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Strengthening Heritage Greek Vitality in the United States through a Community-Based Curriculum

Zoe Gavriilidou | ORCID: 0000-0002-5975-6852
Professor, Department of Greek Philology, Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini, Greece
Visiting Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA
Corresponding author
zoegab@otenet.gr; zgavriilidou@uchicago.edu

Maria Mitsiaki | ORCID: 0000-0002-4185-3881
Associate Professor, Department of Greek Philology,
Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini, Greece
mmitsiaki@helit.duth.gr

Lydia Mitits | ORCID: 0000-0001-7348-5967
Assistant Professor, Department of Education Sciences in Early Childhood,
Democritus University of Thrace, Alexandroupolis, Greece
lmitits@psed.duth.gr

Abstract

Sustainability of Greek as a heritage language in the United States is at stake at present due to the low rates of intergenerational transmission among its speakers, declining immigration from Greece and Cyprus, shortage of specialized teachers, lack of instructional time, old-fashioned teaching methods, and limited opportunities for using the language. This paper builds on the Capacity Development, Opportunity Creation, and Desire (COD) framework (Grin, 2003; Lo Bianco, 2008, Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013) and elaborates on how a new community-based curriculum (Gavriilidou & Mitsiaki, 2022) can enable heritage Greek vitality by (a) developing capacity through proficiency-based learning (ACTFL, 2012) in formal and informal settings by laying the emphasis on

all registers and linguistic varieties in terms of meaning and form; (b) creating opportunities for actual Greek heritage language use through engagement in community, school, and family contexts; and (c) enhancing motivation and desire to use heritage Greek through cognitively challenging content and experiential learning.

Keywords

heritage Greek – heritage language curriculum – language vitality – heritage language education

1   Introduction

Developing and enacting a language curriculum as a sensible whole is a complex undertaking (Graves, 2023), which becomes even more challenging when it comes to a heritage language (HL). Literature on HL pedagogy has expanded significantly over the last two decades (Potowski, 2018), as has research on the type of curriculum that best meets the socio-affective needs of HL learners (HLLs) across the United States (Beaudrie, 2006). This has led to numerous initiatives in developing HL curricula, programs, and syllabi, mainly for the most spoken and researched languages, such as Spanish, Russian, and Japanese (see, among others, Kondo-Brown, 2010; Kagan, 2012; Boruchowski, 2014; Menzie, 2015; Beaudrie, 2016; Douglas, 2017; Mendoza, 2018; Kagan & Kudyma, 2019; Beaudrie et al., 2021). In the course of this development, the emphasis has shifted from documenting specific needs-oriented HL curricula and programs to identifying, contrasting, and assessing successful curricular practices (Beaudrie, 2020).

As a plan, act, and product of language and education policy in a country, a HL curriculum should be informed on the latest developments in HL acquisition and instruction concerning not only linguistic and pedagogical priorities such as "ideologies about what constitutes language" (Leeman, 2012, p. 52), realistic content/syllabi (Menzie, 2015), proficiency-based progression and assessment (Kagan, 2005; Fairclough, 2012), efficient instructional methodology (Kisselev et al., 2020), and teacher preparation (Carreira, 2012), but also socio-cultural challenges such as maintenance of the HL (Valdés, 1997), community engagement (Belpoliti & Fairclough, 2016), and connections of the learners' home culture with those of their families' countries of origin (García & Blanco, 2000, p. 88). More recently, the fundamental concepts of Critical Language Awareness, such as the development of language and power awareness, the

appreciation of linguistic diversity, and the advocacy for the use of heritage languages (HL) in their respective communities by heritage language learners (HLLs) (Beaudrie, 2023; Loza & Beaudrie, 2022; Wilson & Marcin, 2022), have started to integrate into HL pedagogy. Additionally, other primary objectives commonly shared by those engaged in HL course design encompass fostering cultural awareness, promoting a positive self-image among HLSs within their communities, and facilitating opportunities for them to connect with their cultural roots (Wilson & Pascual y Cabo, 2019).

However, this is not the case for the teaching of less spoken HLs, such as Greek. Research on Greek as a HL (GHL) in the United States has only recently begun to describe aspects of the HL speakers' and learners' profiles (Gavriilidou & Mitits, 2019, 2021). Previous efforts in curriculum design were mainly based on the adaptation of first/native-speaker (L1) and foreign language (FL) practices following the general trend in early HL pedagogy (Douglas, 2005; Potowski et al., 2012), leaving aside or undermining the context and socio-cultural aspects of various target groups in different geographical areas. Such efforts also failed to meet the socio-affective needs of Greek heritage language learners (GHLLs), help them expand their HLL strategic command, and motivate them to develop Greek for practical, academic, and vocational purposes. This reality points to the urgent need for revitalizing GHL instruction in a sustainable way. Recently, HL studies and programs have embraced "vitality," an umbrella concept that subsumes key conditions such as linguistic capacity, opportunity, and desire. All three notions are closely related to practices and policies intended to revitalize non-dominant languages and cultures through proficiency development by means of formal and informal learning, community engagement, and learning motivation.

In this paper, we consider theory- and practice-informed HL curricula grounded in the specific needs of HL communities as a significant means or resource to strengthen heritage language vitality. Our aim is threefold: (i) to record the social, linguistic, and educational profile of Greek heritage speakers (GHSs) and GHLLs across the United States; (ii) to document the development of the new community-based Curriculum for Greek as a Heritage Language (Gavriilidou & Mitsiaki, 2022); and (iii) to build on the Capacity Development, Opportunity Creation, and Desire (COD) model (Grin, 2003; Lo Bianco, 2008; Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013) and elaborate on how the community-based curriculum can strengthen heritage Greek vitality and facilitate intergenerational preservation by applying the COD model.

