

## BILINGUAL IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: INCLUSIVE LEARNING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was concerned with eliciting information about the difficulties bilingual immigrant students of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> primary school classrooms encounter and the strategies they employ while writing in a second language (Greek as L2). The reason for conducting the study stemmed from the growing number of bilingual students in Greek mainstream classes, since Greece has been an immigrant receiving country for the last two decades. A number of variables are associated with bilingual students' literacy attainment, such as their personal characteristics, socio-economic factors, as well as parental interest and involvement in school activities. For this purpose, an attempt was also made to record immigrant parents' views on their children's literacy development and their attitudes to involvement in their children's education. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis were employed: a) students' *think-aloud reports* and *retrospective interviews* b) parents' semistructured interviews were used as the basic instruments for collecting data. Although this study may be limited in scope, it is hoped that it will make a contribution to the promotion of inclusive practices for immigrant children as the findings provide signposts for practices to develop children's literacy skills and strengthen full inclusion into school life.

**Key Words:** Literacy development, writing strategies, bilingual children, immigrant parents, inclusive learning.

### INTRODUCTION

Diversity of student population is becoming reality within the educational context of most societies. Recognition and acceptance of differences and similarities as well as whole-school approaches to learning are employed in an inclusive setting where teaching emphasises the connection between social, cultural and linguistic aspects of students' experiences and understanding. It is widely accepted that in such a context teachers should assume the responsibility to stimulate a classroom environment where students develop language and cognitive skills along with their cooperative skills and recognition of perspectives other than their own (see Griva, et al., 2011).

Throughout school, equality of access to learning should be promoted, irrespective of students' cultural, linguist background and abilities. For this purpose, inclusive practices are adopted aiming at enhancing learning of less competent students and providing the same opportunities for holistic learning and participation in all aspects of school life. There is also some evidence to suggest that through the adoption of appropriate approaches to learning, responsible behavior in the classroom and adequate development of language skills, the following outcomes can be potentially achieved: improvement of interpersonal and intercultural

relationships, understanding of individual differences, bias and stereotypes (Santora, 2006) which contribute to the immigrant students' inclusion in the school.

A number of issues are associated with bilingual students' language development and educational attainment, such as students' personal characteristics, ethnic and linguistic origin, socio-economic factors, parents' education and basic skills, and parental involvement (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). However, despite the fact that school plays a vital role in literacy development, other influences that are likely to affect children's everyday life in and out of school cannot be underestimated. It should be noted that since effective education responds to the learning needs of individual children and the needs of their families, collaboration between school and family is essential to achieving education for all.

Parental involvement also plays a central role in children's successful literacy attainment (Marsh, 2006). It has been indicated that the children whose parents are actively involved in their development are more likely to succeed in school (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). In addition, the attitudes of immigrant parents towards the majority language tend to affect the speed and quality of children's second language (L2) acquisition (Li, 1999). It is believed that immigrant parents' supportive attitudes towards both languages and their active involvement in their children's linguistic progress can result in children's acquisition of language skills.

#### Issues and strategies in writing skills

While writing is regarded as an important part of literacy development, it is regarded as a complicated process which imposes some constraints on bilingual/ immigrant students. Children who do not learn to read and write and communicate effectively in primary school are more likely to leave school early, be unemployed or find themselves in low-skilled jobs, and are most likely to end up in poverty (Barnados, 2009). Students who encounter literacy difficulties are more likely to experience educational failure, and therefore they leave school without qualifications (Eivers, et al., 2004). Not having the skills and qualifications to participate in today's knowledge-based society, the individual faces a low level quality of life (Kennedy, 2009). Those individuals do not enjoy certain outcomes that determine human well-being, such as psychological, economic, physical and social well-being (Maxwell & Teplova, 2007).

Given the fact that first language (L1) writing process depends on mastering a number of processes and sub-skills, such as generating and drafting ideas, producing content, revising and editing text (Griva et al, 2009; Reid, 1992), L2 writing involves all of these processes mixed up with L1 competence issues, which overwhelm the writing process, especially in the case of poor writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

Some recent research suggests that bilingual students' L2 literacy depends on the literacy developed in L1 (Cummins, 2001; Baker, 2002). These students develop metalinguistic awareness and use a wider range of language learning strategies compared to monolingual ones (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Griva, Chostelidou, & Tsakididou, 2011).

