

Institution: King's College London
Unit of Assessment: 31 Classics / Centre for Hellenic Studies
Title of case study: 'Small stories' research: its impact on the Greek classroom and beyond
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Georgakopoulou's research in discourse analysis has from around 2000 pioneered - and promoted the academic and pedagogical importance of - the study of 'small stories', that is everyday narrative conversations, using data drawn primarily from schoolchildren in Greece, including their communications through electronic media. Through her contributions to handbooks officially designated for teacher training in Greece, her work has become influential on teachers and hence classroom practices at secondary level, especially in the fast growing and crucial field of teaching Greek as a second language to migrant and minority children. The primary beneficiaries are teachers and pupils in secondary schools in Greece, but in other countries too Georgakopoulou's research has started to influence educational theory and practice in teaching English as a foreign or second language, and is also beginning to arouse interest for the psychotherapy of groups unable to construct coherent narrative accounts of their lives.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Georgakopoulou's sociolinguistic research into narrative and story-telling, which goes back to her appointment at King's in 1993 (Professor since 2010), has produced academic outputs including her monographs of 1997 and 2007 (3.1, 3.2) and a variety of research papers and contributions to handbooks. Since its establishment in 2006, her work has been supported by the Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication at King's, of which she is Co-Director, with its commitment to practical development of educational practice. From around 2000 Georgakopoulou has directed her research to the collection and analysis of data in the previously little studied area of the communication practices and socio-cultural aspects of supposedly trivial story-telling (narrative discourse) in everyday life. Her particular focus has been on audio-recorded conversations of adolescent girls in Greece and, since 2004, their communications through digital media. Her researches have been buttressed by PhD dissertations at King's which she has supervised, such as those of Lytra (2003), published as <i>Playframes and Social Identities</i> (2007), which studied children in a Greek school for minorities, and of Spilioti (2007), who carried out the first study of text-messaging among young people in Greece. The work of Georgakopoulou and her students, and her collaborations with Goutsos (University of Athens) (3.3) and, more recently, Bamberg (Psychology, Clark University) (3.4), has pioneered a new paradigm for the study of identities through narrative analysis, in effect creating a new field of 'small stories research' within the discipline of sociolinguistics.</p> <p>Since the 1960s, narrative has been recognised across the social sciences as the main qualitative method available for the study of identities. The standard type of narrative used has been life stories told to a researcher-interviewer. Small stories research has shown the limitations of this approach by demonstrating the significance for identities analysis of a whole range of other narrative activities in everyday life. Georgakopoulou's revision of the criteria for what counts as narrative has now been accepted by numerous studies. Her more recent focus on studying the relationships between the sociolinguistics of everyday narratives and the new forms of media used for communication (e.g. SMS, Facebook, Twitter) is widely accepted as path-breaking, and is now being pursued by other prominent researchers. Thus academic interest in certain types of conversational story-telling, once disregarded as being of little importance, has boomed, and is gaining a wider audience as communication through digital social media has become a general interest and concern of governments, educationalists and the media and public.</p> <p>In step with the growing academic influence of her publications, Georgakopoulou has been invited</p>

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to teach small stories research in numerous workshops as part of international conferences, summer doctoral programmes, and invited professorships in Europe (including Denmark, Finland, France, Germany) and the USA. Publications by her have been translated into Spanish, Polish, Russian, Japanese, and now Russian. Her work is frequently cited by leading scholars in the field, such as Herman, Riessman and Labov, and standardly included in bibliographies for the teaching of discourse and narrative analysis to undergraduate and postgraduate students. She has been invited to write the first handbook chapter on narrative and computer-mediated communication for the *Pragmatics Handbook of Computer-Mediated Communication* (ed. S. Herring et al., 2013). She is also co-editing, with Spilioti (her former PhD student, now at Cardiff University), the *Handbook on Language and Digital Communication* – the first of its kind – in the Routledge series ‘Handbooks in Applied Linguistics’. Throughout her research career at King’s, Georgakopoulou has been and is committed to promoting knowledge and debate of new developments in discourse analysis, including her own research, among the academic and educational community in Greece through the publication of handbooks in Greek in collaboration with Goutsos and Sifianou, both University of Athens (3.5, 3.6).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1. A. Georgakopoulou *Narrative Performances: A Study of Modern Greek Storytelling* (Amsterdam 1997).
- 3.2. A. Georgakopoulou, *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities* (Amsterdam 2007).
- 3.3. A. Georgakopoulou & D. Goutsos, *Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh 1997; 2nd edn, 2004). [Russian version in preparation.]
- 3.4. A. Georgakopoulou & M. Bamberg, ‘Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis’, *Text and Talk* 28 (2008) 377-96.
- 3.5. A. Georgakopoulou & D. Goutsos, *Κείμενο και Επικοινωνία [Text and Communication]* (1st edn, Athens 1999; 2nd edn, 2011).
- 3.6. A. Georgakopoulou, D. Goutsos & M. Sifianou, *Η Ελληνική ως Ξένη Γλώσσα. Από τις Λέξεις στα Κείμενα [Greek as a Foreign Language: from Words to Texts]* (online 2004; hard copy Athens 2006).

