

Cultural Integration of Bulgarian Immigrants' Children in Greece through the Similarities between Greek and Bulgarian Proverbs and Sayings

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Introduction

Immigrant integration is without a doubt an important issue in the modern world and it is no wonder that it has been researched from various scientific points of view. Regarding the emigration of Bulgarians to Greece, there is an interesting statistical fact: according to the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of February 7th, 2005 (the latest official statistics) the number of Bulgarians living in Greece is 290000 – making Greece the country housing the most Bulgarian emigrants. In comparison, according to the same source, there are 270000 Bulgarians in USA; 120000 in Spain; 70000 in Italy; 44300 in Germany; and 44000 in UK. If we take into account that this number has risen significantly after the borders between the two countries were opened in January 2007 when Bulgaria joined the European Union, the need for researching the process of integration of Bulgarian immigrants' children into Greek society is quite evident.

On the one hand, when discussing the creation of a basis for a culture of behaviour, pedagogical research and practices concentrate on the period of pre-school childhood. Therefore, it is when children are in the pre-school age that it is necessary to find a means of unification, based on which to create forms and methods of pedagogical interaction to help the process of integrating Bulgarian immigrants' children into Greek society.

On the other hand, the rising interest in the definition of "meaning" and its ever-increasing role in human behaviour are continuously paving the way for a transition towards a semantic way of thinking. Every passing day confirms the perception of the modern world as a vast system of signs, each of them bearing pieces of information, which we have to know how to access and understand. The ability of proverbs and sayings to integrate the wisdom and experience of our forefathers into a short expression makes them not only excellent moral templates for behaviour, but also primal cognitive matrices on which to build upon – at least for the people who can interpret them adequately. But these forms of verbal folklore, seen as short and clichéd signs that are poetic expressions of everyday situations, might be used for something much more: helping the process of integration of Bulgarian immigrants' children into the Greek society and Greek language, through getting these children involved in equal peer-mates relationship with Greek children at the same age on the basis of the similarities between sayings and proverbs of the two neighbouring cultures. Mostly because of the geographical proximity of the two countries, there are a lot of similarities to be found between Bulgarians and Greeks with regard to the above folk genres. Additionally, because of their short size and ease of use, proverbs and sayings remain alive during everyday speech, even when people have moved outside their home country.

Research Aim and Hypothesis

The *aim* of the proposed research is to find, analyze and categorize a collection of Bulgarian and Greek proverbs and sayings whose literal meanings correspond, in order to develop a theoretical model of pedagogical interaction based on their similarities, which can be used to help the process of cultural integration of Bulgarian immigrants' children aged 5 to

7 years into the Greek society. This is also related to the *main hypothesis* of the proposed research, which is that the similarities between Bulgarian and Greek proverbs can be used as a cultural matrix for developing educational tools in the field of intercultural education between Bulgarian and Greek children.

Methodology:

Five main research stages have been conducted so far:

Stage I: Researching the official Greek educational materials in order to determine the place of proverbs and sayings in children's education in Greece.

Stage II: Preparing a questionnaire for teachers and parents from the Bulgarian Sunday School in Athens, collecting proverbs and sayings in Bulgarian and Greek which are in use nowadays abroad; and analyzing the information from the questionnaires in order to identify the most popular proverbs and sayings whose literal meaning corresponds in both languages.

Stage III: Selecting proverbs and sayings suitable for children aged 5-7.

Stage IV: Additional selection of proverbs and sayings from bilingual publications (English and Greek; English and Bulgarian) dealing with proverbs in order to facilitate international understanding of the proposed research we have found corresponding proverbs and sayings in English.

Stage V: Laying the foundation for the cultural integration model.

During the first stage, we have researched some educational materials approved by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. This included materials for use in pre-school settings, in order to determine the place of proverbs and sayings in children's education in Greece, as well as materials for use in the first grade in school.

We have used two official kindergarten resources: Greek Pedagogical Institute (2002) *A Cross-thematic Curriculum Framework for Compulsory Education* (DEPPS), and Kindergarten teachers' manual: *Designing creative learning environments* (Dafermou et al, 2006). As far as these two official documents are concerned there is no clear and specific reference to proverbs. But proverbs are extensively used in preschool settings (Kostinoudi & Sivropoulou, 2009; Kourkourika & Moraiti, 2007; Pagoulatou 2007; Sarakintsi, 2003; Panagiotidou & Sarakinidou, 2003).

