and sports he watched were in English and that most of the books and magazines he read were also in English as well. It appeared clear that for Periclis, anything that pertained to entertainment was in English probably due to the American media.

With time, it became clear to me that Periclis preferred to use the English language to interact with his friends and peers because that was the language he associated with the aspect of his life that was non-academic. From sports to leisure activities, English symbolized the fun aspects of his life. For Periclis and his peers, English was easy and it provided access to popular culture. *“Everything we liked was in English, movies, music...”*. This probably explained the reason why he reported speaking in English with his friends in school, even inside the classroom. For Periclis and his friends, the English language became the lingua franca for play. It united children who may have spoken English as their mother tongue but also many allophones. Use of the English language was prohibited in Periclis' high school, as well as within a two kilometre radius outside the establishment.

*It was so weird, we would take these city buses but that... they were designated to students only... and we'd take these buses right at the front of the school and as we'd ride off, I remember talking about, the moment we had passed the 2*

*kilometres so that we can start speaking in English. We'd totally make fun of this rule. Oh! And, we really drove the bus driver crazy. He was this quiet francophone, québécois guy who never said much but I remember this one time, he just, he just lost it. He kicked us all out! We were stranded somewhere... no one really cared because we called our parents... and hitched rides, it was fine, but... I'll never forget that (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*

Staff and faculty were tired of hearing their culturally and linguistically diverse students speaking in English or their heritage language, therefore they believed that they had to enforce the French language by installing strict rules which forbid the use of other languages.

*I remember when we had a project, actually it was for French class... we had an oral presentation to do on our favorite singer, we all thought, yeah! This is a cool subject and then, when it was time to select our topics, the singers we chose, The teacher says no, you have to, those of you who don't have a favorite singer who sings in French, you have to chose from this list... we were like Ah man! (laughter) I remember, I did my presentation on Patricia Kass, she was from France, not bad... but no one, nobody liked the fact of being forced, we couldn't really enjoy it, it was fake (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002).*

With the stories Periclis had reported, it was clear that the reason school officials enforced strict language use rules was not solely due to academic reason for learning but issues of the use of power and authority to dominate and control. When discussing these matters with Periclis, I remembered the Greek proverb “Δεν είναι

δυνατόν να κλείσεις κανενός τα χείλι εκτός εάν ραπούνε” stating that ‘you cannot stop someone from speaking unless you actually sew their lips shut’. Well, Periclis’ teachers came close to doing just that. He reported that they would monitor their students in the hallways and in class and penalize them by bringing down their grades when they were caught breaking the language laws of the school. Periclis said: *“Teachers would come flat out and tell us that we were not allowed using any other language than French so... a lot of time... as the rebellious youths that we were, we’d do it on purpose... we were bad... you know we were just kids.”* Adolescents know the power of language use, much like Periclis, many adolescents use language for subversion or resistance. The use of English was very attractive to Periclis as it was easier to pick up and it was the language that he associated with the world outside his school and outside the environment he knew as home.

*For me English was included in my life because I wanted it to be, to be included... also... because my parents wanted it to be. I know a lot of people who live in a bubble, in their little enclosed world of French, like nothing else exists. I actually feel bad for them, no I do because, they are missing out on , on so much (Interview with Periclis 05-30-2002).*

Periclis said: *“I knew that English was important... everything that I was interested in was in English.”* The world of aerospace technology, a field Periclis was determined to enter, involved interacting with many other world countries. Periclis said: *“[...] English is the international world language.”*

Learning English was inevitable for Periclis. What remained to be seen was how well he would learn English. Periclis did master the English language in spite of

the fact that he felt his English (English as a second language) courses were not challenging enough. He said:

*I never really thought I was learning as much as I could, as much as I should in my English classes... it got a little better in high school where we were placed in 'advanced' English classes... but that too was a joke. I wanted to learn the literature, to really know the language (Interview with Periclis 05-30-2002).*

I sensed that the English courses to which Periclis referred bored him and caused him to act out as he had mentioned, not perform to the best of his abilities in these courses. He reported fooling around a great deal. As reported by my other participants, the level of English language instruction taught as a second language in French public school in Quebec is not up to the standards of those who have basic knowledge of English.

*Sometimes I felt like... what is this?! Come on! The English we were learning was so low. If it wasn't for the fact that, that we spoke English with friends, watched English T.V. and that kind of thing, forget about it. There would be no way we could, anyone could, attend an English C.E.G.E.P. because the level was so low. Actually I'm sure that many French kids wanted to go to English C.E.G.E.P. but just wouldn't because they would have to learn the language first. It was astonishing whenever we'd meet some francophone person at our C.E.G.E.P. you know, just forcing himself to learn. It was sad, it's a sad situation (Interview with Periclis 05-30-2002).*

When the time came for him to select the C.E.G.E.P. he wished to attend an Anglophone C.E.G.E.P. He said:

*I knew how important, the importance of English and I knew that I needed to get better at it to really become trilingual so I decided to go to an English C.E.G.E.P.. My sister had gone there before me, it was, it was, very close to my house and one very important factor was that it had the program I wanted, well actually, I needed to pursue to go into the field I wanted. It was kind of a like a course which prepares you for the hard-core sciences of the field... and also... the very advanced math (Interview with Periclis 07-24-2002).*

Periclis attended an Anglophone C.E.G.E.P. with ease. He is very proud of this fact and calls it the only time he truly made a conscious effort to perfect his English language skills. He believes and often stated that “*knowledge is power*” and having refused to learn English would only end up harming him in the long run. Attending an Anglophone university was therefore the next natural step. He did so because he felt comfortable in English. Furthermore, he explained that his program of study did not require him to use language as much as numbers - which he calls a language of sorts as well. He was required to take a writing course geared towards students in the faculty of engineering which he called useful. At that point, English had become the language he was most comfortable using amongst peers and friends who did not speak Greek.

Periclis talks about the time when his French was much stronger as if it was a very long time ago, as if perhaps, it never really happened. He is happy to have

become a trilingual and does not harbor feelings of animosity towards those who may have discriminated against him in the past.

*I'm settled now, so... so it doesn't bother me anymore. I kind of understood, actually I came to understand, and let me tell you, it wasn't easy... to understand where they were coming from. They obviously had their own issues... maybe it was politics, maybe it was personal, no matter! The important thing for me is that I got through it. I am trilingual now, so it's not important anymore (Interview with Periclis 05-30-2002).*

Although he explained that his experiences with racist individual were behind him and that “the past did not matter”, Periclis expressed sadness and disappointment with the individuals that surrounded him when he was growing up. Among those, he counts certain teachers, classmates and what he said hurt him the most some of his friends. He explained it by saying:

*[...] some people are just angry and unhappy with themselves, they don't necessarily want to see someone from an ethnic background surpass them... because they may have had more chances, but never took them so maybe, maybe they're bitter (Interview with Periclis 07-24-2002).*

Periclis explained that although he can forgive, it is very difficult for him to forget even the seemingly mundane events that exhibited peoples feelings

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: Greek Experience**

The most striking aspect about Periclis' trilingualism is his fluency in the Greek language. Although the interview was conducted in English, the discussion



often switched into Greek. This fact did not surprise me because as I had discovered in my Master's monograph (Konidaris, 2000), code-switching, was a contextual occurrence, meaning that it happened when the topic of conversation related to something the subject related to the particular language he would switch into the language he related to that issue or context. Therefore, when Periclis used Greek to discuss issues he related to learning his mother tongue and his upbringing in a Greek context, he tended use the Greek language. He expressed feeling very comfortable using the language and proved to have a rich vocabulary that enables him to navigate from language to language with extreme ease. He attributes learning Greek to his parents. They spoke to him in Greek from the day he was born and it has been the sole language of communication within his parents' home. He said: *"I use Greek, because first of all I love the language, I love the culture and it's what will help me maintain the rapport."* For Periclis, Greek is not only his mother tongue it is something at the very core of his being that defines who he is. He said: *"If I didn't speak Greek. I couldn't feel the way I do... I couldn't... because it's the most important link to the Greek culture... you need the language."*

In addition to his parents influence within the home, Periclis attended a heritage language school. It was a school called **Ομοσπονδία Γονέων και Κηδεμόνων** (Union of Parents and Tutors) held on Saturday and although Periclis calls it a benefit now, he did not always feel that way about language. He said: *"When I was in grade one and my parents told me that they had registered me into Saturday Greek school... I, I well... in the beginning it was very, very, umm... like I*

*didn't find it a good idea! (laughter).*” Periclis explained that like most children his age, he would have preferred staying home and watching cartoons while eating cereal in the living room. I realized that Periclis has a great sense of humor and says it like it is! We had heartfelt conversations where he openly spoke about his experiences and feelings.

Periclis often mentioned the importance of Greek while he was learning French: *“I would often look at a word trying to see what the... what it meant in Greek, and since the roots of many French words in French, I would translate it in Greek, in my head and understand it, I would know what it meant in Greek.”* Periclis mentioned that while he was growing up he did not like to be called *“le Grec”*. He explained that although he was indeed of Greek descent, he was also a Canadian and a Quebecer. He said:

*When someone would call me le Grec, it meant... that is all you are... we don't care what your name is, what you do, what you like... that's it! That's your label, le Grec. I am more, much much more than that and, even... if I am not Québécois de souche, meaning that my ancestors are not from Quebec... generation after generation in this province... I deserve respect... I was born here too (Interview with Periclis 07-24-2002).*

While Periclis explained his interactions and reactions to being labeled *“le Grec”* he seemed genuinely angered. He explained that being a stereotyped child meant that *“you would suffer in pretty much... silence”*. He rarely spoke up about the injustice of stereotyping.

