

A multilingual map of Europe: identity and diversity

15-MMOE-EC (2020/21)

Prof. Magdalena Wrembel et al.

Adam Mickiewicz University EPICUR

My multilingual profile

1. *Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM)*

I was born and raised in rural Greece. Greek is my mother tongue but growing up I realized that learning foreign languages gives me pleasure and broadens my global awareness. Working on this assignment was a challenge for me, as I had to travel back in time and recall all my educational efforts. To outline my language skills, I present my Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM) in figure 1.

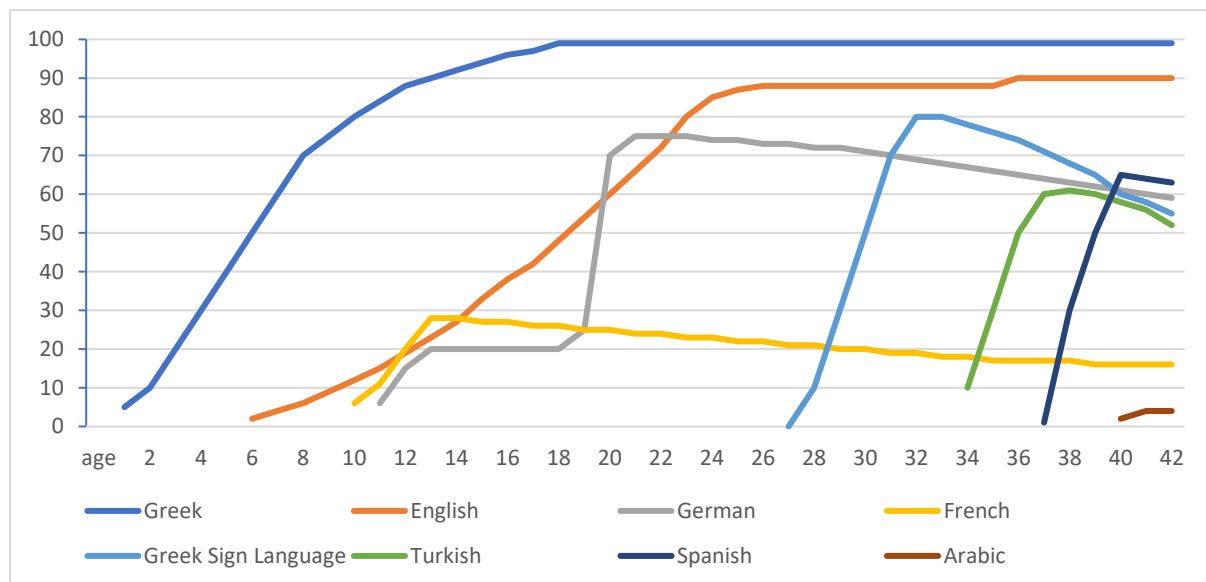


Figure 1. Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM)

To create this diagram, I used a scale from 0 to 100, expressing the level of a language, on the vertical axis. On the horizontal one is the time frame per my age.

As I mentioned before, **Greek** is my mother tongue. In school I learned how to correctly use this language. But I believe that no one can master a language, even their mother tongue; that is why on my DMM I used the 99 mark. In primary school I started learning **French** also. To support the course, I took private lessons at a language school. I reached a level of A2, but since then, I have not used it and my level has declined as a result. At the same time I started learning **German**. The reason was that my aunt had a language school and my mother wanted to support her and she enrolled me to the courses. But finally, it turned out to be very handy, because in 2000 I did a 6-month Erasmus internship in Germany, where I really improved this “mathematic” language and I achieved the B2 certificate.

