

# The Motivation of English Language Teachers in Greek Secondary Schools

**VOLUME II**  
(Interview Transcripts)

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2003



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## **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Interview 1 with KK**

**Date: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2000**

**Location: Her flat in a town near Athens.**

**I: Could you please tell me your name and give me some information about the school you're working in?**

**S: My name's KK and I am presently working in a junior high school in the suburbs of a town near Athens in a lower middle class area.**

**I: Could you please tell me about your teaching experience?**

**S: I started teaching English at a private language school in 1982 and at the same time gave private lessons. In 1988, I decided to do an MA course, so I had to give up working for two years. Having completed the MA I again joined the private sector and worked in one of the best organized private language schools until I was appointed as an English language teacher in the state sector. I worked for a fortnight for a private school just before I was given the post in the state school. Of course I had to teach in different schools.**

**I: Which means that you have been teaching English for the state sector since .....?**

**S: Since 1994, that'll be 6 years this year.**

**I: What was the subject of your MA studies?**

**S: It was about English and American literature.**

**I: Where did you do the MA?**

**S: In the USA.**

**I: Why did you choose to become a teacher?**

**S: Because in those days, we used to think in a more romantic way, I firstly liked the youth, the young people, secondly, the children. When I say the youth I include the senior high school students too, and the ages in between and the very young children. Secondly, I like teaching them English. I felt that whatever mentality, perceptions they might have English will come to be handy, in their future lives, both practically, for their profession, their studies and their communication with the people. It is a means of contact with other cultures. I, therefore, felt that this subject as a subject could really be the most useful of all [subjects]. I thus, felt as a teacher I could get across something useful, benefiting and pleasant.**



I: Coming to the state school where you are working at present, how would you describe yourself as a teacher within the system?

S: In the system at this very point, at least, I can't see myself being any different, in any aspect. I have been forced to adapt. I only live with the hope that perhaps at the next school I'll be going to I'll have more liberty to apply two or three radical things (approaches) which I would like to have applied, but I don't feel I have the liberty to apply here...

I: When you said I had to force myself to adapt what did you mean by that? What did you have to conform to?

S: You very soon realize when you join the state sector and especially when it comes to this subject that it is a second class subject. This subject in particular has been degraded. It is even more degraded than the other subjects. This implies that the interest both of the school and of the administrative staff and in general of all my superiors, but also of the students and of their parents for a really substantial and effective lesson is minimal to non-existent.

I: You have already mentioned the administrative staff. Could you please tell me how you would describe your relationship with them?

S: Eh, yes, with the heads in general. What is my relationship with the present, eh, headmistress?

I: Yes.

S: Eh. I think it is altogether formal. It regards only practical issues concerning the function of the school, nothing more. The pedagogic essence or even the educational aspect of my subject and our eh how shall I put it, a headmaster, in my opinion, is obliged not only to look into the organizational, practical issues regarding the functioning of the school, but also to give the impetus through the relationship he/she creates to solve various tensions emotional or problems that the teachers might be facing again because of the school, I don't mean personal problems. They [heads] have not given much importance to the good climate of the school, i.e. to be one, to feel united both the teachers among themselves and the teachers and the students. I strongly believe that this climate should exist, in order for a school to function properly. The heads are only interested in matters that have to do with the smooth running of the school. She wants everything in working order to make a good impression on society...The headmistress is interested in that, I don't think that she would be interested in anything else...that the students had their classes and that they did not miss any lessons so that the parents won't have to say anything. A parent-would think, the teachers were all there – the teachers should never be absent – it is not right for a teacher to be absent. The headmistress is interested in this only, the point I just made – I don't think she would be



interested in anything else. After all, this is the factor that will determine her position – I'm not implying just her but all the heads, because they are appraised by this [the smooth running of the school] the rest [probably she meant factors let's say on how supportive they can be] unfortunately are not taken into account when a head is to be appointed [as head of a school] as you must already be aware of. This is it!

I: You've already pointed out certain perceptions about the heads. Could you very briefly list the weak and strong points of your relationship with the administrative staff?

S: Eh, the only good point is that I was able – not from the very beginning – I managed at least to establish a very formal and icy relationship between us and this I take as a success. This I say ironically in inverted commas. This is the positive point, the negative points are the ones I mentioned earlier, that is, a headmaster that isn't involved in and doesn't altogether attend to the human factor and in fact treats the teacher badly. A school primarily functions with the human factor, it is not a factory that functions with machines, you know!

I: Yes, I do.

S: Clearly, it will negatively influence both...our disposition and...intention and many more things for example the relationship amongst us teachers and even perhaps our relationship with the children at a certain point.

I: Which areas do you find difficult to handle when it comes to technical and practical needs?

S: For me, at present the only thing that I would anticipate from the heads, eh – are you implying this or are you speaking generally.

I: Generally, that is, in your school which are the areas you find difficult to handle when you have technical and practical needs to meet? For example these needs might have to do with having access to the photocopier...

S: Yes, the photocopier, which is certainly a problem, the lack of books which is something that has to do with the ministry and not the school, [can't make out what she is saying]. They have only provided us with the course book, there are no books on any kind of special skills, or on any activities, or on grammar or on writing, or on listening, or on anything we just have a 'dry' course book which is given so that we can go and teach in the classroom. Naturally, they don't have any kind of teaching aids, unless we have our own which we can bring to the school. The school itself doesn't have anything to provide us with neither a library with English books nor a series of basic videos. There is nothing of those. And of course it is well meant that I would ask to have a special classroom for the teaching of

foreign language adapted to all the needs which I have already mentioned and which naturally they do not exist at present.

I: I am well aware that the school is a new one [my own son (the interviewer's) is a student there]

S: Yes, they haven't made any provisions for the teaching of foreign languages they haven't made any provisions. I believe that they could make provisions at least for the room where they can be taught how to use the computers, or a library. I mentioned earlier that they create surely, for the contemporary Greek society, a picture of a progressive school, of a new school, which is well financed and this school is indeed well financed. Nevertheless, this [the foreign language classroom] has not been provided because obviously it doesn't interest them. It is within the framework that relates to the same indifference that has to do with foreign language teaching. Everybody – this is a common secret and this is where everything arises from – it is taken for granted that the actual learning of a foreign language is only realised in the private language schools.

I: How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues?

S: I would say that my relationship with my colleagues is quite good as long as this also stays at a formal level. Eh, I have some problems with my colleague who teaches English, which I practically solved by adapting myself, as I primarily bore in mind that this is not my permanent position to try and make attempts to change things. So, I said to myself that I should be patient for a year until next year, when I could do the job the way I would like to, by being on my own. Usually schools are smaller; this is a big one, so that I could have the air of freedom to do things as I told you earlier. I was pressed a bit from this aspect; she [colleague] works in a way and a style that I have to follow her.

I: Which means..?

S: Well, Eleni, what is going on is: when I have the advanced classes, you see we even have this, which you might think that I have been making up in my mind... I have been stressed a bit from one aspect. She works in a way and a style that I have to follow. I realized from the very beginning that I would have a problem because she picks the course book and rushes it by just doing the reading passages, the grammatical points, exercises and then goes onto the next unit. She doesn't do any of the speaking or listening activities. So, when I have, in the third grade of the junior high school to teach the advanced and she has the lower classes she appears to these classes with the same book I have [I can't make out what she says]. Imagine she is the one who chose the particular book the school should be buying not I, [it's the first year that teachers of English were allowed to choose the book they like to teach from a list of books provided by the ministry]. So she appears to be ahead of me in the book, obviously



because she has omitted to do all the skills which are the essence. I had to rush myself in the same manner so that the lower classes are not well ahead of the advanced.

I: Let's make an insertion here. Is the colleague older than you? [I happen to know the other teacher and was just trying to confirm for the interview's case]

S: Yes, yes.

I: Is she your senior?

S: Yes. With quite many years. Yes, sure with many years in service, of course. In fact, when I discuss with other younger colleagues in other schools they try to bring in supplementary material in the classroom irrespective of whether they might fall a little behind with the units in the book.

I: If you were asked to list the weak and the strong points of your relationship how would you list them?

S: Eh. Positive and negative? In the public school?

I: Yes. As regards your relationship with your colleagues?

S: Well, positive. The only positive is, the only one because there is no other positive that you're working with children, with the youth.

I: I was referring to your colleagues...

S: Oh!! You changed subject. The colleagues in particular! Eh, the colleagues, eh, the positive thing is to be formal and to make sure that they do not cause you any problems, more than you already have. To help you with your problems? Even if you wanted it he/she could not do anything to help you, I mean in your job.

I: Yes.

S: [I can't make out what she is saying] the fact that everyone in such circumstances not everybody, but most have to adopt a proportional point of view. Even if I think that I am doing my job in the best possible way I should have no more relationship with anybody and anything more than what I have. Unfortunately, this perception has started to prevail among many colleagues.

I: What kind of educational approach do they nurture towards the EFL teacher?

S: The other colleagues. It is a fact that in the junior high school they face you at least this is the impression you would get externally, as being on equal terms.

I: Yes.



S: However, internally, I assume that, certainly, the teachers who teach Greek and Maths feel exalted. In the senior high school there is an apparent difference you are even less than a second class teacher, due to the fact that even your subject is a second class subject and this [is the kind of] attitude you are more likely to receive.

I: What would you describe as the best thing about the staff in your school and what is the worst?

S: I think I have already mentioned the points.

I: So, these are the only points. You wouldn't like to add any more.

S: The best thing is that most of them try to respect the fact that you are trying, struggling for the best, and that you also have to face the difficulties you have to. A mountain of difficulties

I: A mountain of difficulties? A mountain...

S: Of difficulties

I: That is?

S: A mound of difficulties

I: Oh, yes, difficulties

S: However, without having to discuss about it.... I assume that in them they feel, most of them and they keep, let's put it, their distances. Furthermore, the negative point is when they start to interfere eh to criticize to cause problems this is the most negative. To cause problems I mean with discussions, funny discussions by intervening in your matters, your subject, your students and their performance. Eh you have this sort of stories in all the schools there are always the two, three, the so-called – I'm only wondering how you'll translate this word the "tsirakia" of the headmaster. This is a phenomenon that regards every kind of working environment, though. If you detect it early and you avoid having a lot to do with them, that is, keep a distance I don't think you are in danger. Cliques and cliques. They function in all areas of work why not have them in a school as well. The people of the president...

I: What would you say is your status among your colleagues and the administrative staff?

S: It depends on the school. My status is nothing, nothing and I assume the same is with other colleagues of mine [English language teachers] in this respect I feel that this is our common fate. Maybe the older colleagues certainly relish a better status.

I: Would you say that your relationship with either the administrative staff or your colleagues affects your attitude towards working in the school?

S: Eh, clearly an argument, let's say with the head or a colleague will affect me so it is wise to avoid such situations.

I: Yes.

S: That is why I mentioned earlier that a formal, icy attitude and more permissive necessarily on my side brings about better results because it secures me the peace, which I can have as much I can derive from myself so that I can go into my classes.

I: Yes. When you do have such arguments to what extent do they affect you?

S: Very bad. Fortunately, I tell you since the beginning of this school year I can enumerate only two serious, three, to be precise such [arguments] and I hope that until the end we can even avoid them altogether. Very awful. Maybe then for 24 hours, I have a stomachache, poisoning of course. Especially, if it has to do with inexcusably bad behaviour [treatment] or even rude, because here we are referring to rude phenomena. Anyone can have a chair [power] and is allowed to do anything; this is a Greek contemporary perception.

I: Yes, could you describe one of the arguments that hurt you?

S: Well, an injustice somehow and a recent one is this one: We were to break up for the Christmas holidays [There is a tendency that teachers, that come from different parts of Greece and not from the place where they have been appointed and even the local teachers (teachers whose family live in the same milieu as the location of the school), not to go to school on the last day before the schools close so that they can travel back to their hometowns] and the headmistress made me come for the last day, for the party, despite the fact that I personally had my Christmas parties with each one of my classes – singing carols etc because she needed teachers, as many were absent. There are 15 classes and 35 teachers and she seems not to be able to bring 15 teachers – the last day because the others have played it truant without having permission, and she recalls the ones who only leave last. What is more, I was absent only once since the beginning of the year due to illness, and despite the fact that I was legitimate, this brought about great confusion to the school. And how should I dare protest?!! On that day I was supposed to teach only two hours when the others had to teach seven I was forced to be there [teachers don't necessarily need to be around when they do not teach (this is illegal, but it's common practice)]. I had to attend the party, go to church, and the ones that had to teach 6-7 hours on that particular day attended neither the party nor the mass. This was a gross injustice and she had the upper hand and naturally she covered it by shouting at me hysterically for quite a long time, for quite a long time. It was obvious and she proved to me once again, the third time, that it was my fault that I dealt with the matter [probably she complained and supported her position]. After all, according to the law I was supposed to be there, that is, from the moment the school opens

until it closes. Anyway and if there is any discrimination and she allows some of the teachers not to come altogether this I shouldn't have questioned, there's the devil to pay.

I: How would you describe your relationship with your students?

S: The relationship with the students is good, but it would have been even better if the subject was in the position it should have been. And if the school was generally as an institution in the position that it should have been which it is not, due to the general downfall that one can notice in the ten or even more years. The general downfall has become obvious in the past ten years in all the state schools all over Greece.

I: Ten years eh...

S: The past ten years it has become obvious. Certainly, if we compare with older times the differences are very visible. And all these phenomena besides ours, which we are discussing now, like the sit-ins [in 1998 the students had closed down the schools for two months by sitting-in as a form of protest due to the changes that the ministry imposed].