*I didn't really say much cause... cause, it's sad to say but a lot of teachers would, teachers in one elementary school in particular.. would lead the pack. The teacher would make jokes and say les Grecs font si et font ça... it was pathetic on their part because it put me in a precarious position. The thing that kind of saved me was that I was good in sports so... I was like the sought-after athlete, people wanted me on their team so I wanted rejected by everyone, I did have friends, it was alright (Interview with Periclis 07-24-2002).*

Periclis spoke about feeling out-numbered and feared that fighting back the negative stereotypes would draw even more attention and make matters worse for him. “I would sometimes tell my dad, he would say, leave them alone, they're jealous of you and that's why... Take the high road, leave them alone!”. He explained:

*I was often involved in scraps on the school yard... for other reasons... but, I I didn't want to be known as... for that... for being a Greek kid... I just wanted to be me. To be respected as I respected others and and... I knew that when someone would point at you and call you Greek... it was not to flatter your cultural background (Interview with Periclis 07-24-2002).*

Periclis said that he felt the isolation of being the outsider, of not being a part of the group. Being called “*le Grec*” seemed to be the equivalent of being called “*an ethnic*”. Since Periclis attended public French schools in rather predominantly francophone regions it is easy to understand that he was *de facto* the outsider. While making efforts to fit in to his school environment he did not want to disassociate himself from the Greek language and culture. For Periclis, it is

something sacred that others should speak of only with respect. Periclis explained that for him, knowing Greek allows him to bridge the gap that may easily have existed between he and his parents, his siblings and his extended family abroad.

*I can speak with my family with my friends... being able to communicate is just... just so important because I don't think you can hold on to your heritage if you... well especially the Greek heritage, because it involves so much, it's so family oriented... when you're Greek you care, you have to care (laughter) about your family, you have to keep the lines of communication open. A lot of our culture, as you know involves get-together, family dinners, and basically events where everyone gets together and talks from their heart, they tell you what they think...we're such a passionate bunch! (laughter). So, knowing the language allow you to be part of all this (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002).*

Periclis often spoke about the great feeling that he experienced while traveling to Greece. He said:

*I felt like one of them... actually knowing the language, blending in so well mmm... I could easily be a Greek person... born and raised there. Of course I am uncovered when I pop an English word or maybe if I say O.K. that gives me away! But... otherwise I don't stand out... and I love that (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002).*

He explains this with passion and was very convincing. Periclis added that having learned the Greek language opened “the great door of the Greek culture” which allows him to be a part of a world which is welcoming to him as he is a part of it. He does not feel like an outsider even if we was born and raised in Montreal,

Canada. He reports being embraced by the Greek people probably because his love and appreciation for the Greek language and culture are so evident in his actions and his words. Regardless of whether he can “*pass as one of them*” he feels accepted by individuals in Greece, and this fuels his desire to maintain his heritage language. Membership to the Hellenic culture is something that Periclis holds very dear. He takes part in many religious ceremonies in which he feels he could not be do if he didn't have knowledge of the language, or access to the culture.

Today, Periclis occasionally interacts with individuals of Hellenic descent living and working in the United States, or Australia. When he does, he is proud to see that others like him have chosen similar professional path. He said:

*When I do meet another person who is of Greek origin, I am so happy... sometimes they speak Greek, sometimes they don't... but there is still this strong feeling of 'appartenance'... that's something that is you... you keep your language... you will never lose it (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002).*

Periclis use of the word “*appartenance*” exhibits once again his apt code-switching ability. He code-switches because he wishes to show me his ability with the three languages. At the same time, he knows that I too am trilingual so can comfortably convey a concise message. The French word “*appartenance*” he uses means membership. Periclis uses the French word because the term “[...] *packs a punch!*” Periclis’ cultural knowledge and identification are rooted in his knowledge of the Greek language. He embraces all three parts of his identity and forms a hybrid

identity with which he can navigate from language to language and from culture to culture with ease.

*I cannot... I would not say that I am just one, of just one culture... it's more complex than that. Yes, I am Greek, of Greek background... but... I am also a Canadian, and I am a Quebecer. I can speak French I can speak English... and I can speak Greek. You know, I sometimes answer people's questions with whatever is simpler... like if in a questionnaire it said what is your first language? Well... I sometimes answer, I just write Greek, but I learned French and English at early age so... you know?! It's not fair to discard the fact that I did learn the other languages quite young... all my efforts would seem lost because it may appear that the other languages are weaker than my so called mother tongue, or first language. I am a trilingual person I am proud that I know... what I know and that's it. I think it's nice to get the chance to explain who... where you're coming from, so, that's why it's nice to take part in these interviews... I get, I'm getting the chance to explore and define who I am, who I really am (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002).*

I see and understand Periclis' perspective and it is certainly one that I can see him living by.

### **A Portrait of Katerina: The Voice of Others**

At our first exploratory meeting, Katerina began to tell me about herself in quick vignettes with very few pauses between each.

*I'm a trilingual person, I work, I'm a full time audiologist, I use both English and French at work, I'm sometimes required to use my Greek. Certainly, my knowing the Greek language has been useful, otherwise I don't think I'd be able to accommodate my Greek speaking patients... the same goes for the two other languages... it's an advantage I have over many others in my field (Interview with Katerina 10-18-2002).*

I sensed her urgency and rightly attributed it to the high pace she is accustomed to in her place of work. Katerina is an audiologist in a large Montreal hospital. In addition to her full-time schedule at the hospital, Katerina works at a private clinic and is part of a research group that requires her to collect data for a project she has been working on for the past two years. She is definitely a busy woman. In her early thirties, Katerina enjoys the long hours she puts into her work because she is passionate about helping people and knows that the experience she is getting will be useful when she opens her own private clinic, which she aspires to do someday.

My discussions with Katerina remained very high paced. I was astonished by her determination to apply her trilingual skills. *"Since I know the language it would be foolish for me to not use it, to not help my patients get the best service they can".*

In commenting on her trilingualism she states:

*I am not just one thing, one culture or language alone cannot define me. Just like everyone, I am made up, if I can use this awkward expression of, is made up of many parts. I am a little bit of everything that I've learned, of of.*

*everything that I've experienced (Interview with Katerina 10-18-2002).*

She explained that she considers herself Canadian, and Greek, while still viewing the Québécois part of her identity as a very important part of herself.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: French Experience**

Katerina told me that she loves the French language and does make efforts to use it whenever she can to primarily accommodate her patients but also to interact on a daily basis with those she encounters. *“My father wanted me to go to an English school, but he was not allowed to do , it's alright because I got the chance to learn French which is so important!”* I was interested in Katerina's choice of words, when she told me that her father had wanted to send her to an English school but that it *“was not allowed”*. Katerina seemed to refuse to project any negativity or animosity toward the law that had forbidden her from studying in English public schools. She is in fact quite content with having learned French and being capable of interacting with her patients and being an active member of Quebec society. During her elementary and secondary schooling, Katerina was surrounded by many anglophones and allophones due to the geographic location of her school in a culturally diverse neighborhood.

Katerina interacted with her peers in all three languages. Her social interactions have made her the trilingual she is today. She explained:

*[...] I used French in school with friends... and on the streets as you would say... when you're playing with your friends... unless my friend was French, then I'd speak to them in*



*French. And, as for other friends... even if my friend spoke three languages I'd associate a certain language with them and that was it! If I was asked to speak another language with them, it'd be hard to do, because if you associate them with a certain language, you can't switch to another language (Interview with Katerina 10-18-2002).*

Katerina explained that she found it “unnatural” to speak a language other than the one you associate to the particular individual you are speaking to because the language-person association is so strong that it would make it nearly impossible to make a change. I have experienced what Katerina described but not to the extent where I find it difficult to speak a certain language with someone. I believe my training as a language teacher has made it easier for me to communicate with people even if it is not in the language I associate with them initially. Katerina offered the following example:

*[...] it is so unnatural that, for example, an English friend of mine married a French Canadian, so when would go there, he would speak to me in French. I'd reply in French and when I'd turn to speak with my friend, I'd speak in English... I'd I'd, I just could not speak to her in French and then of course I had to I had to translate for the husband. I'd translate... but I couldn't speak in French it would be very unnatural (Interview with Katerina 10-18-2002).*

Katerina told me on numerous occasions that she always loved the French language and although it was “an extra language to learn, it was an extra language to have”. Although many of her friends were taking “the back exit out of French high school”, she wanted to pursue the language and learn it more in-depth instead of

leaving the French school system at the first opportunity. With the help of a very influential high school teacher, Katerina took the plunge and went to a prestigious highly-ranked Francophone C.E.G.E.P.. This C.E.G.E.P. was not only academically challenging but proved to be an arena reinforcing her French language skills and her desire to continue studying in French. Katerina studied in the field of Health Science. The teachers she had while attending C.E.G.E.P. were strict in turns of grammar and spelling. She needed to assure the proper spelling of words and conjugation on verbs in all her courses including, mathematics and science.

