

Action 5: Reinforcement of the mother tongue



Count me in: Inclusive practices in formal and non-formal education
and training

7-11 October 2013, Edessa & Thessaloniki

Constructing material for teaching heritage
languages within the Program "Education of
Foreign and Repatriate students"

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1. Introduction: Education of Foreign & Repatriate Students

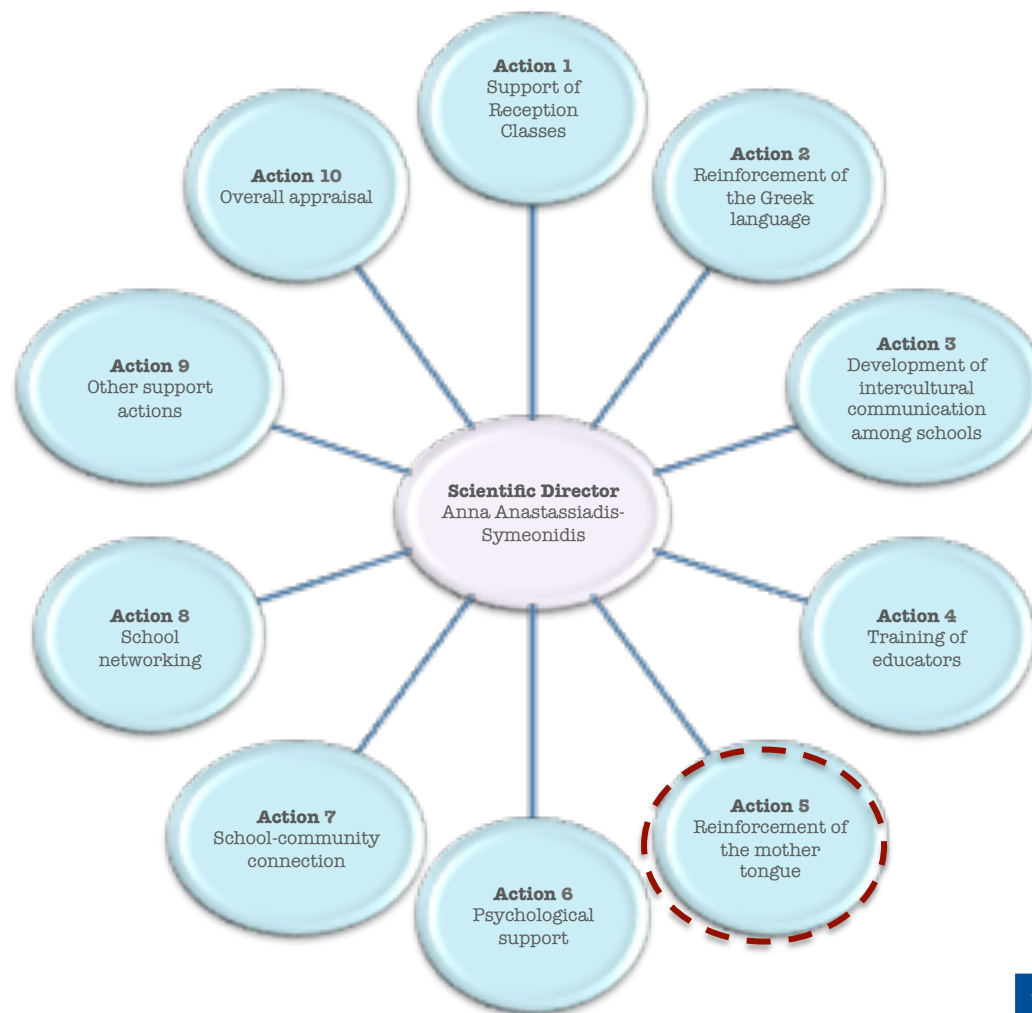
Aim of the Program: To lower school failure/dropout rates of foreign and repatriate students in the Greek (primary and secondary) education by giving them equal learning opportunities that will provide the basis for their smoother integration to the Greek community.