I: Could you list the strong points of your relationship with the students?

S: The strong point is that they have realized, but this didn't exactly happen through the methodology of teaching or practically they most probably realized that the emotional message got across, due to my behaviour and reactions that I really care about them and generally about them as individuals not only as students who will perform well in the subject of English. Therefore, it is taken for granted that when the young person understands it, he/she receives it, he/she will respond positively, at a certain point it is most likely that he/she will respond positively. We do not have any differences, at least, in this school even with the most, how shall I put it, the most undisciplined.

I: ...undisciplined. And what are your weak points?

S: The weak point is that ....the teaching methodology I can understand that it is boring and this, anyway, I feel that even this plays a role eh that I don't relish the same admiration and respect I would relish if I taught the same students at a private language school. And anyway I do have the recent experience to compare because I was only recently appointed to the state sector, because, let's face it, it is one more subject that they have to undergo and in their minds they do not have any reason to live through it since they attend the private language school – I am actually talking about the ones who want to learn the language. And they feel that they are harassed more unfairly. They feel that it is a wasted hour. Don't you think that this will affect them the way they regard you as a teacher and your subject, and yourself and the whole situation?

I: If you could change the situation in this school what would you improve?



S: Well, first of all in order for the student to learn there should be another motive besides that of the grade. The proposal that was made, that is, the introduction of a state language proficiency certificate, which would allow the student to receive a certificate upon graduation, of course after having taken exams, would be an ideal solution, which would correct the whole system. We would be relieved of the British origin certificates, we would certainly be relieved. But, we won't be relieved altogether, simply they will coexist, and people will be able to choose. If this was promoted, and I know that they don't intend to do it, that is, the ministry from what I have found out, to promote it in this way, through the state school, that is, that the student is aware that when he/she graduates school that he/she can take some exams and truly most of them to be able to take the certificate, this would be an ideal proposal which would correct the whole system, to restructure it from scratch. Small classes [size], different levels eh the above mentioned the special class for the teaching of the English language etc, etc, so that quality work is done. If quality work was done and there was in the far end the prospect for a certificate which would give them the acknowledgement in the market [of work] in future we would be a little unblocked of this extreme dependence on the private language schools. From there and on we would see what we could do. I have already told you some changes that are radical, that is to have 15 students even 18 in each class, not 30.

I: Yes, and now....

S: Surely, and certainly complete modernization ....to give us the books, to give us the means and from there on I would not raise any objections for him [the minister, Mr. Arsenis who introduced the changes in the educational system in 1998, one of which is the appraisal of teachers] to check on us, which should be done, the so-called appraisal.

I: Yes, eh if you could bring about the changes do you think that the school would be supportive?

S: The things that I would like to change don't depend on any teacher. There is no chance that a teacher would dare to break up a class into two and to teach them separately. We are only paid for the hours we are supposed to teach [can't make out what she says] it is not that simple.

I: Yes, eh now what do you think are your most effective skills dealing with students?

S: Are you implying from an educational point of view or regarding my relationship with the students in general?

I: Both, tell me about both...

S: Eh, as far as the former is concerned the general the pedagogic aspect that has to do generally with your relationship irrespective of the subject, the teacher with the student it is something surely a good background at least on the basic principles, it helps, from there and on, eh you see in practice each time how you can, how it is wiser to face problems with each student and you learn from your mistakes, Eleni, if you are interested in learning.

I: So you are good at this.

S: I don't believe that there is good or bad, I believe in devoting time to think on how to face issues.

I: Do you devote time?

S: Usually, not always, usually I'll get down to think the x or y case of students that preoccupy me, how it is best for me to confront it and there is no doubt that the so-called Greek 'philotimo' [can't be translated, due to the fact that it exists only in the Greek culture].... That is, encouragement instead of scolding all the time. You can do the opposite you can encourage.

I: Yes.

S: Cases that other teacher have considered as hopeless. Students, nevertheless, who you can involve in the lesson to make them participate...because these are the difficulties students who cannot participate at all and do not even open their books [don't study] and do not know English.

I: How about the methodological?

S: The methodological now, but I don't want to talk about this particular school.

I: Why not this particular school?

S: Because this particular school, due to the fact, as I have already mentioned, that there is this senior English teacher, who changes the flow of things ..., I realized that I had very limited scope. Generally, in another school with a colleague, if there is one of the English language, and is cooperative, or if I'm on my own as far as the methodology is concerned, whatever you can bring apart from what is in the book as I was telling you the other time [pilot study], [for example] a song with the lyrics which you can embody to your lesson, an oral activity you can do even a small theatrical, things that the students themselves can do I've only given two examples off-hand, they go crazy about them, they love it, there may be commotion in the classroom, and this is not desirable by the heads, but the students like it and they respond and they participate and incidentally you accomplish in the best manner your educational deed, in this manner, because you can do all the skills we mentioned

earlier. And you can do the speaking in the classroom and ask for a writing [piece], a paragraph to write, how can I put it, to do a more complete work. Instead of rushing the course book, which is a boring thing to do, as we would normally say [to ourselves and the students]: “Let’s see what is there in this unit? Oh, there is a text to read, there is a grammar point to cover and I gave you [i.e. the students] the rule, you did the exercises...”. Well, this is the worst thing I could do and of course it belongs to that very ancient method. What is it we called it at university? The structural approach. Nowadays, we have to move to other methods much more promoting, and surely the teacher must exploit something from all the methods.... So that his/her job can be complete. And with a bit of effort despite the unfavourable conditions something could be achieved more than what it is done. This extra thing makes a difference to the students.

I: Yes. If you were appointed minister of education [laughter] I’m laughing [she laughs as well].

S: Will they appoint me? Is that why you are laughing [both of us laughing again most probably because of the impossibility].

I: Or a principal? What changes would you introduce?

S: But, I think that since I focused on that earlier, that is, where does the whole evil derive from? Eh the reason, have you got a question on this? If you haven’t then we can discuss it some other time because I have obviously wondered why there is such evil, that starts from there, what are their reasons in keeping the English subject at such degraded level.

I: If you like you can discuss it.

S: Eh it is obvious that the people function based in their own interest, naturally, the interests that they represent. It is not in their interest suddenly to have so many private language schools closing down for example half of them. Because then we would have so many unemployed teachers, you already remember the fuss we had with ASEP [exams the teachers had to take in order to be appointed in the state sector – it is part of the changes that Mr. Arsenis wanted to impose and the teachers who were not appointed protested against it since the previously appointed teachers were waiting on a waiting list without having to take any exams (there are teachers who have graduated and have been waiting for their appointment for 10 years or more)]. Regarding to the temporary teachers there is this constitution that the teacher is not appointed, but works on a temporary basis until he/she is appointed.] there has been such big turmoil the last two-three years. One to be carried over, which has to do [side one of cassette ends and I miss a sentence and we try to establish the continuation of the discussion having turned over the cassette] and of course all the taxes that they receive from the private language schools is a second serious economic interest for



governments, who are turning a blind eye. That is, there are interests that are promoted behind all this. Generally, looking at the state school for that matter, let's face it the private schools [actual schools not just language schools] are constantly upgraded in comparison to [can't make out what she says]. They turn a blind eye even at this phenomenon just to mention something different than the English subject – to place English between the general educational system. If I were the minister of education I would start first with this.

I: Which is...?

S: That is, there should be a general economic policy that would deal with economic problems such as that of unemployment etc, etc in a different manner so that the minister of education can have the right financing. We can't just have the 3.5% of the education when the average for the rest of Europe is 5.2%? It is 5.2 the average of the gross national product that goes from the (GNP) to the education, on the average, which means that there are countries in Europe that give a lot more and Greece gives only 3.5 of the GNP. Were you are aware of this fact?

I: No, I wasn't.

S: The financing therefore of the education firstly and the total, virtual upgrading of the work being done in the classroom, the teaching aids we use, the training of the teachers, of everything [should be done]. And as far as the other problems are concerned, which they have concealed at this moment in a way: the private language schools, private education, and state school teachers who give private lessons and others, these, he should find other ways to confront. And for the teacher who gives private lessons and comes to school shattered, you shouldn't forget that I also had private lessons not many, but I had quite many.

I: And how do you think this could change?

S: He should give them a better salary and as a result the state should try to be more demanding of the work that teachers do.

I: What would you like to do in ten years time regarding you professional development, if you were in an ideal world?

S: In ten years? Well, I haven't thought about that long, but in the next five years I can definitely hope for, that at a certain school where the head of the school would show a personal interest, the welfare and the problems of each teacher and of the subject he/she teaches. If he/she displays the spirit of understanding, then I would feel the air of freedom to do something extra, and there I can say, my creativity – if I have any at the extent that it might exist – and the knowledge and the relevant training at last to be of use. Because if you are under circumstances that you are obliged to pick the book and start rushing through, as I

am doing at present and fortunately, I hope that this is going to be a temporary situation, I have no scope to think beyond this point. I am also actually bogged down, talking about my professional development as a teacher. Eh I am not hoping to have any hierarchical advancement. And I wouldn't care the way things are functioning to be in a position more responsible than this one. As a result, I will only have the ranking advancement that the law makes provision for.

I: It is claimed that teaching is one of the most stressful professions. I wonder if that is true about your own practice and the school you work in?

S: This is true for all the schools that I have worked for. And surely in the school where I'm working at present. There are some differences in each school due to the different circumstances. However, yes, the stress of the teacher in Greece must be at a much higher level than that of the other European, average teacher if we consider the circumstances under which the Greek teacher works under irrespective of the subject he/she might be teaching.

I: What would you say are the particular sources of stress and how could these be reduced?

S: We should restructure, the so called restructuring changes, but not anymore in the economy, but in the education; the whole system from the foundations, and incidentally many intellectuals have already mentioned it and have been protesting about it. All the material in all the subjects the infinite material which they have to learn by rote of which the most is rubbish and which does not help develop students' critical thinking. If it does develop something it could be the memory and nothing more the majority, but not all [of the memory]. So all this material has to be eliminated from all the subjects so that the school can start to be a place of work and not a place where the children [she used the diminutive form probably to show her sympathy for them] come to school passively, they sit on their chairs like lambs and they have a teacher on top of their heads lecturing them all the time, befuddling their heads and if they could think of three points not to be able to do so. It should really become a milieu where they can be educated and exercise their intellect and not a place of stupefaction. [She raises her voice tone showing anger].

I: Many teachers...

S: I just got angry, why shouldn't I get angry [she was muttering to herself]

I: It's all right to get angry. Many teachers complain of becoming 'stupid' during their course of teaching. They tend to lose their expertise. Do you think this is true?

S: Yes, unfortunately, unfortunately if you decide to go against the current on your own, to improve the way of your teaching and the way you confront generally the students generally but also indirectly your teaching methodology you will be bogged without doubt. Most of

them have solidified, unfortunately, a specific way they should teach the lesson, they have abandoned any kind of experimenting and for this reason surely, I couldn't say they become stupid but certainly they remain they don't display any virtual development regarding the way they teach.

I: Do you believe we are given enough opportunities for our development?

S: Are you specifically referring to the English language teachers or in general?

I: In general or even if you would like the English language teachers, in particular?

S: We don't have. Again here the problem is there. They are not exactly interested in whether you teach in an amazingly good way in the classroom which will yield the best, that is, the students will learn more or not. They are not interested in this they're only interested in the smooth and formal function of the school. Did you come on time to the classes, left on time, you weren't late eh you did your recess duty, do you understand?

I: Yes.

S: And this, I didn't want to refer to the heads generally.

I: The superiors...

S: Anyone who doesn't show any interest. Regarding the seminars, which the ministry is giving at present, again and again seminars and seminars here and there up and down, eh, they could have utilized the money; it comes from the European Union first and foremost the EU, the European Union. And it is a safe way to show that the sum is absorbed, off hand, the absorption of the appropriation despite the fact that he should have done the first thing. The thing he must have done so that we could catch up with the rest in Europe, the extra time so that the teachers can safeguard their profession in the universities. To offer free of charge education, the first thing that should be done, four years for your subject and one year to go out and teach to get a teaching permit.

I: Yes.

S: The first thing I wanted to tell you. Instead of this, we have the seminars which give you the impression that he is interested. "Here you are I'm interested in education" [I=the minister of education], which in fact do not have any guarantee seminars like the PEK, which last 40 hours. They are primarily a ridicule, most of the guest lecturers are amateurs and quite irrelevant to the essence of the topic that they come to discuss. It should have been a university professor to teach [lecture] us, who should specialize on the methodology of each lesson separately. And of course he/she should have the appropriate experience, the appropriate prestige, and the appropriate level. It can't be another teacher who comes from a



different school, who has just experimented and had just two good ideas to come and lecture us in seminars. [her voice shows disapproval]

I: Yes. On a working day would you say that you look forward to going into classrooms to teach or are you reluctant to go in for different reasons?

S: Eh my feeling is to leave school, surely. Simply when I am there I try to overcome it and to internally cultivate the positive attitude. To think that it is good that I am here, but this “It’s good to be here?” only because I can compare, I can really believe in it truly, [compare] with other working environments both in and out of the educational environment. If I compare things with my original aspirations I wouldn’t say that things are any good.

I: Supposing you were enthusiastic one day about going into the classroom to teach, could you think of anything that would inhibit this enthusiasm?

