Ethnolinguistic vitality, language use and social integration amongst Albanian immigrants in Greece

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Nikos Gogonas[a]* and Domna Michail[b]

[a]*Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education, University of Luxembourg, Walferdange, Luxembourg;* [b]*Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece*

The focus of this paper is on the relationship between Albanian speakers' ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) perceptions and their language maintenance, language use and choice patterns. A subjective EV questionnaire, and a language usage questionnaire capturing domain-specific language use was completed by 200 Albanian immigrants of first and second (one and a half) generation residing in various areas all over Greece. In addition, interviews were conducted with 180 informants from the sample to generate useful information for the qualitative analysis. The findings of this study chime with recent findings on Albanian immigrants' social integration strategies. Data analysis uncovers three themes: first, language use is domain-specific, with preferences for the L1 in the home/family domain only, L2 being the language of choice elsewhere especially for the 1.5 generation; second, there are low perceptions of EV of the L1 group across the sample; and third, there is evidence for a shift in language use and competence as a result of an integrative attitude to migration by the respondents, governed mostly by practical reasons.

Keywords: ethnolinguistic vitality; language use; social integration; Albanian immigrants; Greece

The ethnolinguistic vitality theory: implications for the present study

The present study follows the social psychological construct of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) (i.e. that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup relations [Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977, 308]). The challenge of the group-EV framework has been to provide a subjective assessment of how members of ethnic groups construe societal conditions imping ing on their own and relevant out-groups. For this purpose, Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal (1981) devised an instrument called the Subjective Vitality Questionnaire (SVQ) to assess EV perceptions of individuals in intercultural contexts. The SVQ has been proposed as a means of measuring group members' assessment both of their in-group vitality and of the vitality of out-groups.

The EV model has been used in the Greek context to investigate the issues of language maintenance/shift in second-generation Albanians in Greece (Gogonas 2009). This present study forms part of a larger project which also investigates language competence, language use and language attitudes and its findings indicate a clear

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*Corresponding author. Email: nikog@hotmail.com

tendency towards language shift into Greek, especially within the second generation where the subjects appear to be dominant bilinguals in Greek and use mostly Greek in all domains.

Although the concept of subjective vitality relates specifically to ethnolinguistic groups and language-based behaviours, its foundation is in the social identity notion of 'social belief systems' (1979) which relates to the entire spectrum of social groups and group behaviours. Along these lines, it is a goal of the present research to show that subjective vitality influences a broader range of behaviours than just language behaviour. Thus, the investigation of the role of subjective vitality in social incorporation and social mobility, including access to citizenship, as features of social adaptation in a multicultural context is one of the goals of the present study. As McEntee-Atalianis argues:

> The study of EV and EV theory will benefit from the application of ethnographic/ observational approaches and discourse analytic frameworks. These approaches and analytical tools could not only contribute to the development of current methodologies, including the development of traditional instruments, such as questionnaires, but also establish new frameworks of analysis, potentially giving greater 'voice' to the 'researched' and their social environment, and a more sophisticated analysis of multilingual/multicultural contexts and hybrid/complex identities. (2011, 152)

EV theory on its own does not provide the responses we need for exploring the relationship between receiving society policies and immigrant group reactions (Yagmur 2011, 119). Following the above rationale, we have attempted a combination of methods, in addition to the SVQ, namely semi-structured interviews. The interview questions elicit on Albanian immigrants' social relations with the indigenous population, their attitudes to acquiring Greek citizenship and attitudes to the Greek language. Our data retrieved through the SVQ will be viewed through the theoretical context of the issues of 'status', 'citizenship' and inclusion/exclusion presented above. More specifically, the paper addresses the following research questions:

(1) What are Albanian migrants' perceptions of their group image (status) in Greece? To what extent do they feel discriminated against? What differences are noted between the two generations?
(2) To what extent do they feel they 'belong' in Greece? Do they consider Greece 'home' or a country of temporary residence in order to meet financial needs? Do these feelings of 'belonging' differ between the generations? What are the repercussions for language choice and language maintenance/shift?