Furthermore, studies have also shown that skilled writers tend to view planning and composing as a continual process which includes developing an initial set of goals or plans to guide the writing process (Goddard & Sendi, 2008). In contrast, poor writers seldom set writing goals, monitor their final product as regards the writing goal, and rarely revise a text (ibid 2008). Also, poor writers are believed to have weaknesses in the following areas of language (Victori, 1995): a) size of vocabulary; b) correctness of language; c) unconscious processing of language; d) language creation; e) mastery of the functions of language.

Having briefly examined the literature and given the findings of the studies outlined above, the present study was aimed at:

- mapping the range of cognitive/ metacognitive writing strategies employed when immigrant bilingual students write a task in Greek (L2);
- identifying the possible differences between more and less competent bilingual students in their use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies;
- identifying the potential difficulties encountered by students while composing a text in L2;
- recording immigrant parents' views on their children's literacy development;

- recording immigrant parents' attitudes in relation to their involvement in their children's education.

The reason for conducting the study stemmed from the growing number of second-language students in Greek primary schools, justified by the fact that Greece has been receiving immigrants for the last several decades. It should be noted that immigrant students, especially those who enter the Greek educational system at a later age, face unequal opportunities in their studies, as their educational and cultural capital and mother tongue (L1) tend to be ignored by the Greek system of education (Paleologou & Evangelou, 2003).

Given the fact that the Greek primary education system tends to adopt the process of assimilation, immigrant children are expected to learn the Greek language once they enter school, while they receive no instruction in their home language. They are expected to acquire a functional command of the Greek language achieving the level of first language-users.

## METHOD

### Sample

The sample, chosen for this research, consisted of a total of thirty-two bilingual students, aged between 10 and 12 ( $M=11.4$  years-old,  $SD=0.45$ ), from Albanian, Russian, Armenian, and Georgian families who have moved to Greece as immigrants. Sixteen students were born in Greece or had moved to Greece before the age of 5 and sixteen students had entered the Greek school at a later age. All of them fall under the category of early bilingualism.

The participants were selected from thirteen classrooms in seven Greek primary schools from a total of 58 bilingual students according: a) either to their higher (standard score: 13 or above) or lower writing ability (standard score: 7 or less) based on the scores of a group administered screening writing test, and b) their language competence based on the classroom teachers' judgments. Both 'good' and 'poor' writers can read and write in L1. Also, all of them (100%) declared that they almost always speak their L1 at home and 65.6% of the participants stated that they also speak Greek at home in some cases.

In addition, 32 immigrant parents of the children who participated in the study (27 women and 5 men) aged from 32-45 years were interviewed. They were of four different ethnic and linguistic origins (Albania, Armenia, Georgia, and Russia) and their permanence in Greece ranged from 2-15 years.

### The Instruments and procedure

The following instruments were used for data collection:

- a. A standardized writing test (Porpodas, Diakogiorgi, Dimakou & Karantzi, 2004) was used to identify the writing strengths and weaknesses of the students.
- b. Verbal report data were collected from students through think-aloud sessions. During each data-collection session, the researcher worked with each student on a one to one basis. Every student was requested to produce a piece of writing in Greek, between 200-250 words. While writing the text, the students were asked to think aloud all the techniques and procedures they used, as well as the difficulties they encountered.
- c. After the think-aloud sessions, retrospective interviews were conducted with each student in order to gain further insight into their usual approach to writing and the strategies they employed.
- d. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with children's parents. The interviews comprised 23 open-ended questions, which were grouped under the following basic sections: a) parents' views on children's development and use of L2, b) parents' views on children's development and use of L1, c) parents' perspectives on children's school attainment, d) parental cooperation with school (directors, teaching staff) and involvement in children's education.

## RESULTS

### Students' writing difficulties and strategies

Qualitative analysis of the verbal data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) from the writing task in Greek, resulted in a number of categories and subcategories, which were grouped into five basic thematic strands: a) pre-writing processes and strategies b) while-writing processes and strategies c) metacognitive strategies, d) social skills e) writing difficulties .

The majority of the good writers reported that they relied on external resources for generating content and they thought about organising the content of the task in Greek (L2). They showed a preference for drawing on prior knowledge to make sense of the topic they were writing about and to generate ideas. Moreover, they suggested that they generated new ideas as their composing process went on. Some participants stated that they generated alternative ideas at paragraph/sentence boundaries, which were constantly evaluated, checked against the context, and often re-structured. In contrast, the poor writers did not devise an initial plan when writing as they preferred to "write sentence by sentence". Their writing process was sometimes accompanied by comments such as "I don't know what else to write", or "let's see if something else comes up".