S: Yes, of course when I have to go into one of my most undisciplined classes, and it happens because it is either a sunny hot day in spring, or because it is the last day before we break up for the holidays. These children cannot be quiet or to cool down so that we can start the procedure of the lesson and we have nothing but a madhouse. This only, if I need a quarter of an hour to quieten them down, I have spent half of the teaching time to get them down, and this has ruined my enthusiasm.

I: And one last question, which I should have asked earlier, but it slipped my mind. Have you ever had any feedback?

S: Yes, but only in the USA on the second year of my Master’s degree when I did the assistantship, but I didn’t teach English as a foreign language then, but essay writing and composition writing. I did different things, but yes, then the mentor who supervised you would come and advise you, and yes it was quite helpful. Definitely.

I: Would you need any feedback or since things have come to be the way they are, it is OK with you?

S: Eh, I would like to be given feedback, but this presupposes that I went into the classroom and tried to do something of essence, something different, something original, a lesson where I have integrated the skills we mentioned earlier, and many more. Then yes I would not mind being assessed. However, considering that I’m so much trapped I can’t see any reason why I should have somebody in my class to tell me that my lesson is boring, or that I don’t give emphasis to the oral skills, and that I’m forced to follow a structural approach, maybe most of the time in this particular school and not that much fortunately in other schools. Fortunately. In other schools [I can’t make out what she says]

I: I thank you very much for giving up your time to help me with my research. I might need to refer back to some issues when I see you next time.

S: I hope I have been of help to you.

## **Interview 2 with KK**

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> February

**Location:** Her flat

I: Is there anything inspiring that occurred within the past four weeks that you would like to discuss?

S: Inspiring? The only inspiring thing is that it is the end of the second trimester and because I handled things in the right manner I noticed that some students have started to work in the classroom, that is, to participate in the classroom. Indeed, I noticed a better participation and this became clear to me just after the holidays.

I: How it did this become clear to you?

S: Because I just gave them tests, because they realised that the end of the trimester was approaching [that is when students are given their trimesterly report cards] and they have started raising their hands, participating, they did well at the tests, some who were the so-called lost cases before started doing well.

I: Is there anything that was threatening in the past four months?

S: Eh, the fact that eh that the handling of the disciplinary problems by the senior colleagues is done through infliction [of punishment], and there is not, how can I say, that much communication with the students. While I follow a different approach, and I feel that I may be exposed [as a bad teacher] in my workplace because I have a friendlier attitude.

I: Does this mean that you do not discuss ways to handle disciplinary problems in the school when you have staff meetings? Don't you have a common, consistent method of dealing with such problems?

S: The view point that prevails in most schools and certainly in this one as well, is that the teacher is required to solve disciplinary problems on his/her own and only when there are extreme cases, that is, when there is a fight in the courtyard, I'm just giving you an example, we take the students to the office [i.e. the headmaster's office]. This is the viewpoint that prevails. There is no democratic discussion for your opinion to be heard to be democratically

let's say respected or they [the senior teachers] turn and advise you. Doing it at a personal individual level it is rarely done. At the staff meetings it is wiser not to bring in your problems at all, and in fact it is wiser neither to take students to the office nor to have disciplinary problems. You should find ways to solve your problems on your own.

I: Why is this? Will there be any consequences on you?

S: Yes, on the one hand and on the other hand they are ineffective actions. In fact, in extreme cases they will be expelled they will be punished anyway, but when students just make some fuss in the classroom or talk to each other there is nothing better to suggest than for you to find ways to impose yourself – to impose, that is, with your austerity, eh, the way you should.

I: Would you say that the school you are working at has a philosophy, either a pedagogic or disciplinary that you have to follow?

S: Well, the pedagogic philosophy, unfortunately and this applies to all schools if I have to judge from the schools that I have worked for [During a chat we had after the interview was over, I found out that she has worked in the six years that she is appointed for nine schools already] it remains clearly teacher centred. I don't think that there has been any effort on the teachers' side, in all subjects I mean, to involve students in the lesson. To make students participate by using different activities to make them participate with something practical because what preoccupies most teachers is how to cover the syllabus. Therefore, when the teacher, this is the pedagogic aspect of the issue, teaches as fast as he/she can, to cover as many pages as they can, this is quite ineffective. They usually cover five or seven pages, if we are talking about a theoretical subject, which the student will be examined at orally during the next lesson and then the teacher will go on to teach the next pages. If we assume that the teacher wanted to [engage the students in the lesson, the learning procedure] then he/she wouldn't have the time to do it. To open the frames of the lesson to do something else. He/she has to teach the pre-set material he/she has to cover the syllabus and there is a perception that the good teacher is the one who taught many pages, the one who examined many students orally, the one who had control over the students, that is, the management of the classroom. I would eh expect from a more open a more democratic school, I mean theoretically. I don't know whether there exists one and where it exists naturally, to have part of the lesson consolidated through discussion and some practical ways that we could do without giving so much emphasis as to how many pages we have covered and the memorisation students have to do. Unfortunately, this is the philosophy of the school. And I have already told you the reason why I am obliged to follow the same approach in my English subject.



I: Why? Does this teacher, the senior one, have a role of a sort of head?

S: Of course not, but on the other hand, she is the one that will report on me for my teaching if the headmistress asks her to give her information about me. So, when she is asked how the other teacher of English, that is me, is doing in her lessons, whether she is moving on or not [unitwise], then you are doing okay [if you are moving ahead with the units], because this is what the headmistress wants to hear, she will say yes, okay or otherwise she will tell her that the other teacher is behind with the units. And, I for fear that I will be exposed towards the heads, who will in future make a report on me, as you know according to the new appraisal system, both the school advisor and the headmaster write reports except for the SMA, that is, the Body of Anonymous Evaluators I definitely don't want to find myself exposed, that I am not moving on [with the units and] that I am not teaching the next unit.

I: I see.

S: That is, if I do the speaking activity it does not seem that I have taught a lesson. For them to see that I have taught a lesson, it should be written in the syllabus book that you did the text, that you asked questions, that you did exercises that you went on to the next unit, the following grammatical structure, such things should appear [in the syllabus book].

I: I see so you still have to report almost everything.

S: We haven't yet entered the era when reports have to be written, but we are very close. First of all, the bill has been passed and therefore I imagine that I have to report, what and how I did things in the classroom, but I do not report to the advisor. The advisor where is he, he doesn't exist the advisor where is he or she? You know the institution of the advisor has been degraded, has collapsed. Even though they exist [the actual advisors].....they are not enough to pass by the schools to advise us, because in the past I had seen advisors promoting a progressive teaching methodology. Therefore, at this point we are to report to the headmaster.

I: I see. Well this question refers to the previous interview where you repeatedly used expressions such as 'freedom of action', 'I feel trapped', [she didn't let me complete the question]

S: As far as the teaching is concerned and as regards the pedagogy the equivalent is valid due to the fact that they [the ministry or the administration?] haven't found ways to approach the problematic students, and individual teachers cannot do much to change things. Thus they impose discipline just by expelling when something is extreme or else by shouting, let's say, or using any other ways. There is not, as you know, any social worker or psychologist, which should have existed, to confront cases of students that are problematic.

I: Is it the presence of the senior teacher that stops you from doing what you would like to as regards the lesson you teach, or is there any other reason?

S: In this school the senior teacher is the reason.

I: In other schools?

S: Naturally, except for this reason another reason is certainly the fact that I have 30 students in each class, as I already told you last time, with 30 students it is very difficult to organise something that would engage the students in the learning procedure. Eh, and of course as I have already told you the lack of infrastructure as regards the tools we use to teach, we just have one book and it is not that easy for the teacher to bring in something extra, to waste all one's time in front of the photocopiers to make photocopies and of course you have the heads, who complain that we excessively consume photocopying paper, and toner.

I: How would things be if this particular lady, your senior, was another younger, like you, sharing the same beliefs?

S: Eh we could organise, we could first of all have a common approach and therefore neither of us would appear that she is not working. She would not be exposed to the heads or the heads of the heads who are on top of us and who are also ignorant of our subject.

I: And what would make your lesson interesting?

S: Eh, well we could actually, if both of us do it and it doesn't seem, it doesn't look that one is falling short to dedicate an hour to do a speaking activity, I'm just giving you an example on top of my head.

I: Have you ever had this kind of experience?

S: In the past, yes. I had the chance to organise something on reading comprehension, but the school was small and I was on my own and it is a fact, Eleni, that these work out, they like them, they go crazy about them [the activities].

I: What I meant is with another colleague? Have you had this kind of experience?

S: No, because in the past, eh, a colleague who I filled in, she may not have dealt with such matters, but she never had any kind of control over me. She did not function with me but she never competed with me asking me whether I am going ahead with the book or not. And anyway she always did something extra in her classes to vary the teaching. She seemed to have more abilities and a better communication with the students so it didn't look [that she was going much ahead from the interviewee]. She brought songs to the class; she made some effort to supplement the lesson.

I: So to recap what really inhibits you to do what you would like to do in your classes, in this school is that: there is a kind of control over you; there are 30 students in the classroom ...

S: Yes, yes, certainly, certainly and generally the more general mentality that most of the teachers are old. It is well known that this particular school with the permanent positions, it is clear, that they will not move out of this school until they retire. And they do not say it outright, but, well, this is what I have understood since I came this year: the perception, the way they teach and deal with things are the best and the wisest. Us, new ones, they perceive us, and I have heard comments for other new teachers not myself that "She is young so she doesn't know". That there is, how shall I put it there is a kind of arteriosclerosis [= opposition to knowledge and enlightenment – obscurantism – stagnation] that's the word eh as regards our confrontation. And then again, I don't want to judge them about what they do in their classes, but I understand that because I am different eh that the ambience is not positively good for me as regards my colleagues, not of all of them fortunately, but most they can be indifferent or they can be touchy.

I: I see. Truly, why did you choose to join the public sector? What were your expectations when you joined it?

S: Well, here I had obvious problems with the labour relations in the private sector, that is, in particular, the insurance, the retirement, and the medical insurance in the private sector. Because in the private schools. We [English language teachers in general] have three options either the private schools or the private language schools or the public schools. On the one hand the private schools are appallingly illegal they pay very badly at 'Kosti and [can't make out what she says]

I: At...

S: At 'Kosti and Geitona's' by the way I had applied just before I was appointed as a public school teacher. You must have heard about this school, it is one of the biggest in [the private sector]. They had given me a post in the administration, which naturally it meant that the salary was much lower. An illegal action, for which they are not checked. The state is indifferent [she must have applied to be a teacher and she was given this post and what is more when you are an MA you are entitled to a higher salary by law] they have allowed them to be illegal. At Ziridis', [another well known private school] where I had a post, too from 1990 to 1991, I had applied for the post in 1990. They also employed me, it seems, that the lady, the one, who interviewed me, she was an American headmistress, she liked me, and they employed me, they gave me a salary that was much lower than the wages I got in the private language school where I used to work. It came out to be lower with more work than what I got in the private language school. In the private language school where I wanted to



remain, I had been appointed to an annual contract, because they had annual contracts, that is, they employed us in October and dismissed us in May. What is more, the wages were very low, and there is a great deal of exploitation. In the public sector the salary is much better there is the advantage of being permanent in the position you are, although this is going to be changed. It is not the annual contract you have only, one has to compare it to a contract that is indefinite.

I: Supposing you could choose to work either in the public or private sector, having the same pay and insurance which would you choose to join and why?

S: Well, I would not give it a second thought I would choose to join the private sector.

I: Why?

S: Because there, in some language schools they appreciate your effort of being in your field of being better, of offering something more. Here, on the contrary, in the public sector they don't care. You have to appear that you have covered the syllabus. All of them send their children to the private language schools to learn English. They do not care if you teach them something extra, so that when you leave your class, because for me this is the biggest complaint I have, that the students leave when school ends, that is, where the source of the problem is finally for all the subjects in the secondary educational system in Greece. I don't think it is like this at least [she could be referring to other countries abroad but she didn't complete her sentence]. They finish school at noon starting from morning to noon they literally haven't learnt anything new in essence, they have to go home to study if they want to learn. They are passive listeners they have listened to their teachers teach, they have sat there like plants, like sacks of potatoes on their chairs for so many hours. They get bored and it is only natural that they talk with their classmate in front of them or next to them and they start becoming naughty and leave class having learnt nothing. If for example I dedicate a session to do a speaking activity, as I have already mentioned, and as a result the students have learnt to use three expressions, at least three, which they have articulated, they have heard, they have used during the session – this will be taken by a third irrelevant person, who will come to assess my work, it will be considered as a waste of time!!!

I: If you were to reflect and report on when you think you were most motivated to teach in your teaching career when would that be?

S: Well, these years between 1990 until 1994, just after I came from the USA and I worked in the private language school.

I: What were the factors that contributed to this phase of your career?

S: Well, look first of all there was, you are talking about teacher motivation, and there was student motivation. Teacher motivation is clearly interwoven with student motivation.

They were there because they had decided it – 99% of the children wanted to learn English. They wanted to you didn't have to try to persuade them, that it was a good idea to learn English. They wanted it themselves. And secondly, the classes were very small. The third is that the school was well equipped for everything and there were 50 different books to get ideas from in order to do speaking, writing, whatever you like in your class to advance the students to the next lesson, eh, a fair method of assessment and a very good relationship. Imagine that the students talked to me in the singular [pupils are expected to speak in the plural number to show respect – this is a form used in Greek to talk to someone who is older and respected or you haven't met before and would like to keep distances] and they were using just my first name. Despite this, we worked in the class [I can't make out what she says – quite a long sentence]. If it was the same employer, for example, because this was a well organised private language school and I would say quite strict if she had offered an indefinite contract I might not have joined the public sector. And it is needless to say that I have been thinking about it, that I should start applying here and there in case somebody in fact...