The article is structured as follows. First, we provide a brief historical overview of GHSs/GHLLs in the United States and discuss linguistic and pedagogical parameters, i.e., the characteristics of GHLLs, the schooling opportunities

offered, and the available educational resources. Then, we elaborate on the needs that led to the compilation of the new community-based CGHL, its theoretical principles and novelties, and how it aligns with GHLL's educational needs. Finally, we look at how the new curriculum enables heritage Greek vitality by (a) developing capacity through proficiency-based formal and informal learning (ACTFL, 2012), laying the emphasis on linguistic and stylistic varieties in terms of meaning and form; (b) creating opportunities for actual GHL use through engagement in community, school, and family contexts; and (c) enhancing motivation and desire to use heritage Greek through cognitively challenging content and experiential learning.

2   Greek as a Heritage Language in the United States

Greeks immigrated to the United States in a series of waves; the first migratory flow started at the end of the 19th century, after the economic crisis of 1893 in Greece, reaching its peak in the mid-twenties (1923–1924) as a result of the Greco-Turkish war (1919–1922) and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey. During 1890–1914, almost a sixth of the population of Greece immigrated, mostly to the United States and Egypt. The second wave followed World War II and reached its peak between 1950 and 1974 (which also marks "Metapolitefsi," the transition from dictatorship to democracy). Greek immigrants to the United States mainly settled in major urban areas, including the industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest (Salutos, 1964; Kopan, 1989; Nikolidakis, 2005).

Greek is one of the top 15 non-English languages in Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York even though the number of its speakers has substantially decreased, from 401,443 in 1989 to 264,066 in 2019 (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022). Monolingual, monocultural language and literacy ideologies anchored in the educational system of United States, especially during the era of migratory flows of Greeks in the United States significantly contributed to this decrease.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 1,153,038 individuals claimed at least one ancestry as Greek. The 2000 census counted 93,140 people of Greek ancestry in the metropolitan region of Chicago, Astoria, Queens in New York City, and Chicago's Greek Town (Halsted Street), which used to be the largest Greek-speaking areas in the United States. However, as Greeks of New York and Chicago became richer and changed socio-economic status, they left these ethnically defined neighborhoods where Greek was the majority language and moved to other areas considered more prestigious. Greeks were thus dispersed

in different areas, with fewer opportunities to communicate in Greek outside their home. Consequently, Greek, similarly to other HLs, is not generally preserved beyond the second generation (Gavriilidou & Mitits, 2021). However, a reverse current can now be seen, for example, in Astoria, Queens, where, due to the economic crisis, younger generations of Greeks reside with their grandparents or parents.

2.1   *GHSS' Profiles*

The compilation and analysis of the *Greek Heritage Language Corpus* (GHLC) (Gavriilidou et al. 2019) shed new light both on the GHSS' demographics and on their oral skills. The metadata and interviews accompanying the recordings have helped to create a profile of current GHSS.

2.1.1   Age of Onset of Bilingualism

Most interviewees were born in the United States or arrived there before the age of 14 (Gavriilidou & Mitits, 2019, 2021). Half of them acquired Greek as L1, which was their dominant language until formal schooling began at the age of 5 or 6.

2.1.2   Literacy and Schooling

Most participants studied Greek for more than 4 years at community schools. They often travel to Greece during summer holidays, and they speak mostly English in everyday communication since there is a dramatic decline in their use of Greek with age. Some of them, however, continue to function in two languages, a mixture of English and Greek, when communicating with members of the first generation. They rate their writing as the least developed of their skills in Greek, followed by reading, speaking, and listening in which they feel more confident. There is great variation in second and third-generation HSS' proficiency in Greek.

2.1.3   Cultural Ties and Motivation to Learn GHL

The interviews documented that the more GHSS' parents engaged them in cultural and social activities associated with Greek community and culture, the higher sense of appreciation for the Greek language and culture the children had. In such cases, second-generation HSS are immersed in both Greek and American culture and adopt a bicultural Greek-American identity. Finally, there is often family support in maintaining the Greek language and a very positive attitude towards schooling opportunities available for GHLLs. Experiential evidence, however, shows that second/third-generation school-aged children are not necessarily motivated to learn and maintain their HL despite their

parents' and grandparents' efforts. Considering the above, schooling opportunities may be crucial for raising HLLs' motivation and cultural bonds with Greek language.

2.2   *Heritage Greek Features*

The corpus analysis also helped to systematize the recurrent features observed in GHSs' descriptive, narrative, and argumentative discourse. Data revealed (a) considerable use of dialectal features, (b) differences in grammar from the variety of Modern Greek (MG) spoken by baseline speakers, (c) innovative lexical forms, and (d) extensive code-switching.

GHSs preserve dialectal features in their oral interactions in terms of phonetics (see example (1)), morphology (example (2)), and vocabulary (example (3)) that differentiate their performance from baseline Modern Greek. These are characteristics of regional dialectal varieties of Greek spoken in the areas from which GHSs immigrated, mainly from Laconia and Peloponnese in general (in Southern Greece).