The Program is implemented by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in collaboration with:

- the University of the Aegean
- the University of Thessaly
- the University of Ioannina

It consists of 10 Actions:

The Structure of the Program



2010-2013

A total of **1.061** schools participated in the Program. More specifically:

- **150 Reception Classes** were supported by the Program (placement tests, distribution of targetted language material as well as material for the training of the teaching staff)
- **130 school communities** carried out summer language courses for bilingual students
- **7 schools** participated in the *Action Reinforcement of the Mother Tongue* (pilot study)

General goal of Action 5: To provide all students with learning opportunities and to help them preserve their mother tongue at a national, local or school unit level. However, this is not the case in educational systems across the world (Arends, 2009) – with the exception of Australia (Palaiologou & Evaggelou, 2011: 226).

Greece: No framework at an official level for teaching the students' mother tongue (Mitakidou & Tressou, 2005) (although institutionalized by law N.2413/1996 on “Intercultural Education”).

The school curriculum overlooks the history and civilization of these students' countries → intense assimilative educational policy is enforced by the state.

Bilingualism results in:

- the enhancement of cognitive flexibility in bilingual students;
- earlier development of reading skills;
- the use of rich vocabulary;
- the skill of language analysis and cognitive control of linguistic processes (Arends, 2009: 75; Sakellaropoulou, 2007).

Benefits of preserving the *mother language* (aka *home language, heritage language*):

- reinforces the students' cultural identity, family bonds and their linguistic and cognitive progress (Palaiologou & Evaggelou, 2011: 177-178);
- enhances relations with the cultural group to which the student belongs;
- assists the acquisition of the ambient language (Bongartz, 2003, 2010);
- ensures their access to enriched environments consisting of a mixture of two civilizations;
- gives them the opportunity to perceive the world from a different viewpoint;
- widens the scope of their professional choices in the future (Gogonas, 2008).

At a classroom level, proficiency in the heritage language:

- acquires a higher status in the conscience of the other students;
- contributes to resisting and preventing racist behavior;
- enhances awareness of cultural diversity;
- upgrades communication among different cultural groups.

Aim of Action 5 of the Program “Education of foreign and repatriate students” (AUTH, 2010-2013): Planning and development of an educational intervention aiming at reinforcing the mother tongue of the Greek school students of different origin (i.e., Albania and the ex-Soviet Union). ****Pilot study****

Other objectives of Action 5:

- acknowledging and enhancing the heritage of students with a different linguistic and cultural background;
- representing the culture of these students both in the teaching material (e.g., in the contents of the language books) and within the class;
- promoting values, behaviors and attitudes that support ethnocultural diversity;
- creating favorable conditions for the coexistence and interaction among all students.

2. Specifics of the intervention

The courses: 2 teaching hours a week -- after the end of the “normal” classes, with a half-hour break between them.

The students: Grouped in classes for beginners or advanced learners, according to their scores in a specially designed language test they took at the beginning of the school year. A total of **148 students** attended the courses.

The instructors: The instructors – five women and one man – were specialized in teaching Albanian and Russian. They all came from Russia and Albania, with the exception of an instructor who was Greek.

The research team: The group of researchers that planned the intervention consisted of linguists, Albanian and Russian-speaking writers-editors of educational material, language instructors with studies on pedagogy and philology, and educators. A team of research assistants offered technical support to the courses the lessons and assisted in the follow-up and assessment of the overall process.

The participating network of schools (in the year 2012-2013): 14 groups in primary and secondary schools in Thessaloniki and Athens.