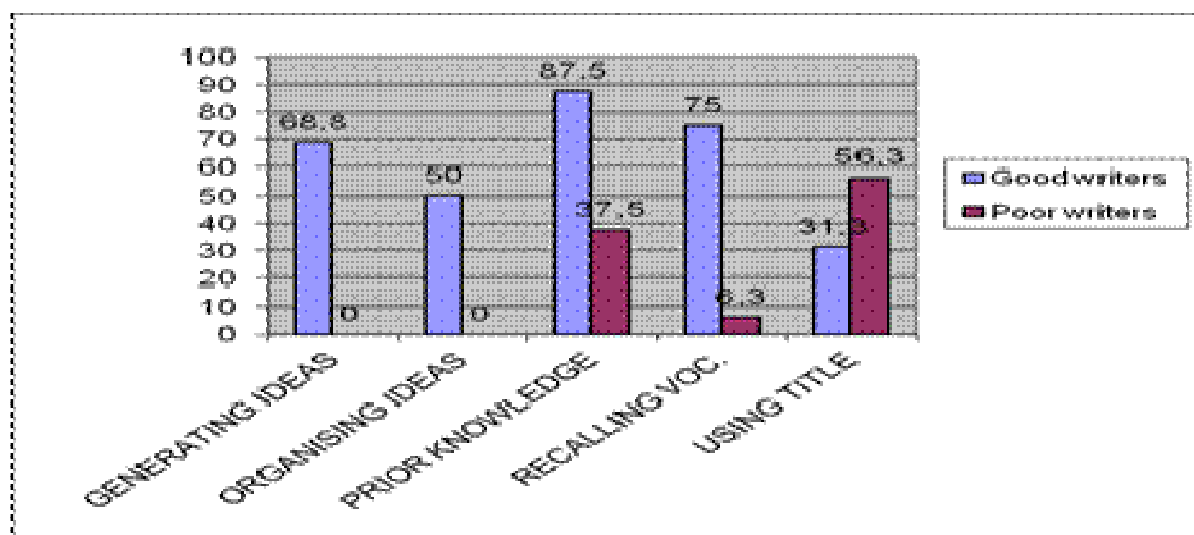


Figure 1: Pre-writing processes

The cross-tabulation indicated statistically significant differences between the two sub-groups in the following processes and strategies:

- Generating ideas ( $X^2=18.462$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), since 68.8% of the good writers used this strategy efficiently, on the other hand none of the poor writers was found to use it in an effective way.
- Organising ideas ( $X^2=27.246$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ); 100% of the poor writers used it inefficiently, but only 6.3% of the good writers underused it and 50% of them employed it in an efficient manner.
- Activating background knowledge ( $X^2=8.533$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ). 87.5% of the good writers followed it but 37.5% of the poor ones showed a preference for this strategy.
- Recalling vocabulary ( $X^2=15.676$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This strategy was used more by poor writers (75%) compared to more competent writers (6.3%).

### While-writing processes and strategies

While composing the text, most of the students followed certain sub-processes and employed a number of cognitive strategies, such as drafting, redrafting, composing without drafting / redrafting, rereading what they have written, writing sentence by sentence, translating, using resources (see figure 2).