'Objective' vitality of Albanian immigrants in Greece

Demography

Estimates in literature suggest that more than half of the migrant population in Greece are Albanians. According to Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou (2005), the total number of Albanians in Greece is 450,000–550,000. It should be noted that an important segment of Albanian citizens are ethnic Greeks. This group holds Special Identity Cards for *Omogeneis* (co-ethnics) issued by the Greek police. According to more recent data from the Ministry of Interior in April 2008 there were approximately 275,000 Albanians with valid stay permits in Greece. Valid data on the exact number of Albanian immigrants in Greece are not available and at this point it must be noted that such estimation is difficult to make due to the fact that there is a lot of back-and-forth movement between Greece

and Albania. The case study of Maroukis and Gemi (2011) identifies a type of Albanian circular migration to Greece, among others; that of an irregular seasonal migration for work in agriculture, construction or tourism. It would also be worth noting that the Albanian irregular resident population has decreased substantially over the last decade due to regularisation and lately due to the visa-free entrance regime and a return trend to Albania related to the ongoing Greek economic, social and political crisis (Maroukis 2012; Michail 2013).

Status

The extremely negative perception that Greek society has about Albanian immigrants has been described by some researchers as 'Albanophobia' (Karydis 1996; Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2001). The Greek media has played a significant role in the alignment of Albanian ethnicity with criminality in everyday public discourse (Maroukis 2009). Kapllani and Mai (2005) have classified the stigmatisation of Albanians in Greece in three layers: as inherently criminal, as poor and backward by nature and as the 'invader' and 'traditional enemy' by reason of their ethnicity and religion. This 'othering' of Albanians can be traced in Greece's collective memory of its own past of poverty combined with authoritarianism and resulting in emigration. Moreover, Greek–Albanian relations have been characterised by rivalry, tension and mistrust due to their dispute over the territory of south Albania and its inhabitants, an issue that has added to the anti-Albanian sentiment in Greece.

Up until the late 1990s, the immigration policy of Greece was non-existent. Mass expulsion was the main policy provision to deal with the phenomenon of irregular migration. The first Greek regularisation programme was launched in 1998. The fact that deportations were the sole policy measure directed to migrants for most of the 1990s has contributed to the criminalisation of the irregular migration discourse (Maroukis 2009).

At this point it is worth noting that due to the recent influx in Greece of migrants and refugees from mainly Asian countries, and due to the fact that the majority of Albanians got regularised and are considered somewhat 'settled' immigrants, they no longer constitute the most stigmatised group in Greece. In fact, Maroukis (2009) states that the irregular migration inflows that attract public attention today have ceased to be Albanian as the national marker is giving its place to the phenotypical one. He adds that harsh police measures more often target migrants and asylum seekers from Asia and Middle East today. Also, according to Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti (2014), there is a change in public perceptions about the migrant 'other': from national/ethnic otherness highlighted primarily through the racialisation of Albanians during the 1990s, difference is now constructed towards a growing Muslim presence in the country.

Institutional support

Illegal Albanian immigrants have had three opportunities to regularise their status in Greece in 1998, 2001 and 2005. Stay permits in Greece are renewed every one or two years for the first 10 years with the condition that immigrants are legally employed and insured. Due to the economic crisis, Greek employers are unable to insure and declare their employees for the amount of €10,200, set as a minimum yearly income by the tax system (instead of €5000 that it used to be), and most immigrants are facing the possibility of being forced to leave the country as soon as their existing permits expire (Michail 2013). In general integration through naturalisation has not been easy, since