Kostinoudi & Sivropoulou (2009) use proverbs and sayings to test how children work individually and in small teams (4 children in each team) and to help children's literacy development. They use 24 proverbs and sayings, such as *Like cats and dogs; The apple does not fall far from the tree*, etc. They use some pictures to stimulate children's thinking, for example:

Όταν λείπει η  χορεύουν τα 

(*When the cat's away, the mice will play*).

In Kourkourika & Moraiti (2007) there have been published some materials about music in kindergarten and it is mentioned that there they utilize different kinds of texts (among them and proverbs), but there is no detailed reference apart that they will use proverbs, among other texts.

Genakou (2003) pays attention to proverbs as metaphors and children's reading behind the words. As an example, she uses the common proverb *The apple does not fall far from the tree*. She also mentions the proverb *An apple a day keeps the doctor away*. The author suggests that proverbs and sayings should be included in language activities aiming at their learning and understanding by children through different games. She uses very good rhyme to explain the core of proverbs to children (Genakou 2003, p. 315):

<i>Είναι μια μικρή κουβέντα με μεγάλη σημασία. Κρύβει πείρα, κρύβει γνώση έχει χιούμορ και σοφία και με λίγα λόγια αποφεύγεις την πολυλογία.</i>	<i>[It is a small phrase with a big meaning. It holds experience, it holds knowledge it has humor and wisdom and with only a few words you avoid talking much.]</i>
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Proverbs are used as pedagogical tools in Sarakintsi (2003). In a thematic unit about “bread”, one of the activities was to read, write and draw the following proverbs: *If someone doesn't want to knead he sifts ten days; If you don't seed in October then you will have just a little wheat; Whoever is hungry dreams about loaves of bread and whoever is thirsty dreams about wells.*

In a book by Hadzhimanoli (2005), proverbs and sayings are grouped by key-words, combined with excellent illustrations, suitable for pre-school children. Each illustration features both the text of the proverb or saying (above the picture) and the literal explanation (below the picture). This kind of presentation is very useful, as it can help children understand proverbs and sayings most properly and it can be used by both teachers and parents.

According to the use of proverbs in the Greek curriculum for Grade 1 in the “Literature” section (...reference to be added...), it is mentioned that the main target is the familiarization of children with texts of popular literature. Later in the section of “Indicative practices” it is mentioned that in classrooms children can collect “popular tales, traditions, proverbs, enigmas from family settings” (p.30). There are no proverbs in Language books, but in the “Study of the Environment” book, part of the chapter on “civilization” is dedicated to proverbs (p.119). In this chapter there is the proverb “*the song is for the vintage and the tale for December*”. Children are encouraged to write and draw proverbs. They are given a task to collect the proverbs and make a book for them. Also, they are called to act out or sing about a proverb.

Therefore, the conclusion after the review of the literature is that, while there is no special focus on proverbs and sayings in the curriculum, Greek teachers have some pedagogical directions for using them and they do use them during the pedagogical interaction in kindergartens, as well as in first grade at school. This means that the proposed model will have some basis to build upon.

According to the second stage of the research, we have prepared questionnaires in Bulgarian and Greek language for collecting proverbs and sayings which are in use nowadays abroad. The questionnaires were given to: 1) teachers who work in Bulgarian Sunday School in Athens; 2) parents of children who attend the same school (living in Athens and speaking Greek well); 3) students from Greece at the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (now living in Bulgaria and speaking Bulgarian well). Analyzing the collected questionnaires helped us identify the most frequent Bulgarian and Greek proverbs and sayings which are alive nowadays. We needed them for the third stage of the research where we have selected the proverbs and sayings most suitable for children at the age of five to seven years.

After enriching the set through an additional selection of proverbs and sayings from bilingual publications - English and Greek (Stathes, 1998), we have also found corresponding proverbs and sayings in English (stage four) in order to facilitate international understanding of the proposed research.