*It was points off if we didn't spell something right...not only in language classes but even in math and sciences... it was a little tiresome at times... you know, but it... was for our own good in the end. You could not just say, oh! It doesn't matter because it's math class or chemistry class. So, it forced you to try harder in all, in all your courses (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Katerina spoke about the strictness of the C.E.G.E.P.'s policy. “It wasn't just a few teachers, it was school policy! If you wanted to be a student there... and it's a public school, you had to abide by these rules, or, or fail”. Katerina appeared positive even thrilled about having succeeded in such a constrictive, evaluation-oriented environment. She gave the following example to help me understand her predicament:

*In C.E.G.E.P., we were forced to speak in French, even to our friends... which made it a little strange for me, well, probably for everyone. In the halls, the people around there, the teachers, if they heard you speak English, they'd get very*

*upset with you. If they heard you speak other languages, they'd be a little more tolerant (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Nevertheless, Katerina prevailed and completed her two years of C.E.G.E.P. until came the time to decide on a university. She stated:

*At that point, my French was strong, so was my English so I was looking for the best place to study. I decided, finally I decided on an English, an Anglophone university because they had the program I wanted (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Following her undergraduate degree, Katerina went on to specialize in Audiology but as she put it: *"The program was offered in Quebec but you needed a bachelor degree in communicative... um... sciences in order to continue... or, you could go to another province."* Katerina went on to complete her graduate degree in Audiology in a university in Western Ontario, a very different environment from the one she was accustomed to. She was now immersed and living in a very English environment and culture. She said:

*It was quite different for me... a different experience. Everything was mainly in English. While I was doing my degree I did some translating... from English to French, for some of my professors... it was alright though... I kind of missed French (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Katerina explained that whenever she returned to Quebec she would be ecstatic about getting the chance to use French again. She often mentioned receiving better service when she spoke to clerks and attendants who were francophone in their language and

that observation also played a role in her choice of language. On many occasions, Katerina clearly stated that she considered the learning of the French language a very important element of living in Quebec. I understood that Katerina felt that the importance of French was not only something that would be beneficial to her career but for her identity.

*My identity is, how should I say this... my identity is formed. I am a trilingual person, nothing can change that. No matter where I decide to work or to live. The core will not change. I will evolve as a person, but I believe that a major transformation is just... not possible not... and I'm happy about that (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

As part of her work, Katerina needs to interact with both children and adults to test their auditory capabilities. She told me of one of her encounters that she considered truly disappointing. She said:

*[...] I was testing a little girl probably about a month ago... from Gaspésie or somewhere... really... deep French, where the mainly, only speak French. I had asked, I had told the girl, if she does it correctly, read certain sentences, I'd give her some stickers and the way I said stickers in the end, probably, the girl did not understand. I can understand different accents. The mom, instead of saying, 'Okay, the lady meant this', she turned around and said 'The lady meant this, she doesn't speak French like we do. I thought, oh that's nice (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Katerina was annoyed by her encounter and she told me that that was the day she truly saw “*how malicious certain people could be*”; she neither liked nor hoped she would experience more of those situations.

*I understood the little girl's, I mean the mom's comment to mean... that, that we, meaning herself and the child, spoke the so-called, the right kind of French and that since I said an English word, which stickers is, in English, it meant that my French, the quality of my French, since I knew another language was not like their, was not pure... hence of lesser, of lower, of diminished quality to their since the were francophone. (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002)*

Katerina appeared hurt even as she was recounting her rationalization. She said:

*I find, sometimes, when you speak or you've grown up in three languages, the attitudes versus 'Oh wow! you know three languages, that's great or you know four languages or you know two languages' versus someone who's only been in one language, I don't find they're as accepting. It's a little hard but like I've said before, it's part of life. (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002)*

Katerina has struggled with negative attitudes towards her trilingualism which she explains as something most likely born out of jealousy.

*The knowledge of additional languages is something sought after, there is no other reason why... how do you explain malice... there's no reason. The truth is that that that, when someone aspires to be something or to do something and does not succeed... well that awakens envy in some people...*

*actually it's pretty sad. Yeah, sad but true. (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002)*

Katerina's views on this issue were precise and coherent. Although she may resent certain individuals bad behavior she does not harbor negative feelings about the French language or culture.

*It definitely an advantage... knowing more than one language especially here... you have to look at the number of language schools in the city... they're everywhere, there's school where people can learn a foreign language at almost every corner (laughter) no I'm just kidding, maybe not that much but I'm convinced that having the knowledge of additional languages can be beneficial for your future, for career prospects and for... for... for personal advancement (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Being trilingual is a mark of social and personal achievement that I too believe should be revered. Katerina says: *"It wasn't easy for me to get to where I am today, but it was worth the extra effort"*. Katerina is proud of the fact that her efforts yielded her current proficiency in French. *"I'm happy about my position in Quebec society"*. Her place in Quebec and about her identity make up a part of her identity that she claims : *"[...] I could never do without!"*.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: English Experience**

Katerina learned the English language *"on her own"*. She spoke it with friends, watched television in English and interestingly spoke it with her father. When she says *"on her own"*, Katerina means that she was never formally instructed

in English. Having attended French public schools, Katerina was left feeling unsatisfied with the level of English she had reached at the end of her studies. She said:

*We had English as a second language courses which are fine if you don't plan on using it in your future... I never learned... I was never instructed in English formally. I never learned English grammar, I never learned English literature in school. (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002)*

Katerina's disappointment with the French public system was evident:

*I wish we had at least read something... nope, nothing. We never actually ever got there... well maybe the class didn't! I was ready to read literature to, to do mentally stimulating work in my English classes but that, but unfortunately that was not the case. We would barely even speak in English in our English class... even the teacher, who was francophone... actually, come to think of it, her spoken English, I can't speak about her written English, was so poor... I don't know if that was the reason... but she would speak French in class, teach English through the... by using French (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

She later went on to share her equally disappointing views about the English courses she took while studying in a francophone C.E.G.E.P.. She said that despite the “*sub-par English courses*” she attended while in school, she was able to learn English through always being immersed in it.

Katerina read a lot of novels in English while growing up and was even a member of a literary book club which provided her with an appropriate venue to

practice her English. *"I remember reading a lot of mystery novels, yeah, mostly stuff like that... like Mary Higgins Clark novels... I was reading one after the other, I was very much into it"*. The book club Katerina attended was organized by the mother of one of her friends:

*It was Stephany's mother who organized it... they were Anglophone and her parents were really old, I think they were retired. I remember they had a really big library... they had a large collection of books... some people used to say that she did that to make friends (laughter) it was great because we could get together and pick the book we'd read and then get together and and discuss our ideas... our opinion on the book. It was nice to be able to do that especially for kids whose parents didn't not read much... like my parents, I... actually I don't know if they read much but if they did, it would probably have been in Greek (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*

Katerina jokingly mentioned the catch-phrase *"use it or lose it!"* to explain that while studying in the francophone sector she sometimes wondered if solely the French language would endanger her other languages.

*I didn't want to lose, or to forget the other languages I knew... that was probably what made me want to attend the book club meetings so religiously... I didn't want to end up like those francophone kids who ended up graduating and knew virtually no English at all! Let me tell you, that was really common, not to mention Greek I had to hold on to Greek because it was also extremely important to me (Interview with Katerina 11-02-2002).*



With this fear, Katerina forged ahead in her studies, trying to read and interact in English as much as possible. This was not necessarily a difficult feat since her home environment permitted her the luxury of speaking in English with her father. She said:

*My father studied in English, his English is pretty strong and, I don't know why, but whenever I need to have a serious talk with him... we speak in English. Don't ask me why, but I guess it's what I associate with him, I associate English with him (Interview with Katerina 11-22-2002).*

Although Katerina grew up mostly interacting with her mother, who spoke only in Greek at home, she spoke in English with her father whenever she needed to discuss “an important matter”. Katerina could not explain how this interesting family language pattern had occurred but seemed content with the fact of having someone she could interact with in English at home. *“I was lucky because most typical household, the father speaks in Greek and that's it, not that it's a bad thing but it was nice, I enjoyed it and still do sometimes”.*

Katerina attributes part of her linguistic success to her mother. She said: *“My mother couldn't really help me... but she always encouraged me to work hard, to learn each language... she made me believe in myself and my abilities.”* Katerina was able to pursue studies at the university level in an English university and soon after the completion of her degree, pursued graduate studies in Ontario. She stated that having enjoyed her experience in an anglophone environment so much that she

decided to find employment in Toronto to fully experience the contrast between Quebec and Ontario. She explained:

*Toronto is a much larger city than London, London Ontario where I studied... where I completed my graduate degree... and there's a lot more French people there too... umm.. obviously nothing like in Quebec and Montreal but much more than other Canadian cities. Umm... every time, again, if I had a patient that was French, or that was more comfortable in French... I'd speak to them in French. I'd make the effort because they would, were getting better service... but also because I'd get to speak in French, and practice my French, but it didn't happen very often... it did happen, but English was the language we used the most (Interview with Katerina 12-09-2002).*

After several years away, Katerina decided to return to Quebec. She felt strange using French again but spends much of her free time interacting with friends and colleagues in English. She watches many movies, goes to the theatre, and listens to the radio in English. Interestingly, she says that she likes to watch and listen to programs or shows in their “original format”. She stated:

*I like watching movies in their original format... you know, without having been dubbed for translation, you enjoy them more... so I can't see myself going to see a French movie if it was originally done in English. It doesn't make sense to me. But if it was done in French, I'll go see it in French, not in English (Interview with Katerina 12-09-2002).*

Katerina considers herself lucky to have learned English and having had opportunities to use the language as a native speaker would.

*Whenever I interact with people in English, it's as if it were... as if it is my first language, though it's not... Greek is, I feel very comfortable in English... I think also people are more forgiving or less picky... I don't know, maybe it's just my impression but if you have a slight accent or what you might call a different intonation... no one will really say anything. Well, at least no one was ever said anything to me about it the way in French... people knit-pick, I don't know why that is but they'll ask you stuff like, are you from here? Or de quel pays viens-tu? You know that's never something you wanna hear, anyway you look at it! In English this has never been an issue (Interview with Katerina 12-09-2002).*

Her knowledge of English makes up a part of her identity.