Greek nationality has been based predominantly on the *jus sanguinis* principle and the naturalisation procedure has been long, costly and with a very uncertain outcome even for applicants who satisfied the formal requirements (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2012). The law 3838/2010[1] on citizenship and naturalisation introduced a substantial element of *jus soli* into the concept of Greek citizenship. This law produced provisions for the second generation of migrants, notably children born in Greece of foreign parents or children born abroad of foreign parents, but who have completed at least six years of schooling in Greece and live in Greece. The law also lowered the requirement for naturalisation from 10 to seven years of residence, provided the migrant has already received the European Union (EU) long-term resident status (which can be acquired after five years of legal residence). Finally, it introduced local political rights for foreign residents (living in Greece for five years or more). In December 2012, this law was overruled as anti-constitutional by the Greek Supreme Administrative Court, on the basis that it conflicts with the constitutionally circumscribed *jus sanguinis* principle.[2] In reality, the Constitution, and particularly Article 4 thereto, does not expressly reject *jus solis*, but this is implicit in Greece's constitutional history.

The economic crisis in Greece has affected not only the Albanian immigrants' legal but also their social status since it resulted in many losing their stay permits as a result of losing their job. Thus, a considerable number of Albanian immigrants remain in Greece in a status of illegality while others return to Albania risking their 'good name' as successful emigrants to Greece (Michail 2013).

The present study: theoretical and methodological reflections

Albanian immigrants' integration strategies and identity formation

Albanian immigrants' practices and strategies of integration[3] partly constitute a response to Greek policies towards them. Michail (2010b) suggests that 'non-capital investment' in education is taking place in the host country as a basic strategy of social integration to be added to a list of others mentioned above, as well as language shift to Greek. Research indicates language shift tendencies among the second generation of Albanians in Greece (Tsokalidou 2005; Chatzidaki 2005; Gogonas 2007, 2009, 2010; Maligkoudi 2010; Michail 2008a, 2008b, 2010b; Chatzidaki and Xenikaki 2012). In some studies (Gogonas 2007, 2009, 2010; Michail 2010b), a basic factor that leads the Albanian community to the 'abandonment' of the ethnic language is the stigmatisation it has received in Greek society and the lack of institutional support for teaching Albanian in Greek schools, despite the existence of large numbers of Albanian origin pupils in them. Some recent studies show that Greek teachers treat immigrant pupils' bilingualism as an obstacle more than as an asset (Gkaintartzi and Tsokalidou 2011; Gkaintartzi, Kiliari, and Tsokalidou 2014). At the same time, Albanian parents do not apply systematic policies to support Albanian language maintenance (Chatzidaki and Maligkoudi 2012), while participation rates in Albanian mother tongue classes organised by the various Albanian communities are very low (Maligkoudi 2010; Gkaintartzi 2012).

Intermarriage among Albanians and Greeks is also reported as a practice of integration although little information is available concerning the extent of endogamy or exogamy among Albanians in Greece. A research by Kasimis, Papadopoulos, and Zacopoulou (2003) on intermarriage between Greeks and Albanians indicates that Greek–Albanian weddings have taken place, particularly in rural areas where young male farmers have been left with no potential Greek wives because of internal migration by younger women. Baldwin-Edwards et al. (2004) provide statistics on specific reasons for

stay in Greece according to residence permit data. These reasons include employment, family reunion, study, business, and marriage to an EU national. Albanians are underrepresented in the last category (marriage to an EU national), at 17%, well below their recorded presence in the immigrant population of Greece. Looking at gender differences, it is mostly women from Albania who have married Greek men rather than the other way round.

A research, conducted in a small Greek border area community neighbouring Albania reveals that the few existing cases of marriage of Albanian women to Greeks constitute a way of social boundary crossing and inclusion into the Greek community and often raise feelings of antagonism within the Albanian community. Immigrant entrepreneurs as well as Albanians married to Greeks do not feel as discriminated as the other Albanian immigrants, are better integrated and indeed are often accused by their compatriots as having lost their 'Albanian-ness'. Besides, despite offering chances for work to the newcomers, ethnic entrepreneurs often appear to adopt and reproduce discriminatory attitudes. Usually, ethnic labour markets are not necessarily fairer towards either women or their own fellow – countrymen (Michail 2010a). Furthermore, the author states that 'the immigrant working within an ethnic network becomes antagonistic not to the natives but to the members of his/her own ethnic group. Of prior importance, then, is not ethnicity as such but social relations and labour availability…' (Michail 2009, 548). The same researcher suggests that antagonism among relatives and compatriots is commonly expressed in various ways and that Albanian immigrants

