

## DO YOU SPEAK GREEK? A CASE STUDY OF L2 SERBIAN LEARNERS OF GREEK<sup>a</sup>

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### Abstract

The current study focuses on presenting the learning situation and the development of productive skills, namely, speaking and writing in a sample of second year students of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Belgrade. More specifically, the study consists of two parts. Initially, the paper presents the foreign language approach of teaching Greek at the B1 level as a foreign language and the teaching materials used within a specific Greek language course – Praktikum. Secondly, two tasks are administered to the subjects of the study in order to examine their productive skills and perform an error analysis of their output, followed by a questionnaire where they evaluate themselves and also the teaching process. The aim of the research is twofold: on the one hand, to show whether each student applies the same strategies in speaking and in writing, and to present the different dynamics that affect productive skills.

**Key words:** Greek as a Foreign Language, speaking, writing, strategies, error analysis.

## ГОВОРИТЕ ЛИ ГРЧКИ? СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА СТУДЕНАТА НЕОХЕЛЕНИСТИКЕ

### Апстракт

У овој студији аутори се баве дидактичким приступом и развојем продуктивних језичких активности, дакле писане и говорне продукције, у настави модерног грчког језика као страног на Филолошком факултету Универзитета у Београду и састоји се из два дела. У првом делу представљени су како дидактички приступ

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koji se primenjuje u nastavi modernog grckog kao stranog jezika na B1 nivou ZEOJ-a tako i didaktički materijali koji se koriste za razvijanje produktivnih jezičkih aktivnosti. U drugom delu studije analizirali smo kako pisanu tako i govornu produkciju studenata druge godine Neohelenistike. Nakon testiranja, studenti su popuñavali upitnik u vezi sa strategijama koje koriste za razvoj pisane i govorne produkcije, ali i iznose svoje stavove u vezi sa didaktičkim materijalima koji se koriste u nastavi. Cilj ovoga rada je dvostruk: s jedne strane, prikazuje da li studenti koriste iste strategije za razvoj obe produktivne aktivnosti, dok sa druge strane ukazuje na različite faktore koji utiču na govornu i pisanu produkciju.

**Кључне речи:** грчки као страни, писана и усмена продукција, стратегије, анализа грешака.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Scope of the Study

The objective of the present work is to explore the different challenges students encounter in both oral and written production when learning Greek as a foreign language. For this reason, a sample of 22 second year students of Modern Greek Language and Literature at the University of Belgrade, who have already attained the B1/CEFR level in Greek<sup>1</sup>, were assigned certain tasks. More specifically, the paper addresses the teaching methods and materials within the framework of a specific language course – the *Praktikum*. Additionally, in order to address the participants' productive skills, two tasks were administered and their speaking outcome was analyzed in contrast with their writing performance. Hence, the study is realized in a multifaceted way, involving: a) an overview of the teaching material of the *Praktikum*, which is a mandatory course that focuses on the productive skills during the second year of Modern Greek Studies b) the administration of two tasks which assessed the participants' oral and written ability c) a juxtaposition between their written and oral performance and error analysis and d) the completion of a questionnaire<sup>2</sup> showing the subjects' opinion of the teaching approach as well as their personal evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> The level of the students was attested and verified by means of a diagnostic test. This test was administered prior to the two tasks to the whole class of second year students. The subjects sat a sample examination of four parts, corresponding to the four language skills (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing) according to the B1 level (CEFR) available online at the candidates' care of the Centre for the Greek Language (CGL) and the Hellenic American Union. The subjects selected for our study had achieved a high passing grade. This means that only 22 students took part in this study out of the total of 60 students.

<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire is available at the followed link: <http://www.fil.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/obavestjenja/neohelenistika/Questionnaire.pdf>.

### 1.2. Theoretical Approach to Productive Skills

Learning a new language consists of four large domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Canale & Swain, 1980). The four domains need to be incorporated into lesson planning, and the assessment of L2 proficiency, so that a balanced program is achieved - a program that is “a combination of whole language and skill development approaches” (Uzuner et al., 2011, p. 2126). Therefore, in order for our students to maximize their performance and keep their motivation high, the teaching approach bears a communicative quality (Lee, 1995), while the teaching material serves a communicative purpose in the target language (Little, Devitt, & Singleton, 1989). We could also say that part of the *Praktikum*'s curriculum is based on Task-Based Instruction (Nunan, 1999) and Content-Based Instruction (Oxford, 2001).

