

Socioeconomic Effects on Satisfaction and Recommendation from Second Language Programs

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Abstract: Learning the Greek language is particularly important to Greek Pontians from the former Soviet Union, since language skills represent one main criteria of integration in Greek society. The level of satisfaction from Greek language programs, in effect, constitutes a defining factor whether students complete course syllabus. The aim of the present work is to investigate if socio-economic characteristics affect satisfaction level of Greek Pontians as trainees of a second language program and how those levels might influence their referral of other repatriates. Research sample constituted 124 trainees drawn by the convenience sampling method, while statistic analyses realised were frequencies, percentages, means, as well as chi-square tests of independence. Results are discussed and directions for further research are given.

Key words: Consumer behaviour, satisfaction, recommendation, repatriates

INTRODUCTION

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989, civil wars, rearrangement of the economy, as well as other important factors, contributed to the emigration of a large part of the people of Hellenic origin to Greece. As a result, these repatriates found themselves in a new and competitive environment, without adequate knowledge of the Modern Greek language.

The majority of repatriated Greek Pontians settled in Northern Greece, with the largest percent within the prefecture of Thessalonica. To help them assimilate and improve their language skills, private and public Centres of Professional Training were developed to teach Greek as a second language. These programs were financed by the European Community to support mainly the repatriate Greek Pontians. A typical program at the Centre lasts 300 h and includes the following units: phonetic, grammar, syntactic, writing, oral sessions and one session introducing socio - cultural elements.

Cloutier and Richards^[1] report that empirical measures of customer satisfaction within an educational institution can present one of the largest challenges to executive staff in charge of quality improvement. Also, Pitman^[2] reports that educational institutions deal with multiple customer levels, all of which must be addressed by Management.

The effectiveness of learning a second language has been extensively studied, especially when English is the objective. In the research frame for learning a second language, cultural factors were studied^[3,4], the role of trainee motivation^[5,6], as well as, ways for better learning outcomes.

On the other hand, no literature focuses on trainees' expectations or satisfaction levels within the confines of

a second language learning program. Research was found in the periphery of the subject or regarding components of a wider study. The role of expectations and satisfaction levels by students and teachers alike were examined in the foreign language learning process^[7,8]. Otłowski^[9], analyzed students' expectations regarding the learning of appropriate accent, while Bennett^[10] reported the importance of expectation and reviewed the ways by which trainers can define these expectations.

Although reports measuring students' satisfaction level based on courses, Universities, Academic Departments or Faculties exist (e.g.^[11,12]) direct research related to trainees' comprehensive satisfaction levels of a second language learning program was not found, specially as it might relate to learning Greek.

Taking into consideration the above literature review, the primary objective of this paper is to investigate if repatriated Greek Pontians are satisfied with the 2nd level Greek language curriculum, while secondary objective includes whether students' social and demographic characteristics affect satisfaction levels and if they contribute to recommendations made to other repatriates ($\alpha = 0.05$). Based on this inquiry, marketing managers of the Centres of Professional Training can derive useful lessons to improve how well they teach Greek to students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research was realised at the premises of a private Centre of Professional Training in Thessalonica, Greece which materialised 2nd level training programs of the Greek language as a second language for repatriate Greek Pontians.

Table 1: Satisfaction regarding the learning of the Greek language -2nd level programs (%)

	Absolutely satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied/ dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Absolutely dissatisfied	
Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
Personal contact with the trainers-teachers	95.0	3.3	0.0	1.7	0.0	4.92
Behaviour of trainers-teachers	91.6	5.0	1.7	1.7	0.0	4.87
Communicability of the trainers-teachers	90.0	7.5	0.8	1.7	0.0	4.86
Quality of the trainers-teachers	84.1	14.2	0.0	0.7	0.0	4.81
Quality of teaching	82.3	16.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	4.79
Way of teaching	84.1	11.7	0.0	1.7	2.5	4.73
Quality of notes	78.3	16.7	3.3	1.7	0.0	4.72
Content of teaching courses	75.2	19.8	2.5	2.5	0.0	4.68
Assessment of time spent for the knowledge acquired	69.7	26.1	2.5	1.7	0.0	4.64
Classroom size compared to the number of trainees participating in the class	68.1	23.5	5.9	2.5	0.0	4.57
Quality of books	69.2	17.4	11.7	1.7	5.0	4.54
Workload	61.3	30.0	10.0	1.7	0.0	4.45
Quality of fellow trainees participating in the same program	63.3	39.2	5.0	1.7	0.8	4.43
General organisation of the program	65.8	23.3	4.2	1.7	5.0	4.43
Availability of suitability of teaching means	61.4	26.1	5.0	2.5	0.0	4.36

Sample: 124

The research data was collected with the use of a questionnaire exclusively developed for this primary search and was modelled mainly on a qualitative template^[13,14], as well as from previous studies. The quantitative research questionnaire included close-end questions, dichotomous, as well as a five point satisfaction and recommendation scale. Sampling method applied was convenience sampling (Priporas,^[15]) and data collection took place the last day of the program. By this way 124 valid questionnaires were gathered from 5 programs.