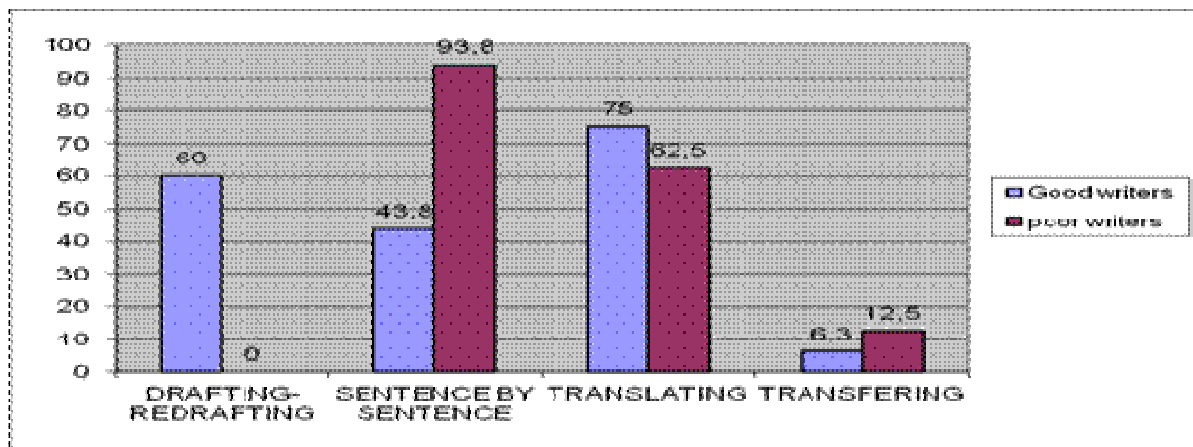


Figure 2: While-writing cognitive strategies

The comparison between the two groups indicated statistically significant differences between poor and good writers in relation to two sub-processes while composing a piece of writing:

- Drafting and redrafting ( $X^2=12.857$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) was employed mostly by good writers either efficiently (26.7%) or partially (33.3%). However, 100% of the poor writers were not engaged in drafting and redrafting during text construction.
- Composing sentence by sentence ( $X^2=9.309$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) was followed by the great majority of the less competent writers (93.8%) in contrast to more competent writers (43.8%).

It is interesting to note that while the students were composing the text, they employed some *compensation strategies* in order to overcome their limitations in writing, such as adjusting the message, switching to L1, using a synonym/circumlocution, getting help, and avoiding communication partially. In some cases, poor writers avoided using some expressions or they abandoned writing midway, because they were not able to use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical items. On the other hand, when the good writers could not come up with the right or desirable expression, they were able to adjust the message by making the ideas simpler or less precise and by using a synonym.

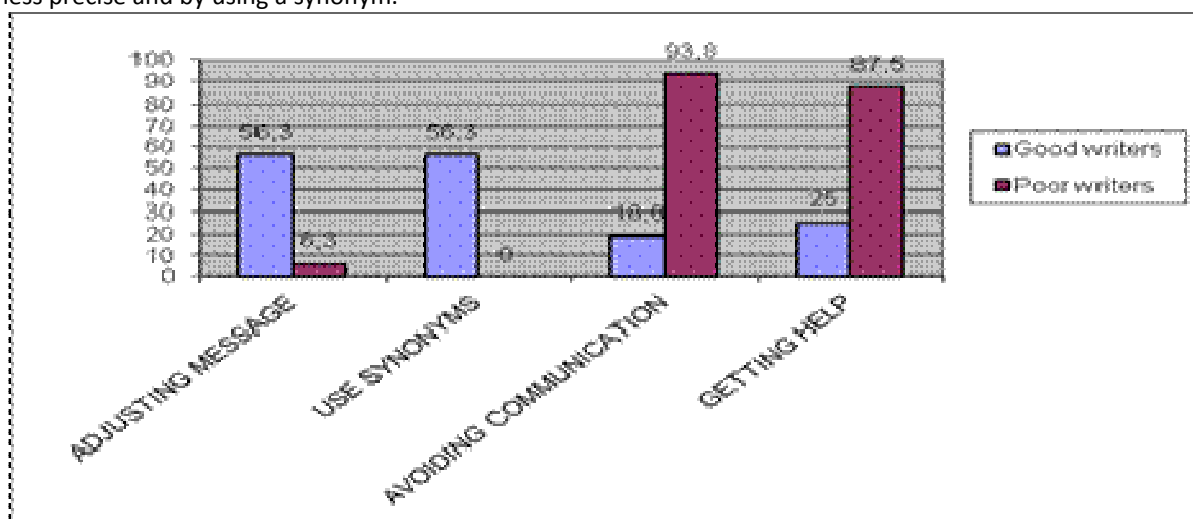


Figure 3: While-writing compensation strategies

The cross-tabulation indicated statistically significant differences between the two sub-groups in the following compensation strategies. The good writers were more willing to be engaged in 'adjusting the message' ( $X^2=9.890$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and to 'use a synonym' ( $X^2=11.768$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) (56.3% and 56.3% respectively) in order to overcome some knowledge limitations. However, only 6.3% of the poor writers used 'adjusting the

message' and 0% could use a synonym or a circumlocution effectively. On the other hand, the latter showed greater preference 93.8%) for 'avoiding communication' ( $X^2=18.286$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and for 'getting help' ( $X^2=12.698$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) compared to more competent writers (18.8% and 25% respectively).

### Metacognitive strategies

It is worth mentioning that the majority of the participants showed a positive attitude towards evaluating their own writing and got involved in the processes of identifying difficulties and problems, and self-correcting. They reviewed and commented on their drafts, focusing on the style, content, spelling, and punctuation (Figure 4).