In other words, the students encounter authentic texts created by native speakers and are encouraged to participate in class discussions. The educators try to enhance the students' vocabulary, grammar and sub-skill development which focus on the lexicon of the content. At the same time, the goal is to fulfill the students' needs (Spiegel, 1998).

What seems to be particularly challenging, though, is oral and written production since it requires additional effort. As Bygate (2002) notes, speaking is a highly complex skill. The speaker has to activate his working memory, retrieve words and arrange them in such a syntactic order as to be semantically meaningful. According to Levelt's model, talk presupposes the processes of *conceptualisation*, *formulation*, and *articulation* (Bygate & Samuda, 2005, p. 43). All three function as a “cascade” meaning that they interact and overlay. However, the speakers' capacity displays a differentiation: “a speaker may have difficulty sorting out the conceptual content; or in finding words to express it; or else in articulating the words, each with different implications for planning” (ibid.). This is something observed in the participants examined, a point that triggered the implementation of this particular research.

In addition to personality traits, which also affect production skills, another factor that influences oral performance is the time available to prepare the task and the familiarity of the task or the topic itself. As Ellis (2005, p. 45) confirms, improvement is noted during the re-run of a test. As he explains: “formulation is likely to be speedier and more accurate.” Cohen (2011, p. 12) also states that reviewing the clustered material facilitates memory work: “Repeated contact with the material could be considered as a form of rehearsal [...]” Or, as Ellis (2005, p. 38) claims: “The first meeting with the material includes the internalization of information and content and organization into communication units,” while in the second contact with the same material or communication circumstance, the student experiences less stress, provided the conditions are the same (ibid.)

Taking into consideration the aforementioned point, it is important to note that the *Praktikum* introduces task repetition in ways students find motivating. The texts presented in the *Praktikum* concern everyday activities, or regular and familiar themes at the B1 level, in order to facilitate the students' oral and written production in Greek. Each unit is enriched with a sufficient number of similar texts, enabling the students to rehearse lexical and grammatical items. As Bygate and Samuda (2005, p. 45) argue, the rehearsal gives learners a better opportunity to integrate their linguistic resources. In this way, students are expected to enhance both their cognitive strategies, namely, "awareness, perception, reasoning and conceptualization" processes, and their metacognitive strategies, namely, "preassessment and preplanning, online planning and monitoring, and post-evaluation of language learning activities and of language use events" (Cohen 2011, p. 19).

In general, students are encouraged to join in discussions when they are triggered by an interesting topic, or to participate in groups and engage in role-plays along with the tutor enhancing collaborative language learning (Gómez, 2016) and favoring the implementation of communicative tasks: "A piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than on form"<sup>3</sup> (Nunan, 1989, p. 10).

## 2. DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PRAKTIKUM

Oral and written production skills are practiced in the framework of the course *Praktikum* (*Praktikum 3* – winter semester and *Praktikum 4* – spring semester), as mentioned previously, which aims at boosting the students' comprehension and production abilities. The curriculum dictates 3 teaching hours with homework assignments. A selection of texts and tasks from the following three course books constitute the core material of the *Praktikum*:

- 1) *Modern Greek for Immigrants, Refugees and Foreigners Level B... and good luck* (Kamarianou & Prodromidou, 2004)
- 2) *Modern Greek B* (Pathiaki, Simopoulos & Tourlis, 2012)
- 3) *Klik – Level B1* (Centre for the Greek Language)

The *Praktikum* course was introduced in the academic year of 2012/2013 when the new curriculum was accredited. All three coursebooks were designed for foreigners who have already achieved the A2 level and continued towards the B1 level. For writing skills, a repeating pattern of

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<sup>3</sup> There is also the possibility that in a communicative task students focus on form (Swain, 1997b); something that was attested in the experimental part.

activities or exercises is used, mainly letters or articles, e.g. movie reviews, a letter to the city mayor concerning recycling, a letter of complaint to a restaurant owner, etc. There are modules for revising vocabulary, grammar, and written and spoken language practice. As far as oral production skills are concerned, the books include role-play exercises and open-ended questions where learners are asked to give their opinion on various topics. There are no image description exercises, sketches, or image-based narratives.