*English is very important to me, I mean I speak it everyday and with so many people... I don't know how life would be if I didn't know English, speak it... it defines who I am. I may be Greek, of Greek background but just as the French language and culture has shaped who I am today, so has English. The real me, I mean the Canadian person, that lives and works in Quebec... who is of Greek descent... if I can say that... is trilingual... and English is part of that definition (Interview with Katerina 12-09-2002).*

As a trilingual, being fluent in English means that she is a part of Canadian society - something she repeatedly expressed as dear to her. Canadian multiculturalism fosters a Canadian identity in which all peoples are accepted and whose rights to retain one's heritage culture are recognized. Katerina knows about the opportunities such a system breeds and she looks to apply it in her daily life. *"I know that I can live as a*

*trilingual, and enjoy everything that comes from that... so I do try to enjoy it, that's just the way it is". She said it best with the following statement. "I am Canadian, and a big part of my Canadian identity is... being able to speak, to understand... to function in English."*

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: Greek Experience**

Because of her knowledge of three languages, Katerina believes that she is doing an exceptional job working with her patients. She said:

*I often have Greek patients, older patients who come in for ear exams. For example, we give word lists and if someone who speaks Greek and has very limited English, I can give them a basic... a set of words to say, but they're not gonna say it correctly if it's not their language. I can give them another set of Greek words and they can answer one hundred percent and this will have an outcome sometimes... and if they need a hearing aid, on what ear I'm gonna fit it or how well they are doing or something else in the diagnosis (Interview with Katerina 11-22-2002).*

Katerina is able to provide services in all three languages and she is particularly happy to help someone who speaks Greek. She said: *"They are often frightened, and don't know what to expect, and seeing their expressions, the expression on their face when I help them in Greek is very good, very rewarding."* Therefore Greek comes in handy when Katerina is working as an audiologist. Knowledge of multiple languages when employed in the public health care system seems to be of great benefit to both patients and staff. Efficient communication amongst patients and

staff member likely increases the quality of performance of staff member and the satisfaction of patients and their families.

Although she works many hours, it is only one aspect of her life. For Katerina the Greek language is what links her to her roots. She needs it to attend church and understand the ceremonies she said: *“Religion is very important to me and I need my Greek to be able to be a part of the festivities.”* Attending Greek religious festivities provides Katerina with the feeling of belonging she seeks.

*I can participate, I can understand and, I mean, that is important! Well, it's important for me because it makes me feel, that I am part of the Greek culture, which I am... it's really important to remind, you know, to kind of remind myself of my roots, not because I think that I'll forget but because I think it just goes with it (Interview with Katerina 11-22-2002).*

Even if Katerina cannot attend church on a weekly basis, she knows that diminishing use and exposure to the language, will start widening the gap between her life as a bilingual and her life as a trilingual. Living and interacting with people in English and French has become natural to her. Interacting in Greek takes more effort because *“you need to kind of go out of your way, there is no guarantee that I will go to work and have a Greek patient... or meet anyone by fluke that, that, who will speak Greek, and we'll get to practice”*. Therefore, although being a “practicing bilingual” is quite feasible in the city of Montreal, the same cannot be said about Greek and being trilingual. Katerina explained that she is extremely proud of her Greek heritage but that she needs to put in the time get involved and interact using the language.

Katerina would like to pass on the Greek language and traditions to her future children; however, to do so requires making an effort to use the Greek language, instead using English or French.

*At home, we could very very easily speak English... or French... but no, we make the effort... just because sometimes the other person's Greek may not be as strong, you may be tempted to bypass it completely... sometimes, what happens is that the other person's Greek is weaker and they may feel shy about making mistakes... however lately, I've been meeting all sorts of people who chose to be fluent, even if the quality of their Greek is not... not so great. They want to practice, sometimes, they want to be corrected and that good, I say, good for them! Make the effort, I believe that we have to make efforts, it's important (Interview with Katerina 11-22-2002).*

Katerina knows that it is highly unlikely that she will lose English or French because they are the “*languages of the land*”. Whether at work or with friends, or even just by interacting with those in her environment such as at the grocery store, at the bank, at the park, Katerina can speak French or English and her bilingualism. The same is not true for Greek since it is a heritage language; more effort and attention needs to be in place for the Greek language. Katerina explained that sometimes, even among family and friends whom she knows are fluent in Greek, the English language is used, although she wishes that weren't the case.

*It would be great if everyone felt this way, but that just isn't the case. Speaking English is sometimes simpler especially these days with inter-marriages. You cannot be*

*disrespectful to someone who doesn't understand, so... you either have to translate, translate, constantly translate, or speak English or French (Interview with Katerina 11-22-2002).*

She attributes using the English language frequently to the fact that many individuals “can get by even with a little bit of English” and because she claims that the English language is simpler and easier to learn than French or Greek. Because the Greek language possesses what Katerina perceives to be “a more complex grammar system” she and those she communicates with, often resort to using English. I believe that no language is more difficult or more simple than another; depending on each learner’s perspective, that language will appear different in terms of level of difficulty. Katerina explained that many second and third generation Greek Canadians may choose to communicate in English, while others choose to make the effort to reinforce their Greek by practicing it. I believe these individuals to be sensitive to the importance of maintaining Greek as a heritage language in Canada. She mentioned participation in Hellenic community events, such as dances and festivals, as well as membership and participation in other Hellenic associations, referred to earlier σύλλογο (silogo) events. Katerina was an active member of the Hellenic society of both of the universities she attended.

*Yup! I enjoyed it actually, I got to meet other Greek people, some were, some would be from Greece, some would be like me, of Greek, of... Greek background, it depends. We organized get togethers, we had kind of mini-conferences. We once managed to arrange for a singer from Greece to*

*come for a concert, we rented a place for him to perform, we advertised. It was great because, well, I think it was a great learning opportunity, because we did so many things. And... and it was nice cause, a lot of times in your classes, especially in those big classes in university, you know get to meet too many people cause you have to concentrate on your work. It's a course not a party (laughter) so I mean, it was really nice to get to meet and do things with the people in the association (Interview with Katerina 11-22-2002).*

It became clear that the Hellenic youth associations Katerina took part in served as mediators for her cultural identity. The attraction was more than just taking part and organizing activities; it was interacting with individuals with whom she shared a culture. This not only comforted her but helped form her trilingual identity. Katerina talked about how the thematic focus often being on the maintenance of a strong bond with the Greek culture through activities that they organized. She believes that this was truly helpful to her heritage language maintenance. Today, Katerina is no longer a member of these student associations. She nevertheless makes efforts to place herself in contexts that welcome the use of Greek and the embracing of the Greek culture. These include church and local community events that invite individuals to become familiar with the traditions of the Motherland. Katerina hopes that her love for the language and her desire to keep that aspect of her trilingual identity alive will prevail.



## **A Portrait of Christos: Just a Natural Act**

Christos is a young man in his early thirties. He calls himself a fluent trilingual because he not only knows English, French and Greek but he uses each of the languages in specific environments. Christos is a businessman working in a large pharmaceutical company, where he primarily interacts with his colleagues and clients in English. In his home environment, Christos uses the Greek language with his family members. Although sometimes required to use French at work with colleagues or clients, Christos used French with certain friends and while encountering people as he goes about his daily life in Montreal. Throughout our meeting, Christos confided that there is not one thing that drives him to want to become a trilingual. Success as a trilingual was simply *“a natural act”*.

## **Becoming and Being Trilingual: Greek Experience**

As a young child, Greek was the primary language of upbringing and communication. He said: *“Greek was and is the language of the home and... the language that I speak with my parents.”* Christos has a quiet dignified way about him. He was always calm and responsive during our interview. This seems to originate from Christos' upbringing. He explained that his parents always encouraged him to excel but did it in a way that he did not perceive as forceful. He said: *“Speaking Greek was just a natural act... I never really put much thought into it... it was a given.”* Christos explained that the pride he felt about his Greek heritage was something to celebrate and therefore learning the language was something he desired.

He attended heritage language school for many years. During his elementary school years he attended Saturday Greek school. He said:

*Going to Greek school on Saturdays was not easy... because you know, as a kid you wanna do did stuff like watch cartoons or play with your friends... and you always had double homework every time, right? So, not only did you lose you Saturday, but you probably lost some of... your Saturday and part of your nights just to do... to do your homework (Interview with Christos 09-15-2002).*

Christos attended **Ομοσπονδία Γονέων και Κηδεμόνων** (Union of Parents and Tutors) heritage language Saturday school. He describes attending Greek school as a difficult experience because as he said:

*[...] don't get me wrong, not from the sense that it was difficult to learn Greek, because that was great... but difficult in that you'd lose your interactions with your friends and they wouldn't have the same experiences either (Interview with Christos 09-15-2002).*

While Christos may have believed that Greek school was useful and necessary, a part of him still wanted to do the things other kids his age did on Saturday mornings. The desire to make friends and interact with them is an expected aspect of child socialization. When Christos was in his second year of high school, he moved to a new school where Greek school was offered on Tuesdays and Thursday. He described his attendance to this school as “*exceedingly chaotic*”. Christos described the classroom as a very unwelcoming place.