> have been negotiating their ethnicity according to the degree of attachment they maintained with Albania, including family ties there, their aspirations for their as well as their children's mobility in Greece and how they experienced their belonging to either community. So, large variations are presented in expressions and experiences of ethnicity, identity formation as well as integration strategies. (Michail 2009, 548)

The present study shows that what matters most in the integration process is dealing with practical issues in the host country rather than a need to be identified with either ethnicity out of emotive reasons.

Data collection procedures and description of the sample

The research was carried out during the academic year 2009–2010 as part of the interdisciplinary research methods seminar, at the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia, Greece. It was led by the tutor of the course (one of the authors of this paper), who designed the project and the questionnaires, along with the co-author, for the purpose of the seminar. After undergoing thorough training by their tutor 15 students participated in the questionnaire and interview survey with the authors. Both the students and the authors administered questionnaires and conducted interviews. The software package, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 19 for Windows was used to analyse the quantitative data.

The SVQ consists of the 22 questions of Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal's (1981) subjective EV questionnaire in an adapted form. For assessing language competence, a 7-point Likert scale closed response questionnaire was used, while for language usage and language attitudes a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used.

In order to achieve as great demographic coverage as possible, the students traced the informants in their places of origin, i.e. throughout Greece, and not within the region of

Table 1. Informants' educational level, occupations and area of residence by generation.

	First generation (N = 99)	Second generation (N = 101)
Educational level		
Tertiary education	4	22
Vocational education	4	6
Secondary education (senior high school)	12	51
Secondary education (junior high school)	37	8
Primary education	42	14
Occupations		
Service sector employees	24	28
Students	2	37
Agriculture	16	3
Construction workers	20	8
Unemployed	10	15
Domestic work	18	4
Other	9	6
Area of residence		
Athens-Piraeus	4	19
Thessaloniki	8	26
Peloponnese	6	3
Macedonia/Thrace	60	23
Epirus	3	2
Thessaly	10	13
Central Greece	7	9
Islands	1	6

Western Macedonia alone. The questionnaires were administered to 200 adult Albanian immigrants (110 women and 90 men – all of Albanian ethnicity). Ninety nine of them belong to the first generation (28–48 years old), the remaining 101 to the second generation (18–27 years old). They reside in various areas all over Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, Western/Central Macedonia, Thrace, the Peloponnese, Epirus, the Islands and Thessaly). Of them, 196 were born in Albania and four in Greece. The majority comes from areas of Central Albania (114) while 54 come from the south and 28 from the north. At the time of data collection, the majority of the informants (170) had been living in Greece for over eight years 26 had been living in Greece between five and eight years while four were born in Greece. A condition governing sample selection was that informants should be resident in Greece for at least five years. Table 1 shows informants' areas of residence, education and occupation, by generation.

One hundred and eighty of the above-mentioned informants accepted to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted by both the students and the authors, recorded and then transcribed. From the responses to the open questions we have selected the most reflective and revealing among the narratives of the themes we examine. After each narrative extract we make a note for each participant in parenthesis: 'M' for 'male' and 'F' for 'female', then his/her age and the location of the interview. Our study across generations provides us with valuable insight into the issues of family and transnational communication, perceptions of institutional support and of social status, perceptions of the importance of knowledge of Greek social relations, legislation and naturalisation, identity and transnational ties, as well as plans for the future articulated through the first- and second-generation participants' narratives. Through the interviews with members of

Table 2.   Mann–Whitney test: ranks of Greek and Albanian language competence.