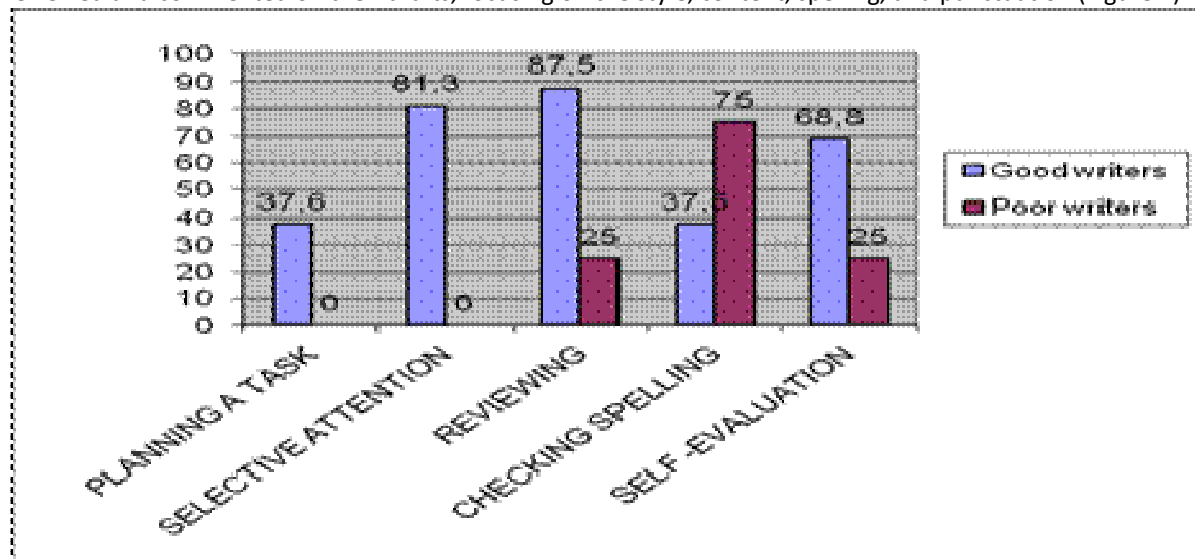


Figure 4: While-writing cognitive strategies

Crosstabulation revealed statistically significant differences between poor and good writers in the range of metacognitive strategies. In relation to 'planning for the writing task' ( $X^2=7.385$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), although 37.6% of the good writers indicated that they plan for their writing before starting to compose, none of poor writers was found to do so. Similarly, the poor writers showed no 'selective attention' ( $X^2=21.895$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), while a great part of the good writers (81.3%) paid attention to certain language elements while composing. In addition 'reviewing' ( $X^2=13.714$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) was a more favourite strategy for good writers (87.5%) than poor ones (25%).

Regarding 'self evaluation', the more competent learners evaluated themselves more highly than the less competent ones ( $X^2=19.444$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). More precisely, 68.8% of the good writers ranked themselves as 'very good' and 25% as 'good enough'. In contrast, 68.8% of the poor writers ranked themselves as 'weak' and 31.3% as 'good'. In addition, in the retrospective interviews, they declared that they had to improve some aspects of their writing. Concerning 'organising ideas' ( $X^2=0.821$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), 25% of the good writers expressed their desire to improve this skill; however, only 12.5% of the poor writers focused on developing this process.

On the other hand, poor writers referred to more local processes dealing with: a) 'spelling words' ( $X^2=8.127$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ), since a great part of them (81.3%) would like to be better at spelling compared to good writers (31.3%) and b) 'accuracy' ( $X^2=5.236$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), with half of the poor writers (50%) expressing their desire to be better at 'accuracy'; and only 12.5% of the more competent students focused on this skill.

The one-way ANOVA test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the two subgroups in using both cognitive ( $F(30)=4.821$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and metacognitive strategies ( $F(30)=7.846$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) when performing the task in Greek (L2) (see table 1).

Table 1: Differences between poor and good writers in cognitive, compensation and metacognitive strategies in Greek

Strategies	Greek (L2)	
	Poor writers	Good writers
Cognitive strategies	.2766 (Std .1838)	.4766 (Std .037)
Compensation strategies	.6500 (Std .1243)	.5000 (Std .1633)
Metacognitive strategies	.1125 (Std .1628)	.6250 (Std .2049)

### Writing difficulties

Most students, irrespective of their language level, declared that they encountered certain difficulties while writing the task. However, the less skilled writers had problems with gaining control of the ‘basics’ of writing (spelling, vocabulary, and grammar) and organising the content of the text, while the poor writers’ major concern was to recall and use the appropriate vocabulary the correct spelling (see figure 5).