Region	School	Level	Language
Thessaloniki (11 groups)	6 th Intercultural Elementary School of Kordelio (3 groups)	2 Beginner groups and 1 Advanced	Russian
	5 th Elementary School of Stavroupoli (4 groups)	3 Beginner groups and 1 Advanced	Russian
	Intercultural Elementary School of Xirokrini (1 group)	Mixed group of Beginners and Advanced	Russian
	3 rd Secondary School of Kordelio (2 groups)	1 Beginner Group and 1 Advanced	Russian
	4 th Secondary School of Thessaloniki (1 group)	Mixed group of Beginners and Advanced	Russian
Attiki (3 groups)	132 nd Elementary School of Athens (3 groups)	2 Beginner departments and 1 Advanced	Albanian

Table 1. Allocation of groups of mother language teaching in schools

3. The e-Learning environment (eLE) for teaching Albanian & Russian: The 7 Keys of the Dragon

The team for the “Reinforcement of the mother tongue” produced an **interactive open source extensible software** (using Java – Java FX2) for the teaching/learning of Albanian (levels A1/A2 & B1) and Russian (level A1/A2) in order to help students (10-15 years old) with the respective languages as their heritage languages develop or preserve bilingualism.

- The language material was designed on the assumption that students may have null to advanced knowledge of the target language.
- The electronic language learning environment was designed to supplement the material that was created for the language classes. It assists the development of receptive and productive language skills, giving emphasis to reading and writing.
- It was designed on the *Framework for the Development of Academic Expertise* (Cummins 2001) in order to support the development of academic language proficiency of the students, based on the principle that literacy should be developed in both languages.

- ⇒ Activities that **focus on language/grammar** are designed to cultivate an awareness and critical analysis of language forms and uses. Activities of this sort help students understand the similarities/differences between Greek and Albanian/Russian.
- ⇒ Activities that **focus on meaning** are geared to making input comprehensible and to developing critical literacy.
- ⇒ Activities that **focus on use** are designed so as to allow students to use language in creative ways (e.g. generate new knowledge, create literature and art and act on social realities).

- The software is designed to provide real-time correction of all quizzes. Answers to all quizzes are automatically provided by the program at the third unsuccessful attempt by the student-user, with the exception of the (non-graded) open questions and essays, that are sent to the instructor for correction.
- A separate application for teachers facilitates essay correction and commenting on the students' language progress and achievements.

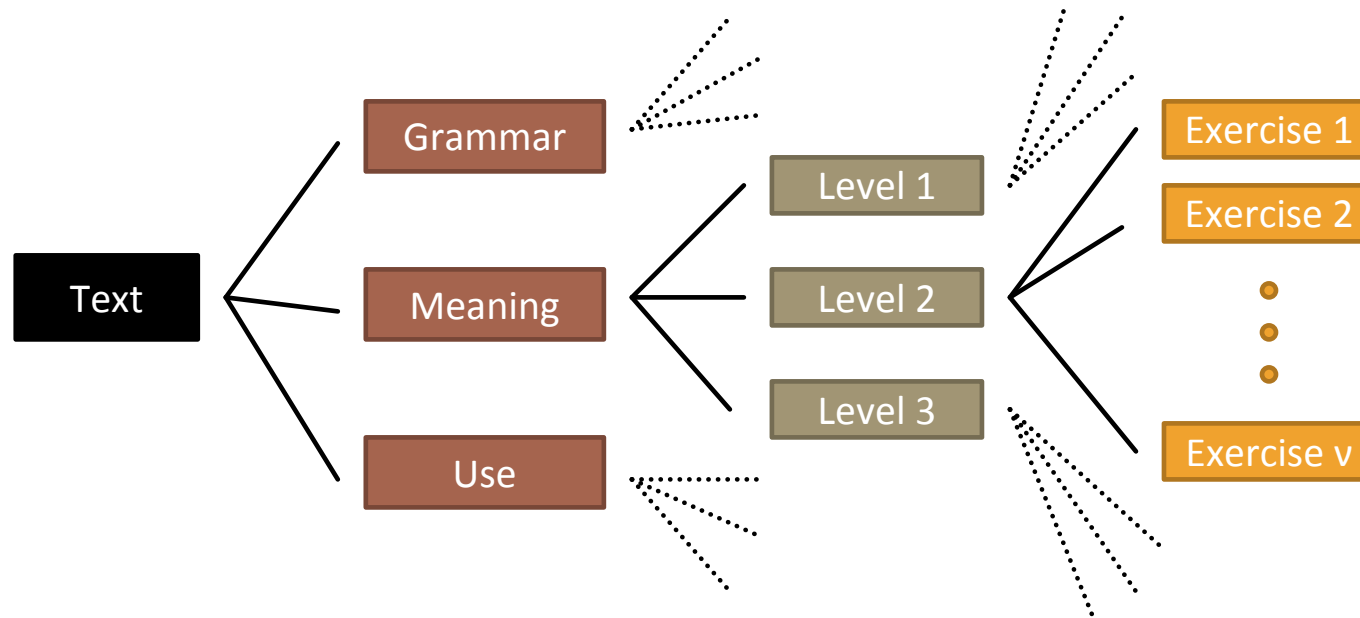
Table 2 presents the total number of quizzes/activities in the correction version of eLE (version 1.02):