*It was one very large sized room which housed various grades and levels of students guided by the same teacher, it wasn't fun to have to compete for the teachers attention (Interview with Christos 09-15-2002).*

Christos described his teacher as “*strict and often quite violent*”. He said: “*They'd pull your ears, they'd hit you... violence was always a part of Greek school... and that was not helpful... at all.*” Although Christos did not wish to further discuss the violence that took place, as it was evident that it was a hurtful and negative episode in his construction of a Greek identity. I believe that the love and interest he possesses today for the Greek language and culture was primarily due to his parents. Parental influence played a very important role in his life in general and in his Greek identity construction. He speaks about them in a loving way and recollects childhood stories with a smile. One of the stories he shared was of his writing letters to his grandparents in Greece later going to Greece and feeling the closeness he cherished with his relatives. Christos explained that all his family, i.e. grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins) live in Greece. Although the geographic distance between them is large, he always feels close to them when he speaks to them on the phone. Feeling a sense of belonging is important for individuals living in the Diaspora but it can be equally meaningful to their children.

*My parents I think, I think they often wrote because, well.. they were expected to write... maybe like my dad... but we, the children I think came to love to write and just, well have pen pals, and communicate with cousins and friends we had made during summer holidays in Greece...because it kept us*

*connected. It kept the lines of communication up for probably the next time, the next summer if we were lucky enough to go (Interview with Christos 11-06-2002).*

Christos was able to communicate because he possesses knowledge of the Greek language. He considers Greek important because he wants to pass on the Greek culture and traditions to his future children. He believes that the recent improvement in communication technology have helped in this domain as well.

*Nowadays I can communicate with my family in Greece using the Internet, using web cam... It's actually much easier that it used to be... mind you, I still like to write letters, like on... with pen and paper... but things are easier these days, as long as you want to communicate with people (Interview with Christos 11-06-2002).*

Perseverance and hard work are trademarks of Greek culture. Throughout history, they have proven to be the elements that propel individuals out of despair and onto new heights. Christos reports seeing his parents “*working hard and never letting go of their dreams*” and feeling inspired to do the same in his life. Christos’ drive to succeed in school and in his work stems from observing the ways of those before him. He knows of the struggles and hardships but is also well aware that his ancestors prevailed even through the toughest of times. He said:

*You know, it probably stems from my parents and my background... my parents are very very very hard workers and they are the ones who supported you for so long... so there's a fear of not... or disappointing them (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

He calls this fear of let-down and disappointment “*a very typical belief amongst children in our generation*”. Describing it as the “*Greek mentality of second generation*” Christos believes that learning the Greek language and perhaps learning of all sorts is a big part of building your identity. Christos does not separate the three languages that make up his identity as a trilingual because he believes them to be “*blended*” and “*natural*”, as if no other way could be. Because Greek is the language that links him to his culture he states that it is a very important aspect of his life.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: French Experience**

Christos completed his entire schooling in the French system. From kindergarten to graduate school, he was first legally obliged to attend French school but later in his C.E.G.E.P. and university studies chose to attend francophone institutions. Christos told the story of his first realization of the importance of the French language. He explains:

*When I was in kindergarten, going on the bus for the first time, going to a new place, I realized that I was going... going to this school where everybody would be speaking French except for myself. I think I knew only, I think maybe a handful of words at the time and I remember being like... oh my gosh! What the heck am I doing here (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

Christos' shock with being in a very different environment dissipated when he started making friends and improving his French language skills. His initial feelings were those of an outsider:

*I felt really awkward, like I didn't really belong there... and that maybe someone had made a mistake placing me there. I mean I was born in Montreal, yet for me as a little child, I thought... French? That's strange, I speak Greek at home". Although kids can be cruel, things evolved and when you're such a small kid you absorb like crazy, so... so I, I think I got comfortable by grade one or two... I was up to speed with everything, so... it went very well (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

It was not until Christos improved on his French that he started feeling comfortable being in a francophone environment. Despite this fact, Christos explained that he was “always on his own” when it came to learning French and doing his schoolwork. He often felt that he had to work “twice as hard” as his peers did to achieve the success that he sought. He explained:

*[...] they could help you up to certain point... my parents could do math a bit... you know. But the more you went on in school, the more you were on your own. You know?! Good luck! I can't help you! And that was actually another drive... it's what... the reason why you wanna achieve is because you're basically on your own. You're not babysat. I mean, to succeed you need to... you had to push yourself. More so for the first kid in the family, the second kid had it easier (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

Christos' desire to succeed in school was fueled by primarily two sources. The first source was his desire to maintain his parents approval, and second source was to prove to himself that he could achieve his dreams on his own. In high school, Christos reported completing a bilingual program which he described with a great deal of enthusiasm.

*[...] bilingual diploma which was a kind of certificate proving that I had successfully completed a certain number of French course, and a certain number of English courses, that... that the average kid, just the average regular student did not do. It was an advantage to be able to complete this diploma (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

He further described it as an opportunity to study literature in an advanced setting for both English and French. *"We had more literature more grammar... or least more advanced grammar... and this in both the languages we studied"*. He explained that he loved the challenge because it fuelled his desire to accomplish more and excel in it. He said: *"It encouraged me to see that I was doing well in those classes and although it was kind of tough, it was nice to get the recognition for our work... and our efforts... with the bilingual diploma."* Upon completion of his secondary level studies, Christos made the decision to attend a French C.E.G.E.P.. Although some of his trilingual peers may have viewed the end of secondary schooling as their first opportunity to escape from the French system, Christos thought of it differently. He explained:

*My decision to go to a French C.E.G.E.P. stemmed from the fact that I wanted to continue on to the health sciences and I*

*figured that if I do... I continue on the French side, I could do French and then switch to English. Whereas I felt that if I continued on the English side it might be difficult to hit the French universities later on. Because... well I thought that there might be some discrimination. Or... I don't know, I felt that the reverse was true, you know?! All these French kids would eventually find themselves in McGill but... not many English students would find themselves in the French universities (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

Christos' perception of possible discrimination by French universities pushed him to attend a French C.E.G.E.P. and work hard in his studies to be able to choose where he would pursue his university degree. However, when the time came to apply to university Christos stated that:

*You didn't really feel like switching, even if it wasn't a problem... I was comfortable in the French system and even decided to take a fourth language. Yeah! I decided to take Spanish... it was really just for fun, but still another language in its own right. I enjoyed it actually, even if I didn't take as many courses as I wanted... you know, there just wasn't enough time (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

Once again, I saw that Christos was driven to learn and to succeed. The three languages that make him a trilingual were merely the tip of the iceberg for Christos. He had dreams and the drive to do whatever it took to achieve them. Having studied the Spanish at the C.E.G.E.P. level, facilitates his travels to Spanish-speaking countries and seems to offer him a confirmation that his abilities and efforts are



pragmatized. When Christos decided to study in Pharmacy, he learned that only the French university offered this program, making his interest in applying to English universities difficult. He said: *"If I wanted to do Pharmacy in English I'd have to go outside the province... and would've really changed the path I took in... my life."* He explained that his choice was simple because in spite of his interest in studying in English, he knew that if he wanted to remain in Quebec, he would be in a more advantageous position when seeking employment. In his own words:

*The reason why I followed the French path was because my perception was that it'd open more doors. Once you hit the English system it's more difficult to come back, so I preferred going to French and if need be, I'd go to an English university or... so... in that sense (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

Christos was the only student of Hellenic descent in his program in university and although he reported making friends with peers of diverse backgrounds, he confided that he was sometimes lonely. He said: *"I remember feeling alone sometimes, you know... having someone who... who really understands you"*. Christos told me that socialization issues such as making friends and interacting with peers made him work harder at finding common points of interests with peers of different ethnic backgrounds and native francophones as well. Two of Christos' best friends are also trilingual. English and French are the two languages he and his two friends share. They speak Eastern Farci and Vietnamese respectively. *"It was nice that they too had different native languages. We all had a different, actually very different backgrounds but it didn't matter it was actually really nice!"*. Christos

explained: *"We've been through similar hardships... we're in the same field and... essentially, we share the same dreams."* The kinship Christos described seemed to have affected Christos's way of thinking about his trilingual identity. He shared the following story with me that exemplifies how he feels about his trilingual status. He said:

*I remember when I was in class with my friends and at the break, we talking... we were communicating... switching from language to language... and a guy sitting in back of us said, how the heck are you guys communicating, it's so strange! Well, let me tell you, we were... we sure were self-conscious from then on because we didn't even realize we were doing that... just to show you how comfortable we were but how strange our behavior probably, obviously... appeared to others (Interview with Christos 11-27-2002).*

Christos' story seemed to bring him back to the day those events occurred. Although he mentioned feeling self-conscious at the time, I believe that his underlying feeling was one of pride for actually being able to communicate in more than one language. Christos later confirmed my assumption was right. Christos went on to complete a masters degree in Health Economics in a francophone university which made it possible for him to work as a market access project manager for a large pharmaceutical corporation in Montreal. Although he uses French with local clients, Christos interacts with individuals throughout Canada and is therefore using English primarily. He claims to be using English at least eighty-five percent of the time he spends in his work environment. Although most of his co-workers are

bilingual, he often uses French with them to facilitate the process of communication. Because of the large size of the corporation where he is employed, he mentioned the availability of translation services. He explained: *“I could write a document in French and get it translated into English or write it in English and translate it into French.”*

Interestingly, Christos prefers to write his documents in English as he feels that they are more simplistic to write due to what he calls *“the simplicity of the English language, in comparison to the French language”*. He said: *“The terminology is similar but more can be said in less words in my field... that’s why it’s just easier to use English.”* For Christos, the French language is the one he used to get ahead and reach his goals. He is proud of the fact that he knows French and appears to wear an air of vindication about having achieved a great deal in the French system.