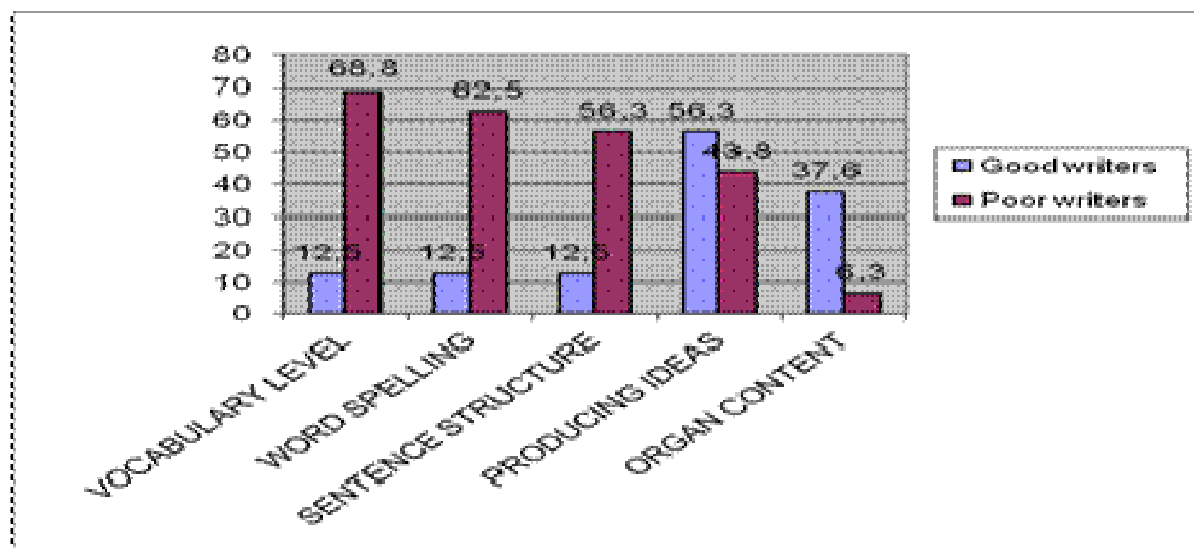


Figure 5. Writing difficulties

Specifically, a statistically significant difference was identified in relation to encountering difficulties at the vocabulary level ( $X^2=12.374$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ); the less competent learners encountered greater difficulties in recalling and using the appropriate words (68.8%) than the more effective learners (12.5%). In addition, statistical differences were indicated ( $X^2=8.583$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) between poor writers, who had greater problems with ‘word spelling’ (62.5%) than the more competent ones (12.5%). Moreover, for struggling writers, writing correct and effective sentences was a significant problem ( $X^2=7.770$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). More precisely, they encountered difficulties in structuring a sentence to a greater degree (56.3%) than the good ones (12.5%) did.

### The immigrant parents’ views and opinions

Rich insights into the parents’ viewpoints were obtained through the interviews with parents whose comments and suggestions complemented the data provided by the students. The verbal data, after being coded qualitatively using the techniques by Miles and Huberman (1994), resulted in 35 codes, which were grouped into seven categories classified into two basic themes:

- Parents’ views on children’s language development*, including the following categories: development and use of L2, development and use of L1, reasons for hindering L1 development, suggestions for enhancing L1 development.
- Parents’ perspectives on children’s school attainment*, including the following categories: academic performance (attainment) of bilingual children, parental involvement in children’s education, difficulties in parental/school cooperation.

### Parents' views on children's language development

During the first part of the interview it was attempted to identify the parents' views as to their children's development and use of L2 which seemed to be of major concern to them all. They reported that their children can best develop the Greek language "through formal tuition" and acknowledged the need to "shift to L2 given its status as the dominant native language". Immigrants who had been living in Greece for a limited period of time, 2-4 years, heavily prioritized the development of L2 and also supported its "usage within the family environment" at the expense of L1, along with "out of school reading in Greek" to promote its mastery probably as a means of integration in the host country of their settlement. This was not the case however, with parents who had immigrated to the host country a longer time ago and tended to value the development of both L1 and L2.