	Albanian	Russian
Focus on Language	85	91
Focus on Meaning	52	67
Focus on Use	44	36
Total	181	194

Table 2

- ✓ The environment is set on the basis of a storyline in which the Wizard of a village is imprisoned by a Dragon. The user needs to go through certain learning tasks in order to collect enough points that would allow him/her to set the Wizard free.
- ✓ The user is presented with (Albanian and Russian) texts and their translations (in Greek), dictionaries and quizzes in a game-like setting, in which scoring and achievement badges provide additional incentive.
- ✓ A variety of quiz types is provided, including true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, fill-in-the-table, sorting, pairing, listening, essays, crosswords and non-gradable in-class or at home activities.
- ✓ In-game assistance, relating both to the quizzes and to the application itself, is provided by two cartoon-like characters:
 - the **Dragon**, who provides navigation details and
 - the **Wizard's Assistant**, who provides assistance in the language tasks

The structure of eLE



- ✗ Every text has exercises of 3 focus types.
- ✗ Every focus type includes exercises of 3 levels of difficulty.

Fig. 1

On the first page the student-user inserts his/her user name and password (Fig. 2):



Fig. 2

and is engaged in the plot (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3

The central page of the eLE includes (Fig. 4):

- Start - «Έναρξη»: The User selects a text and the associated quizzes
- Online Magazine - «Περιοδικό» for posting the best homework assignments
- The Student's Profile - «Προφίλ», where the user can review his/her overall progress and score, s/he can gather the completed quizzes/activities and exchange emails with the class instructor (Fig. 5)