I: How do you think students learn a foreign language and how does this belief correlate with your teaching strategies?

S: There is no doubt that they also need to study. For example the vocabulary. If they want to learn it at some speed and because the educational system does not lend itself, for all subjects it does not allow them the time to guess, to look for the meaning of the word nor to do whatever this modern teaching approach suggests for the teaching of the English language, that is, by bringing realia into the classroom or all the other ways you could use to teach, nor do you have the luxury to spend, two to three hours weekly. The third grade is taught only two hours [weekly], it is half an hour, a full half hour or forty minutes, if you consider the time, from the time you get in the classroom to the time the bell rings and adding the time that there is commotion until they sit, they calm down, it is quite short. However, they will obligatorily take the vocabulary ready from you. I don't have the possibility to give them time to try and look up the words in the dictionaries neither. Do you have the time? I'm just giving you an example that needs to be studied [what she is implying is that the students need to study]. Similarly, however you have presented, introduced, let's say a grammatical phenomenon, for example the present perfect and they have let's say inferred it, in the end you have explained it again so they know when to use the present perfect. To bring them to the point, that you can give them a clear explanation in the end. This thing [the present perfect] they have to go home to study no doubt. However, they



could in fact learn a lot in the classroom maybe not much, as regards quantity. Because now that I have to cover a text as big as this [shows me the length of an A4 page] in a week that is, two sessions, if you take the second and third grades [these two grades are taught English two hours weekly] and in which text the students might have twenty or thirty unknown words eh shouldn't they go and study them? I'm just giving you an example. If I had the chance with more sessions to advance more slowly in these [texts] certainly they would learn and most of them would practise more on such issues in the classroom. However, unfortunately there is no such possibility.

I: So you confine yourself to assigning

S: I keep myself limited to a very teacher-centred approach. The only thing certainly I expect them to learn at home, fortunately everything is ready in the Companion [It is a book that accompanies the main course book and the vocabulary that the student needs to learn is presented as well as the grammatical points. It is a kind of self-study book] I don't have to deal with the explanation of words expect for very subtle differences such as the difference between 'beat' and 'hit' and I give them three or four examples after I have given them the definition of the word. Well, I started talking about vocabulary now probably because this is time consuming for them when studying at home and the thing that bores them the most to study. The other, however, eh for example to devote a session let's find an example say what shall I say – linking words. To have a session on how to just link choosing some words [derogative] that we use and have a lesson on them as supplementary material. This I don't have the scope to do. I have to use the book and rush it. If it happens that the book tackles the links, then it is good. However, I hope as I told you last time, that in future if I find myself in a post, most of the schools are smaller, Eleni, I'll be able to do something better, something better because here it is a special case.

I: And how would you describe a bad day at school?

S: Like the one I had today. [When I got to her flat she seemed to be in despair because on that particular day they had staff meeting and one of the senior teachers insinuated that she was not strict enough with the students and the school's discipline was falling apart because of her. This was said, as she informed me, on the grounds that he once or twice visited her classroom for no reason, to just check why there was so much noise. As she told me when I asked her why it was noisy she said that she had just got into her class and she was waiting for them to calm and settle down. She was mostly offended because he wasn't exactly the head to have made this remark and after all as she added she is one of the staff members that gets into the classrooms as soon as the bell rings.]



I: Not in this school, but in another school, where you would have the liberty to do things the way you would like to.

S: Eh precisely, it would not have been routine teaching. I am not implying that the teacher is always able to step out and improvise and to get away from the book. But, at least if in one of my classes ... Well, in this school at the beginning of this school year, I'll just give you an example, I was going to do this, and I used some of the dialogues that are in some units in the first grade. I organised a sketch and I told them to learn the expressions that were in bold letters and to change the context so that it can suit their situation. I told them to think where they had travelled to, for example and to be ready to get in pairs or in threes to perform the dialogue. One student would ask where he/she went, and the other would answer, let's say, "I went to Australia". And I got some students to come to the front of the room, Eleni, I made them get up so that the others could hear them, students that wanted to get up and perform and sincerely, the others sitting at their desks were watching carefully and enjoyed it. There were many students who volunteered. However, I didn't have the scope to do it with more than three pairs of students or how many were they three groups of three students, let's say, but it worked out well even for the rest. The ones that didn't perform who actually wanted to perform I told them to keep their appetite for next time, as we would be doing something similar, but with a different topic.

I: And why did you stop doing it?

S: I stopped it as soon as I realised how things were functioning and when I realised that I would stay behind with the units.

I: I see. How would you describe a day on which you felt satisfied with your teaching, despite all the adverse conditions?

S: Well, this is gone past, there is not such thing as satisfying until the year is over. Until I go to another school to see what I could do and if it is possible to do anything because I have started to worry. However, if I were to judge from the first days, the first month yes, they were such days, that I dared to do something different and a very good atmosphere was created and the students seemed to be very pleased... and what is more their self-confidence rose because they had used their English more creatively and my own self-confidence [rose] even more, because, there you are, I succeeded in taking another step in this job and I contributed. I knew on that day when I did the supplementary activity that many children [derogative] left the class having learnt something more than the usual. It is assumed that the English language teacher... will give the student something more than what is written in the companion book or the solution handbooks [she means the teacher book]. Or even the rules,

to read the rule, but if I have led the child to discover the rule by himself/herself he/she has learnt more than just English, Eleni, if I [that is the student] have learnt to learn in this way.

I: Right.

S: There is a way to look for information in your life [i.e. the student who will become an adult when he/she grows up]. But, can you perceive the educational system to be based on this? Here the whole philosophy is to load the students with information which obscures the mind, instead of us opening their minds by leading them to find the information on their own. I: I see

S: This is irrelevant to what Mr. Arsenis promises that he has managed with the educational system [can't make out what she says]...

I: It is said that our commitment and enthusiasm to teach are very rarely constant, but rather show a dynamic fluctuation. To what extent is this true about you within the past four weeks? Could you mention some examples?

S: Eh this is true, surely, if you bang your head against a brick wall as it is said, all the time, how do expect to have any desire. At this moment, I don't do anything that, as a teacher can appear that I am doing my job properly. I've got a book, which I advance to the next unit...God forbid. Why should someone have the desire to do such a thing? But, things they do and this, maybe, should be made clear to your people, your professors abroad. The whole institution of these private foreign language schools and lessons, the teacher who goes out and works after two or three o'clock in the afternoon until late in the evening giving private lessons, cannot think the things that I have just said. [she has confided in me, that in the past she used to give private lessons, but now she doesn't because she finds it very exhausting to teach in the morning at the public school and in the afternoon to give private lessons].

The 'man' [the teacher] does not have the time to get down and prepare an activity or to prepare something different for his class. He/she gets the book and runs it through. He/she doesn't have any time! Even if he/she wanted to. I believe that the teacher has come to a point that he/she doesn't want to.

I: I see. I understand that you are unhappy about the school you are working at? Do you do anything to boost your esteem as a teacher after having the experience of 'degradation' in the public school?

S: I have hobbies, [she shows me her paintings, which I must admit were beautiful].

I: If you were to self evaluate yourself would you say that you are a good teacher, a mediocre one or a bad teacher? Don't think of yourself in this particular school.

S: Do you mean I should get out of the context of this school? I'm afraid it is the same thing with most public schools.

[Long pause.]

I: What do you mean? I didn't get it.

S: It isn't only this school; it is most of the public schools that have such problems, very similar, if not the same.

I: If we take you out of the context.

S: But you can't judge a teacher out of context. We are in a context. At this point I am rather a bad teacher. If I have probably succeeded in something is the good communication I don't have with every student but with most of the students. However, let's say it is something. I haven't felt that I have scope, much more scope for more. A good teacher, a bad teacher what are your criteria? Things depend...

I: Let's take it differently. Do you believe that a teacher is born or made?

S: The truth is that no one is born. Eh, naturally, the ability to get things over to the students, you are not born with it, it is not hereditary, and it is a virtue of the character the ability to communicate something. You have it within your character the ability to explain well, but from there and onwards he/she thinks for them [can not make out what she says]. The teacher, who wants to become a better teacher, and the mediocre one who wants to improve, becomes [better]. He/she must get down and deal with it, to research it, to get interested in what new things there are, things from which he/she can learn. And to see what he/she acquires by experimenting. "I did something new in my class and it didn't work out well let me not do it again or I should do it differently". And not to be afraid, in particular, when it comes to foreign language learning it can be a chaotic situation. That's what I was telling you a little while ago. It was remarked in pedagogy [Can't make sense] that as you pass by outside the classrooms that one of my colleagues and an old one that has been in service for many years .....[I miss some data here as the cassette ends and I turn it to the other side and some things she says are not recorded]

S: If you want to experiment, to do something different, and it happens that you are not successful and they do not come out the way you would like them to, all the things that you have thought, or read eh, if you are afraid that chaos will be brought about naturally, there will be chaos. If we do group work in the classroom, Eleni, and I divide the class into five students to do something another five to do something else in groups, in groups won't there be any chaos...?

I: Certainly,



S: But this, in this school gives the impression that you are a bad teacher. Do I have to get down and explain to them how a foreign language is taught!!! They are not interested in how they are to teach their own subjects [let alone how a foreign language is taught!!! I don't think they have ever bought a book to read to update their teaching. They have not devoted time to open their eyes!!! [I can hear the indignation in her voice]

[laughter]

I: Does the fact that you have given a student a bad grade affect you especially when parents say that their children performed well at the private school, which therefore could imply that you are not a good teacher?

S: Personally, it does not bother me, there are other things that parents say and annoy me personally. Simply, in such cases because it is a very common remark we hear, you must have a good answer ready in advance. It is impossible to improvise. My own good reply is this one: "This is a good reason for me to expect more from your child, who did so badly at the test in my English class, considering that he/she has been taught so much out there [the private language school]". How can I put it I get the upper hand.

I: When the school year starts do you set goals for each one of your classes?

S: Eh ideally speaking there should be a syllabus, that I aim to cover this and that phenomenon so that I can have some goals. But, this year... in the past I used to do it and it happened that I did not adhere to it, but it helped. Personally it helped me a lot. Here, unfortunately just after the first month I fell in to a complete disorganization.

I: When you are in the staff room do ever discuss about pedagogical issues?

S: Well, when it comes to teaching a foreign language it is a different philosophy, it is a different thing, therefore logically this should be discussed among the foreign language teachers. In order to discuss such matters with another foreign language teacher he/she must have the related restlessness [that is to look for new methods, approaches]. If the person does not have such interests how can you discuss them.

I: What is your teaching philosophy?

S: We are obliged to teach them how to look for information and not to spoon-feed them. But, until this philosophy is introduced, here in Greece, I will have retired.

I: Thank you. One last thing. I would like you to prepare something for me for the next time. Please think of two classes that we could refer to one of them must be a class that you enjoy teaching and the other must be a class that is a nightmare to be in.

### **Interview 3 with KK**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000**

**Location: my flat**

**I: Did you have any say whatsoever over the selection of the book?**

**S: None, I tried to tell her that I preferred the Grivas's book series 'Exploring English', but in the end this series was selected.**

**I: Could you have objected to her choice?**

**S: No.**

**I: If you had chosen the book you like, do you think you would have been able to teach the way you would like to?**

**S: At this school I wouldn't, but surely I would have more scope for flexibility. This is because the book that I would have chosen is more flexible. Let's say in the Use of English there are both easy and difficult exercises to choose from according to the class you have. Or say you want to revise certain points, not to do everything. The problem is that, now we just get the book and we run it through.**

**I: What do you like or even you don't like about the book you are teaching at present?**

**S: Well, there is no course book that is comprehensive, you need to supplement. Bearing this in mind, I don't have any problems with either this book or the other one [the one she would have chosen]. This book is quite a good one. It is quite a good series. I don't reject it. Fortunately, that is, the selection was not bad. What is bad is the selection of how we are to work with the book.**

**I: In the previous interview you said that students started working when they realized that it was the end of the trimester and the tests were about to be given. Do you think that this is what really motivates them?**

**S: Yes, unfortunately the students have been trained in this system, to first and most importantly care about their grade and then about the essence [of learning]. And this of course if they are in anyway interested in learning. As a result, there is the fear of the tests which functions as a motivating factor to study harder.**

**I: So you use this as a means to motivate them?**

**S: Out of necessity. There is nothing else I could use at this point. This is because, as I told you, in order to induce their motivation I have to get away from the book. When I have to teach them just the reading passages and the questions and exercises on the passage, as well**

as give them the grammatical rule using the structural method – I give them the rule and from there and on you start applying the exercises, you start drilling, which is the most boring thing to do. All these things if I could do the reading in a different way and the use of English differently to do the speaking activities, to do the listening imagine I only do the listening to the first grade only. This is because luckily enough I have all the lower levels of the first level and I don't have to keep pace with the other colleague. In this class I have more independence and I could at least do the listening activities. Unfortunately, both the students and their parents are very badly trained in this system that they judge the teacher as to how much the teacher work proceeds with the lesson in the classroom according to which unit the teacher is in. [What is implied here is that even parents expect her to rush the book irrespective of whether their children have learnt. For them an indicator that their children are learning and the teacher is a good one is when the teacher advances in the book and consequently by the end of the year the teacher has completed the book. It is not surprising since they have also been nurtured in the same system]. Consequently, any lesson that I do that doesn't have to do with the book would keep me behind as to what I would present, that is the unit I am in.