Statistical analysis included: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and means), as well as chi-square tests (crosstabulation), in order to test if trainees social and demographic characteristics affect satisfaction from the program, as well as recommendation of it to other repatriate Greek Pontians.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile: The largest percentage of the trainees (37%) had age 36-45; 34% from 26-35; 16% from 46-55; 11% from 18-25 years and the rest 2% had age from 56-65 years. Regarding gender 56% were women and 44% men and as marital status is concerned, 61% was married,

24% was single, 13% divorced and 2% widowed. Repatriates' country of origin was: 47% Georgia, 38% Russia, 10% from Abkhazia and Kazakhstan and 5% from Ukraine.

Reasons of attendance in the Greek language program

learning: The reasons that led the repatriate Greek Pontians to attend the Greek language learning program were: for a better learning of the language (48%), because they are paid while simultaneously they learn the Greek language (19%), they did not find work so they had spare time (12%), in order to grant their degree from former Russia (11%), only for the money (6%) and for the fast incorporation in the Greek society (4%).

Trainee satisfaction: Fifteen variables were used in order to measure trainees satisfaction utilizing a 5 point satisfaction scale, where 5 corresponds to the higher degree of satisfaction down to 1, which corresponds to the lower degree of satisfaction (Table 1). From Table 1 it is seen that regarding trainees satisfaction, the largest percentage (for the most variables) has mean score 4.5 and above of the scale; that is to say that trainees tend to be satisfied towards absolutely satisfied. It is realised also, that only 4 variables had mean score less than 4.5 of the satisfaction scale.

Chi-square tests: Table 2 presents the results from the chi-square statistical test. Twelve chi-square tests of independence were realised. From the 12 independent controls only one gave statistical difference effects. It appear that country of origin influences recommendation of the program to other repatriate Greek Pontians and specifically, repatriate Pontians that come from Ukraine are not willing to recommend the Greek language learning program to other repatriate Greeks.

Table 2: Statistically important relations derived from test of independence

Statement	Socio-economic Factor	Pearson χ^2	Degrees of freedom	p
Satisfaction from the total Greek language learning program	Country of origin	16,555	15	0,346
Satisfaction from the total Greek language learning program	Gender	3,212	3	0,360
Satisfaction from the total Greek language learning program	Age	13,589	12	0,328
Satisfaction from the total Greek language learning program	City of residence	2,422	9	0,983
Satisfaction from the total Greek language learning program	Familial situation	11,052	9	0,272
Satisfaction from the total Greek language learning program	Years in Greece	6,211	8	0,159
Recommendation of the Greek language learning program	Country of origin	38,428	10	0,000
Recommendation of the Greek language learning program	Gender	6,076	3	0,089
Recommendation of the Greek language learning program	Age	7,961	8	0,437
Recommendation of the Greek language learning program	Marital status	5,762	6	0,450
Recommendation of the Greek language learning program	City of residence	1,625	6	0,951
Recommendation of the Greek language learning program	Years in Greece	11,261	6	0,081

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to investigate if repatriate Greek Pontians are satisfied with the Greek language learning programs offered at the Centre of Professional Training. Both qualitative and quantitative measures provided primary data. The affects of trainees' social and demographic characteristics on satisfaction levels were also examined as well as how those levels influence the recommendation of the courses to other repatriate Pontians. Results showed that only in one case statistical difference effects exist. Albridge and Rowley^[10] report that perceived quality derives from the trainees' total evaluations. For this reason, the Centres of Professional Education and the Institutes of Greek Language Learning (public or private) have to respond to the increasing competition. Thus, it is expected their customers to be satisfied from the total education program quality offered.

The results of this research should be interpreted by taking into consideration unavoidable limitations. First, this research is exploratory and the sample satisfies its aim and objectives. Results therefore cannot be generalized. Other variables that could measure trainee's satisfaction likely exist and are not included, which possibly add other limitations. It is likely that further research with a larger sample, could improve the validity of these results.

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