At the age of 26 I was introduced by a friend to a totally new linguistic world, to **Greek Sign Language (GSL)**. This magical way of communication has a unique way to express your thoughts with gestures and facial expressions. I was so devoted to GSL that I reached the level of an interpreter, having courses for almost five years in total. An important role played the contact that I had with deaf people. A relationship with a deaf boosted my communication skills in GSL. But breaking out signed the end of my interesting to this subject. Soon after I transitioned to another language that has always been in the background, **Turkish**. Since 2003 I have had friends from the neighboring country, friends that I visit almost every year and stay at their homes with their families. Even though I was communicating in English with my friends, there was a language barrier to communicate with their parents. This fact motivated me to learn Turkish with a private teacher. Even though Turkish has nothing to do with any of my other Indo-European languages, I was fascinated by its agglutination system and the vowel harmony. After four years of study, I got the B2 diploma and I was planning to continue furthermore. But the decision to have a second Erasmus internship to Spain, instead to Turkey, changed my linguistic orientation. So, in 2017 I started taking some lessons with private instructors for **Spanish**. In the same year I completed a trimestral Erasmus internship in Madrid, working for an English academy. Thirsty to improve this “poetic” language, I decided to have another trimestral Erasmus internship in Sevilla, working at a hotel in the heart of this magnificent city of Andalusia. Returning to Greece I got my B2 certificate. But since then, I rarely speak Spanish, and as similarly to my other languages, there is a slightly decline. Finally, two years ago I passed the University entry exams again. Theology- Islamic Studies in Aristotle

University of Thessaloniki is now my field of study. **Arabic** is obligatory in my faculty, so I attended to acquire some basic knowledge of this “holy” language.

On purpose I left **English** at the end because I consider this language to be the most important in my life, as a procedure of acquisition, apart from my mother tongue of course. Until the age of 23, I had never had any English course, in a private or a public school, but I was able to communicate quite fluently in this international language. It is surprising the fact that I learnt to speak English only by watching television! I consider myself lucky to have been raised in a country where almost all the films and series are broadcast in English with subtitles in Greek. This is a lifelong learning procedure that still goes on. So, at the age of 23 I started having “official” courses with an instructor and within a period of four years I succeeded to accomplish the C2 level. Moreover, in 2015 I started a Masters, held in English, which improved my academic English skills further. Having friends form all over the world, traveling around the globe and having contact with English daily, allows me to maintain my level.

2. *Dominant Language Constellation (DLC)*

Passing to Dominant Language Constellation system, I preferred to follow the pattern of Kannangara, because some important periods of my life changed the amount of usage of a specific language.

As we can see from the figure 2.1 since my childhood, I have always had exposure to English.