	Age	*N*	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Greek language competence	18–27	101	126.46	12,772.50
	28–48	99	74.02	7327.50
Albanian language competence	18–27	101	70.60	7131.00
	28–48	99	131.00	12,969.00
Test statistics (grouping variable: age)				
	Greek language competence		Albanian language competence	
Mann–Whitney U	2377.500		1980.000	
Wilcoxon W	7327.500		7131.000	
Z	−6.444		−7.757	
Asymptotic significance (two-tailed)	.000		.000	

both generations we get a follow-up and more insight into the research questions. We examine the two generations comparatively in order to find out whether they hold different views and attitudes towards the issues under examination. Both the questionnaires and the interviews were conducted in the Greek language. On the whole, all respondents demonstrated good speaking skills in Greek.

Results

The results presented below refer to (1) Albanian migrants' self-assessments of language competence in Albanian and Greek as well as language choices with various interlocutors: both of these sets of data indicate language shift into Greek more so in the second generation, (2) perceptions of Albanian and Greek vitality across the two generations, and (3) qualitative results referring to perceptions of institutional support, perceptions of social status and Greek language knowledge importance.

Language competence

As the Mann–Whitney test indicates, the second generation (age group 18–27) report higher competence in Greek than in Albanian (mean ranks: 126.46/70.60) (Table 2). On the contrary, the first generation (age group 28–48) report higher competence in Albanian than in Greek (mean ranks: 131.00/74.02). This significant difference clearly indicates language shift in the second generation.

Table 3.   Language choices with various interlocutors first generation.

Options	Language used with spouse (% data, *N* = 92)	Language used with children (% data, *N* = 92)	Language used with friends (% data, *N* = 99)	Language used with colleagues (% data, *N* = 99)
Only Greek	7.6	13.04	12.1	51.5
Mostly Greek	8.7	28.2	17.2	28.3
Equally Greek and Albanian	34.7	32.6	43.4	19.2
Mostly Albanian	21.7	6.5	17.2	–
Only Albanian	27.2	19.5	10.1	1.01

Table 4. Language choices with various interlocutors second generation.

Options	Language used with parents (% data, $N = 101$)	Language used with siblings (% data, $N = 99$)	Language used with friends (% data, $N = 101$)
Only Greek	0.8	28.3	43.6
Mostly Greek	24.2	25.2	20.8
Equally Greek and Albanian	18.3	20.2	23.8
Mostly Albanian	23.2	9.09	8.9
Only Albanian	33.2	17.2	2.9

Language usage patterns

Results on language use and choice indicate that the first generation makes use of Albanian mostly in the home domain, especially with spouses (Table 3). So, 48.9% speak mostly/only Albanian with their spouse, while only 26% speak mostly/only Albanian with their children, a fact that clearly indicates strong signs of language shift in children. The fact that only 27.3% of the first generation report to be using mostly/only Albanian with friends, must be an indication of the fact that there is a high degree of socialisation with Greeks or other nationals. At the same time, the high percentage (43.4%) who report to be using equally Greek and Albanian with friends may be either an indication of socialising with both Greeks and Albanians or, of codeswitching taking place when conversing with their co-ethnics. Finally, the high percentage (51.5%) of first-generation respondents who report using 'only Greek' with colleagues seems to demonstrate the close cooperation with Greek nationals in the context of the workplace.

Language choice/use results on the second generation present us with a somehow different picture (Table 4). Respondents make very little use of Albanian and this is limited to interactions with parents (56.4% report speaking mostly/only Albanian with parents). This percentage drops dramatically in interactions with siblings, where 53.5% report speaking mostly/only in Greek, while a 20% report speaking equally Greek and Albanian. This percentage changes slightly when it comes to speaking with friends, where more use of Greek is noted; 64% report speaking only in Greek and only 11.8% report speaking mostly/only in Albanian. This may denote preference of speaking in Greek in public (as has already been discussed, Albanian immigrants have tried to conceal their identity for many years in Greece to avoid stigmatisation and exclusion). It may also indicate a high degree of socialisation with Greek people.

Subjective ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire

Overall, the EV results indicate low vitality perceptions among both first- and second-generation Albanian immigrants in Greece (Table 5). In the following section, we attempt a discussion of perceived social status and perceived institutional support in combination with the qualitative data. Finally, perceived language status is discussed in the light of qualitative results regarding attitudes towards Greek language knowledge importance.