Fig. 4

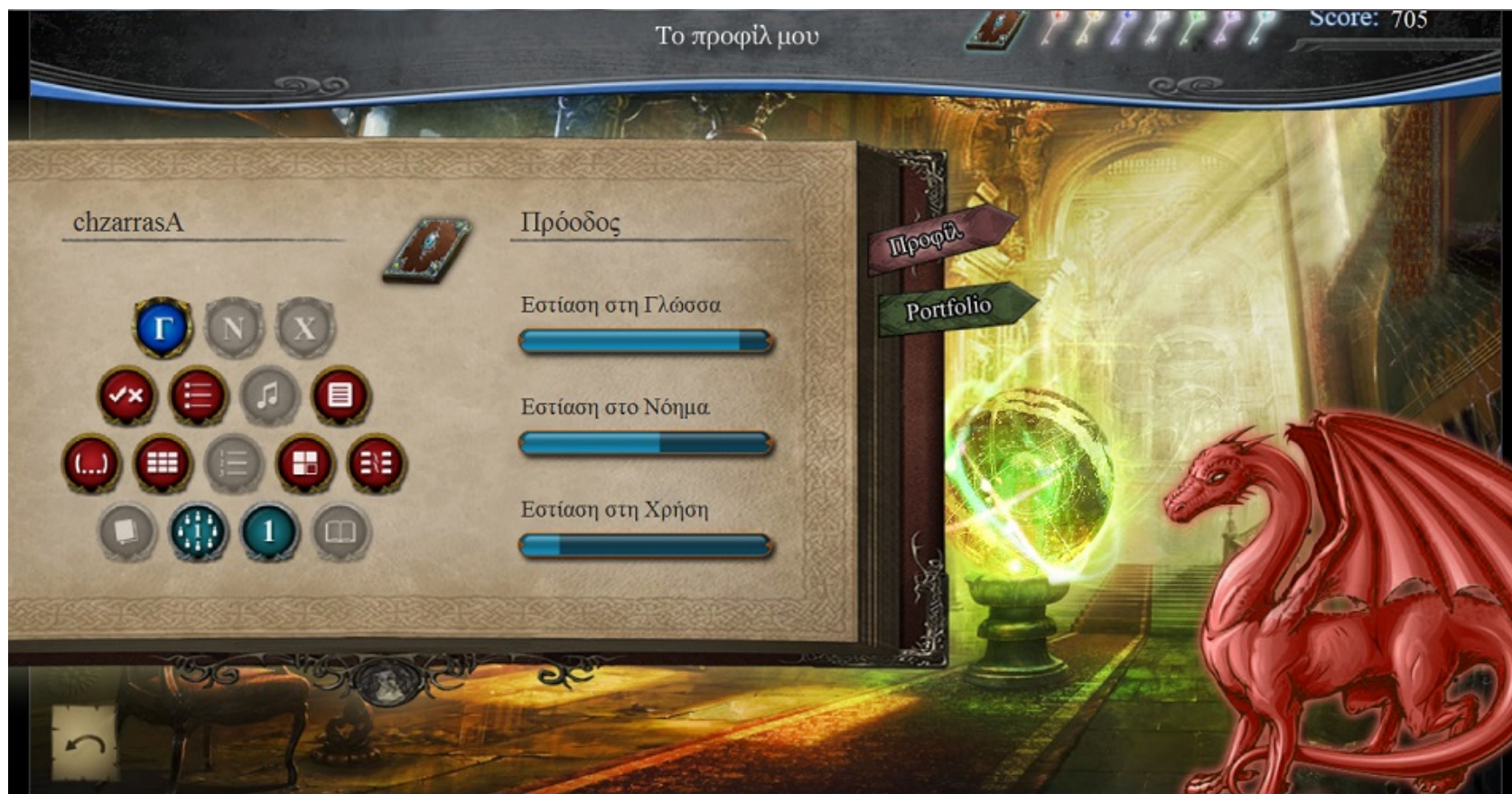


Fig. 5

The user's scores and achievements are translated into badges, e.g. 'The best author', etc., which provide additional incentive. The user needs to collect enough points in order to collect the 7 keys and set the imprisoned Wizard free.

Step-by-step presentation of the eLE: The User's application

- The user selects a text
- A number of tools are available for his/her assistance (depending on his/her language proficiency): dictionary, translation of parts of the text or of the whole text, audio file with or without the text appearance, highlighted underlining of the uttered portions of the text (Fig. 6).