It should be pointed out that despite the fact that the need for proper development of L2 was strongly supported by most parents so as to ensure that it could be used comprehensively by their children, their "wish of maintaining L1" was equally an issue of major significance. To them L1 mastery was mainly "a tool for maintaining the students' cultural capital. As to the development of L1 they seemed to favour L1 acquisition to take place "within the family environment" by encouraging "out of school reading in L1" while they highlighted the fact that their children do have "poorly developed or even undeveloped writing skills in L1".

In an attempt to find the reasons for such a scenario, which most likely is responsible for hindering L1 development, they put forward the argument that the development of L1 either functions as "an obstacle to school attainment (achievement)" or "as an obstacle to L2 acquisition" while they underlined the fact that L1 development is perceived as "an obstacle to school and social inclusion".

It ought to be noted that a limited number of the interviewees (six parents) supported the view that their children should be given every chance to develop reading and writing skills only in L2 and not in L1 most possibly influenced by the need to assimilate in Greek society.

When asked to make suggestions for enhancing L1 development, the interviewees provided useful insights. First of all, a significant percentage of the parents opted for "mastery of L1 through formal schooling" while "private institutions run by the country of origin" was also considered. They also called for promoting students' familiarity with their mother tongue and culture "through intercultural activities which take place within the school environment" and is aimed at the "activation of the non-native students' cultural capital". Moreover, many of them seemed to be in agreement as to the significance of "the development of both the productive and the receptive skills not only in L1 but also in L2" In effect, training in relation to reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in Greek and the students' mother tongue were highly valued by a considerable percentage of the parents.

Table 1: Codes and categories of the thematic strand 'Parents' views on children's language development'

A. Views on children dual language development	
1. Development and use of L2	L2FORTE=L2 acquisition through formal teaching L2FAMEN=L2 usage in family environment (between sisters and brothers) SHL2DOLA=Shifting of Greek as L2 to a 'dominant' first language OUTREL2=Out of school reading in Greek (L2)
2. Development and use of L1	WISMAIL1=Wish of maintaining L1 L1FAMEN=L1 acquisition within family environment L1CULCAP=L1 as a tool for maintaining cultural capital OUTREL1= Out of school reading in L1 POWRSKL1=Poorly developed (non-developed) writing skills in L1



3. Reasons for hindering L1 development	L1DOSCAT=L1 development as an obstacle to school attainment (achievement) L1DOACL2=L1 development as an obstacle to L2 acquisition L1DOSCINC=L1 development as an obstacle to school and social inclusion
4. Suggestions for enhancing L1 development	MAL1SCH=Mastery of L1 through formal schooling MAL1PRIN=Mastery of L1 in private institutions run by the country of origin L1CULTAC=Students' familiarity with mother tongue and culture through intercultural activities in school ACTCULCA=Activation of cultural capital REWRL1L2=Development of reading and writing skills both in L1 and L2 LISPL1L2=Development of listening and speaking skills both in L1 and L2

#### Parents' views on children's school attainment

**Academic performance of bilingual children:** The academic performance of their children was a major issue for most of the parents, as "the students' competence in L2 was viewed in relation to school achievement"; it was believed that the higher the L2 competence of the students the better the achievement in school subjects attained would be. On the same line, "underachievement in L2" was related to poor academic performance, namely lower achievement in most of the school subjects. However, it was emphasized that "bilingual students' attainment in sciences" is considerably high irrespective of their level of L2 competence. It is also striking that for a vast majority of the parents their role is influential concerning their children's progress as "school attainment is related to parental involvement".

**Parental involvement in children's education:** Concerning parental involvement in children's education most of the interviewees stated their "willingness to engage in school activities" and stressed the "significance of their own L2 development for providing assistance to their children" in line with their wish to get involved in their children's "reading and writing activities in L1 and L2". Nevertheless, they admitted that their involvement tended to be limited. Similarly, "parental counseling for school subjects" and "counseling for dealing with out of school activities" were highly regarded. Some of them also considered themselves unable to assume an active role in terms of their "involvement in out of school activities" due to practical constraints such as the language barrier, lack of familiarity with the Greek school system, differences in cultural capital and level of education.