### **Becoming and Being Trilingual: English Experience**

Christos uses English for the majority of the time he spends working. He is content with the fact that although he never pursued formally learning English after the completion of his high school diploma, he is fully comfortable and fluent in the language. Christos considers English to be a simpler language to learn, I however understand that the reason for which he perceived it that way is his early introduction to the language. Christos described many situations where, as a child he would use English as a lingua franca to interact with other children of diverse backgrounds. He explained:

*I always spoke English with my friends. They were an influencing factor for my learning the language because...as a kid you wanna make friends! With friends, we used to hang out on the street... our common language, cause we were all from different backgrounds... was English. So it was obviously a push to learn that language otherwise you have a hard time being a part of the fun. English... it's a fairly simple language to learn so back when we were little kids playing hockey in the streets... we all spoke English (Interview with Christos 11-27-2002).*

He was taught English as a second language at both elementary and secondary levels.

Christos explained that he found it “quite easy” due to the fact that he had been exposed to the language at home at an early age. He explained that most of the television he watched was in English. With children’s shows like Sesame Street, Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood, and Electric Avenue playing on the television everyday, Christos believes that he learned “a few of the basics”. Christos explained the following:

*I loved the fact that I could learn how to count, the alphabet, certain words, certain expression... all that by watching t.v., I know you’re a teacher so I’m not sure you would agree that this is the best way of learning... anyway, that’s not what I’m saying... I just think that it was nice to be able to be... to get exposure of the English language through television... because like I said, it was... primarily English for me at home, and with my parents...so I did learn certain things (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

Christos completed the “*bilingual diploma*” which his high school offered. This diploma meant that he had been exposed to English literature as well as French literature. “*This program allowed us to get more in-depth, more advanced language programs*”. Christos explained that he was able to retain some of his acquired knowledge through reading he did on his own time:

*After high school I was back to... it was back to the same story. The English courses were really not advanced, even if that's what they were called (laughter), so I read a lot on my own... mostly scientific magazines, and the English papers, that kind of thing (Interview with Christos 12-02-2002).*

I sensed that Christos may have wanted to pursue at least some of his studies in an Anglophone setting but his desire to prove to his parents, to himself and perhaps even to the world that he could prevail in a challenging environment made it unlikely. Today, Christos works and interacts in English on a daily basis. When he spoke about his current situation, it was evident that he is proud of his linguistic abilities and his trilinguality.

## **EKTO KEΦAΛAIO: ΣΤΟΧΑΣΤΙΚΗ ΑΝΤΙΛΗΨΗ:**

### **ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ, ΘΕΩΡΙΑ, ΠΡΑΞΗ**

## **CHAPTER 6: REFLECTIVE UNDERSTANDINGS:**

### **POLICY, THEORY, PRACTICE**

In the preceding chapters, I provided self reports of six Greek trilingual adults' perceptions about becoming and being trilingual. My inquiry on trilinguals focused on them as “children of Bill 101”. These individuals are allophones who received their formal instruction in the French school system in the province of Quebec. They received English language instruction as it is taught as a second language within the public school system and also attended Greek heritage language schools.

After conducting in-depth interviews with the six participants, I *painted* a portrait for each. In order to do so, I adopted a socio-cultural approach to learning, language and literacy and embraced the tenets of activity theory to describe their development of culture and a trilingual identity. From our conversations, I aimed to access the participants' perceptions of their experiences ‘growing up Greek’ in Montreal, Quebec. I conducted 40 hours of interviews over the span of three and a half years. I documented the participants' self-identification with the three languages and their perceptions of becoming and being trilingual.

In this chapter, I present my reflective understandings of these Greek trilingual adults. I revisit my research journey and reflect upon the implications of this study for the policy makers, educators, parents and students.

## **Constructing a Trilingual Identity**

The participants in this study are literate in three languages. The cultural practices and literacy activities they engage in are specific to their culture, specific to their group and, specific to their person. Therefore, the factors that influence them to engage in such practices and activities are as unique as their choices of practices and activities.

However, the common thread among them is the fact that they share a common background. All participants are adults born in the province of Quebec, in Canada to parents who emigrated from Greece during the second wave of migration between 1960 and 1970. They were “children of Bill 101” thus, having received formal French language instruction in the French public school system. None of the participants attended the same schools. All six participants attended different schools, except for those who attended the semi-private elementary day school Socrates. At the secondary level, all six participants attended different public French schools. At the C.E.G.E.P. level, the participants who pursued their studies in English institutions attended the same one, and those who pursue their studies in French also attended the same francophone institution. (Refer to TABLE 5: List of the participants and overview of their backgrounds).

They received English language instruction taught as a second language starting in grade 4 during their elementary school year and proceeded on the same path in the French public high schools they attended. The participants attended heritage language Greek schools in which they were formally instructed the Greek

language and culture. For all of the six participants Greek was the language used within their home environment as well as in other social contexts with parents, siblings and close relatives.

The six participants share cultural backgrounds, consider Greek to be their mother tongue and recognize Greek as their heritage language. Knowledge of one's heritage language can serve as a tool for reaching higher levels of cultural conceptualization. They reported that by learning Greek, they were more willing to engage in Greek community events, attend Greek Orthodox church service, and use the language on a daily basis with their families, their relatives and their peers both when they were growing up and now. The participants reported feeling comfortable with the Greek language and more attracted in using the language on a daily basis. During their lives their comfort level with the Greek language fluctuated. Helena and Periclis gave an example of this occurrence.

*H: When I was a teenager I was... it was more ambivalent for me. I needed to feel accepted by my peers but the same time did not wish to alienate the Greek part of me.*

*E: Alienate?*

*H: Yeah, from my parents, from myself... and from my Greek relatives... here and in Greece. They were always so supportive and proud. So...I didn't want to not speak Greek to not go to Greek school and to just be, although... the truth is, I don't think it's even possible, to distance myself from my roots. (Interview with Helena 05-10-2002)*



*P: I am proud to be Greek. Although I sometimes felt, you know?! It would be just, just so much easier if I was un Québécois, or an Anglo-Canadian.*

*E: Why did you think that?*

*P: Because as a kid, you are building who you'll be and if you're known as "le grec", you kind of have to try to define yourself to yourself.. like when you look in the mirror and to others. (Interview with Periclis 03-11-2002)*

In these excerpts both Helena and Periclis report feeling confusion in trying to define their identity. Although peer and social acceptance was important, this acceptance could not come at the cost of culture. They considered that rejecting their Greek practices and activities would possibly help them gain the acceptance of their Francophone and Anglophone peers. They also explained that doing so would be anathema to them and to their families. Contexts such as social, school, home, and work were places for use of Greek. I use the term place to signify not only setting in the physical sense, but place as a symbolic context for human life (Giddens, 1983). Entrikin argues that place should be seen as "the meaningful context of human action" (1991 p.10). The actions that individuals took in their day-to-day activities created the place I referred to earlier. It is a socially constructed place which in Anderson's (1983) terms could be referred to as "imagined". Since a sense of place can be *imagined*, individuals can attach to it the elements that make it psychologically comfortable. The participants' sense of place includes the relationship between people and place, perceptions, attitudes, values, and worldviews that affectively bond them together. The sense of place they have

constructed helps them promote cultural awareness, protect cultural heritage and strengthen the bond with members of their Hellenic community and their kin.

The encouragement participants reported receiving from their parents, their relatives, and their Greek school teachers affected their learning of the Greek language positively. The participants share religious beliefs that are grounded in the Christian faith. Their attendance at church services and community events is perpetuated by the fact that they understand and can communicate in Greek. They reported that their knowledge of the Greek language and customs urges them to participate because they are able to see a practical purpose to their literacy skills and cultural knowledge. Their knowledge of Greek history affords them pride and a desire to pass on their traditional Greek family values and customs to their prospective offspring. They consider their knowledge of Greek as a tool to achieve this feat. The knowledge of Greek gives participants a feeling of *appartenance* when amongst other Greek or Greek background individuals. The feeling of *appartenance* is one belonging felt in the heart. It is a deep desire to identify with one's cultural group, with family, community, church and various associations. The participants reported that traveling to Greece reinforced their attachment to the Greek language and culture. Family, hospitality and the feeling of belonging were reported factors for a desire to retain links with the motherland. They reported that the most influential factor in learning the Greek language and culture was that of the parents. Thus, the home environment served as the main context for becoming and being Greek.

The elements that form an individual's identity often include one's self-perception in relation to their own culture group as well as to the larger society. Thus, self-perception is defined by their image of the behaviors, beliefs, values and norms that are considered appropriate to members of the cultural groups to which they belong. Hall (2003) assumes that identity is a production constituted within representation. This representation is perpetually incomplete and always in process. The on-going desire of trilinguals to keep up their linguistic skills can be interpreted as the way to define and redefine themselves as trilliterate individuals.

They discussed their cultural identity as a complex fusion of cultures. The languages that make up their trilingual identity are English, French and Greek. Each language is intrinsically linked to culture. The English language is linked to the notion of being Canadian despite the fact that Canada is officially a bilingual country. The participant interviews were conducted in English, except for the sporadic use of code-switching. English serves as a link to that which is characteristically Canadian and is associated with an Anglophone identity. The French language is linked to the province of Quebec and all that is characteristically *Québécois français*. A Francophone identity entails something contextually specific to this provincial region. It is not a French identity of those living in France or any other French-speaking country. The French language the participants live with is distinctly associated with Quebec. For many Greek and Greek background individuals, the Greek language represents Greece, the

motherland. It is the language of the six participants' ancestors and a culture for which many lost their lives and kept alive.