Moreover, the *Praktikum* entails the use of new technologies, namely the Moodle platform. The online platform informs the students about the material being taught and provides them with a variety of exercises.

### 3. EMPIRICAL PART

#### 3.1. Methodology

##### 3.1.1. Design

The empirical part consists of two phases. The first phase concerns the students' oral and written achievement on the following tasks:

Writing: *You are a nutritionist and you are writing an article for the local newspaper "Health and Beauty" where you discuss the eating habits of young people in your country. In a text of about 200 words, give advice and propose solutions for a proper diet.*

Speaking: *Discuss the notion of a healthy diet and the eating habits in your country. You will be given two minutes to prepare to talk about the topic on the task card.*

The second phase involves the administration of a questionnaire. As previously mentioned, it presents the students' viewpoints and perceptions of the efficacy and quality and/ or suitability of the material, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The completion of the questionnaire took no more than 15 minutes, and it was done online by the same students voluntarily, meaning that they could refuse to complete it or decline to do so if they felt uncomfortable with any of the questions. Furthermore, only a vague, general description of the purpose of the questionnaire was given so as not to lead the participants to a specific response. A less biased explanation was offered: "The purpose of this research is to identify your study habits and improve teaching."

##### 3.1.2. Participants

The selected sample constitutes 1/3 of the second year students (22 participants), with an average age of 20. Six males and sixteen females were selected for the sample. The criteria for their selection were their high performance in the B1 sample test administered prior to the tasks, and their active in-class participation during the spring semester 2016/2017.

### 3.1.3. Procedure

Initially, the students were tasked with writing an in-class essay within a 45-minute period. This written part took place on May 2017, while the second task was realized a month later, in order to ensure that the students would be creative and would not repeat the same expressions and ideas used in the essay. Here, the students had 2 minutes to think about the topic, and then approximately 2-3 minutes to answer the question. Before the recording started, the participants were briefly introduced to their task. They were informed about the recording process and expressed no objections. Hence, their responses were recorded and their oral production was later processed, along with the written one. The steps of our study are as follows: 1) the identification of strategies 2) the identification and description of errors, and 3) the exemplification of errors (the steps suggested by Corder 1974 cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005).

## 3.2. Analysis of the Results

### 3.2.1. Oral activity: the communication strategies used

The students' overall performance was satisfactory enough since they provided well written essays in the writing task, and during the oral activity they covered the recommended time by providing their opinions and justifying them. In terms of communicative language competence, their essays and their speaking performance were assessed based on the global scale of the criteria of Independent User Level B1 of the Common Reference levels<sup>4</sup>. Naturally, mistakes were made, which were itemized in lists and analyzed. Before moving on to a detailed examination of the indicative errors, it is important to briefly review the communication strategies which the participants mainly resorted to in the oral activity. Concerning their classification, we adopted the taxonomy suggested by Dornyei and Scott (1995) who distinguish them into direct, interactional and indirect strategies.

a) Direct strategies:

i. **Message Replacement:** (also Corder, 1983; Faerch and Kasper, 1983): when the intended meaning was not achieved, the speaker tried to replace it with something similar:

Σημερινοί άνθρωποι [simeriní ánthropoi] (3) = “people of today” was replaced with “σύγχρονοι άνθρωποι” [sínxroni ánthropoi] = “contemporary people”, probably in an attempt on the part of the student to use a more ‘eloquent’ word.

<sup>4</sup> At the stage of ‘Threshold’ (B1 level), the language competence is examined in relation to the following components a) linguistic b) sociolinguistic and c) pragmatic. [https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf)