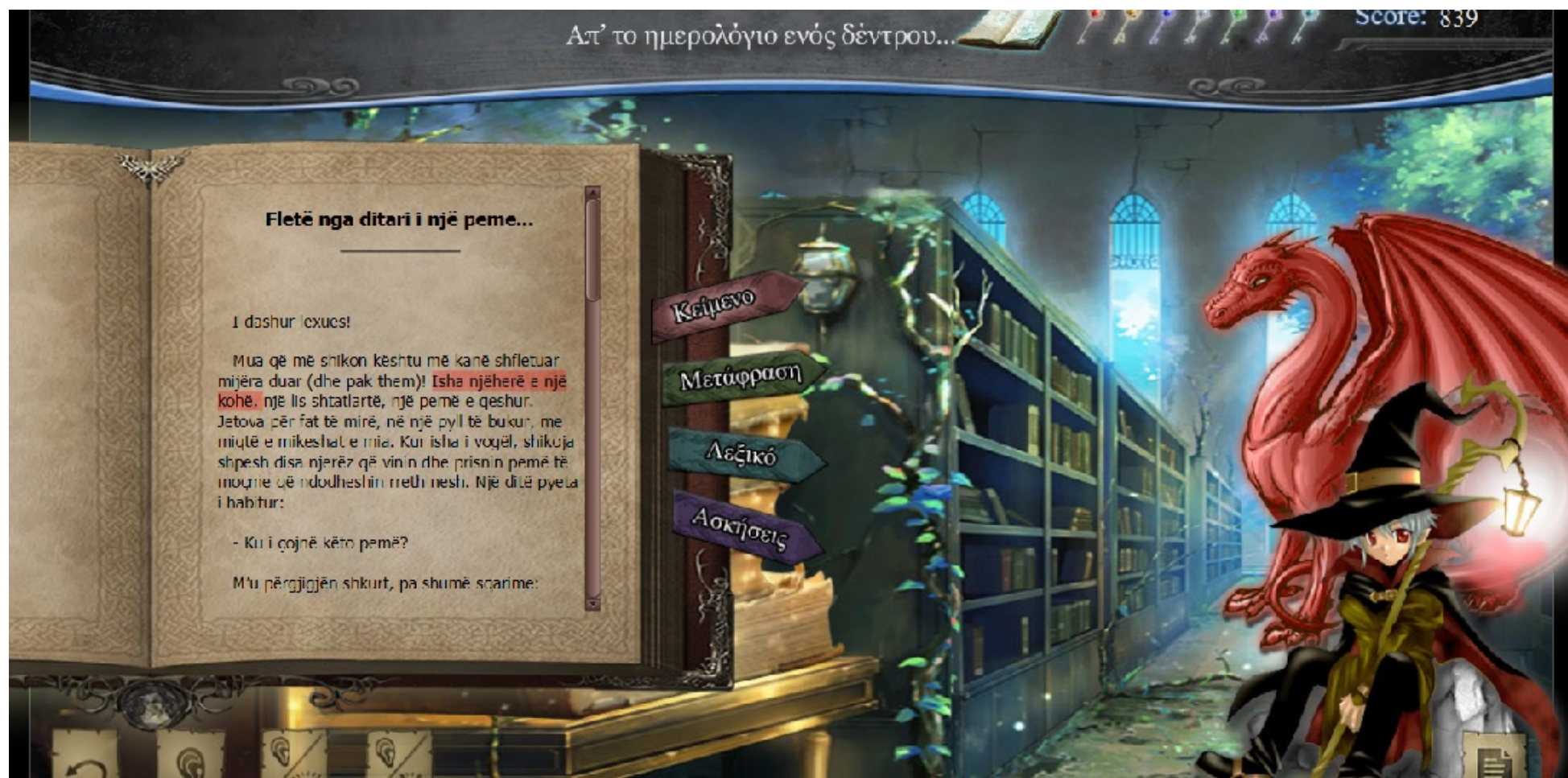


Fig. 6

Example from Russian that underlines the Greek-Russian interference in intonation:

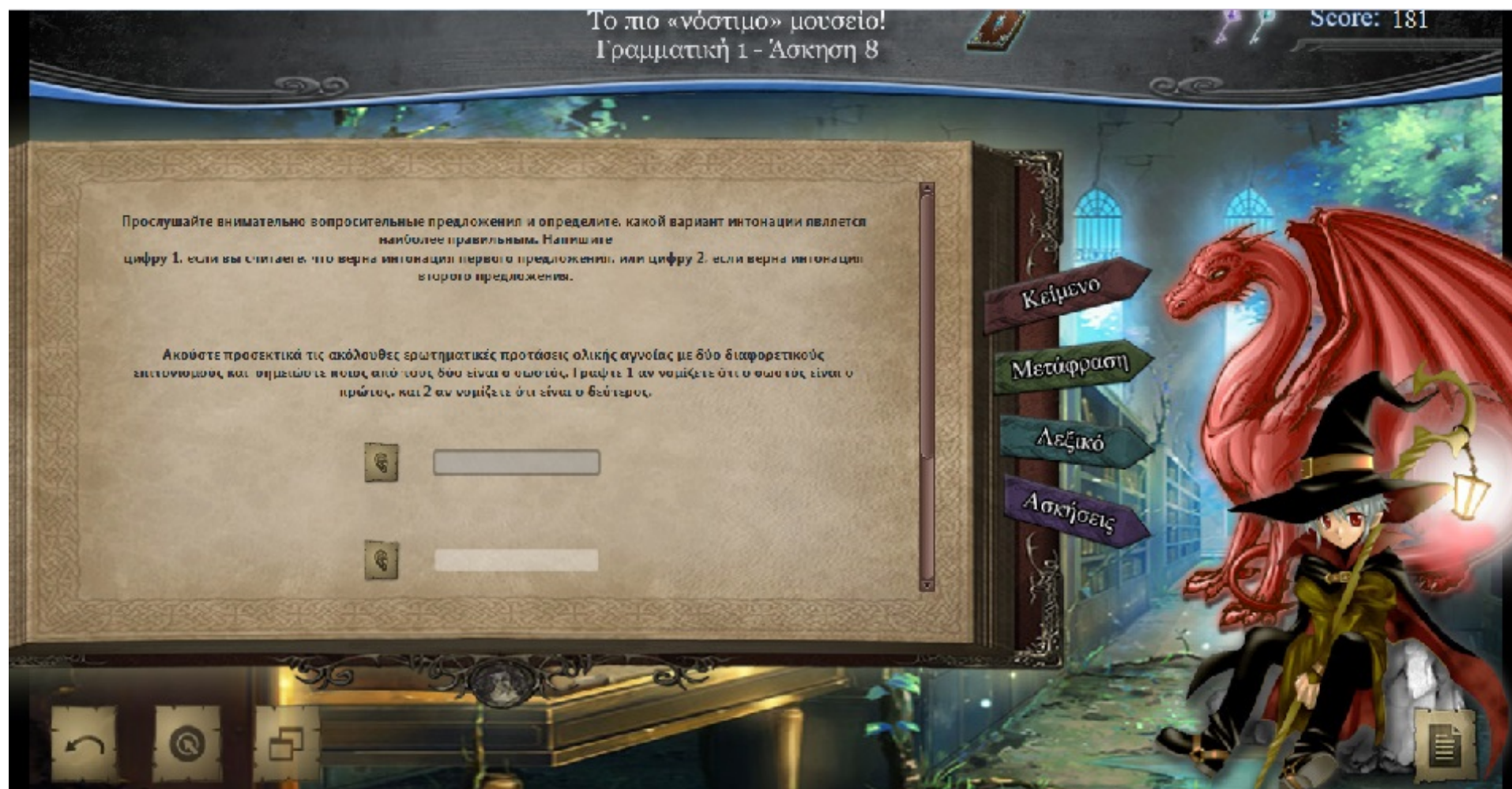
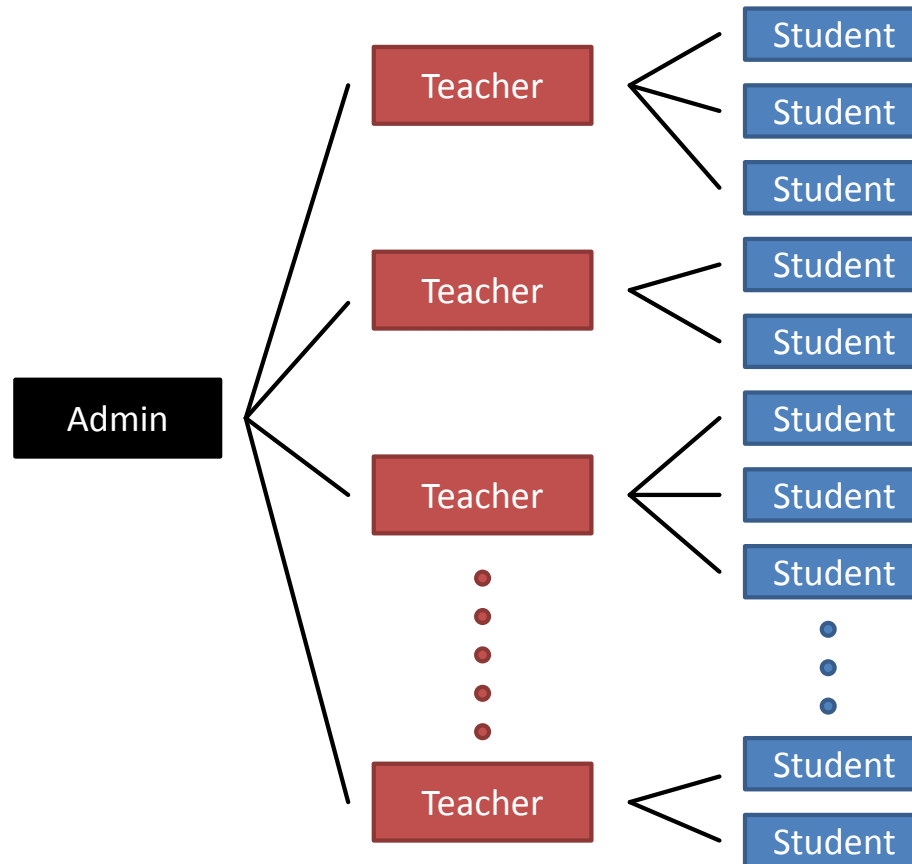