Their strong affiliation to the Greek language and culture emerged as experiences, practices and ways of seeing oneself that affect their complex identity as Quebecers, Canadians and Greek cultural background individuals. It became clear that:

*In school we were taught how to be 'des Québécois'. Everything was geared towards that. The school, the curriculum, and of course, the blatant expression of their belief that to learn French, to learn French really well, we had to watch T.V. in French, speak in French at home and with friends... (Interview with Helena 09-17-2002)*

In this interview excerpt, Helena reported feeling the pressure to conform to the majority culture. She was encouraged to engage in practices that would familiarize her with the Québécois culture. Her heritage culture and identity were silenced due to the push to fit in to a québécois identity. In explaining her desire to fit into her environment Helena said:

*I really wanted to fit in so when I'd spend time with my Anglophone friends I'd wanna... like prove in some way that I wasn't different from them. You know, I spoke the language like they did, I watched the same programs as they did... but the truth was that well... it just wasn't true. I had this whole Greek life at home! (Interview with Helena 12-04-2002)*

Despite the complexity of their cultural identifications, all six participants reported being successful in the three different cultural spheres of their lives. Their malleability is due to a hybrid identity which they forged over the years. Although none of the participants ever brought up the concept of hybrid identity, they did discuss the ease with which they traveled from culture to culture. Papastergiadis (1997) assumes that the hybrid identity is positioned within the third space as a lubricant in the conjunction of cultures. Identity is a process that is formed in “a zone that exists between the familiar and the foreign” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 98).

*I belong to the three cultures in which I was raised in! It's a little strange to some people but I could never be... just Greek, or just anglo... or just Québécois. I don't think anyone sees me that way... but... it's not possible, I think for anyone who is of Greek descent or any other cultural background sees himself as how can I put this, as a complex being. One culture rubs up against the other. Some things are new, some things are old, but each one of my cultures lives essentially together... together... inside of me (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002).*

In this excerpt, Periclis explains that he does not perceive himself as solely coming from or belonging to one culture. He explains that it would be impossible for individuals with more than one culture and language to see themselves as exclusively of one culture. Periclis' positions himself in a space where the three parts of his identity co-exist within him. There are elements in each of his cultures that he is familiar with and other which are or were foreign to him at a time. For example when he started going school he was familiar with the cultural practices of

his home that were distinctly Greek. The practices he faced when starting school in a francophone environment were entirely foreign to him. He gave the following example from when he started attending C.E.G.E.P. in English.

*When I started C.E.G.E.P. it was nice to have all this freedom... you know, no bells ringing, no one to tell you what to do or when to do it, plus... in addition to all this new freedom, everyone spoke English, it was unreal to me! It was like I entered a whole new world. Things looked very different to me, they way they spoke, you know, their accent was not like the one I was familiar with...it was a very strange experience for me, especially at first. When you get more life experience then... things like this don't hit you as much (Interview with Periclis 13-07-2002).*

He was faced with new situations and contexts that appeared foreign to him until those too became familiar and were replaced by others. Rutherford (1990) describes hybridity as the 'Third Space' in which other positions are able to emerge. This space accommodates Periclis' hybrid identity.

The issue of colonization was not the focal point of my inquiry of trilinguals. The six third generation Greek Canadians who participated in my inquiry, as well as the individuals from the first and second generations who emigrated from Greece did so voluntarily. The issues of colonization faced by Greeks migrating to Canada should be considered mild in comparison to other forms of migration. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the Greek Diasporan communities in Canada found themselves in Canada after having left Greece in search of opportunities for employment and better socio-political standards than those

available to them in war-torn Greece. The immigrant experiences of the Greek Diaspora included many hardships such as linguistic barriers, isolation and racial discrimination. Nevertheless, these experiences differ in severity from those of colonized peoples described by Hall (2003), Henry (1994), and Harney, (1996) among many others who research and write about individuals persecuted by colonizers. Take for example, the case of the Pontic diasporas.

Over three thousand years ago, Greek colonists set up trading posts around the Black Sea (Ascherson, 1996). A kingdom was formed in the city of Trebizond and with time, further migration took place. The unique location made for a Pontic culture and language that was influenced by Genoese, Venetian, Turkish, and Russian Empires which diverged from its Greek origin. In 1923, the proclamation of the Turkish republic forcefully expelled Greek people from the motherland. An estimated 164,000 Pontians were 'returned home' to neighbouring regions in Turkey, Albania and Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, another estimated 200,000 Pontians ordered to vacate their homes and return to Greece - which by that time, had become a foreign land to them. Despite the persecution, lengthy lapse of time, and the long severed ties to Greece, the Pontians returned to Greece. The Pontian Greeks revived their historical consciousness of origin and reinvented themselves as Greek people despite colonization.

The term hybridity carries a problematic meaning because it has historically been utilized in nineteenth century eugenicist and scientific-racist thought to describe those who are products of miscegenation or mixed-breeds. (Young, 1995).

Despite the loaded history of this term, contemporary cultural discourse theorist Homi Bhabha uses it to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequality. (Bhabha, 1994; Bhabha, 1996). Bhabha argues that hybridity is the process by which the governing authority (the colonizer), attempts to translate and redefine the identity of the minority groups (the colonized or the *Other*) within a singular universal framework and fails. At that point, Bhabha claims that the Third Space emerges and a hybrid identity becomes possible. This new hybrid identity consists of an interweaving of elements from the two main sources: the colonizers and the colonized. These two sources challenge both the authenticity and validity of a cultural identity, thus leaving place for the birth of a hybrid identity. The hybrid identity replaces the established representation of cultural identity with an identity which figures somewhere in between the colonizer and the colonized. (Lindsay, 1997).

Bhabha (1996) assumes that hybridity is positioned in the 'in-between' space where the cutting edge of translation and negotiation occurs and which he terms the "Third Space". This Third Space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no primordial unity or fixity (Bhabha, 1994). It is a space in which new forms of cultural meaning and production can exist without the limitations of existing boundaries and categorizations of culture and identity. The six participants socially constructed their identity by bridging their differences and similarities within themselves and with others.



*I knew that I could not ignore any part of myself... If I were to not embrace my Greek culture I would be denying a big part of who I am. I know people who did this, they wanted so badly... to be integrated that they refuse to acknowledge their native culture. In the end I don't even think they got fully integrated, probably because it was always a part of them. I make the analogy to people who have nose jobs, rhinoplasty. The guy may pass off as someone with a beautiful nose... maybe!? But his nose is still his original nose, the one he was born with. His offspring may inherit it. That's how deep it is. Culture, I see culture the same way, it's not something you can just modify and forget about. (Interview with Alexandra 27-05-2002)*

In this excerpt, Alexandra talks about how refusal of a cultural part of herself does not work because it is something that cannot be altered effectively, permanently and without repercussions. Papastergiadis (2000) asserts that “to know where the self has come from is to gain a sense of belonging which enables one to risk the journey ahead” (p.98). The trilinguals in this study all shared a way of dealing with their cultural background. They embraced the cultural practices of their homes, their communities and their families. They shared a way of thinking about the role culture would play in their integration into Quebec society and Canadian society. They became trilingual by thinking about their transformation in a generative way. Hall (1991) views the transformation as constructed by ideas, world-views and material forces which interact with one another, they are reworked internally until a

new identity replaces the old one. However, Hall's representation of a hybrid identity is not meant to imply that a new identity wholly replaces the old. The hybrid identity seen with the participants is an ongoing process of negotiation and identity construction.

## **Knowledge as Power**

The six participants view that developing language skills is advantageous to their personal and social development. They consider literacy a social achievement. For example, Tilemahos reflects on his linguistic accomplishment:

*T: I really truly feel that I have achieved something great. I am trilingual, as that's not something that everyone has... you know the ability to function in French, in English and in Greek. I consider it something good that I achieved because I worked hard to get there. (Interview with Tilemahos 23-04-03)*

Literacy achievement is an outcome of cultural transmission that is neither static nor a universal essence (Scribner, 1986). Participants reported that being trilingual can serve as a status symbol. Their knowledge of three languages is a product of their skill, desire, and drive. Thus, being trilingual is something participants reported wanting to maintain. Once they had become communicatively competent in three languages, their desire to maintain their knowledge of each of the languages increased. They described themselves as being functionally literate in the three languages.

*P: "I consider myself trilingual because I am functional in all three languages, I am literate in all three languages. I can work in either of the three languages...I am comfortable. (Interview with Periclis 10-07-2002)*

Being trilingual gave them the freedom to use their linguistic skills to advance their careers and to navigate comfortably in the pragmatics of their work, civic and private lives. For example, Alexandra explains:

*A: I am able to accommodate my patients in the language of their choice... English or French, I have no issues with either. It's not everyone, every nurse who can say this because there are many francophone nurses who only speak French and actually try to use English... well, the message may get mangled so I guess... it's preferable for them to stick with the language that they are fluent in... I'm not saying that they shouldn't try, that they shouldn't even try... but because it's often life or death type of situations, I don't know I think that it may actually be better than getting the wrong... like an incorrect message across to the family of the patient... or to the patient himself. (Interview with Alexandra 08-05-2003)*

Alexandra reports using her knowledge of languages to accommodate her patients. She is putting her literacy skills to use on a daily basis, thus making her good at her job. Her desire to assist others encourages her to make use of the language by perpetuating her belief that trilitracy is useful and advantageous.

## Implication for the Research Participants

Becoming trilingual and maintaining knowledge of each of the languages requires a certain amount of effort. In the next quotations, the participants share their thoughts about external perceptions of them as trilinguals and the ways in which they dealt with their desire to be trilingual.