- ii. **Code Switching:** using words from the mother tongue due to the inability of the speaker to express themselves in L2 in an attempt to compensate for the “deficiency”:  
*μπουλίμια* [bulimía] instead of *βουλιμία* [vulimía]
- iii. **Restructuring** (Faerch and Kasper, 1983): the search for an alternative syntactic plan which could compensate for the lack of linguistic resources:  
*Δεν σημαίνει* [dén siméni]= “it does not mean that...” was replaced with *δεν έχει μεγάλη σημασία* [dénéxi meγάλι simasía]= “the fact that ... is not of great importance”
- iv. **Literal Translation/Conscious Transfer** (Tarone, 1977) - **Negative Transfer** was particularly observed: Ellis (1997, p.51) refers to the interference of mother tongue as ‘transfer’. According to him, it is ‘the influence that the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2 (ibid.):  
*Κάθε δεύτερη μέρα* (10) [káthe défteri méra] = every other day. The expression exists in Serbian, but not in Greek; it is a literal translation.
- v. **Word Coinage/Circumlocution/Approximation [or paraphrase** (Tarone, 1977)]- **Semantic Contiguity** [(classified in achievement strategies (Willems, 1987))]: a new word is created either deliberately or accidentally without using the word formation processes:  
*Χοντράδα* [xondráda] (3). The speaker intended to say “obesity” which in Greek is “*παχυσαρκία*” [paxisarkía]. Instead, she coined this word from the Greek adjective *χοντρός* [xondρός] = fat.

b) Indirect strategies

In their oral performance, the participants used a large number of **fillers** and **repetitions** or own-performance problem-related strategies according to Dornyei and Scott (1995), and especially self-repair in their attempt to produce a flawless outcome. Some participants focused on form and asked for comments from the researcher at the end of the recording. This was expected since the sample consisted of very good students who have a solid grammar base (Dulay and Burt, 1978).

vi. **The Use of fillers:**

(Εμ..) [em], βέβαια [vévea]= of course, λοιπόν [lipón]= so, δηλαδή [ðiladí]= for instance, μήπως [mípos] = maybe, ίσως [ísos] = probably, τελospάντων [telospánton]= anyway, δεν ξέρω [dén kséro] I don’t know.

The next section shows indicative examples of the most common mistakes recorded from their oral and written production, respectively. The sample shows that specific areas are equally “problematic”.

### 3.2.2. Oral versus written production: error analysis

On the whole, the main difference between the students' oral and written production is an increase in mistakes in expression, accentuation and repetition due to self-correction and the use of fillers. This was expected as oral activities impose time limits which raise the affective filter of the speakers and prevent input from being used during the learning process in general (Dulay and Burt, 1977). Another factor that may have increased the students' anxiety in the oral activity is the fact that they were being recorded, even though they voluntarily participated in the research. However, in both the oral and the written task, the participants faced difficulty in certain grammatical areas.

Theodoropoulou and Papanastasiou (2001, p. 200-201) distinguish three categories of errors: mistakes concerning a) the language system, b) the use of language and c) the written form of the language. This section exemplifies the students' mistakes in all three areas. The most common mistakes relate to 1) aspect, 2) the definite/indefinite article or zero article, 3) inflections, 4) spelling and 5) stress.

These areas were the most challenging for the participants in both their oral and written performance. In fact, spelling errors were attested in the written task, while stress solely during their speech. Additionally, we can say that interference errors – or interlingual errors – were observed and were attributed to the influence of Serbian, the mother tongue, and intralingual ones, or developmental errors, due to the difficulty of Greek, the target language (Dörnyei, 2005). The results below are in accordance with Vervitis, Kapourkatsidou and Stojičić (2012), where a similar examination of the students' written essays featured errors in article usage, aspect, spelling and vocabulary. In our case, the indicative examples of both tasks are presented below.

- *Verb*

- i. *Aspect*

In terms of tenses, common mistakes in oral and written speech concern the aspect of the verb. There is a tendency to use the imperfective, probably due to the transfer from their mother tongue. The results also agree with other studies of non-native speakers of Greek related to aspect (Papadopoulou, 2005). Examples are provided from both tasks.

Writing:

1. *Να πάτε κάθε εβδομάδα...* (16)<sup>5</sup> [na páte káthe evdomáða]  
 “To go every week...”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This numbers stand for the candidate i.e. the 16<sup>th</sup> candidate who participated out of the 22.

<sup>6</sup> The English translation in certain examples produces grammatically correct sentences, which is not the case in the Greek equivalent.



2. Δεν τους δώσουν το καλό παράδειγμα...(11) [δέν tús dósun to kaló parádiġma]  
 “They do not set a good example...”