(1)   MG   Dialectal variety
       τριακόσια/τρακόσια   *τριακόσια/τρακόσια*
       [tr(i)akosça]   [trakoʃa]
       300.PL.NEU   300.PL.NEU

(2)   MG   Dialectal variety
       έφερες   *ήφερες*
       [eferes]   [iferes]
       AUG.bring.2SING.PAST   AUG.bring.2SING.PAST
       'you brought'   'you brought'

(3)   MG   Dialectal variety
       συναντώ   *σμίγω*
       [sina(n)do]   [zmiɣo][1]
       meet.1SING.PRES   join.1SING.PRES
       'I meet'   'I meet'

GHL is a variety characterized by differences from the linguistic variety spoken by baseline speakers. These include grammatical gender agreement

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1   The primary meaning of this word in Modern Greek is "to have sexual intercourse," while in the linguistic variety used by the particular community it has retained the meaning "meet (with somebody)."

substitutions (example (4)), overgeneralization of the perfective verbal aspect (example (5)), and in terms of case marking, predominant use of the nominative for subject and object arguments, (see example (6)).

(4) SMG   GHL
σπίτια   σπίτες
[spitça]   [spites]
house.INFL.NOM.PL.NEU   house.INFL.NOM.PL.FEM
'houses'   'houses'

(5) SMG
ο άντρας   συνεχίζει
[o a⁽ⁿ⁾dras]   [sineçizi]
ART.DEF..man.SG.NOM.MASC   keep.3SING.PRES
'the man'   'keeps'

να μαζεύει   τα αχλάδια
[na mazevi]   [ta axlaðja]
pick.3SING.**IMPERF**   ART.DEF.peer.PL.ACC.NEU
'picking'   'the pears'

GHL
ο άντρας   συνεχίζει   να μαζέψει τα αχλάδια
[o a⁽ⁿ⁾dras]   [sineçizi]   [na maze**ps**i]
ART.DEF.man.SG.NOM.MASC   keep.3SING.PRES   pick.3SING.**PERF**
'the man'   'keeps'   "to pick'

τα αχλάδια
[ta axlaðja]
ART.DEF.peer.PL.ACC.NEU
'the pears'

(6) SMG
βλέπω   έναν άντρα
[vlepo]   [enan andra]
see.1SG.PRES   ART.INDEF-man.SG.**ACC**.MASC
'I see'   'a man'

GHL
βλέπω   ένας άντρας
[vlepo]   [enas andras]
see.1SG.PRES   ART.INDEF-man.SG.**NOM**.MASC
'I see'   'a man'

Lexical innovations are produced as literal translations from English to Greek (example (7)), adaptations from English to Greek (example (8)), and morphemic substitutions that lead to hybrid formations, i.e., adaptations of English stems by the addition of Greek inflectional suffixes (example (9)) (Gavriilidou & Mitits, 2020). Such formations are the product of language contact between Greek and English. From a functional point of view, they can be considered as effective vocabulary strategies to compensate for difficult or missing knowledge in Greek.

(7)   MG   GHL
      σημειώνω   *γράφω κάτω*
      [simiono]   [ɣrafo kato]
      make a note.1SG.PRES   write down.1SG.PRES
      'make a note/write down'   'make a note/write down'

(8)   GHL
      [ɣuatamela]
      'watermelon'

(9)   MG   GHL
      φράχτης   *φένσι*
      [fraxtis]   [fensi]
      fence.SING.NOM.MASC   fence.SING.NOM.NEU
      'fence'   'fence'

Most of these derivative or innovative formations are consistent with those recorded in other HLs and lead to universal patterns (see Polinsky & Scontras, 2020) driven by avoidance of ambiguity, resistance to irregularity, and shrinking of structure.

Code-switching is another consistent communicative strategy among GHSs who often introduce English words, phrases or pragmatic markers when they use the heritage language. The most frequent code-switching practice results in hybrid productions where Greek sets the grammatical frame while content morphemes are inserted from English into the Greek structure (see also Alvanoudi, 2019), as in examples (10) and (11) extracted from the GHLC:

(10) ε:μ *κάτι να χει βάνει:* σαν mask *δεν ξέρω σαν μαντίλι*
     ehm he has worn something: like mask [word in English] I don't know
     like a scarf
     (GHLC, interview 1008, l. 19)

(11) βλέπουμε ↑έναν farmer oh my god α δε-/το πιστεύ-/
      we see ↑a farmer[word in English] oh my god[in English] I don't believe
      that
      (GHLC, interview 1032, l. 10)

3 Schooling and Educational Resources for GHL in the United States

Regarding Greek instruction in the United States, no exact number of schools or students is available. On the one hand, private bilingual full-day schools (*imerisia*, as they are known in Greek), often run by Greek Orthodox churches, offer a bilingual English and Greek curriculum, usually from PreK to K8. In recent years, this curriculum has also attracted non-Greek English-speaking students who wish to be exposed to Greek. St. Nicholas School in Flushing, Queens, Hellenic American Academy in Deerfield, Illinois, Koraes elementary School in Palos Hills, Illinois, and Guardian Angel Orthodox Day School in Des Plaines, Illinois belong to this category. However, after K8, students have to switch schools given that Greek programs for older students are extremely rare (see, for instance, St. Demetrios Preparatory School in Astoria, Queens). Ideally, this type of school could empower heritage speakers and affirm their diverse and dynamic language practices. However, subjects in English in such schools include mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, reading, writing, and spelling, while only one (or two 45-minute sessions) is dedicated daily to Greek language teaching. This policy prioritizes English, which becomes the language of daily practical use. Furthermore, given the limited number of Greeks and their effort to attract more non-Greek students for sustainability reasons, these schools often downgrade the teaching of Greek.