I: I see

S: Can you believe it?

I: How do you feel when the students like your activities, or as you said “they go crazy about them?”

S: [I can see her face lightening up] Let's go back into time, for example last year, you feel very satisfied. I feel very much satisfied because you can see the result, that your work has taken effect, it is tangible finally, that is, the result. That they are using the English language and it is the language you have taught them. Because if we assume, that even though they go to these private language and they have background knowledge, you limit them to a particular activity. That is, you make them use certain expressions or a certain grammatical structure, you limit them, you give them certain guidelines to follow and they do it and this succeeds and chaos has not been created down there [where the students are sitting], because there is the danger that chaos can be created... because there is even this danger. Simply, I didn't bother about this danger in other schools I knew that there was no problem if it was unsuccessful. I would try to find out why it failed and would take it into account for the next time that I would have to use a similar activity. However, whenever it was successful I was very pleased.

I: Would more control over what happens in the classroom make you feel better about teaching?



**S: Of course.**

**I: And what kind of control would you like to have?**

**S: First of all, I would like to have more control over the small number of students, with a well equipped class, which I don't have, having an overhead projector in the class if possible, a video recorder if possible, if I could have a special class.**

**I: That was not what I was implying with the question. What kind of control would you like to have in the classroom?**

**S: I don't think that a foreign language teacher should be on top of the students and react like a 'Dracula' so that the students follow the teacher when teaching. This is no control. This is what is going on now in this school, of course it is done by other teachers. I would assume that I would have control, I would assume that I have, if I realized that they were collaborating with what we are doing in the classroom, and they could see my classes as creative classes. This apathy that they sit there I don't like. And there should be the element of surprise. Because, surely, no one likes the monotony. And for them [the students] to look forward to surprise.**

**I: You mentioned in the previous interview that you keep yourself restricted to a teacher-centred approach, for the reasons that you indicated. How does this make you feel as it is obviously at odds with your teaching philosophy?**

**S: Terrible, I'm counting days until that I will get a transfer to another school, which would be smaller and I would be the only English teacher, or I would have a more 'normal' colleague, with whom I could collaborate and thank God, Eleni, most of them are, it is not the right word, 'normal', they are more collaborative. This was a special case, in other schools, fortunately, colleagues brought in the classroom supplementary material, and they gave me ideas and I also told them some of my ideas.**

**I: You mentioned in the last interview that you have started to worry and you would like to see what you could do in another school where you will be transferred. What is it you worry about?**

**S: Well, when you realize that there are rumours that are against you and especially when they derive from older and therefore senior teachers, who incidentally keep a good relationship with the headmistress. And once again, incidentally she is interested in nothing else, but the image she has for the outer world, which I put it, having in mind the negative connotation of the word [she means that the headmistress is only interested in what people will say without giving any importance to the essence of teaching, learning and really**

supporting the students]. They want to give the impression that they are good teachers, as they perceive it to be, one worries. I worry how can I put it?

I: Do you mean that they might report you?

S: Exactly. When you start to realize that even the smallest thing that I might say or do might trigger an unpleasant situation. The smallest breach of rules I might fall into could be fatal.

I: Again in the previous interview you told me about the security that the state sector provides you with, despite the fact that you are dissatisfied with the whole system. It seems that you have traded off your job satisfaction with your job security, even though you have told me that you are having second thoughts about staying in the state sector. Why is this so, Katerina, and how could you possibly remedy it?

S: Well, at this point, at the age I am at, [she is 42] it cannot be treated, except if you are a little lucky. That is what I count on, and my disposition to be transferred. When you are transferred to a region in a school, in some region it is easy to find out, this you should bear in mind even for yourself, and it is very easy to get information on what conditions [working] prevail in the rest of the schools of the region. You can find out if a vacancy will be created for you to ask for a transfer, because teachers ask to be transferred and you can find out about the climate that prevails, as regards the educational views they have, in that particular school. Therefore, you can realize that you can function better. With regards the job security, if you take into consideration that all us [English language teacher] have been through the same stages, that is, we have been through the private language schools, the private schools and finally succeeded in getting a post in the public sector, you cannot say that we all wanted to leave one sector for the other. Simply, we all got a taste of the exploitation that exists, the exploitation in the private sector, because, make a note of this. I don't know whether they, European citizens, are aware that there is anything legal, they don't check on them, the state does not check on them whether they are legal. What is more, this is aggravated by the present law. That is, wherever there is a law it is an exploiting law, e.g. annual contracts starting in October and expiring in May [can't make out what she says]. Is it possible that I can accept it, at the age of forty, fifty, sixty, that I will still be working signing annual contracts and going on the dole in the summer? After having worked for so many years? As far as the private schools are concerned there is no law that is put in practice. They are a state within a state, the status of them, it is said by everybody. There have been brought charges. People have been consulting lawyers. The moment they hear about the public sector [that is the teachers] they go to the public. At least, there [in the public sector], there is a kind of a permanent post, which is basic.

I: I see

S: Incidentally at Kosti and Geitona they had placed me as an administrative staff while I had applied to be employed as a teacher.

I: I remember you telling me about it in the previous interview. I also remember you telling me that you never had any experience collaborating with a colleague in a school. Do you seek out other colleagues in other schools, systems to share problems and ideas? Do you consider this helpful?

S: Yes, there is that friend of mine, I have already told you about her, [the same question was asked in the pilot study] her name is Katerina and she lives in Athens [the subject's permanent home is in Athens where she was appointed for some years as a teacher]. With her I discuss about everything. The good and bad days we have at school, because there are days that are good, as well.

I: And do you think that this has been in anyway helpful?

S: Surely, because I realize that the problems that I face are common and natural problems among the colleagues of English language teachers. What is more, Katerina has also got her own connections with other colleagues so she conveys her problems to them so there is a kind of network among teachers who complain about the same problems. That is, the degradation of the subject and so on...and so forth. The large classes everything that I have already listed. I understand that they [the problems] preoccupy all the girls. [Young English teachers. Katerina is 42, but she has an air of a young and new teacher] at least, us the somehow younger ones, and of course the much younger ones. While the senior ones, like this case in this school [the senior teacher in the school where she is working]. They have integrated in the system and they are not interested in anything, but to do their timetable in the school in a relaxing way as much as that is possible. And this is so, in order for them to be able to give private lessons, which will of course yield them the income that they would desire to have [can't make out what she says]. You must realize then that, there is no chance that they have any ideals. There are no ideas. How can you expect this lady to have any ideas!!! She doesn't have any ideas, this colleague of mine she has not got any ideas about anything. I can't imagine myself starting a conversation with her!

I: How about the professional associations? Are you a member in any?

S: I used to be a member of the IATEFL, but then I discontinued. The problem of these associations as far as it concerns me and the public sector, is that all the issues and aspects they deal with are altogether not applicable. When I find myself again in circumstances that I would be freer so that I can look for things I'll see what I can do. I have already told you



that I buy books of methodology every now and then, which I have left at home [Athens] and I refer to them [She travels to Athens at the weekends].

I: Do you read the ELT News [a local monthly sort of journal/newspaper that is distributed free of charge to public and private language teachers]

S: Yes I do. Actually, it has nothing that is important reading. However, I read to find out about communicative activities, games that they can play, unfortunately, I can't do such things with my classes now. Maybe at the next school.

I: If there was an appraisal system that you would have faith in, how would that affect you?

S: I suppose that it would solve my problems. When the school advisors start coming into the classroom and they start to assess based on what dictates 'science' [she implies the applied linguistics] nowadays, I will be able to do what I want to do freely without having anyone to come to me and dare to say anything about what I do. Even this year, if things come to worsen I'll have to call the advisor to come and intervene. The advisors encourage, that is what I have realized so far, fortunately Eleni, even though they do not exist as an institution anymore [they encourage a more communicative approach]. Whenever they appear or they make up their mind to do a seminar etc they encourage all the things that contemporary methodology dictates. To bring in the classroom a variety of activities, to make students become more involved in the lesson.

I: Have you attended the annual seminar?

S: This year I don't know whether the papers have come from the ministry or they have not arrived yet. A seminar that is to be presented in Salonica I can't attend.

I: I mean the seminar here in [name of town not disclosed for security reasons].

S: Here, I don't know, because I came here as a temporary transfer, I might not have been in time to attend it.

I: I know that there is one to be held in the near future, I'll consult my diary and let you know when it is due to take place.

S: I don't really know because no notice has been sent so far that I have been informed about. [Incidentally, the next day I met a colleague of ours, who used to be my son's ex-English language teacher in a high school in the town the research was conducted. I asked him whether he was aware of the seminar that was due on the XX<sup>th</sup> of March (for security reasons again the date is not given) and he told me that he was well aware of it, since the notice had come to the school about twenty days ago. This makes me think that the administration could have concealed the arrival of the notice so that the subject would not

attend it. This could be because the seminars take place in the morning when schools are functioning and therefore, chaos would be created in the school.]

I: How important is it for you that you be seen to be doing a good job. Or let me put it somewhat differently, what sort of recognition would you like to have for the work that is well done by you?

S: It is quite a distant thought. Personally, the first thing for me is to be given the chance to do my job properly, to be left in peace. To expect any kind of recognition is quite far fetched.

I: Out of the school context how important is it to you what people think about you?

S: Well, you must be talking about the school community.

I: No, but, yes you could talk about both the school community and outside the school community.

S: As far as the school context is concerned the ones that really interest me are the students, whom I want them to feel good and comfortable, to have a very good communication and a good relationship with them.

I: Don't the parents interest you?

S: No, not really. Especially in this phase, not really. The people out there in the broad sense? In the broad sense no, I don't care. In the narrower sense, yes.

I: And what do you imply by the narrower sense?

S: I mean the immediate, the closest to my environment. Don't forget also the fact that I lead quite a solitary life and I have quite few people close to me, I could say that they are hand-picked. I have friendships that go back in years. I have few, but very good friends that have been there for years. And of course my immediate family environment.

I: How would you describe yourself as a personality?

S: As a personality in relation to my profession?

I: Well you could describe both your personality in the school context and the one out of school context.

S: I'll first tell you in relation to my job. A good trait is that I'm approachable and it seems that it is quite easy for me to understand psychologically, not always though, how students react and how to approach them. This is an advantage. However, I have my imperfections. I am full of angst.

I: I see and what exactly is it that you are anguished about?

S: I try not to transmit it to the students. I have anguish over the material I have to cover in the class. The fact that I am expected not to be behind with the material I have to teach them. The fact that I have taught them only few structures, very few grammatical structures or vocabulary. This is an imperfection. I have to control myself every time I get in the classroom. I have to convince myself that I shouldn't worry and that I should make sure that they [the students] are not touched by the world of the grown-ups. [I presume that she means the anguish that we adults may have for the things that we do in our lives.] I should try and teach in a pleasant way to the degree that it is possible. Therefore I should not reflect the anguish I have.

I: Do you have fears?

S: Fears, yes I have. One of which is that, if I don't give up smoking I will definitely die soon.

I: I didn't mean that kind of fear. For example I am claustrophobic.

S: Well, then what you are implying is quite different. Phobias are quite different.

I: Yes, you are right. I'm sorry. Yes, phobias.

S: Yes, I do have phobias. I have already told you that I hate cockroaches so I constantly spray my flat with insecticides, especially the balconies. This, however, is a special phobia. On the whole I have the same phobias that the rest of the world has.

I: How can I put it? I was trying to lead you to give me a different answer, but I was unsuccessful. I'll tell you straightforward. I have the feeling

S: Well, in this school I feel insecure. I can't hide it from you, but this is not one of my traits because it is not something usual.

I: Let me tell you how I came to the conclusion that you have a kind of phobia, the so-called *ευθυνοφοβία*. (It is a kind of phobia that is related to the fear of taking on responsibility that derives from the position they have or even the status they hold within a structure) I might be wrong. Do you remember me calling you the other day and I asked you to send me with my son the notes that I had made, but I wanted you to send me a copy of it in case my son lost the original?

S: Yes.

I: You said that you would send me the original because you could not make a copy of it at school, and it was only one page.

S: At this school I have a feeling of insecurity. Truly. What can I say, Eleni. I don't know however if it is right to record such things.



I: It's all right don't worry.

S: Even the headmistress when she calls you to tell you off for something that you have not done the way you should have, she reacts in a hysterical way, really in a hysterical way. It is outrageous!!! I can't stand it really, [it seems that is quite painful, because her voice sounds as if she is in pain. I don't blame her]. This is another phobia. I can't stand the yelling. I can't bear such scenes. I hate arguing with people. This yes, is definitely a phobia. To start insulting each other at the highest volume of our voice, to do things. I can't stand such things.

I: In other schools that you used to work for how were things. Say I asked you to copy just one page would you have been able to?

S: Oh, yes certainly. This is a special case. It's a pity that I had to be in this school both for myself and you. I have lost control; I can't conceal it from you. In other schools I would have listed other problems. I had other things to complain about. However, I never came to the point to be afraid that by just saying "Good morning" they will start giving me a shower. I have had really tough showers. In full blast and who cares...

I: What do you mean by 'showers'?

S: She starts showering you with yells, insults. [Long pause. She seems upset.] I come to the point, really that I wonder whether I am a child. But then again, imagine I never talk to my students like this, my colleagues or the headmistress, let alone her talking to me the way she does.

[She asks me to stop recording and starts confiding in me things that are unspeakable to describe. She describes instances that another colleague has been through and this is the reason she wanted me to stop recording. It is only ethical that she is talking about another colleague and she doesn't want the incident to become known to others]

I: Now tell me, what gets you out of bed in the morning to go to school and teach?