**Difficulties in parental/school cooperation:** As all of the parents were immigrants to Greece they inevitably had to face a number of difficulties in fulfilling their parental role in relation to their children's school responsibilities. They confessed that their major problems came about as the result of their "difficulties in involvement due to language barriers" and their "insecurity in relation to their level in L2" especially for those with a limited period of stay in Greece. "Lack of education" was also indicated as a major factor which made it difficult for them to get involved in their children's everyday school tasks and "cope with their children's needs" especially "in upper grade activities". Moreover, other factors related to the life of immigrants such as "practical constraints", "heavy work schedule" and "difficulties in cooperation with schools due to lack of understanding of school operations" were also put forward.

Table 2: Codes and categories of the thematic strand 'Parents' views on children's school attainment'

<b>B. Aspects on school attainment</b>	
6. Academic performance (attainment) of bilingual children	COL2SCAC=Competence in L2 is related to school achievement UNDACL2=Underachievement in L2 BILATSCI=Bilingual students' attainment in sciences SCATPARI=School attainment is related to parents' involvement
7. Parental involvement in children's education	WENSCACT=Willingness to engage in school activities INOUTACT=Involvement in out of school activities INREWRL1L2=Involvement in reading and writing activities in L1 and L2 PACOUNSC=Parental counseling for school subjects PACOUTSC=Parental counseling for dealing with out of school activities L2DEVASS=Significance of L2 development for providing assistance to children
8. Difficulties in parental/school cooperation	DIFUPGRA=Difficulties in involvement with upper grade activities DIFLAED=Difficulties in involvement because of lack of education DIFPRCON=Difficulties in involvement due to practical constraints/heavy work schedule DIFLABAR=Difficulties in involvement due to language barriers DIFCONEE=Difficulties in coping with children's needs INSLEL2=Insecurity in relation to their level in L2 DIFSCOPE=Difficulties in cooperation with schools due to lack of understanding school operations

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present research revealed some useful insights in relation to writing skills of bilingual immigrant students included in mainstream classes. More precisely, the poor writers' results showed that they had a limited knowledge of the writing task and they adopted lower-level processes and strategies (see Goddard & Sendi, 2008; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). They did not display a wide range of organizational strategies and they did not revise or rethink ideas, however, they had adequate awareness of their own writing problems at the word level and they used certain compensation strategies to overcome these problems. In contrast, the good bilingual writers held a much broader and complex view of their own writing process and showed more strategic knowledge, since they were more flexible in using both cognitive and metacognitive strategies and employed a wider range of more 'elaborated' strategies (see Stein, 2000).

Parents' opinions indicated that although most of the parents cared about their children's education, they demonstrated low levels of involvement in it. An explanation of this paradox may be the barriers encountered by immigrant parents. This is particularly the case of parents who have been living in Greece for less than five years, who have to face issues such as the language barrier (inability to understand Greek), unfamiliarity with the school system, and differences in cultural capital and lack of education. It was also noted that the low level of support and encouragement provided by the school and the difficulties in communicating effectively in Greek make them feel uncomfortable when visiting their children's schools and this discouraged them from getting actively involved. Fewer of the immigrant parents valued both their home and school involvement. For this purpose, they try to offer their children help with tasks at home and they believed that they should get more involved in a range of reading and writing activities with their children both in L1 and L2.

Although this study may be limited in scope, it is hoped that it will make a contribution to the promotion of inclusive practices for immigrant children as the findings provide signposts for practices to develop children's

literacy skills and strengthen full inclusion into school life. Furthermore, although the study was done in one country, Greece, the data echo the school situation of immigrants in many countries.

It is widely accepted that children with limited proficiency in the language of schooling are certain to experience increased difficulty in coping both academically and socially. For this purpose, it is important to identify these difficulties in order to understand what intervention, support and remedial approaches are needed (Bialystok, 2008). It is suggested that inclusive practices should be implemented, which support immigrant children's literacy development, and their adjustment to a new school and social reality (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). School should a) expand opportunities for students to become strategic readers and writers; b) educate children with limited proficiency along with other peers by providing them with the opportunity to receive language support in the classroom; c) adopt practices that exploit students' potential rather than their difficulties; d) provide parents with opportunities to participate more actively in school activities and to get involved more actively in their children's language development. In this way, school can constitute a place, where 'citizenship education' should be encouraged and home-school communication and collaboration should be attempted in order for a supportive home learning environment to be established.

Inclusive education should be considered as a multidimensional and complex context with basic purpose to promote the bilingual students' linguistic and cognitive development, encourage their growth of metacognitive and social skills, develop interpersonal and intercultural relationships and abolish biases and stereotypes, so as to create citizens of literary and inclusive societies and educate students for 'global citizenship' (Tanner, 2007).

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