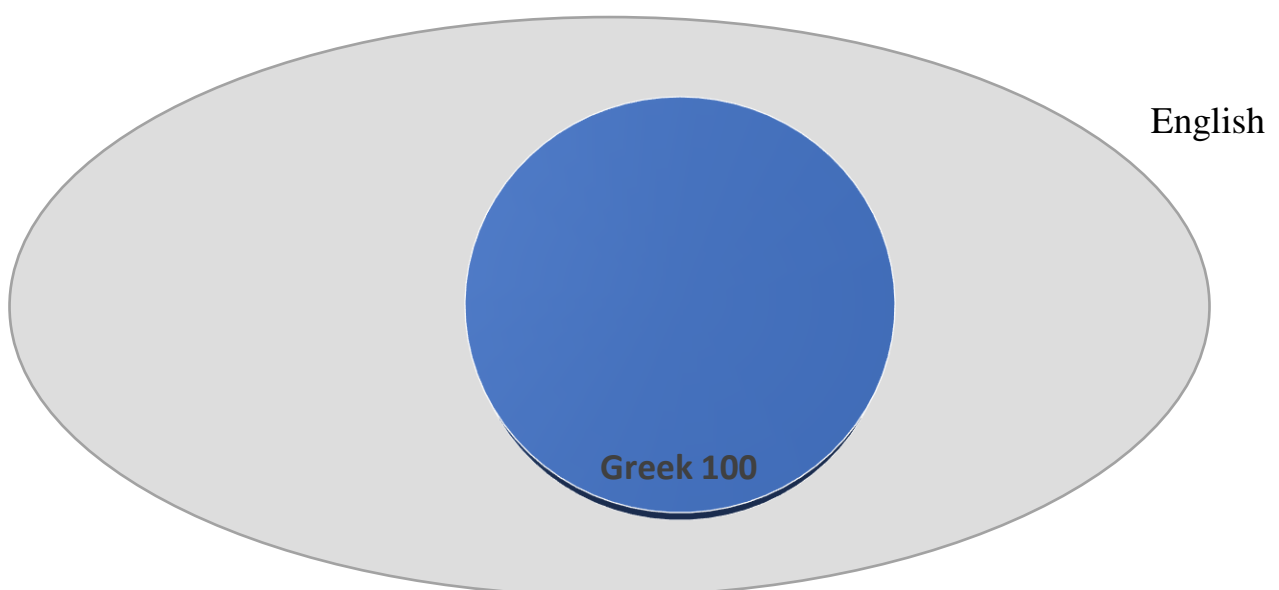


Figure 2.1 Preschool Dominant Language Constellation

Moving forward my life, during secondary and higher school period, I started learning French, German in schools and English, but with an unusual way, as I mentioned before. A very critical point, changing the usage of language for a short term, was my first Erasmus internship in Germany, at the end of my studies as an agriculturalist in 2000. I was working for six months at a plant nursery and I had to speak German all the time with my colleagues, and English for when I could not express myself in German. Living with my Greek relatives maintained my Greek also in an extend use. I had some friends from Turkey, Serbia, and Poland that taught me some basics also. We can see all the above in the figure 2.2

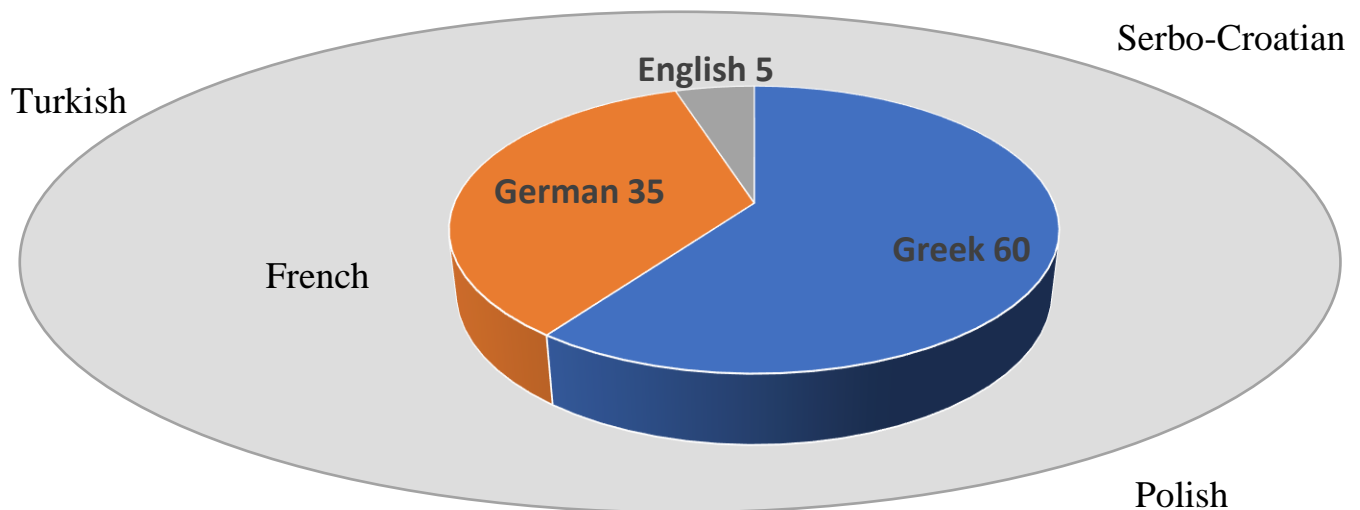


Figure 2.2 Erasmus in Germany Dominant Language Constellation

Another critical point was my third Erasmus internship to Sevilla in 2018 for three months. I was working in a hotel, where most of the clients were from the USA or the UK, that means that I had to speak English quite a lot. But in my personal life I spoke Spanish exclusively; with my colleagues, my friends, my roommates, and even my co-trainers at the gym, some of which were natives of other countries. That is why I improved my Spanish so well. I limited Greek only when I was calling my family back home, as we can see in the figure 2.3. Moreover, I would like also to add that when I live in abroad, after the first two months, I switch the way that I think and speak to myself, from my mother tongue to the spoken language of the new country.