Albanian immigrants' perceptions of their social status in Greece

Results from the SVQ indicate that the Albanian immigrants of our sample perceive their group as having very low status in Greece without any difference between the two

Table 5.   Ethnolinguistic vitality ratings of first-generation (n = 99) and second-generation (n = 101) Albanian informants.

Questionnaire items	Greek vitality		Albanian vitality	
	Second generation	First generation	Second generation	First generation
1. Proportion of population	6.14	6.06	2.98	3.16
2. Perceived language status locally	6.65	6.73	1.83	2.01
3. Perceived language status internationally	3.95	3.85	2.09	2.03
4. Amount of Greek/Albanian in government services	6.81	6.72	1.54	1.47
5. Greek/Albanian birth rate	5.07	4.86	3.94	4.03
6. Greek/Albanian control over business	6.02	5.93	2.56	2.40
7. Amount of Greek/Albanian language in mass media	6.75	6.74	2.37	2.47
8. Perceived group status	6.08	6.07	2.56	2.73
9. Proportion of Greek/Albanian population locally	6.04	6.17	3.08	2.86
10. Amount of Greek/Albanian language in schools	6.87	6.82	1.20	1.20
11. Greek/Albanian immigration patterns	2.95	2.70	4.45	4.22
12. Amount of exogamy	5.49	5.64	4.77	5.02
13. Amount of Greek/Albanian political power	6.54	6.49	1.69	1.61
14. Amount of Greek/Albanian language in business	6.40	6.42	2.00	1.80
15. Greek/Albanian emigration patterns	3.51	3.28	3.23	2.78
16. Pride of cultural history	6.50	6.52	5.63	6.07
17. Amount of Greek/Albanian in religious worship	6.66	6.84	1.66	1.74
18. Evaluation of group's cultural representation	6.50	6.66	2.32	2.07
19. Perceived group strength	6.06	6.14	3.31	2.99
20. Group wealth	5.60	5.48	3.66	3.59
21. Predicted future group strength	5.37	5.40	4.81	4.30
22. Perceived contact between Greeks and Albanians	4.98	4.72	4.98	4.72

Note: Mean values are based on 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates minimum vitality, 7 indicates highest vitality.

generations. As the following interview quotes indicate, and despite the fact that 114 out of 180 respondents claim to be happy with their life in Greece, racist attitudes to Albanian immigrants are reported:

> What annoys me most, is the stereotypes about Albanians and that there are still people who can't understand that Albanians have achieved a dynamic integration in Greece. It is what we call 'put everybody in the same basket'.…because some incidents took place when Albanians first came to Greece … 20 years later the Albanians' children care only about going to school and having friends, but they still hear the same racist comments. There are kids who were born in Greece and have lived here all their life and are still treated like foreigners because of their origin. I think this is unfair. (F 20, Athens)

> I am very annoyed by the racist behaviour of many people, even educated ones. One day my sister came back from school in tears. I asked her what was wrong and she told me that the teacher had told her friends to stop hanging out with her because she is Albanian. After that I went to school and I reported this incident to the head teacher. I tried to convince her not to

be ashamed of her origin. I don't like it when I hear her crying and saying 'I don't want to be an Albanian'. (F 19, Ptolemaida)

Despite the perceptions of very low status provided by the responses to the SVQ, scores on perceived social contact between Albanians and Greeks are a lot higher.