S: Firstly, it is my job.

I: I see, but what is there that makes you want to go to school. Because personally, I have had the experience of not wanting to go to school at all. I remember myself waiting outside the school gate for a quarter of an hour, until I plucked up courage to go in and teach. [I also had quite a traumatic experience with my colleagues and in particular the senior ones.]

S: There were times that I also didn't want to go to school and I am sure that you will experience it again when you go back to teaching. But, it happens when you know that you have certain classes to teach and you have prepared something better, something different

from what you usually do on a daily basis, something platitudinous and you feel excited that you will do it. You may feel that you could have a good day ahead of you.

I: I see,

S: Yes, yes it can happen even in the public sector. If they gave us a little more freedom to do things, believe me it depends on us despite all the problems that we are facing and which will remain unsolved. The large number of students in a class, the degradation of the subject, these will never be solved for a long time. At least if we didn't have the 'crows' on top of us.

I: You mentioned in the previous interview that a teacher should research. What inspired you to do the MA?

S: Well, I did the MA on literature.

I: Tell me what drove you to do the MA?

S: I'll give you the same answer I gave the university when I had to fill in the form to be accepted by the university. I was frank and it is still true to me that by studying literature it is like studying the whole world enclosed in a box. It is a kind of art, how shall I put it, if we can call it art. A box we can open up and make you come up with questions that are directed to the rest of the humanities. That is, you can direct your questions to sociology, to psychology, to economics. And at the same time it is so good. It satisfies you aesthetically. I was interested in the subject, and that is why I went to study.

I: What do you do to stay abreast?

S: As far as the teaching is concerned, the different approaches are quite well known. I haven't made any other effort, except for the books I buy every now and then and that I have already mentioned. I buy books that are very specific, for example 'Games for language teachers'. I bought three books last year. There were so many ideas to use to teach different language structures. Of course, you have to prepare some of the materials on your own and organize the groups in the classroom. Out of the hundred ideas if you apply the ten or even the five the book can be of use. Now the journals well you can find quite a lot of ideas in them as well, But I haven't subscribed ...

I: Why not?

S: Now you will laugh at what I will tell you. I'm waiting until the day I will have a permanent address so that I can buy a post office box because people steal them when they are left unattended on the caretaker's desk. [Most blocks of flats don't have a caretaker anymore as it is very expensive to employ one, so the postman leaves the correspondence on

the desk and the residents of the block of flats just have to look in the pile in case they have received anything.]

I: [laughter]

S: You are laughing I see. Can you imagine them stealing the ELT news, which is distributed free of charge.

I: Really?

S: Yes, that is why I'm going to buy a post office box. Do you remember we were talking once about how much it would cost to have a post office box? It was for this reason I was asking around.

I: What do you think is the driving force of our profession? What keeps you motivated of course to the degree you are?

S: Well, we have the good point that we can see the tangible results of our profession.

I: I see. Do you mean that you can see the students speaking or even writing what you have taught them?

S: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. Absolutely. [I can hear the enthusiasm in her voice] Something they have learnt from you.

I: And what keeps you motivated in the school you are teaching at present?

S: At the school I am in at present there is nothing that motivates me. You can tell for yourself. As I have already told you, I have submitted an application to be transferred.

I: Yes, I see. But what do you tell yourself on a daily basis that makes you want to go to school.

S: I see [very long pause]

I: Is there anything?

S: Yes, there is. Certainly there is. Despite the bad conditions, there is always something you can offer, both from the lesson you teach, and from the relationship that you can have with the students. And of course whatever you give you receive.

I: So is it the kids that get you going?

S: There are moments that you will laugh, that you will see them use what you taught them. We do have our good moments, too. Yes, the kids. It is for sure that they are the ones that get me going. I go to school just for the kids and truly even in the next school I would like them to let me do my job. I want them [the administration and her colleagues] to be formal and polite with me.



I: What are the elements that slow down our progress?

S: Eh... of course their arteriosclerosis [the stagnation] of their mentality, of their methodological approach, the way they approach the children. Everything. This arteriosclerosis.

[I show her the Acts in the State Gazette, which is where all the Bills that have been passed by Parliament are published and we laypeople refer to in order to be advised. I am showing it to her because, I found the bill which explicitly says that we English language teachers have the liberty to teach the students according to the needs of the students.]

I: Have you ever seen this Act? Are you aware of its existence?

S: Yes, because I was teaching in a senior high school last year.

I: Well, actually there is one for the junior high school as well. Are you aware that you can function in the classroom according to the needs of your students?

S: Well, I am very well aware of their existence. But are you aware that I am dependent on the reports made by any headmaster or headmistress, since there are no school advisors at present. [as an institution, because the advisors are there to just give an annual seminar and nothing else]

I: I see, so that is what really stops you from doing what you would like to.

S: Yes, this is where I realize that I have to avoid provoking them. I have enough enemies so far. I think they are more than enough. Although I am sure that I will make more, my dearest Eleni.

I: Thank you.

## **Interview 4 with KK**

**Date: 22nd April 2000**

**Location: My flat**

I: Is there anything worth mentioning that has happened during the period that we didn't see each other?

S: Eh... I was actually a bit worried about the material I have to cover... you remember...I had told you and I came in touch with the advisor I phoned him and I clarified whether there was a certain amount of the material that I had to cover... a certain amount and since then I have calmed down. I was temporarily a bit anxious with the amount of material I had to cover.

I: What did the advisor tell you?

S: The advisor said the typical thing that we have to work based... in each class... based on the majority ... the level of the majority of students in each class. However, we try to move on he said as much as we can, but we have to take into consideration the level of the students. So far there is no restriction and therefore he told me not to be worried.

I: So you feel better now.

S: Yes, I was worried because this happened with the other colleague of mine, who moved on...using the same book, but in a different level. She had the advanced class and she had covered many more units. And there were rumours from the students and that is why I decided to phone the advisor and clarify things with him.

I: So now you feel more confident.

S: Yes, now I feel I have everything under control. Anyway, I showed that I moved on in the third grade with the number of units I have covered many more units and the actual material I am supposed to cover.

I: If you were to assess the school you are working in would you say it is considered a good one, a mediocre one or a bad one?

S: Well, you can't just use one characteristic, because it does have good students, meaning that in this region compared to other ones the students show an interest to work. But, also many teachers give me the impression, but I can't be a hundred percent sure, that they are interested in their job and that they will go into the classrooms to do things, if not all of them most of them. However, the pedagogic issues, not the educational I think that they handle wrongly and they have not given much importance to the good climate of the school, i.e. to be one, united both the students among them and the students with the teachers. They are still in a very traditional... by the way I have mentioned it in the vignette, a very traditional form of discipline and therefore this on its own, is enough to let it function. It is a good school because it has the specifications, but they need to change the people in the administration and of course the mentality has to change.

I: Would you say that you are happy with the life you are leading at present? Would you have liked it to be any different?

S: My personal life?

I: Yes.

S: Not really.

I: What do you mean?

S: I would prefer it to be... the surrounding I live in, both in my professional life and the location where I live, to be more lax, more receptive as I have experience this type of environment in other schools and other neighbourhoods. However, this doesn't really affect my personal life. As for my personal life I believe that is very well formulated as it is at present because I actually enjoy the solitary life I lead, which I selectively choose to break.

I: Would you say that you are the same person at school and your private life?

S: Well, there are many elements that are common. My character can be deduced even at school and in my personal life. Simply, at school at any school, even when I am not in the mood, I will try just before I set off to go to work to...how can I put it...how can we say it...I try not to show them when I have tantrums, or when I am upset. I try not to let it be evident.

I: Professional contentment and personal happiness go together.

S: Not really!

I: How do you deal with the fact that even though you are not professionally contented, you seem to at least be personally happy? I can realise it from the fact that you enjoy painting, which you do very well indeed. Do you switch off?

S: Do you mean when I finish...Firstly, I didn't say personally happy. There is a difference between happy and contented. This, I believe has to do with us finding inside us the required balance, because there will always be problems at work. A professional status is not always stable or even secure, that working conditions are ideal. But, yes when I come back from work in the afternoon I switch off. I make an effort to switch off, of course I am not always successful, but I try.

I: Why do you switch off?

S: Because I don't believe that we should come back home bringing with us the problems we face at work. I don't think that it is psychically healthy to do so.

I: I know I have asked you this question in one of the previous interviews, however now I am going to change the setting. Say, that everything was ideal in the school you are working and students did value the subject of English and the teaching conditions were favourable. If you were to assess yourself would you say you are a good teacher, a mediocre one or a bad one?

S: As a teacher you mean?

I: Yes.

S: Well, when I find myself or rather when I have found myself in situations that were better than the ones I am facing now at least eh it is true that I saw myself be occupied with the job



more at home, I actually prepared more stuff, but funnily enough I had even more ideas. This is because when you have a good predisposition from your professional environment you get more ideas to do different things. It is only natural. If I have to decide whether I am good or very good...at least I would say I am quite good... Perfect...?

I: In the previous interview you said that you feel you are a "bad" teacher in the state sector.

S: Well, actually it bothers me that I left certain things out and I didn't do certain things. I had to...

I: What about the private sector, how did you feel there? What makes you say that?

S: No, thank God in the private sector we didn't have in the frontisteria you mean not the private schools...

I: Yes, anywhere, how did you feel...?

S: Yes, no I felt to be honoured as a teacher, very happy, it worked; your effort did work out. Students studied, they spoke in English, they passed their exams they got their degrees and you said well there could be things that irritated me that had to do with the Cambridge exams. Because we were exam oriented and this was oppressing, but all the rest was ... yes with fifteen students in the classroom and a homogeneous level, excuse me who wouldn't be happy!

I: What did the students feel about you?

S: Well, the better working conditions that you teach in, and giving the best of yourself to the students, they appreciated it, they realised it...eh...I received the recognition I was supposed to get. Yes, there was recognition.

I: When would you say that you are going to be satisfied with your work?

when you have achieved something with the students

when your work has been recognized

when you will be given the whole responsibility to teach the students English

when your pay is raised.

S: When you have achieved something is certainly with the students is surely nice... it is a big thing to feel satisfied. It is a serious factor. As for your work to be recognised, it necessarily might not be recognised so much, or as much as you would like it to, either by the headmaster or the school advisor or the ones that will be assessing us. You never know you, it might be recognised by them or it might be recognised partly or as much as you would like it to. Therefore, this doesn't come first. Of course you want [your work] to be

recognised. The third one, we are not going to be given the whole responsibility to teach the students because the system of the frontisteria will never change. We only hope that the English subject is upgraded so that our contribution can be seen by both the students and the parents. It shouldn't be the session when students play and just have fun, as is the case now; so that we can feel that we also have contributed and the frontisteria of course, since they exist, but we should feel that we also did something. As for the last one the pay the minister of finance the other day made it clear that we are not going to get a rise.

I: To recap, what would be the order you would put the above statements. [showing her the statements.]

S: When you have achieved the first one primarily, with the students. However, on condition that the subject is upgraded as well as the favourable conditions, which can predominate in one school more than another one. It could be that they have broader pedagogical attitudes, to have a friendlier environment both towards the students and between us the teachers; but most importantly the upgrading of the subject. Actually, there was a kind of upgrading in the junior high schools by changing the books. I did see a difference at this level compared to previous years in the junior high school.

I: What are your career aspirations?

S: My professional aspirations, yes, well, eh it is somewhere there that my aspirations stop. If I feel that I can, at least for the moment being, I don't know what I will be feeling in five years time or after three years, I feel that I can apply even something new to my classes, it is implied that I can naturally keep myself updated, by reading, getting ideas, doing a project after having read about it, I try to apply the project it doesn't work, but something else might work out. The possibility to channel creativity, in the classroom, is already a big aspiration, taking into consideration the present conditions. This could sound silly to a teacher in England, because they have conquered this level, but we haven't got there yet.

I: Why is it that even though your pay was low and you didn't have the job security that the public offers, you say you tended to be more effective with your teaching in the private sector? (If she repeats herself ask, "how come the adverse conditions didn't reduce your motivation?")

S: No, no the conditions were difficult as regards the pay, the salary and the insurance. All the rest was okay.

I: Didn't the low pay affect you? Didn't you think that you had to work hard for little?

S: Yes, this was the reason that I applied to join a private school until I got appointed.

I: What I would like you to tell me is what motivated you to teach in the frontisteria even though you had these problems, which are quite serious?

S: This should be clear and actually should be clear for all the teachers. His/her pay has nothing to do with the things that he/she is supposed to do in the classroom. This has nothing to do [with teaching]. It is completely different.

I: This means that you dissociate them.

S: Of course I do. Even in the state sector, I have dissociated them. I did disagree with the trade unionist for not dissociating the two [that is, the pay and teaching] when we went on strike the other day. I don't get paid well, so I won't do the proper job in the classroom and the students will pay for it because my employer or the ministry doesn't pay me. I morally disagree with this view.

I: Would the school owner impose on to you the way you would have to teach the lesson?

S: Not as much as the needs of the certificates that have been established. The certificate of the Cambridge proficiency.

I: Didn't this affect you?

S: It was stressing indeed, but you always teach within a framework you come to teach having in mind some teaching needs, there is always a target.

I: What do you mean by this?

S: You never teach freely so that they learn what they would like to and the amount they would like to. There is always a target as regards what you would like them to learn. The fact that I had to restrict myself to the techniques that are required for the exams, I had to teach them these both for the lesson that is the exercises we did and for the exams, otherwise they wouldn't be able to face the problems. Of course there is always a target and this will restrict you so that you can achieve it. You don't get into the classroom to achieve everything perfectly well.