On the other hand, afternoon and Saturday community schools run by Greek Orthodox churches offer Greek-only language curricula and cultural immersion sessions (dance courses, customs, traditions, celebrations of Greek festivities, etc.). Children attending these schools learn the rudiments of the Greek Orthodox faith along with Greek language and culture (Kunkelman, 1990). These programs are funded by tuition and fees paid by the parents, who enroll their children with the belief that attendance in such schools helps preserve Greek culture and language at a satisfactory level while strengthening children's Greek identity. However, this perception is not supported by previous quantitative research (Kondo-Brown, 2006) which demonstrated that no positive correlation exists between proficiency levels and length of instruction at community-based HL schools. Furthermore, in these schools, teachers are typically volunteers, without teacher training. Teaching methods are often

outdated and traditional while pedagogic material is usually obsolete. As a result, these schools are not attractive to young GHLLS who are also burdened by the requirements of their mainstream schools with respect to academic work and extracurricular activities (Kondo-Brown, 2010). However, since the U.S. educational system does not prioritize bilingualism in different heritage languages, community schools could play an important role in Greek language instruction and culture maintenance if they were reformed and modernized.

There are also Greek charter schools, like the Odyssey Charter School in Delaware, the Athenian Academy in Pinellas County, Florida, and the Socrates Academy in Matthews, North Carolina, which are independently-operated public schools that design their own courses in order to meet the students' needs. These schools do not exclusively address GHLLS because they teach Greek as a foreign language. Greek language classes here aim to help students acquire communication skills as well as academic proficiency in the language. They often offer dual immersion language programs where the core academic content is split by subject area between two languages: math, science, and Greek language arts are taught in Greek, whereas social studies and English language arts are taught in English. This means that students have the opportunity to acquire Greek through the study of academic disciplines (Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL), and this content-based learning is an effective way for them to acquire both interactive and academic skills in Greek as a foreign language. However, teaching Greek as a foreign language does not address the specific needs of GHLLS.

Also, a number of Greek organizations and cultural centers in major cities offer Greek language classes or cultural immersion events (e.g., folklore festivals, music, culinary events such as the Greek restaurant week in Chicago, etc.), or organize other celebrations and traditions. However, such events are not accessible to GHSS living in remote areas. Finally, online schools for teaching Greek flourished during the COVID pandemic.

Thus, the question that remains is what types of schools would strengthen the vitality of the Greek language and develop speakers' Greek language skills despite the challenges described above. Another question is what type of curriculum should be developed and what pedagogical material, textbooks, or teaching methods adopted. Previous curricula launched by Greek national institutions (e.g., the research program "Greek Education Abroad" described in Damanakis, 2005, or the Curriculum for the Modern Greek Language, Checkpoint A (Andreou, 2012) and Checkpoint B (Andreou, 2014)) built on the intercultural aspects of learning Greek in the diaspora, but they appeared to be generic in that they attempted to simultaneously combine a L1 and FL learning perspective while ignoring HSS' needs (Gavriilidou et al.,

2022). Both curricula were aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), using standards that differed from those used in the United States. Also, the curricular content promoted the monolingual academic variety of Modern Greek that is used in formal teaching of Greek in schools (see also Valdés et al., 2006), despite the well-acknowledged importance of dialect awareness in HL use (Martínez 2003; Beaudrie, 2015). This monolingual perspective produced misconceptions about what kind of Greek is worth learning and often stigmatized the varieties of Greek that GHSS speak. Biographical continuity of GHLLs was not taken explicitly into account leading to age-irrelevant, "one-size-fits-all" planning documents. Moreover, teachers' interviews revealed that the institutional curricula were different from what was actually taught in classroom (the enacted curricula). In some cases, communicative competence was prioritized over the linguistic or academic. In other cases, the actual enactment of the curriculum was given a prescriptive orientation (see Carreira, 2012) mainly targeted to a Presentation-Practice-Production model of language teaching. As a result, GHLLs rarely move beyond the intermediate level of proficiency (see Kisselev et al., 2020). Recently, however, charter schools across the United States have started developing their own immersion-oriented curricula (e.g., the Odyssey Charter School).

In sum, the extant curricula are outdated and decontextualized from local communities. They also lack detailed information that would support teachers in making specific instructional decisions about content, procedure, or teaching practices. Thus, instruction is mainly based on textbooks targeted to teaching Greek as a FL which prioritize form and accuracy over meaning and fluency, while ignoring learning by doing and language use in authentic circumstances. These practices result in demotivation to attend Greek schools, slow and inefficient learning of Greek, and wide range in Greek proficiency, in other words, in restricted capacity building and opportunity creation for speaking the HL according to the COD framework (Grin, 2003; Lo Bianco, 2008, Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013).

4   A Community-Based Curriculum for GHL in the United States

Recognizing the decontextualized curricula and the impact of this on Greek language teaching while also acknowledging the decline in the use of GHL, the Higher Council and the Greek Education Office of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, as the official institutions responsible for Greek Education in the United States, coordinated the development of a

community-based curriculum in schools under their supervision, which is to be used as a framework for a systematic approach to teaching and testing GHL.