In the fifth stage of our research we have laid the foundation for the cultural integration model, putting in hierarchical order the selected proverbs and sayings with corresponding literal meaning in Greek and Bulgarian (*Table 1*). The idea is for this content to become the core of the model which will be finished in the fall of 2010/2011 academic year. The principles, methods and forms of pedagogical interaction are also going to be explained in our next publication, when the approbation of the model will have been conducted. We expect our main findings to confirm the hypothesis that the similarities between Bulgarian and Greek proverbs can be used as a cultural matrix for developing educational tools in the field of intercultural education between Bulgarian and Greek children.

Table 1: Bulgarian and Greek literally corresponding proverbs and sayings suitable for use in preschool age (with translation in English).

<i>N</i>	<i>Bulgarian Proverb or Saying</i>	<i>Litterally corresponding Greek Proverb or Saying</i>	<i>Similar by meaning English Proverb or Saying</i>
1	Тънък като клечка.	Λεπτός σαν οδοντογλυφίδα.	Thin as a stick.
2	Гладен като вълк.	Πεινάει σα λύκος.	Hungry like a wolf.
3	Треперя като лист.	Τρέμω σα φύλλο.	Shaking like a leaf.
4	Като две капки вода.	(Μοιάζουν) Σα δυο σταγόνες νερό.	Like two drops of water.
5	Като кучето и котката.	Σαν το σκύλο με την γάτα.	(Arguing) Like cats and dogs.
6	Играя си с огъня.	Παίζω με τη φωτιά.	Playing with fire.
7	Вися на <u>косъм</u> .	Κρέμομαι από μια κλωστή.	Hanging by a hair (thread).
8	На две магарета слама не може да раздели.	Δεν μπορεί να μοιράσει δυο γαιδάρων άχυρα.	He cannot divide two donkeys' straw.
9	Очите ти на <u>четири</u> .	Τα μάτια σου δεκατέσσερα.	Be on your toes.
10	На ръба на пропастта.	Στο χείλος του γκρεμού.	Standing on the edge.
11	Не можеш да носиш две дини под една мишница.	Δύο καρπούζια δε χωράνε κάτω απο μια μασχάλη.	Two watermelons don't fit under one's arm.
12	Онзи, който гони <u>два</u> заека, не хваща нито един	Όποιος κυνηγά πολλούς λαγούς, κανένανε δεν πιάνει.	He who chases many rabbits catches none.
13	Вълкът козината си мени, но нравът си – никога.	Ο λύκος και αν εγέρασε και αλλαξε το μαλλί του, μήτε τη γνώμη του άλλαξε, μήτε την κεφαλή του.	A tiger doesn't change its stripes.