I: So what was the thing that made you a good teacher in the private sector?

S: The fact that the aim was clear and could be achieved at 80%.

I: Suppose you had to stay on for another ten years in this school, and thank God it is not true, what would you do to change the situation because surely you could not survive like this?

S: The first thing I would do is to try and protest primarily to keep a democratic procedure as regards the staff meetings we have every three months. I would protest for this. Then I would make sure to differentiate my position in relation to the English language colleague I



would touch on the thing that affects me badly. I would make an effort, of course I would make more enemies but I could succeed in being in a better position.

I: Would you talk to the school advisor?

S: Yes, of course. Yes, of course. At this point he has shown me that everything would be for me and for the old establishment. Don't forget that with the educational reform and with all the modern methods that are used to teach a foreign language, which they hope they can use I believe that my ideas would be used. I would have to fight for it, but then I could apply something that is more modern despite all the reactions, even if it is at the minimum. Of course it seems as a conviction.

I: Since you are talking about convictions tell me whom you blame for the situation you are in

Yourself?

The school?

The teaching conditions?

The ministry?

S: Well, there is a saying in Greek that says that, "The fish stinks from the head". Well, I don't think that it will be easy for you to translate it. The fact that the ministry didn't apply the evaluation of the teachers for the past years, this is the first thing to blame, and the fact that they (the ministry) appointed people in key positions such as heads of departments, having as a sole criterion their political standing and not their qualifications, these two points show that the biggest blame is laid on the ministry. The ministry is to be blamed for the condition I am in. Following this if you consider that a person might have got a chair (position) or a teacher that has been around for many years, the senior ones, because they are the ones that usually destroy the whole climate. These people, they have not been modernised both in their teaching and pedagogic methods and they haven't learnt to behave. Imagine that we are in the year 2000 and they come into the classroom while you are teaching to grass on you. And all this because there is no one to educate them again, there are no seminars there is no guidance. They were supposed to demand from us to attend those seminars. What is more, no one comes to check on those people. To check on them how they handle pedagogic matters. What right do they have to handle things the way they do? And they should know that they will be assessed negatively for the things they are doing. And that they will not be promoted.

I: You said in the previous interview that seeing the outcome of the language you have taught the students satisfies you. I can very well understand it. However, it is not clear to me

of how you distinguish that it is the language you actually taught then and it is not the one that they had been taught at the frontisterio? How can you tell apart?

S: Well, you can realise it from the things that you have already taught them from the syllabus. Say, for example that you have taught them some idioms, I can give an example from the senior high school because as you know well we do not teach writing in the junior high school, and you see them use these expressions, the idioms that you have done from a text. The student might have used the English that he/she has learnt from the frontisteria, but their effort to use the expressions that you have taught them as well as understand them and not just to reproduce it eh...

I: And this thing must surely please you...

S: Yes, of course.

I: Suppose the school environment was an ideal one, what would be your expectations from the students?

S: Do you mean in the classroom?

I: Generally. What would you expect from them?

S: I think your question is a bit too general. Do you have in mind anything in particular?

I: Not really.

S: Because with children you can't expect anything stable. They are full of surprises. Actually, I would like them to co-operate with me at least during the lesson.

I: What do you expect from the parents?

S: From the parents what I expect? Well, I would like them to show some interest about how well their child might be doing first of all and to listen carefully to the things that I would like to tell them, and not for them to come to complain about the poor grades I have given their children.

I: How about the administration?

S: As for the administration of the school there are particular things that I would expect them to do. The headmaster and the assistant director must make sure that the organisation of the school is perfect. It is their responsibility as well as their collaboration with their colleagues, you can read this in the management books. It is the headmaster's responsibility to have a good collaboration with the teachers and the students. To have a good climate in the school; I have experienced such a climate I have been with headmasters that inspired such a climate. They were exceptional, very few. They united us they made us a team that worked having a common target. We felt this way and there were no cases that one would try to sell the other.

I: Tell me how you felt when you worked in such an environment.

S: We all worked very hard indeed and we felt...how can I put it? We contributed to work; I mean we did things that had nothing to do with teaching.

I: How about the ministry? What do you expect from them?

S: The ministry should take the responsibility concerning all the serious issues, such as the syllabus, the books, our salaries and of course our insurance, which is very serious and happens to be unstable at present, our in service training, and the appointment as well as the assessment of the headmasters using objective criteria and not political criteria, as it is used at present.

I: Now let's move on to something different. What is the percentage of students in a classroom that are actively engaged in the lesson?

S: There is a difference in the different classes. For example in Γ2 there are very few that are actively engaged. In the other group of the third grade the majority of students are actively involved. Of course it could be a matter of coincidence, because the teaching conditions are quite unfavorable

I: I see.

I: All of us are convinced that the students in the public sector are not interested in the subject of English due to the reasons that you have mentioned. The question is: isn't there really any way to motivate the students in the public classes?

S: Of course there are. Certainly! This is the reason that I hope I can be in a more open school environment in order to be able to do certain things in the classroom that would not remind the students of the traditional lesson. This I am sure will attract their attention, something different that you bring into the classroom, something that has nothing to do with the book, whatever this might be. Even if not all the ideas work out.

I: What I am going to say might sound radical, but it is something that we could consider seriously. Do you think that since the subject of English is not really valued and in fact students learn English at the frontisteria, it should stop being taught at the state school?

S: Well, with the system as it has been so far, the English language subject should not be taught at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> senior high school classes. Indeed. In essence it has been cut out by itself. Most of the teachers who teach at this level, because I went to the seminar where I saw them and I asked them and I found out about the teacher that is at my old school, they said that they do not teach at all. There is no such thing as having a lesson in those classes.



They go in, they seep an eye on the students so that they don't leave the class and they just wait until the time is up to leave the classroom.

S: What was the question?

I: If you think that the English language subject should stop being taught at the state school?

S: Oh, yes it should be cut out in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> senior high school grades, unless the subject is included in the subjects that students have to take in order to enter university, which is what it will probably happen. If it was included in the subjects that students have to take in order to pass the exams it should not be taken out and of course it should not be taken out from the rest of the classes. This is because we are the only ones that can really check, to give them the real picture, if we want to, to give the picture of how much of the language the student has learnt, because in the frontisteria they do not tell them the truth until they come to the point that they have to take official exams. There is a lot of exploitation and cheating because they need to keep them as customers. Therefore, firstly we are the only ones that can assess how well the student knows the language. Secondly, the fact that they are taught for three hours in the first class of the junior high school and two hours for the other two classes every week is quite a time to offer the students quite a lot of things. You can teach them a lot even in the two hours.

I: To be a teacher is quite a difficult task. What is teaching for you? Is it just a profession or a lifestyle?

S: It is a 'leitourgima'.

I: Is it a lifestyle, because I have seen you. For you I think it is, because as you came into my flat, you tried to advise my son about his studies and I appreciate it. What I mean is that I saw the teacher in you, you could have just said nothing.

S: Well, with the young person at school first of all, you don't need to be in the teaching framework, but there is always something at the back of your head. During a break or during an excursion you can just talk about silly things with them, you can talk about philosophy or tell jokes. It is not always useful to preach them, to give them advice all the time because it is tiring, you know both for you and the young person. But when it is necessary to take this role you have to do it. Because it is from us the grown ups both teachers and parents that they expect to play this role. Who will play it otherwise. That is why I said it is a leitougima and I believe it is my duty, that I should be interested about their emotional, intellectual as well as their physical health. For example I will tell off a student that is not wearing his jacket and is definitely going to catch a cold in the same way I will advise him about something I know.

I: What do you think is the role of the teacher to impart knowledge or to develop the child's character (through freedom)?

I: Do you think that a teacher can or cannot do much when the student doesn't want to learn due to different reasons that might influence him/her?

S: The teacher can do something for every case. He/she can do something, but he/she should be given the chance to do things. The conditions should be more favourable.

I: What do you mean by more favourable?

S: Well, I have also written it in the vignette. I have listed four problems. The headmaster, the senior teachers, who are aggressive to the newer ones – the ones that are a bit more modern both in our appearance and in our behaviour. They are the first obstacle, because you want to do an activity in the classroom, you need the students to move around, to get up to have groups, there is going to be some commotion and this will have a consequence. This is the first and most important reason that I did nothing in this school. I just did the course book as a foolish person and that is the reason I felt bad about it. You see now I feel better because I have decided that in any school I might go at and whatever the circumstances might be I will do the things I like and if there is any difficulty either from the headmasters or older teachers that grass on you, I will come in touch with the school advisor and stand up for myself. I won't succumb this time! I won't be the foolish one anymore and especially at the school where I will be posted permanently. I was temporary here, that is, I came to leave soon and this was another reason that I didn't insist, of course I didn't expect even to have such a war. The third problem is the number of students, which was thirty in each while they said that there were going to be twenty five. There is a big difference to have 25 students instead of 30.

I: Supposing there was a class you enjoy teaching and there are students that are highly motivated, other that are less motivated and others that are not motivated at all. Could you please tell me on a routine basis how you deal with the three types of students?

S: Well, even the one that may not be that good, there is always something that he might be good at. He/she might be good at reading slowly at least.

I: You might have misunderstood my question. What I meant was motivated, interested in the lesson. The ones that are not interested at all the ones that are less interested and the ones that are really interested in the lesson.

S: Well, the ones that are not motivated at all, to change the perception they have about going to school, because the ones that are not motivated in my lesson they are usually the ones that are not motivated in any lesson. So to change their perception and to make them

motivated you need to be supported. You need to be supported by the other teachers, the headmasters and to have a common aim. You need a psychologist and a sociologist. What is more, it is not that simple for the students that are not motivated at all and they perceive the school as a prison and you alone to change their perception easily. The only thing that I can do with them is that when I know that there is a point during the lesson that I can make them be involved either by making them read a line or to do an oral activity and this is due to the good relationship we have, because if he/she likes me then I can manage to attract their attention, to involve them, to make them participate a little. The ones that are motivated do not expect things from me.

I: Could you please elaborate on how you manage the class having unmotivated and sometimes disrupting students?

S: If I haven't been successful to attract their attention then I have to shout at them, to isolate them from the rest of the class, to change their desk. I haven't found a different way and I haven't even heard ways to...

I: Do they irritate you due to the fact that they don't allow you to proceed with your lesson, as you would like to?

S: Well, the secret is, the thing that I have found out is that before you really get annoyed, to show them that you are annoyed. Therefore, wearing the angry face, that is as you are at this point that you have to show them that you are angry, they might get the message so that they can stop to be disruptive. Naturally, there will always be disruptive students in certain classes and of course the number of these students differs in every school. And we will have them in all the state school. This is a social problem, because there are children that are non-conforming, they have a problem to conform socially, generally. This has to do with the family environment, their friends' environment and this problem is intensified in our schools. Therefore, the state should do something about it, which unfortunately is not interested at all in those kids and it won't even have any interest in them. If they want to change something about it, we will have to put up with it. It won't change. We can't do much about it; we can do little about it, unless there are certain students that will let us help them a little by letting us in.

I: If you were to rank order the factors that influence your teaching negatively and you were given these choices what would be the order?

The students do not seem to be involved in the lesson

The class is quite large and you can't cope with so many students in it

There aren't sufficient means for me to facilitate my teaching (cassette recorder etc)



I had an argument with the administration or one of my colleagues just before entering the class

I have a personal problem

The general school climate is not really inspiring

S: Well, I would put,

The class quite large and can't cope with so many students in it.

The general school climate is not inspiring.

There aren't sufficient means for me to facilitate my teaching.

I had an argument with the administration or one of my colleagues just before entering the class.

I have a personal problem.

I: If you were to evaluate yourself in the aspect of class management how would you assess yourself? Why?

S: I would say that I am quite good at class management, but as far as discipline is concerned I would say I am lenient.

I: This doesn't mean that you are not good.

S: Of course not. It means though that there are more moments of disruption during the lesson therefore there could be a problem with the teacher next door. I think it is a mutual thing to have a good climate. The more you try to have a good climate the better it is since it will be reflected by the students. There is a mutual thing and this is the good thing about it. Your efforts don't go to waste.

I: If you could change your profession would you?

S: It would be very difficult for me to find to do something that would interest me, to do something more interesting. I don't think I would have liked to work in an office and this I knew it from the very beginning. I wouldn't like to work as an employee in an office and have peers near me and try to collaborate with them. I would say that I am good at communicating with the children and therefore if I had to change my job I would do something that would be similar [to teaching]; something that would involve young people. If I had done my Master's when I was younger I would have stayed on to do my Ph.D and then join a university so that I could be with young people, unless I could think of a job that I could be all alone somewhere. This I would also like to do, but if I have to be all the time with older people I wouldn't like it at all. The fact that I would make a lot of money doesn't

have to do anything with what you like to do as a human being. I like to be with young people there are people who don't like the youngsters because they think that they make a lot of noise.

I: This question is quite irrelevant with our topic, but I would like to know. Have you ever had the experience with parents or other teachers that showed a concern that English might endanger their Greek identity?

S: Not really, but I have heard comments from Greek scholars and I hear this very often from Greek language teachers that English language has invaded our lives that our Greek tradition and language are in danger etc. In order to find out more about it you have to read about globalisation so that they can solve their problem. As for the children, they show an interest in English and they are not concerned whether the Greek language becomes extinct.

I: How about their identity?