The compilation of the Curriculum for Greek as a Heritage Language (CGHL) was based on the eight steps proposed in Beaudrie (2016) (for a detailed description, see Gavriilidou et al., 2022; Gavriilidou, in press). Furthermore, it took into consideration recent theoretical studies on HL curriculum development (Kondo-Brown, 2010; Murphy, 2018; Mickan 2020; Mickan & Wallace, 2020), while aiming to destigmatize Greek HSs whose language and literacy practices do not conform to "native speaker" norms (García & Kleifgen, 2020).

In order to document the current situation and collect important input about GHL, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in cooperation with the Linguistics Department of the Faculty of Greek Philology at the Democritus University of Thrace, Greece organized and offered 30-hour fee-free e-seminars (2020–2021) to GHL teachers in the United States. During these seminars, both the teachers' curricular needs and their students' cognitive and socio-affective needs were identified through a pilot questionnaire (Gavriilidou et al., 2022). The needs analysis led to a series of 420-hour teacher support seminars conducted throughout 2021–2022. In order to implement the needs analysis through the teacher-empowering courses, all available resources were taken into account, such as (a) financial, i.e., scholarships and grants, (b) educational, i.e., websites, volunteer teachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students of linguistics, and (c) community-based and cultural, i.e., local community members, parents, grandparents, cultural associations, and dialect communities.

This early educational initiative also engaged GHL teachers in developing syllabi for various learner groups across different settings. They formulated instructional objectives and learning outcomes, applied established methodologies and strategies, utilized or assessed teaching materials, and created tools for authentic or alternative assessments. As a result, they functioned as curriculum mediators/developers prior to finalizing the curriculum version.

Based on this preliminary procedure, the curriculum structure and content were decided. To ensure GHL development in a systematic way, both in academic (full-day, charter, and community schools) and non-academic settings (family, community), proficiency-based instruction appeared to be necessary. Since proficiency in all languages is aligned with the ACTFL's World Readiness Standards (2012) in the United States, we opted for an ACTFL-like curriculum structure articulated around the 5 "C" goal areas:

(1)   communication (interaction, interpretation, presentation),
(2)   culture (practices, products),
(3)   (academic) content (connections, acquisition of new knowledge),

(4)   comparisons (language, culture), and

(5)   communities (Greek community, lifelong learning).

To avoid the risk of turning the curriculum into a sterile document useful only for GHL proficiency-based testing, proficiency levels were aligned to school grades as follows:

Kindergarten, Pre-K1,

Novice: K1, K2, K3

Intermediate Low: K4, K5

Intermediate Mid to High: K6–K8.

Such an alignment corresponded to teachers' demands in a way that provided explicit guidance to apply differentiated teaching in heterogeneous classrooms.

The curriculum document is written in Greek and consists of:

(a)   a brief introductory reader-friendly text explaining the needs of GHLs in the United States, relevant teaching methodologies (multiliteracies, task-based language teaching, content-based instruction, genre-based instruction, focus on form, dialect awareness, translanguaging, etc.), and the assessment of the learning process in pre-school and school-aged learners (rubrics, language portfolio, project, testing, learning diary, self- and peer evaluation, etc.);

(b)   a full package of age-appropriate descriptors in the form of can-do statements (learning outcomes) articulated in four distinct syllabi (per proficiency, age, and school level); and

(c)   information material for stakeholders.

The learning outcomes within the four syllabi (Kindergarten, Novice, Intermediate Low, Intermediate Mid to High) are in tabular form and comply with the specifications of the ACTFL, standards with special emphasis on the Connections and Communities standards. In the CGHL, the Community standard is not seen as merely a resource for language practice but also reflects the aspirations of the community itself, which seeks and prioritizes the active engagement of all of its members regardless of age.

To address previous critiques on the misalignment of the NSFLL/ACTFL to the specific needs of HSS (Potowski & Carreira, 2004; Beaudrie, et. al. 2014), each can-do statement is exemplified and accompanied by suggestions on content, tasks, activities, projects, and relevant teaching material. This approach facilitates GHL teachers in course planning for different target learners, thereby addressing the variability in HSS' proficiency levels and needs. These content suggestions and proposed learning practices ensure that the CGHL is compliant with the eight HL goals. The goal areas of maintenance of the heritage language, transfer of literacy skills, cultivation of positive attitudes toward the heritage language, and acquisition or development of cultural awareness

are achieved through multifaceted, thought-provoking tasks and activities included in the Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, and Community standards. These tasks and activities create opportunities for GHSS to:

(a) consolidate knowledge;
(b) understand texts, facts, ideas by organizing, summarizing, translating, generalizing, giving descriptions or stating;
(c) apply what they learn to real life settings in the community;
(d) analyze structures;
(e) evaluate texts or their own productions;
(f) engage in creative writing.

The acquisition of academic skills in the heritage language is facilitated through the activities proposed in the Connections standard. In response to GHL teachers' demands, this academic content section offers insights into the implementation of Content-Based Instruction and CLIL, paving the path for the development of interdisciplinary literacy in Greek and introducing GHLs into more academic linguistic styles. Additionally, the Linguistic and Cultural Comparisons standard enables the expansion of bilingual proficiency by offering activities that encourage GHSS to reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of their heritage language with its various dialects or other languages spoken in the United States. CLA is reserved mainly for intermediate and high levels (see below). Finally, all can-do statements are explicitly related to community practice and cultural heritage, so that the acquired proficiency in Greek can be used in real life. The basic idea behind the curriculum is to engage HSS in literacy practices that enable them to deepen their understanding of texts, produce diverse texts, and adopt critical metalinguistic awareness.