Qualitative data confirm the above picture, as the vast majority of the interviewed informants (170 out of 180) claim that they have very frequent and good quality contacts with Greek people. Most of the older respondents claim that these contacts are created mostly in the workplace, while quite a few respondents mention that Greek people invite them to weddings. It seems that on the whole these relationships are rather formal. On the contrary, 'deeper' relationships seem to develop among the younger (second) generation:

> I have some relationships with Greeks through work. They are not friends, really, but we get on well. I never arrange to go out for dinner with my wife and another Greek couple though. (M 45, Ptolemaida)

> We contact Greek people every day. We go to their houses, we meet them at work we have friendly relations with most of them. We love them and they love us. (F 39, Ileia)

> My social contacts with Greeks are very frequent. Apart from my family almost all my other contacts are with Greek people. At University, at work, my friends, even my more personal relationships. (F 20, Athens)

> My housemate is Greek, my friends and all my acquaintances are Greek. 90 per cent of my contacts are Greek and only 10 per cent are Albanian. (F 23, Athens)

Albanian immigrants' perceptions of their institutional support in Greece

Regarding the issue of political participation in Greece, the results of the SVQ indicate that the Albanians perceive that in essence they lack political rights in the country. Given the objective vitality data provided earlier, these perceptions are not exaggerated. The right to participate in local elections, as well as the pathway to citizenship that were provided by the aforementioned law 3838/2010 – which meanwhile has been judged as anti-constitutional, as we have already mentioned – are posterior to our research and therefore the informants did not take them into account when they were completing the questionnaire.

Qualitative results indicate that the vast majority of the informants (130 out of 180) would like to acquire Greek citizenship. Sixty nine belong to the first generation and 61 to the second generation. Of them, only 13 informants would like to acquire Greek citizenship out of emotive reasons, i.e. because 'they feel Greek' or 'they love Greece'. It is worth noting that all of them are ethnic Albanians, and nine of them are second-generation immigrants.

> Yes, I would definitely want to acquire Greek citizenship because I feel half Greek. My mother wouldn't want it because she feels that she would betray her country. However, I would feel more complete with the Greek citizenship. As I am now, I think I am missing something. (F 23, Thessaloniki)

> I would like to get it [Greek citizenship] because I have grown up in Greece, I also feel Greek and I know more things about Greece than I do about Albania. (M 24, Volos)

The rest (117 informants) mention mostly 'practical reasons'. For example, 20 informants would like to acquire Greek citizenship to avoid bureaucracy and the high cost involved

in residence permit renewal – while 23 informants claim that their reason for wishing to acquire Greek citizenship would be to 'have the same rights as Greeks'.

> I want to get Greek citizenship because I want to have rights in Greece and because this renewal of papers every year is unbearable and costly. (M 21, Trikala)

> I would like the Greek citizenship so as to have the same rights as Greeks, in order to be able to enter the public sector, and so as not to have problems with my children and my mother-in-law in the future, when I get married to my Greek girlfriend. (M 22, Ptolemaida)

Eight informants would like to acquire Greek citizenship for the sake of their children. Finally, 66 informants suggest ability 'to vote', 'to travel abroad', 'to travel to Europe freely[4]', 'to find jobs easier', 'to face less discrimination', 'to have more freedom of movement'. Of them, 36 belong to the first generation and 30 to the second.

Perceived language status and attitudes to Greek

Results on perceived language status locally indicate very low vitality for Albanian vis-à-vis Greek, especially among second-generation informants (1.83 against 6.65). Albanian immigrants seem to consider the knowledge of Greek crucial to their social incorporation, social mobility and socialisation, thus attaching a practical value to the language. However, a slight differentiation is noted with regard to how each generation views knowledge of Greek. For example, representatives of the first generation stress the practical benefits of knowing Greek.

> It is important because I can understand what my boss is telling me at work, I can go shopping, I can go to the doctor, and in general for my everyday communication with the Greek people. (M 41, Athens)

> I need to know better Greek so that I can communicate better at work. (M 47, Corfu)

> It is important for me to speak to the bosses, to make job deals and to communicate with Greeks in general so that they won't think I'm stupid. (M 45, Rhodes)

> It is important for me to know Greek because I live in Greece and I must know Greek in order to be able to find work and not be taken advantage of. (M 31, Volos)

> I need to know Greek because I need it for my job and in order to speak to Greek people but I consider it also important to be able to speak to my children as it is my wife's mother-tongue. I also need it to communicate with the teachers at my children's school. (M 35, Thessaloniki)