Speaking:

3. Δε λέω ότι δεν πρέπει να πάμε σε... φαστ φουντ (2) [δέ léo óti δέν prépi na páme se... (fastfood)]  
 “I am not saying that we should not go to... fast food restaurants”
4. Θα μιλάω για τις συνέπειες...(17) [θα miláo ja tis sinépies]  
 “I will talk about the consequences...”

- ii. Reflexive verbs and passive voice:

Writing:

5. Η κατάσταση χειροτερεύεται (15) [I katástasi xiroterévete]  
 “The situation gets worse...”
6. Οι περισσότεροι άνθρωποι τρώγονται (21) [I perisóteroi ánthropoi trójonte]  
 “Most people are eaten...”\*

Speaking:

7. Η σωστή διατροφή αποτελεί από...\*(13) [I sostí diatrofí apotelí apó]  
 “The right diet consists of...”
8. Να προετοιμαστούμε ταπεράκια (3) [Na proetimastúme taperákia]  
 To get prepared lunchboxes\*

▪ *Articles*

Another frequent mistake is the use of articles. There is a tendency either to overuse the definite article – probably as the default, i.e. example (10) – or to omit it when they produce general statements, i.e. example (12). Additionally, there is a tendency to misallocate it in front of demonstrative pronouns *την εκείνη* [tin ekíni] = “the that”\*.

Writing:

9. Το μέρα (3) [iméra] = “the day”: The gender of the noun is feminine not neuter.
10. Προτείνω η εξής... (7) [protíno i eksís]= “I propose the following”: The gender should be neuter not feminine.

Speaking:

11. Υπάρχει το σοβαρό πρόβλημα που είναι (11) [ipárxi to sovaró prónlima pu íne]= “there is the serious problem that is...”\*: No article is needed.
12. Έχουν τις άλλες υποχρεώσεις (9) [éxun tis áles ipoxreósis]= “they have the other responsibilities...”\*: The article was placed in the wrong position.

▪ *Weak forms of personal pronouns*

Even though the weak form is present in Serbian, learners still seem to have difficulties with it in Greek.

## Writing:

13. *Μήπως (ίσως) δεν (το) ξέρετε αλλά το ψήσιμο...* (13). [mípos dén (to) ksérete alá to psísimo] = “maybe you are not aware of the fact that...”<sup>7</sup>
14. *Το κόκκινο κρέας είναι κατάλληλο να (το) τρώμε*-(2) [to kókiño kréas íne katálilo na (to) tróme]= “the consumption of red meat is suitable for...”

## Speaking:

15. *Οι ειδικοί συμβουλεύουν τους...* (21) [I idikí simvulévun tus] = “the experts advise them...”

- *Expression*

Errors in expression were also frequent. Taking into account the fact that the students have reached the B1 level, knowing when to use the appropriate vocabulary and making the right judgments for vocabulary items can still be perplexing for them. For this reason, they usually simplify their speech. Some utterances were the outcome of transfer from L1, i.e. examples (16) and (17).

## Writing:

16. *Πως ο τίτλος λέει* (11) [pós o títtlos léi...] = “as the title says”
17. *Κάθε δέκατος άνθρωπος* (11), [κάθε δέκατος άνθρωπος]= “every tenth person”

## Speaking:

18. *Δύο φορές στη μέρα* (10) [díoforés sti méra] = “twice a day”
19. *Τι είναι το κλειδί της σωστής συμπεριφοράς* (16) [τί íne to klidí tis sostís simberiforás] = “the key for a right attitude in life”

- *Concord/ agreement*

The form or inflection of the words in some phrases were not compatible with each other according to the rules of the Greek language.

## Writing:

20. *Τα κολατσιά* (17) [ta kolatsjá]= “snack”: the noun has no plural form in Greek. The form that the candidate wrote is non-existent.
21. *Πολλά παιδιά περίπου 14 χρόνια* (9) [polá pedjá] = “many children around 14 years old”

## Speaking:

22. *Τα παιδιά.... Αυτοί...* (17) [tapeđjá...aftí...] = “the children....they...”
23. *Ένα καλό ζωή* (13) [éna kaló zoí] = “a good life”

- *Spelling (written task)*

24. *Βούτηρο* (7) [vútiro] = “butter”
25. *Εξοικονόμηση* (16) [eksikonómisi] = “saving”

<sup>7</sup>The translation cannot bring out the errors in Greek.