Age and proficiency levels are considered in all syllabi. The kindergarten syllabus aims to provide rich auditory input in GHL and basic cultural elements in order to motivate young learners to further engage in the Greek language and culture. The learning outcomes are specified by playful activities, role-playing games, dramatization, music, songs, drawing etc., all seen as final products to be shared in the community. At the same time, the syllabus attends to the development of basic lexical and phonological awareness, the emerging literacy and reading skills, the strengthening of the ability to formulate hypotheses, the stimulation of creativity, and the development of socio-emotional competencies.

The Novice (K1–K3) syllabus aims to familiarize students with elementary communication contexts (e.g., introductions, asking for information, etc.) and the relevant lexico-grammatical features so as to develop basic communication skills. At the same time, functional literacy, exposure to multiliteracies (digital or mathematical), acquaintance with basic elements of Greek culture

(children's literature, cinema, songs, games etc.) but also the development of the ability to mediate their experiences between Greek and English are expected to be achieved by the GHLLs.

At the intermediate and high levels, language and communication skills are further developed bearing in mind the learners' age and cognitive maturation, and at the same time it is proposed that they become increasingly involved in Greek culture and in comparisons with the culture of the host country. At these levels, the can-do statements reflect the transition from communication skills (everyday language) to academic skills (language of media, science, argumentation) through the promotion of multiliteracies, such as digital and media literacy, creative literacy through literature, critical literacy through comparing texts or changing voices in texts, etc. At the same time, linguistic comparisons between Greek and English proverbs, collocations, and idioms are encouraged. The proposed activities aim to foster the development of multiliteracies and encompass various text types and genres, including debates, Greek-language blogs, reading and writing for pleasure, and more. The syllabi consistently reflect a community-based approach to learning, which involves activities like interviewing family and community members, recording oral histories, and researching the history of the home and host country, among other engaging tasks.

At all levels, the learning outcomes are organized into 11–13 thematic units, which are recycled to enhance GHLs' capacity-building. This non-linear content structure imparts cyclical and dynamic qualities to the syllabi. Each thematic unit includes can-do statements along with specifications covering linguistic aspects (such as pronunciation, spelling, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary), textual elements (text types and genres), and extralinguistic information (contextual and pragmatic) presented in tabular form. Moreover, explicit connections are established between GHL and strategic language learning, as well as GHLLs' diverse cultural (intercultural/bicultural awareness) and linguistic repertoires (dialect awareness). The special emphasis on dialectal varieties stems from an ideological concern (Valdés, 1981; Martínez 2003; Parra 2016) about linguistic hierarchies (Modern Greek over the multiple, mainly southern dialects spoken by heritage speakers). In other words, in the CGHL, dialectal awareness adopts a CLA perspective and is seen as a means that helps HSs (a) understand how Greek language varieties may be valued or stigmatized for non-linguistic reasons that involve power relations; (b) "develop a renewed pride in their heritage language" (Beaudrie, 2015, p. 14); and (c) make their own decisions about language use and bilingualism (Beaudrie, 2023).

In sum, the CGHL promotes learning-by-doing, project-based activities within local communities by providing authentic communicative and academic

TABLE 1   Summary of the curriculum characteristics

Criteria	Curriculum characteristics
Alignment to school levels	PreK–K8
Content	11–13 thematic units
Layout	Tabular form
Language Proficiency Standards	World-Readiness Standards For Learning Languages (ACTFL)
Language learning mode	Cyclical
Micro vs. macro approaches to learning	Process- and product-based
Grammatical system vs communicative purpose	Analytic
Text use	Genre-based
Learning methods	Task-based, learning by doing, strategy-based, community-based, content-based
Language variety	Dialect awareness

context both in the classroom and outside of it. Since it includes a wide range of meaningful educational and learning practices, this curriculum is expected to gradually enhance learners' autonomy and motivation. At the same time, however, it promotes differentiated teaching to cater to the wide variation of heritage speaker profiles.

5   The Language Vitality Framework

The language vitality framework is a tool aimed at assisting communities and governments in supporting regional and minority languages and promoting national-level policy development for language revitalization and usage (Grin, 2003; Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013). It includes three fundamental components: Capacity Development, Opportunity Creation, and Desire (COD). Capacity Development pertains to the enhancement of language proficiency and subsequent language use, whether through formal education or informal transmission. Opportunity Creation involves the development of opportunities for using the language in naturalistic settings. Lastly, Desire Enhancement relates to the motivation to learn and use a heritage language.

As put by Lo Bianco & Peyton (2013), some of the COD model's merits and promising characteristics are that it (a) takes into consideration the sociolinguistic and economic facets of language use; (b) benefits from empirical

evidence, having been applied to revitalization policies in different kinds of regional or minority languages (Irish, Basque, Welsh, Maori); and (c) was put to field testing throughout its nascent state. It is distinct from other frameworks, practices, or policies in that all three parameters, Capacity Development, Opportunity Creation, and Desire Enhancement must co-exist and collaborate so that language revitalization can be successful and measurable.

In what follows, we take a closer look at the three parameters of the language vitality framework and investigate the specific ways in which the CGHL can enable (COD) and may contribute to the transmission and maintenance of Greek as a heritage language in the United States.