> If you don't know Greek you can't live in Greece. If you do know Greek it is easier to find a job, to make friends and also for Greek people to think more highly of you. (M 38, Kos)

As regards the responses of second-generation respondents, we note that, apart from the practical value they attribute to knowledge of Greek, for some, a sound competence in Greek constitutes an important element in their identification process:

> It is very important as Greek is an instrument which can help me in my everyday life. In addition, I like it a lot as a language and it is the official language of the country where I live. Sometimes I feel this language is my native one. (F 20, Athens)

> I like Greek, I consider it to be my second language. (F 27, Athens)

> The fact that I know Greek makes my life easier, but because I was born and grew up here I believe that Greek is a part of myself. (F 18, Ioannina)

They often attribute characteristics such as beauty and wealth to the Greek language, and they claim they feel happy to be able to speak it correctly.

> It is paramount for me to be able to speak good Greek. For reasons of communication and work. Moreover, I feel nice when I am in the company of Greek people and they tell me that my Greek is so good they can't tell I am from Albania. Also, because I love the Greek language very much and I believe that there is no other language like it, you can express so many things. (F 23, Florina)

As is indicated by the last two quotes, informants from the second generation seem to attribute a particular value to the symbolic knowledge of Greek, considering it as crucial to their identity and self-esteem.

Concluding remarks

Both first and second generation of Albanian migrants in this study have perceptions of very low EV. Our study has shown that Albanian immigrants' perceptions on issues of group perceived status, amount of political power in Greece (including their attitudes towards acquiring Greek citizenship) and degree of contact between Albanians and Greeks indicate that there is a tendency on the part of the second and/or one and a half generation to feel more integrated in Greece and to have a high amount of meaningful social contact with the indigenous population while the first generation seems to feel more attached to the country of origin. Moreover, both generations have pointed out that the acquisition of Greek citizenship implies solving practical problems.

Results indicate that language shift tendencies are apparent in both generations. In the first-generation language shift is noted with regard to language use. The only domain in which the first generation makes use of Albanian remains, to a large extent, the 'home'. In all other domains and for all other functions Greek dominates. The results suggest a strong shift in the second generation that shows strong preferences for the use of Greek across all communicative domains. This comes as no surprise given that the majority of the second generation of Albanians attended a Greek school and it is well known in the literature that there is a scarce application of measures of an 'intercultural character' in Greek schools (Gkaintartzi and Tsokalidou 2011; Chatzidaki and Maligkoudi 2012). Furthermore, while knowledge of Greek for the first generation constitutes a practical necessity and a vehicle of social mobility, for the second generation, Greek is the main language in which they got socialised in Greece, and therefore, it constitutes a core element for their identity construction process. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the economic crisis in Greece has resulted to a large number of Albanian immigrants being repatriated (Maroukis 2012; Michail 2013). Therefore, knowledge of Albanian is deemed necessary, especially for the second generation who report low Albanian skills in this study. It appears to be seen whether the very recent return trend will be accompanied by more positive attitudes to the Albanian language as well as how the identities of young returnee Albanians are constructed and negotiated in the 'homeland'. A longitudinal study of these issues, combined with a more qualitative approach, will provide more detailed insights.

Notes

1. Law 3838/2010 'Current provisions for Greek citizenship and political participation of repatriated Greeks and lawfully resident immigrants and other adjustments'. Published in the Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic Volume 1, No. 49.
2. Judgement 60/2013.
3. The concept 'integration' here is used in the sense of 'cultural integration' referring to the degree of cohesion of social relations and cultural systems within a given ethnographic context.
4. At the time these interviews took place, the new visa liberalisation scheme for Albania had not yet come to effect. As of December 2010, Albanians can travel to Schengen countries visa-free (European Union, Regulation [EU] No 1091/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 amending Council Regulation [EC] No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, *Official Journal of the European Union*, OJ L 329, Volume 53, 14 December 2010, pp. 1–2).

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