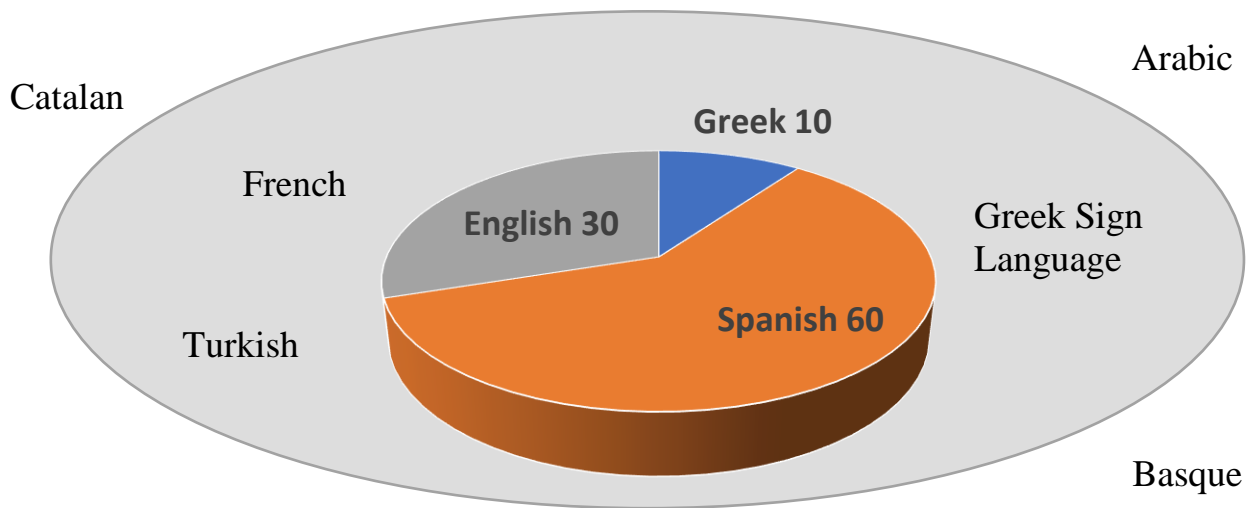


Figure 2.3 Erasmus in Spain Dominant Language Constellation

Today, living, working, and studying in my home country, Greek is the dominant language that I use almost exclusively. Living so many refugees from other countries, such as Albania, Bulgaria, Pakistan and working with them for a short period, It has influenced me somehow. But English still plays an important role, especially in my academic field. This is depicted in figure 2.4. Unfortunately, I practice my other languages occasionally. This has led to a gradual decline of the level of each language, as we can see in the figure 1. If I want to keep a language alive, I must open books again and work on it. At this point I would like also to emphasize the fact that my writing and listening skills are declining at a very slow pace, but not my speaking skill. I would say that my speaking skill is better, almost in all my languages, than writing and listening.

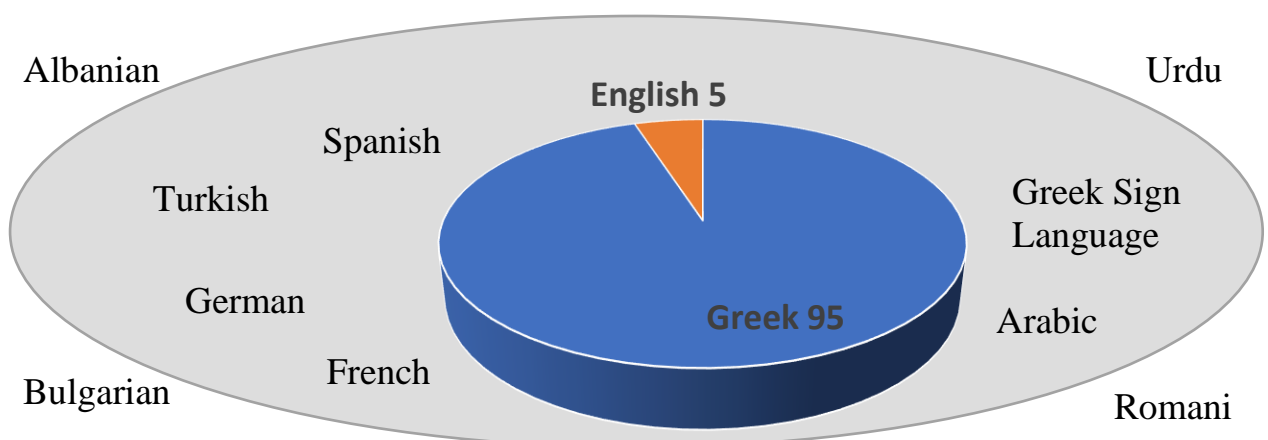


Figure 2.4 Current Dominant Language Constellation