5.1   *Curriculum-Based Capacity Building*

Capacity Building refers to the lexical, grammatical and linguistic knowledge gained in informal everyday communication contexts as well as formal school settings. Informal transmission within families as well as formal teaching in daily, community or charter schools (Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013) are the main paths to building capacity in heritage Greek. The curriculum that is presented in this paper, which is proficiency-, community-, and school-based, highlights the value of Greek in everyday life, school achievement, and social and professional development, thus developing the Greek language capacity through learning that also occurs outside of formal schooling, in informal settings where Greek is used for actual real-world communication, in authentic communicative frames. It supports language vitality because it creates learning paths that can easily take place within families (informal settings), which may involve children in meaningful routines that develop lexical awareness and grammatical accuracy.

However, although intergenerational transmission in family is critical for heritage language maintenance (Fishman, 2006), language transmission in family is not always possible due to a low proficiency in Greek of parents themselves, lack of motivation, negative attitudes towards preservation, insufficient linguistic input, or lack of explicit feedback (Gavriilidou & Mitits, 2021; Laleko, 2013; Shin & Lee, 2013). Data from the GHLC (Gavriilidou et al., 2019) showed that second-generation parents, especially when they do not invest in the preservation of the Greek language and culture, sometimes due to workload or because they are in mixed marriages where one of the two parents is non-Greek, raise third-generation children with extremely low to no proficiency in Greek. This phenomenon is illustrated in the following exchange by a second-generation HS:

> Is your wife Greek?
> No, she isn't.

> Does she speak Greek?
> She understands a little bit, but she doesn't speak.
> Do you speak Greek with your children?
> A little, but they don't go to Greek school. I bought a computer for them to learn Greek. They go to American school the whole day, and to after-school athletic activities and more classes, you know, it's not easy. And I work a lot.
>
> GHLC, interview 1001, l. 48–59

As a result, a functional perspective to curriculum design was adopted, which maintains that in social exchanges, listeners and writers attend to meaning, while readers and speakers respond to it (Mickan, 2020). The CGHL curriculum emphasizes both meaning and form, promoting authentic exposure to Greek and providing genuine opportunities to use the language in contextualized situations. The wide range of genres and text types proposed in the curriculum and their corresponding grammatical analysis raise students' capacity in Greek, building a broad repertoire of appropriate language to express various meanings in different situations. Furthermore, students are invited to write or talk about real-world cognitively challenging topics and texts. In doing so, they acquire new knowledge (content), use appropriate oral or written forms, collect information and act on it, and share feelings, ideas, or experiences. In other words, they "learn to mean by making meanings with texts" (Mickan, 2020, p. 197).

Most importantly, the curriculum offers a graded, goal-oriented approach to language fluency and accuracy, free from hegemonic language ideologies, witnessed in the colloquial, academic, and dialectal varieties that are included in the Intermediate (Low and Mid-to-High) syllabi. Thus, proficiency is not perceived as a "one-size-fits-all" concept but as multidimensional, where the learners' entire linguistic repertoire is valued. Such a framework, when adopted by daily (immersion), community, or charter Greek schools, and fully implemented in a course design, is expected to develop sustainable Capacity Building in Greek which in turn will strengthen the vitality of Greek as a heritage language. It should be mentioned, however, that Capacity Building is not on its own sufficient to guarantee language vitality: to improve language knowledge, one has to actually use language in real-life contexts.

5.2   *Curriculum-Based Opportunity Creation*

Opportunity Creation pertains to the provision of opportunities for naturalistic language use. However, English is the dominant language for the majority of Greek heritage speakers/learners, and opportunities for using Greek in everyday communication beyond instructional settings are severely limited. Pedagogically

building on ACTFL's goal area of Communities, the new curriculum includes alternative community-based activities, so as to create opportunities for GHLLs to use Greek beyond the classroom and to interact with members of their community (or family) in authentic situations (e.g., the organization of a cultural event, the participation in a traditional ceremony, ethnographic research among the community, etc.). In other words, the curriculum seeks to offer heritage learners meaningful opportunities to use their Greek skills outside the classroom, acquire new on-site experiences and bridge the gap between classroom language learning and practice in real-life community contexts, while strengthening their connection with the Greek community. The adoption of such practice makes the use of the language seem natural, welcomed, and expected (Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013). According to Parra (2013, p. 259), this student involvement with the community "demands a step beyond 'learning by doing' by emphasizing the process of learning through critical reflection", which facilitates the transition of transcultural knowledge that Greek heritage speakers already have to a certain degree enhancing their "functional proficiency" (Valdés, 2005). As Carreira & Kagan (2011, p. 62) state, community-based activities may help "harness the wealth of knowledge and experiences these students bring to the classroom." But what is more important is that, upon returning to class, students share their experiences and negotiate their meanings with their classmates and integrate these meanings in class readings and discussions (Thomsen, 2006; Parra, 2013).

In sum, the new curriculum bridges the gap between in-class Greek language teaching and community experiences. Additionally, as part of formal instruction aligned with the new curriculum, the use of the Internet and social media (such as Facebook or Instagram groups, texting in Greek, webpage creation, blogs, etc.) is integrated into daily teaching practices. This integration aims to offer more opportunities for language practice, connection with Greek peers, and the development of digital literacy.

5.3   *Desire to Speak Greek*

While capacity building and opportunity creation depend on how the curriculum shapes teachers' instruction and how community learning is involved in it, desire enhancement is a student-dependent parameter, which in the COD framework refers to

> subjective dispositions of learners' motivation and behavioral activity from them, such as the investment of time, energy, or resources in learning the language, either because proficiency in it brings material rewards or because of a subjective desire to be associated with and active within its community of speakers. (Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013, p. vi)

Desire in COD can be seen as an aspect of motivation, and it is generally acknowledged in the literature that motivation is a multidimensional construct which is crucial in language learning (Dorney, 2006). Moreover, it involves investing in learning the language as the learner feels intrinsically rewarded by becoming more proficient in it (Lo Bianco & Peyton, 2013).