- *Stress (oral task)*

In oral production, improper stress assignment and intonation were conspicuous:

26. *Γέροι – γεροί* (20) [jéri- jerí]: “old people” instead of “strong people”
27. *Κάρκινος –καρκίνος* (1) [karkínos- kárkinos] = “cancer”

- *Morphology*

In the absence of the precise vocabulary item, the subjects resorted to novel, non-existent expressions in L2. They appear to be equally resourceful in productivity based on previously entrenched morphological patterns. This means they may form novel verbs, nouns or adjectives by adding productive morphological affixes to the stem. However, transfer from their mother tongue is also noticed, i.e. example (29). The translation into English provides the candidates’ intended meaning.

Writing:

28. *Σας θαρραλέω* (2) [sas θaraléo] = “I urge you”
29. *Μαγειρευτά αυγά* (7) [majireftá avγά] = “fried eggs”

Speaking:

30. *Χοντράδα* (3) [xondráða] = “obesity”
31. *Ταχυφαγητεία* (13) [taxifajiría] = “fastfood restaurants”

All in all, assessing their overall performance, the students employed the same strategies in both productive skills, and they also made similar mistakes in the same grammatical areas in both the speaking and the written task.

The difference lies in the perceived lack of precision in their oral performance. However, the lack of precision was combined with creativity since the participants coined non-existent derivatives, i.e. examples (30) and (31). Furthermore, the oral production was more simplified than the written outcome. The vocabulary range was limited, the grammatical accuracy more “afflicted”, and anxiety overwhelmed the students. In terms of body reactions, only a couple of students blushed and avoided eye-contact. As Ur (2000, p.111) notes: “Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom. Worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.” Finally, we cannot overlook the fact that the majority of our sample delivered satisfactory results (both in speaking and writing). Here, it should be stressed that their phonemic abilities in Greek were particularly strong.

This could be attributed either to internal goals (Cook, 2002) or to the organized teaching of L2 (Astara and Vasilaki, 2011). Indeed, the majority of students (including our sample) appear to be extremely motivated to learn Greek. Apart from their motivation, the design of the language course ensures the cultivation of their linguistic awareness. In similar studies of L2 learners of Greek it was attested that “when students

who have begun to learn C2 through organized teaching, [...] they obviously have better standards for the acquisition of C2” (Astara and Vasilaki, 2011, p. 73).

#### 4. THE LEARNERS' ATTITUDE

Although the questionnaire focuses mainly on speaking, it also includes a few questions relating to other parts, since all domains - listening, speaking, reading, and writing- are interwoven in the teaching process.

Highlighting the most basic points, we identified certain particularly revealing tendencies (see Appendix). Overall, the students evaluate themselves as consistent with their home assignments (77%). As a means to improve their production skills in the target language, they indicated that writing essays is the best practice (72%). Moreover, they pinpointed as dominant the fact that their corpora place emphasis on both reading (45%) and listening comprehension (45%). However, 15 out of 22 participants think that in the classroom setting prominence is given to listening comprehension (68%).

Moreover, given the chance, half the subjects (50%) participate actively in class discussions. On top of that, based on their choices in the questionnaire, speaking should be reinforced (68%).

During oral practice in class, the subjects distinguished the following strategies: taking notes (54.5 %), following the lecturer's advice (36%) and using dictionaries or other sources (45%). The importance of using dictionaries was underlined for both speaking and writing. Another notable point is that a devastating majority of them claimed to feel anxiety in oral exams if they are not certain of the correctness of their utterances (77%). This is in accordance with the results of the speaking task, because a few exemplary students exhibited symptoms of anxiety: they started repeating words, made a lot of gestures, and even mumbled. Furthermore, they pinpointed that the lecturer should not intervene before the delivery of their complete answer in order not to obstruct the flow of their words (54.5%). However, a considerable number of the participants prefer “on the spot correction” (40.9%). In terms of the type of oral activities, giving one's opinion, or making an extensive argumentation are preferable (59%) to short answers (36.35) or role play activities (4.5%).

Last but not least, in addition to speaking practice, the three areas the students indicated significant for their progress in the target language are: a) grammar exercises (50%), b) listening comprehension exercises (36.3%) and c) vocabulary exercises (31.8%).