14	На каквото си постелеш, на това ще легнеш.	Όπως έστρωσες θα κοιμηθείς.	You've made your bed, now lie in it.
15	Каквото посееш, такава ще пожънеш	Ό,τι σπείρεις θα θερίσεις.	You reap what you sow.
16	Езикът кости няма, ама кости проши.	Η γλώσσα κόκαλα δεν έχει και κόκαλα τσακίζει.	A blow with a word strikes deeper than a blow with a sword.
17	Голям залък глътни, голяма дума не казвай.	Μεγάλη μπουκιά να φας, μεγάλη λέξη να μη πεις.	Swallow your pride.
18	Казана дума-хвърлен камък.	Τα λόγια δεν παίρνονται πίσω.	A word spoken is past recalling.
19	Три пъти мери, един път режи.	Τρεις φορές μέτρα και μετά κόψε μια.	Measure twice, cut once.
20	Приятел в нужда се познава.	Ο καλός φίλος στην ανάγκη φαίνεται.	A friend in need is a friend indeed.
21	Търкулнала се тенджерата, та си намерила похлупака (капака).	Κύλησε ο τέντζερης και βρήκε το καπάκι.	Birds of a feather flock together.
22	Кажи ми какви са приятелите ти, за да ти кажа какъв си.	Δείξε μου τους φίλους σου, να σου πω ποιός είσαι.	Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are.
23	Мокър от дъжд не се бои.	Ο βρεγμένος την βροχή δεν την φοβάται.	Someone who is wet is not afraid of the rain.
24	Който копае трап другиму, сам пада в него.	Όποιος σκάβει τον λάκκο του άλλου ο ίδιος πέφτει μέσα.*	If you dig a hole for someone, you will fall in it.
25	Ясно небе от мълния не се бои.	Καθαρός ουρανός αστραπές δεν φοβάται.	A clear sky is not afraid of lightning.
26	Когато котката я няма, мишките танцуват.	Λείπει η γάτα, χορεύουν τα ποντίκια.	When the cat's away, the mice will play.
27	Не всичко, което блести, е злато	Ό,τι λάμπει δεν είναι χρυσός.	All that glitters is not gold.
28	Най-добре се смее този, който се смее последен.	Γελάει καλύτερα όποιος γελάει τελευταίος.	He who laughs last laughs best.
<i>Bulgarian and Greek proverbs and sayings without literal corresponding but suitable for use in preschool age</i>			
<i>N</i>	<i>Bulgarian Proverb or Saying</i>	<i>Litterally corresponding Greek Proverb or Saying</i>	<i>Similar by meaning English Proverb or Saying</i>
1	Капка по капка – вир става.	Φασούλι το φασούλι, γεμίζει το σακούλι.	Bean by bean one fills the sack./Brick by brick you build a house.
2	Лъжливото овчарче/ На лъжата краката са къси.	Ο ψεύτης και ο κλέφτης τον πρώτο χρόνο χαιρονται.	Lies have short legs and are soon overtaken.
3	Присмял се хърбел на щърбел.	Είπε ο γάιδαρος τον πετεινό κεφάλια.	The pot calling the kettle black.
4	Хитрата сврака - с двата крака.	Το έξυπνο πουλί από την μύτη πιάνεται.	The clever bird is caught by the nose.
5	Ни лук ял, ни лук мирисал.	Ούτε γάτα ούτε ζημιά.	See no evil, hear no evil.
6	Крушата не пада по-далече	Το μήλο κάτω από τη μηλιά	The apple does not fall far

	от дървото.	θα πέσει.	from the tree
7	Утрото е по-мъдро от вечерта.	Η μέρα είναι πιο σοφή από τη νύχτα. <i>Της νύχτας τα καμώματα τα βλέπει η μέρα και γελά.</i>	Tomorrow is another day.
8	По дрехите посрещат, по ума изпращат.	Τα ράσα δεν κάνουν τον παπά.	Don't judge a book by its cover.

**The underlined words have little differences in meaning.*

Research limitations and practical implications

In the current publication we are presenting the findings from the aforementioned three stages of the research. However, the two most important stages are about to be conducted, namely finalizing the model, and proving it by approbation, to be carried out in a pre-school group in the Bulgarian school in Athens and in an Athens state kindergarten where there are children from Bulgaria. These stages are going to be conducted during the fall semester of acad. year 2010/2011. We have the consent of the principal and the teachers from the two Bulgarian schools in Athens to work personally with the 10 Bulgarian children aged 5-7 years (Group A) who attend the preparatory groups at these schools during the next academic year. We are also arranging cooperation with an Athens state kindergarten, where a similar program will be adapted and organized with children of the same age in a kindergarten group (Group B) in which there will be children from Bulgaria. The two programs will be similar, but each will conform to the specific characteristics of the relevant group. In Group A, where the pedagogical interaction will be lead by myself, the main language will be Bulgarian and the supplementary language will be Greek (used for telling some specially chosen Greek tales, proverbs or riddles which have a lot in common with Bulgarian ones). In Group 2, where Greek teachers will work with the children under our supervision, it will be the opposite – Greek will be the main language, while Bulgarian will be the supplementary language.

Originality and value of the research

The current research is unique in its concept. Like any other intercultural education program, building and proving this kind of model for educational interaction always has a doubly positive impact: it benefits not only the Bulgarian children to be integrated, but also the Greek children, as part of the accepting environment. The necessity for development in this direction is also evident by its concurrence with relevant European directives (2000 Lisbon strategy, 2002 Barcelona educational council, etc.), according to which the new role of the teacher is connected primarily with development of new pedagogical methods for increasing children's motivation and establishing their identity in the context of cultural variety.

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