*E: You really seem to be making efforts to maintain your knowledge of the three languages!*

*H: Absolutely. Yes, yes I do! I mean, I don't like saying this to just anyone because they are likely to interpret it as... as if I'm not naturally inclined to be trilingual.*

*E: Really? What do you mean?*

*H: Well... that the fact that Greek was my first language didn't really make much of a difference in my life... and that is not the case. The fact that I did have Greek as my heritage... my first, language made me even more aware of the fact that language is very important. So I get the French paper, I interact with colleagues in French, I go... I attend community events with Greeks, I even make more efforts, like traveling to Greece, like practicing the Greek culture. I became trilingual because I was determined to become trilingual. To actually learn the language, the culture and be integrated, is something that I would never trade... no! I value it so much.*

*(Interview with Helena 12-15-2002)*

*E: Do you make efforts to maintain your trilingualism?*

*P: Do I make efforts... Well to become a trilingual, I definitely have to say that I worked very hard. I read a lot I*

*went to special schools, and all that but now it's different. You know, I don't even consider it efforts. I don't need to make efforts. Being trilingual today is the reward so I think that it's a natural thing I do. It is important to me and so I get involved in activities that will require me to practice my Greek, to practice my French, to practice my English. (Interview with Periclis 11-29-2002)*

The two quotations from interviews with Helena and Periclis illustrate the challenges and the possible rewards of becoming and being trilingual. Helena stressed that she did need to make efforts to become trilingual and that the daily work she puts into being trilingual is something she needs to do but at the same time, it is something that she enjoys doing. Helena feels that being trilingual provides her with many advantages and she would not consider trading. Tilemahos expresses similar sentiments but rather than calling it an effort says “it’s a natural thing to do”. He regards interacting in each of the three languages natural and therefore not effortful. Both Helena’s and Tilemahos’ sentiments about being and becoming trilingual express an admiration for trilingualism. Helena regards it as something valued that she could never trade, while Tilemahos regards it as a reward in and of itself. Participating in this qualitative inquiry gave the participants an opportunity to self-reflect and voice their thoughts and perceptions about the factors that contributed to their trilingualism.

*K: I have never actually spoken to anyone about my... my knowledge, my skills, my use, my daily use of three languages... so even if I may be helping you, since you are doing a study on this, I actually find it interesting... I would*

*even say useful for me, for my own information, my knowledge, for my growth.*

*(E.Konidakis, personal communication with Katerina 09-15-2003)*

I was heartened to hear Katerina's appreciative comments because I realized that my research endeavor was indeed mutually beneficial and had the potential to influence others into self-reflection and personal growth. However, as a qualitative researcher, my goal has never been to produce generalizations or draw patterns for which someone should follow in order to reach a certain goal. My aim was to tap into the lives of self-professed trilinguals in order to theorize about the factors that affect an individual who has a heritage language and culture to become and be trilingual. In the case of my inquiry, investigating Greek trilingual adults who were "children of Bill 101" was an exploratory research task as no other qualitative studies have been conducted on this group of individuals.

Throughout this inquiry, I describe trilinguals as individuals living with three languages within their respective cultures. The in-depth interviews that I conducted asked the participants to think about their linguistic and cultural practices and activities that affected them in becoming trilingual. They reported constructing their identities by interacting with parents, peers, teachers and friends. The individual's literacy was shaped by the social situations they encountered and engaged in. For example, they reported interactions with family and relatives, attendance to heritage language schools and community events as the primary contexts in which they were exposed to the Greek language and was taken in and transformed into something meaningful for their self-identification as Greek trilinguals. The depth of interest and

affiliation to one of the three languages was driven by the individual's engagement in particular literacy practices. For example, although French was a language they used solely in school and with francophone peers, French was learned and esteemed due to the value it was given inside the classroom and the media. Their literacy in three languages developed through their learning of literacy practices with which they came into contact. The literacy practices that contribute in the participants becoming and being trilingual are the cultural practices that are specific to their family's customs, beliefs, backgrounds, status, and personal positionings.

When I completed my data collection and transcriptions, I shared my interpretations with the participants for their review. The four primary participants of the inquiry reported benefiting from the revisiting of their responses and commentary because it afforded them a increased sense of self-understanding including their perceptions about their upbringing, their social networks, their professional networks, and their experiences growing up trilingual and maintaining their trilingual identity as adults. The following excerpts shows this.

*I like the fact that you just didn't take the data and run (laughter) it's nice to see what you did with it. I know that what you say... it all came from me, from what I told you. It's interesting ... it is a sort of a picture of me. A realistic picture in which I recognize myself. (Interview with Helena 05-04-2003)*

*I have to confess. I was afraid of how you were going to use some of the more personal stories I shared with you. But*

*I'm happy. You used the stories tastefully and fairly. It's allowed me to see myself from the outside, as if I was watching my life in flashbacks... everything that when into becoming who I am. (Interview with Periclis 02-13-2003)*

*You know, I never felt like a guinea pig... never... throughout the interviews, but I could honestly not imagine what you were planning to do with them. It's like the tale of a trilingual woman where the narrator is also present. You give your impressions your thoughts, your educated opinions behind what I said. I find it useful to me... To see myself through your eyes, it's accurate. (Interview with Alexandra 03-04-2003)*

When I heard my participants express their thoughts about taking part in the interviews and reading the portraits I had built for each, I felt contentment with the result. At the end of my data collection stage, it appeared as if they had denuded themselves to me. They spoke with apparent honesty and comfort, even using humour at times. Their candor and depth assured me of the meaningfulness of my research.

### **Reflection on the Methodology and the Methods**

The advantage of having conducted in-depth interviews was that they provided a highly contextualized and highly personalized approach to the gathering of qualitative information about the experiences that led my research participants to their trilinguality. In-depth interviewing proved to be an effective means for gaining an understanding of how the self has evolved over time because it



permitted me and my participants to address questions of beliefs, values, practices, traditions and customs that play a role in their personal development. The life story interviews I conducted allowed me to gather data in the unique voice and experience of the storyteller. In turn, this served to complement the data I collected from the in-depth interviews.

### **Affective Nature of the Inquiry**

The participant portraits highlight a recurring theme - the literacy practices in which the participants engage. The social construction of literacy is inextricably intertwined with their worldviews - the beliefs, values and the ways in which they see themselves and others. Each family possesses different worldviews. Therefore, their responses to literacy presented in school will depend on their exposure and familiarity with that literacy. Literacy is a social construct which varies according to cultural contexts. The participants expressed a need to relate their own experiences of literacy to those of the school despite the fact that they often differed.

*H: We had this really big Greek-French, French Greek dictionary... I think I've mentioned it before. So I'd get home from school and we'd start.*

*E: Start?*

*H: Yes. We'd start the translating! My mom and I translate every single word from the *texte de lecture*. This was something you were meant to read, but we'd stay up hour after hour, translating everything. This was the way my mom felt I would learn. And the truth is, it strengthened my*

*vocabulary. It was tough on my social life... I mean all the other kids were out playing. I was...I was busy with my translating.*

*E: Interesting.*

*H: Yes. This was the way we did homework. My parents believed that this was the only way to learn. When I'd show my parents my agenda, where I wrote down what the homework was they were shocked. Only! My father would say... Don't they want you to learn anything! (Interview with Helena 09-07-2002)*

In Helena's family learning was perceived as something that could only be achieved through translation, repetition, memorization and careful copying. In another example, Tilemahos talks about his literacy practices.

*T: My family saw learning French, and learning English as probably the best ways to get ahead in life. My dad would have us stay up late just studying...he would always tell us to study... I never really let him down, I was sleepy the next day but that's another story (laughter). My father would say go to school and learn things so that you can have an easier life than we did... meaning he and my mom. (Interview with Tilemahos 07-08-2002)*

In Tilemahos' family literacy in French and English was perceived as the necessary tool for social and economic advancement.

Just as there exists diversity among cultural groups, there exists diversity among groups of individuals such as those that make up the family unit. The study of literacy cannot be promoted as a phenomenon divorced from social contexts. Teachers and policy makers need to acknowledge that children starting school

arrive with a set of literacy skills and learned literacy practices. They practice the culture and literacy practices of their homes and of their heritage cultures. Thus, instead of trying to transfer school practices to their homes, teachers need to find ways to recognize and accept children's pre-school literacy experiences into their classrooms. Ways of recognizing and accepting these experiences include creating venues in which parents, caregivers and teachers can discuss their views on learning, language and literacy.

## Epilogue

Learning one's heritage language while becoming linguistically integrated into a culture by learning the languages spoken there, encapsulates the meaning of human existence. Global migration has stimulated the desire to understand who these people become, what they do to balance their multiliteracy and how they deal with their hybrid identities. Maintaining one's heritage language possesses more of a self-serving than an altruistic motive because it serves one's wishes to self-actualize and be true to one's identity. I believe that this type of self-actualization to be fulfilling and worthy in the lifelong learning process. Cultural background can be ignored, denied, and concealed but it will always remain somewhere deep in one's heart.

Two years ago while attending a conference in Athens, Greece, I met an elderly lady in a park. In French, she told me that she was born in Greece, had moved to Canada as a young child and eventually became exclusively integrated into the French language and Québécois culture. She told me about her having changed her name and shared her personal torment about having spent a lifetime of self-effacement and denial. At the age of 92, she had come to Greece to reconnect to her roots. I told her that it was *never too late* but as the words rolled off my tongue, I wondered how true they were.

Embracing languages and cultures provides a means for personal growth. On a societal level, it can bring communities together in a shared understanding. However, there are no unique values or exclusive sets of characteristics that will

lead to a utopian existence. What remain are the possibilities that can be achieved with an open mind.

*“Με κάθε καινούρια γλώσσα που μαθένης αποκτείς καινούργια ψυχή”*

*‘With each newly learned language you acquire a new soul.’*

Greek proverb

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