Quality of outputs: all peer reviewed.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Georgakopoulou’s influence on language education in Greece has its roots in her and Goutsos’ *Text and Communication* (3.5), originally published in 1999, whose impact continues to the present day. This was the first handbook of discourse studies written in Greek, and achieved a wide readership beyond academe - it was singled out by the national newspaper *To Vima* as an ‘essential read for the friends of language and linguistics’ in its ‘Best books of the Year 1999-2000’. The book has gone through nine impressions, and publishers competed to produce the substantially revised second edition of 2011; it has sold around 25,000 copies, a striking number for the Greek market (5.1). The book created a terminology accessible to, and applicable in practice by, teachers in primary and secondary education. Since 1999 it has become increasingly influential on educational theory, instruction and practice in Greece. It is currently a prescribed textbook for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Linguistics, Media and Communication Studies, and Translation, at universities including Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Aegean, and Ionian (5.2), and thus has been and continues to be studied by the many philology and education graduates who become primary and secondary schoolteachers. Since 2008 the book has been included on the list issued by the Ministry of Education as ‘Guides for the Teacher’ for the teaching of Greek in schools (5.3), and it now serves, especially through its ‘Tasks’ section, as a resource for Greek teachers of language skills in primary and secondary schools, particularly those with pupils whose native language is not Greek

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(see feedback below).

Because of her high academic profile in discourse analysis, and her proven ability through *Text and Communication* to make her own and others' sociolinguistic research accessible and useful to teachers, Georgakopoulou with Goutsos and Styliani were commissioned to write *Greek as a Foreign Language* (3.6) by the Greek Ministry of Education as part of the Programme for the Education of Muslim Minority Children in Greece, funded by the EU with 17M euros for its first phase 1998-2007, and another 9M euros for the current second phase (5.4). The programme was aimed at the production of material suitable for the needs of ethnic minority children for whom Greek is their second or a foreign language, a group which has grown considerably in the last fifteen years (almost 2,000 secondary schools in Thrace together have some 25,000 Muslim pupils), and for the training of primary and secondary teachers working in schools with a substantial percentage of ethnic minority children. Given the political sensitivities in western Thrace, where Muslim students are a majority but 'minority' schools have no formal status, this material has had to be directed at teachers through their post-qualification training. With the economic crisis since 2010 and consequent growth in anti-immigrant sentiment, practical support for educational integration of these children has taken on an unexpected urgency. Georgakopoulou's own chapter in *Greek as a Foreign Language* is inspired and informed by her small stories research, and presents her results to be useful for teachers and to have an impact in the classroom. She promotes pupil agency, particularly important for minority children whose voices were often ignored in the traditional teacher-centred classrooms. From 2004 on it has thus contributed to enhancement of the teaching of many thousands of children in Greek primary and secondary schools, especially those having to learn Greek. Individual responses from professionals in teacher training and teaching in Greece indicate that teachers' attention to the place of small-story-telling in their lives helps these children build self-esteem and improve their Greek-language acquisition.