Fig. 7

- Russian: Falling intonation in wh-Qs
- Greek: Rising-falling intonation in wh-Qs – Common grammatical mistake in speech production of speakers of Russian with Greek as an ambient language.
- The user listens to the correct (Russian) and wrong (Greek) intonational contour and then selects which one is correct.

Step-by-step presentation of the eLE: The Teacher's and Master administrator's applications

- ✓ New texts and quizzes can be added over time using the administrator application, which also provides an environment for user management.
- ✓ All data, including user information, learning material, and user answers to quizzes, is stored in, and retrieved from, an online database.
- ✓ An embedded updater automatically downloads the latest version of the application, ensuring all users are always up to date.



- Every student is affiliated to a teacher
- Every language instructor is affiliated to a Master Administrator

Fig. 9

The *7 Keys of the Dragon* include the following applications:

1 | the User's e-learning environment

2 | The Instructor/Teacher's application

An instructor is visible by his/her language administrator and his/her class students.

An instructor can teach only one language in a single class and has the rights to:

- ❖ view/edit own info/credentials
- ❖ add/view/edit/delete his/her class students accounts/info/credentials
- ❖ view his/her language texts
- ❖ view/print his/her language quizzes
- ❖ view/score/comment on his/her class students answers
- ❖ add a quiz answer given by a student learning his/her language to his/her language magazine
- ❖ view his/her language magazine
- ❖ view his/her class students portfolio
- ❖ send a message to the language administrator or his class students.
- ❖ Student rights

❖ A student is visible by his/her language administrator and his/her class teacher.

A student typically has the rights to:

- ❖ view his/her language texts
- ❖ view his/her language quizzes
- ❖ submit answers to his/her language quizzes
- ❖ add one of his/her answers to his/her portfolio
- ❖ view his/her language magazine
- ❖ view his/her portfolio
- ❖ send a message to his/her teacher
- ❖ a single student account can be used to learn only one language on the platform

3 | The Master administrator's application

The master administrator user is not visible by any other user/app on the platform.
S/He can:

- ❖ view/edit own info/credentials
- ❖ view/edit administrators info/credentials

A language administrator is visible by the master administrator and the language teachers.

An administrator has the right to:

- ❖ add/view/edit/delete his/her language teachers accounts/info/credentials
- ❖ add/view/edit/delete his/her language students accounts/info/credentials
- ❖ add/view/edit/delete his/her language texts
- ❖ add/view/edit/delete/print his/her language quizzes
- ❖ view/score/comment on his/her language students answers
- ❖ add a quiz answer given by a student learning his/her language to his/her language magazine
- ❖ view his/her language magazine
- ❖ view his/her language students portfolio

What do you want to do?

Users

Texts

Quizzes

Student Answers

Messages

Magazine

Fig. 8

Thank you for your attention._

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