In their research of GHSs in Chicago, Gavriilidou & Mitits (2021) found that most participants had largely positive feelings towards experiences with their HL and a high *heritage motivation* (a term coined by Van Deusen-Scholl 2003, p. 222). Greek was viewed as a symbol of their ethnolinguistic identity, culture, and history that had to be preserved; there was a subsequent strong desire, especially from the first and second generation, to maintain it. This finding was in line with previous research that pointed to connection with the culture as the primary motivation for HL study. Furthermore, ethnic identity and the desire to communicate with members of their community were included among motivational factors in other studies (Wen, 2011) with cultural motivation being more significant than the instrumental one (Han, 2003). In another large-scale study, however, Carreira and Kagan (2011) found that HL learners study their heritage language more for career opportunities than for empowering their sociocultural connections.

Another interesting finding from the GHLC (Gavriilidou et al., 2019) was that second- and third-generation Greek heritage speakers with low Greek proficiency often expressed regret over discontinuing attendance at community schools. They cited finding the teachers dull and the teaching methods outdated as the reasons for their decision. Additionally, they mentioned that, as speakers of Greek dialects themselves, they sometimes faced difficulties with the standard Modern Greek taught in class, especially when taught by teachers from Greece. Consequently, they felt that their linguistic variety spoken at home, which they brought to the classroom, was not respected.

Considering the points mentioned above, three observations should be emphasized. First, heritage motivation may not always align with functional language proficiency, but it can serve as a foundation for enhancing the abilities of Greek heritage speakers. Initial desires or positive motivation should be channeled into learning objectives, which can then be translated into structured learning pathways, ultimately leading to goal attainment (Dorney, 2006). Second, previous research has underscored how the classroom environment can impact learners' motivation (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), and that the learning context can significantly shape learners' attitudes. Motivation, in turn, affects tangible learning processes within the classroom setting (Dorney, 2006, p. 51). Third, the stigmatization of the linguistic variety spoken at home within the classroom can act as another demotivating factor (Parra, 2016).

To respond to these challenges and to raise motivation to learn GHL, the *Curriculum for Teaching Greek as a Heritage Language: A Framework for Teachers* offers meaningful content and creates a cognitively challenging class environment that promotes language use in authentic situations through learning-by-doing activities. The shift away from a grammar-centered approach to more stimulating instruction motivates heritage learners. Furthermore, the curriculum also includes extensive IT use (webpage creation, blogs, etc.) and a functional use of social media in teaching, offering opportunities "for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, thus increasing students' motivation and interest in the language and culture" (Henshaw, 2016, p. 246). Finally, it promotes dialect awareness, seeks to prepare students to understand variation (Leeman, 2014), and expands their linguistic repertoire through the addition of other varieties, including the Modern Greek and professional or academic styles, which are viewed as different but not superior, and are functionally used in academic or professional settings. This is ensured by making use of web-based materials in the HL in order to acquaint students with written products in varied linguistic styles. This pedagogic choice aims at fostering positive attitudes toward the home variety, as well as raising students' awareness about the social role of dialects, and cultivating respect for linguistic diversity.

6   Conclusions and Future Research

In this paper we elaborated on how the COD framework can be applied in the development of a curriculum which would promote linguistically affirming instruction and heritage Greek vitality by (i) developing capacity through emphasis both in meaning and form oriented learning outcomes; (ii) creating opportunities for actual use through activities which are part of the curriculum and language teaching and take place in community and family contexts; and (iii) enhancing motivation and desire to use heritage Greek through cognitively challenging content provided in a playful, learning by doing form. Critical to the success of the COD model is the fulfillment of all three conditions, precisely what our new curriculum offers.

This multifaceted curriculum represents the initial stride towards revitalizing heritage Greek, but it marks just the beginning. The crucial next phase involves the curriculum's implementation by teachers as mediators. Since 2021, we have conducted two 420-hour teacher seminars, equipping Greek teachers in the United States with the tools to effectively utilize the curriculum. Over the past two school years, the curriculum has been put into practice, garnering highly positive evaluations from teachers. Nevertheless, this journey comes

with its share of challenges, particularly in adapting to new trends in heritage language pedagogy versus more traditional orientations. The forthcoming steps encompass defining the evaluation criteria for a systematic curriculum assessment and intensifying efforts to incorporate CLA instruction in every HL classroom that employs the CGHL.

Notes on Contributors

Zoe Gavriilidou is a Professor of Linguistics at Democritus University of Thrace and a Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago. She spearheaded numerous educational projects on Greek Heritage Language and Language Learning Strategies. Her expertise spans linguistics, heritage languages, pedagogical lexicography, language learning and higher education policies, and curriculum development.

Maria Mitsiaki is Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at the Democritus University of Thrace. Her research interests center on L2 teaching/assessment, CLIL, and pedagogical lexicography. She is the Principal Investigator on grants from the HFRI and Erasmus+. She is engaged in curricula development/implementation for Greek as an L2 (Cyprus) and HL (United States).

Lydia Mitits holds a PhD in applied linguistics. She is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Education Sciences in Early Childhood at the Democritus University of Thrace, Greece. She has presented at international conferences and published papers on bilingualism/multilingualism in education, heritage languages, and language learning strategies, among others.

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