The questionnaire reflects the students' own stance on their productive skills and the way these are approached by the curriculum and the educators. The students seem to acknowledge “the practice of the four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing,” more specifically, the fact that

“acquiring a new language necessarily involves developing these four modalities in varying degrees and combinations” (Oxford, 1990, p.5-6). Another crucial point is the fact that the students use dictionaries. When used efficiently and successfully, dictionaries constitute a source of word information used autonomously by students. Hence, learners feel more self-confident as a result of their ability to use the dictionary (Gonzalez, 1999).

### 5. CONCLUSION

Our research was an attempt to depict how Serbian learners of Greek at the B1 level “deal with” written and speaking activities. For this reason, the study delved into the teaching method, the strategies our students used, the errors they made and their feelings. As Dornyei and Ryan (2013, p.91) said: “It is important to look at the person as a whole, not just those aspects that mark them as a ‘language learner’” (see also Dornyei, 2009a).

Additionally, the incorporation of the *Praktikum* as a core Greek language course at this academic level is useful for two reasons. Firstly, it helps students to consolidate their knowledge in the target language and minimize feelings of pressure and stress. Moreover, it helps them gain experience in structuring their speech. Both skills serve the same purpose, that of conveying a message, which is the basic criterion that shows a good language learner. Finally, the questionnaire highlighted the point that students usually do not feel at ease to ask their teachers things they usually notice when they cannot express themselves precisely in the target language in the way they wish.

What is also of great importance are the cultural factors that seem to interweave with learning Greek, i.e. the geographical proximity of the two countries, the various historical events where the two countries came into contact, and/or the recent economic deals among the two countries. In other words, in our case, the Serbian learners of Greek appear to be highly motivated learners of Greek<sup>8</sup>, which results in a high degree of aptitude for productive skills. At this stage this is an observation, which could be the subject matter of future research since motivation, the desires and needs of individuals, and other socio-economic factors, can be a strong drive in terms of language learning.

To sum up, our research constitutes a case study; hence, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of similar programs in the preparatory and university stages, and to also take into account the learners’ individual differences.

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<sup>8</sup> The last five years a number of 60 students are enrolled at the Department of Modern Greek Language and Literature at the University of Belgrade.

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## **ГОВОРИТЕ ЛИ ГРЧКИ? СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА СТУДЕНАТА НЕОХЕЛЕНИСТИКЕ**

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### **Резиме**

Предмет овог рада су продуктивне језичке активности у настави модерног грчког језика као страног на Филолошком факултету Универзитета у Београду. Теоријско-методолошки оквир нашег истраживања заснива се на приступу који у својим радовима заступају аутори Коен (Cohen 2011), Дорнеј и Скот (Dornyei and Scott, 1995), Елис (Ellis, 2005) и други. Наше истраживање састоји се из два дела. С једне стране, анализирали смо дидактичке приручнике који се користе у настави модерног грчког језика као страног на Б1 нивоу ЗЕОЈ-а, дакле, у раду са студентима друге године основних академских студија Неохеленистике, док смо с друге стране приказали резултате одређеног броја студената (укупно 22), чију смо писану и говорну продукцију тестирали за потребе писања овог рада. Циљ овога рада је да прикаже у којој мери студенти Неохеленистике користе исте стратегије и технике при увежбавању сваке појединачне продуктивне језичке активности. Такође, на основу спроведеног емпиријског истраживања, увидећемо који су то чиниоци који утичу на чињеницу да студенти не постижу исти успех када је реч о писаној и говорној продукцији. Поред анализираних приручника који се користе од 2012. године у настави интегрисаних језичких вештина, као и писане и говорне продукције студената друге године неохеленских студија, циљ рада је и да прикаже ставове студената који су посредством анкетног листића изнели своје мишљење у вези са типом вежби које су заступљене у три дидактичка приручника. Анализирани уџбеници и приручници користе се током наставе из Практикума из неохеленистике, а студенти Неохеленистике изнели су свој став само у вези са оним вежбама које се односе на развијање писаног и усменог дискурса. Анализа грешака насталих приликом тестирања писане и говорне продукције, те став студената Неохеленистике у вези са увежбавањем ове две веома важне језичке активности – представљају добро полазиште како за унапређење постојећих дидактичких материјала тако и за писање нових.