'Departments of Education with a special interest in the needs of ethnic minority children make extensive use of this book', writes one Professor of Sociolinguistics (Patras); 'In my MA courses where I teach the narrative construction of identities, I constantly refer to her books and articles, including the most recent ones, where Georgakopoulou introduces the analytical model for small stories. . . [and, of his own work] In the teaching proposals that we put forward, Georgakopoulou's work was more than valuable. This can also be verified/confirmed by school teachers who exploit her work in the preparation of their educational material'. Another Professor of Education (Athens) comments, 'Let me explain the problem a bit: there weren't and still are no official minority high schools . . . [so] there was also no official and non-conflictual way to have alternative educational material . . . Alexandra's study [sc. 3.6] has been very successful and influential, precisely because it stresses the availability of or "alternative" materials and media. . . Even today there is only a handful of studies concentrating on *learners*.' An experienced high school teacher with ethnic minority pupils reports how she implements strategies suggested in Georgakopoulou's works: 'Teaching them essay writing, quite often I ask them to write past stories with memories from their homeland as well as future stories on how they would like to be in Greece, i.e. their host country . . . I quite often ask my students to exchange their stories via e-mail or facebook messages. Thus, I discuss and analyse in class both my students' stories as well as their responses to the stories they receive from their class-mates . . . the writing of personal narratives motivates students and is particularly suitable for promoting inter-cultural communication via enabling students to express their cultural identities.' (5.5)

In the wider world too, Georgakopoulou's small stories research has begun to have an impact in language teaching and learning, and also psychology. Particularly in the field of TESOL ('Teaching English to speakers of other languages'), attention to the sorts of communicative activities that are the focus of small stories research is being promoted over the traditional content analysis of autobiographical interviews as a means for learners and teachers to reflect on their pedagogical experiences and identities, and thus to help pupils become more confident and effective learners (5.6). The insights of small stories research are also being drawn on in life-stance counselling to help psychologists develop flexible 'on the go' models of therapy that can address the needs of specific populations which for medical or social reasons cannot produce coherent 'meaningful' narrative accounts of their lives, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's patients, the homeless, and

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young immigrants in youth centres (5.7).

Georgakopoulou's small stories research was intended to produce an analytical apparatus for academic sociolinguistics. Its usefulness for - and impact on - teaching practices (especially in second-language contexts) was unforeseen. However, it has since been proactively developed and promoted by Georgakopoulou through publications aimed at teachers, and is ongoing and sustainable, with her direct involvement: the Greek Ministry of Education has appointed her to the committee of the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education which is currently (late 2013) evaluating the teaching and research practices of Education and Philology Departments in HEIs in Greece. The potential of the small stories approach for clinical psychology is now to be explored further by Georgakopoulou and Ridsdale (Institute of Psychiatry, King's) as co-investigators in an ERC-funded project for 2014-19, based in English (King's), on 'Egomedial. The Impact of New Media on Forms and Practices of Self-Presentation'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1. Sales figures may be confirmed with the publisher: bookstore@patakis.gr.

5.2. Set texts for university courses in Greece are centrally prescribed at:

<https://service.eudoxus.gr/search/#s>

(paste Γεωργακοπούλου Αλεξάνδρα into search box).

5.3. Greek Ministry of Education 'Guides for the Teacher', e.g.:

http://www.pi-schools.gr/books/gymnasio/glossa_a/VIVLIOEK.PDF (p.17)

http://www.pi-schools.gr/books/gymnasio/glossa_b/EKPAIDEU/1-104.PDF (p.22)

http://www.pi-schools.gr/books/dimotiko/glossa_c/c_dask.pdf (p.53)

http://www.pi-schools.gr/books/dimotiko/glossa_e/e_dask.pdf (p.49)

5.4. Greek Ministry of Education programme for teaching Greek to migrants:

<http://www.diapolis.auth.gr/>.

Programme for the Education of Muslim Children: <http://www.museduc.gr/el/?page=2&sub=36>.

Greek as a Foreign Language as part of the 'Greek as a Foreign Language Programme 2002-2008': <http://www2.media.uoa.gr/language/info.php>.

First and second phases : <http://www.azinlikca.net/ellinika-arthra/2010-12-10-18-03-51.html>.

5.5. Letters from Greek Professors and teacher (PDF copies have been uploaded).

5.6. Developments are reviewed, and the contribution of Georgakopoulou's work acknowledged, by, e.g.:

C. Vasquez, 'TESOL, teacher identities and the need for small story research', *TESOL Quarterly* 45 (2011) 535-45 - available, with more references to Georgakopoulou's work, via the author's website: <http://camillavasquez.com/articles.html>.

5.7. Potential use in clinical psychology, e.g.:

A. Sooks, 'Narrative health research: exploring big and small stories as analytical tools', *Health* 17 (2013) 93-110; also the papers by Schiff and by Sooks in *Narrative Works* 2.1 (2012), at: <http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/cirn/Volume2Issue1.aspx>.