S: Not even their Greek identity, this doesn't concern them at all. As for the parents even if they were concerned they never came to tell me anything. Of course there are a percentage of people in the Greek society that fear that the foreign films and songs and especially the American ones, the American culture has overwhelmed the Greek way of life. Together with the culture comes the language as well. I also object to this myself. It would be ideal if we could limit the influence, but what can you do it is a reality that we have to face. We live in an era of globalisation. I know people who don't like it at all, but this has nothing to do with me as an English language teacher. They have never come to me as an English language teacher who teaches English and....Well, I have heard comments about why I chose to be an English teacher and not a Greek language teacher.

S: This is the end of the interview. I would like to thank you for giving up your time.

## **Interview 5 with KK**

**Location: My flat**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2001**

I: How do you like your new school?

S: I like the students a lot and we have been able to communicate well regarding many issues. This I managed just before the end of the first trimester, but I dislike the staff of the school, the headmaster and the way that they run the school, the way that the school has been run so far by those people and they are still running it.

I: Let's take one thing at a time.

I: Let's start with the students. You said that you were able to communicate with the students by the end of the trimester.

S: Yes, by the end of the first trimester.

I: Could you please tell what the situation was like when you started classes and how you managed to be able to have a good rapport with the students?

S: Well, look you must well remember that we streamline the students at the beginning of the year. This streamlining had already been done for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> junior high school students well before I ever appeared at that school. It was done the previous year, that is, when they were in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of the junior high school. We firstly had very big problems as regards this division of students. There were too many advanced students in the beginners' group and this was done because the students did not on purpose do well in placement test. The reason they did this was because they believed that they would find the lessons much easier and without having to study they would get a better mark, but if they were placed in the advanced they would have to work harder and face much more difficult material. What is more, it is a fact that they would have to study a little bit more and they would have more material to cover, but simply because the legislation allows us until the end of October that is the 28<sup>th</sup> to reclassify the classes logically the teacher last year should have perceived that the students had not been placed appropriately and that certain mistakes were made in the placement test regardless of the fact that they were made on purpose and thus should have placed the advanced students to the advanced group obligatorily. We shouldn't be asking the student whether they would like to be in the advanced group or not, you tell them that it is mandatory by the legislation for students to be in the appropriate group according to the level of the English that the student knows when he/she enters junior high school. So if she had in fact been interested and perceived what was going on, that is, that certain students in the beginners' group were much more competent for the group they had been placed in she should have moved them whether they liked it or not, which did not happen. The same thing happened with the third graders, too. There were three or four students who were much more advanced for the level of the class. However, they were allowed to stay in this group both in the first grade and the second grade and the third grade when I started teaching them in the lower level class so that they won't have to study as hard, to laze away. This was one of the problems, which I was able to resolve partly by obliging the students before the end of October to move to the advanced group. What is more, the number of students in the two groups was disproportionate that is we had 30 students in one group and 10 in the other. In order for me to balance I tried to persuade some



students to move and others I had to press on to them so that they could be at the level where they belong. And next year the third graders who will leave and the second graders who will become third graders will have to go through some minor changes having reached. This I managed after having made an agreement with the students so that the groups can be a little bit better. The groups were not divided appropriately at all. The first graders who started off with me, I was there... was very nicely divided and functions very well indeed. When I say that it functions well the second and third graders last year did not really have classes during the whole school year. The teacher's demands last year were elementary. Even in the exams she for example gave the second graders a test asking them to write down the months of the year. So when I gave them my tests which demanded of the students quite a bit because as you well know I always test them on their vocabulary either by giving them multiple choice questions or matching, I test them on grammar and reading comprehension, true and false questions and multiple choice questions I draw a test so that I can draw true conclusions. I teach them three things, but well I make sure that they recap what they know as well. I also make sure to divide them into groups. And without having a very difficult test which at least demanded of the students even the ones who are quite advanced to deal with it properly before the student attempted to write. He/she could not write the test by only using his/her prior knowledge from the frontisterio. This is because even if the student was advanced at the frontisterio they follow a different syllabus. It could be the different vocabulary we teach them or a grammatical point that he/she does not remember well so it is a kind of repetition. Let alone that even an advanced student would have a proper look at the paper before he/she takes the exam. Since the day they took the exam and they saw that there is a certain level that they have to keep most students were obliged to roll up their sleeves and confront the classes a bit more seriously than what they did last year. However, a major problem was that these students especially the ones in the lower level were not used to having a lesson and so when I first went into the classroom I was faced with chaotic situation. I demanded of them to follow my lesson. Well, this stage of adaptation, that is, managing them and attracting their attention and interest by others pressing on them or by persuading them into doing things so that we can have a proper lesson, which really takes place now, because if I want them to have a lesson we do have a lesson there is no chance that they can get away with it. Now when we say that we should stop the lesson, say the last ten minutes because they would like us to discuss certain issues this is done because I want it to happen, not because they have imposed it on to me. Well, this whole thing took me almost a trimester to get over and be able to go into the classrooms and teach them when I want to.

I: What is your relationship with the students out of the classroom?

S: Initially, as is expected there were many student who were quite disappointed not because of my behaviour, but because of the things I was demanding of them. Because I came and destroyed their habits the things that they were doing last year. What is more, when they were given their grades at the end of the trimester there were many disappointed students because last year's grades ranged from I saw them in their report cards, so their grades in English ranged between from 17-20 out of 20, that is, the weakest student had 17 out of 20 and now that I came the weakest has 8 out of 20. As you can imagine I knocked down what they had for granted. However, as time went past and things were changing even the students who were dissatisfied started to and that is mainly because of my demands and my grading. They gradually began to accept the whole situation. Some of them realized it and held me to be in the right and other just simply accepted it. Therefore, I assume that as a personality they do appreciate me and respect me much more in comparison to the things ... they the students themselves told me in comparison to the thins they did with their teacher last year. The manner with which they referred to their last year teacher was very degrading. Of course you cannot tell what they might be saying about me behind my back. If I judge from the things that I see there is certainly a better appreciation in my person. There are students however, who are disappointed with their grades. Very few students will have low grades since they make no effort to improve. When I say that they will be getting low grades I mean they will be getting a 12 out of 20 instead of the 17 that they would expect. I don't mean that I have been exaggerating with the grades, but they are quite moderate. They have accepted the reality so we do not have complaints but there was just some grumbling now at the end of the second trimester, but the students were very few and they complained once and that was all. They couldn't back up themselves whereas I could back up my decisions.

I: What was the picture that the previous teacher gave you?

S: Of a merry-crazy teacher. She got into the classroom and she would sometimes have a lesson, but as the students described the things to me they would not even sit at their desks they were permanently like one was drawing on the board the other moving about in the classroom and she would just stand and watch them do things or she would discuss with some students or she would just look out the window, she did not occupy herself with the students at all.

I: you mentioned earlier that the students value you as a person ... [I was interrupted so was unable to ask the question]

S: Yes, and that was a victory in this school...

I: Yes, but how about the subject of English language. Do they value it as a subject?

S: The subject of English or let me say it differently. English generally speaking is liked by most students. They do like it.

I: Are you referring to the students at this school or are you speaking generally?

S: Both generally and at this school. However, unfortunately there is the usual bias. That English at school is not taught in order for us, that is, the students to learn. We [that is the students] do English as a subject because it exists in the curriculum. In order for us to learn English we go to the frontisterio. This is the general perception. This of course does not mean that they learn anything at the frontisterio. Some of them do not learn even there if they do not study even a little bit they won't learn even there.

I: Yes, especially if they do not have the right teacher. How will they learn?

S: Maybe, maybe this is not the thing, Eleni that is teachers at the frontisteria could be good I can't really say, but it is the policy of frontisteria to give the students higher grades than they deserve and to promote from one class to another so that they can keep them as customers. So even the teacher who works as an employee has to follow the same policy, I don't think it is a matter of teaching only, I think it is a matter of giving grades it is a matter of policy, the policy that each frontisterio has.

I: I'll ask you now to compare things. If you had to compare the students at your new school and the students that you had last year here what would you have to say?

S: Well, the students at this school here had a higher level of knowledge, because this school here demanded of students much more. It wasn't only the English language teacher that demanded much more from the students, but all the teachers. Whereas in the school I am working at nowadays all the other teachers have a policy that is to promote students to the following class in all subjects and even in June with very high grades for their own different reasons. It could be for personal reasons either because they personally know the parents because it is a very small village and parents and teachers are acquainted and teachers are afraid to disappoint the parents either because they want to avoid going through the procedure to design a new test and deal with students that have to retake the exam or either because they would like to cover I am not sure they might cover their inefficiency by having very low demands. These are the most basic reasons I can think of because let's face it we do not have the same perceptions; I can't really tell how these teachers function in this school, the way they function. Therefore in reality we had students at a higher level at the school here both in English and I presume in all the other subjects in this school here in comparison to the school I am working now. I attribute this partly to this reason. It could even be the educational level of the families that the students come from which is high here so you can see a sort of a better performance in comparison to the school I am working in



now as it is situated in a farming area. It is a village the inhabitants are farmers most families are farmers so the students don't get the message from their families, that is, to be interested in learning.

I: Do you find it easier now to implement the teaching methods that are appealing to you?

S: Unfortunately, Eleni I was restricted to what I could teach them from the book, and I used the material from the book and the board of course. I have at last realized that you can do a lot of things even with just a book and the board, because we had problems, technical problems say like the use of the photocopier many serious problems. At this school I didn't have the opportunity to make copies.

I: Did you have a cassette recorder?

S: Well, I have my own cassette recorder. It's been years now that I take my own cassette recorder. I always take my own cassette recorder. And you know what? They were impressed that we used a cassette in the lesson. Because it was the first time that a teacher ever took a cassette in the classroom, but if I wanted to bring supplementary material after having made photocopies I wasn't able. I had to have copies to do group work or activities.

I: If you have to compare the two schools, which would you think is better?

S: As regards the technical support we had the school here was certainly much better.

I: So you were able to do things that you liked in the class.

S: Yes. I could and it is unfortunate that I was in such a psychological state last year, but I was under pressure.

I: Which let me remind you had to do with the amount of material that you were obliged to cover.

S: Yes. It had to do with how many units I had covered and how much noise the students made. What is more, the students were many more than I have now in each class. Because the village is quite small the classes are not packed, they are not full. I have classes with 20-22 students; the worst would be 26 students. I don't have classes with 32 students. The difference between 22 and 30 is great. You do know, I hope that we teachers demand from the ministry to have classes of 25 students.

I: Do you feel you have control over your teaching, that is, do you feel you are autonomous or is there still someone who checks on you?

S: No, no fortunately not, that is why even though the problems that I face, which are quite serious, I feel that I work much better this year.

I: Do you mean that that affected you psychologically?

S: Yes, yes I feel freer to do things without having to worry whether I have moved on in the book and that I have covered certain units.

I: What you are trying to say is that even though you have no technical support you managed to do much more by using just the book and the board.

S: Yes, by just using the board and the book, but I think that the book happened to be very good for the case.

I: Was it you who chose the book?

S: No, it was the teacher from last year that chose the book, but I kept the series. I had also phoned the advisor in Athens and she advised me not to change the series. I phoned the advisor in Athens not the one that belongs to our prefecture, as she does not exist. I would like to point out to you that I did function much freer and I think that the lessons were much more pleasant, I am not sure if the lesson was as effective, but surely, I think yes more effective especially in the lower levels. I am certain that they would not revise the material at home most of the material we did and we do orally as class work and in fact something in some way has taken place. Say the two hours that we have to teach the second and third graders each week whenever these two hours take place, because there is always a celebration that doesn't allow us to have the lesson, at least I could say that when the student is with me he/she has dealt with the lesson truly, he/she has been able to make English sentences.

I: That is you feel that you have been more effective because of the autonomy that you have been granted.

S: Yes, certainly, certainly.

I: Do you get any kind of feedback from the students?

S: Well, I get feedback from the exams. They give me an idea of the number of students that have been attentive in the classroom and really dealt with the material even at home. They are however, the minority.

I: How about their class performance?

S: Well, in class they do perform, as I have already mentioned, even the weakest students raise their hands to participate in an activity that I might have prepared then and there is something in the book that I use and adapt accordingly for them to do the activity I might extend the exercise so having done the exercise the way it should be done, we try to ask and answer things. Do you want me to give you an example? It is easy you can do such a thing when you have the material in front of you.

I: Yes, but do the students come up to you and say look Ma'am we have learnt this and that. Do you have such examples?

S: This has happened only in an advanced class in the third grade, who are the only ones to keep notes, they write down everything, but these are students that are about to take exams of their certificates or they have already taken the Lower. So if I do teach them something extra even if I tell them that they will not be examined on these points then the majority of these students will make a note so that he/she will learn it.

I: Let me ask you a question about the school advisor since you have already mentioned her. Is there a school advisor in the prefecture where your school belongs?

S: Yes, there is.

I: What is your relationship with her/him?

S: Non-existent

I: So this aspect hasn't improved that is with regards to your relationship with the school advisor here.

S: Yes, I did however look for her at the beginning of the school year because we had a problem with the books as the previous teacher had not chosen a book for the beginners and had kept the very old course book given by the ministry (Taskway). So I phoned her so I could ask her how I could deal with the matter and to ask if I had to keep the same book. This lady is posted in the capital of the prefecture where I phoned quite a few times and they sort of insulted me because I was disturbing them. So I had to phone at the ministry and different other places so in the end they asked me to address a Mrs. X who is an advisor in Athens.

I: Was she of any help to you?

S: Yes, she was of great help. Even if she was not obliged. I told her the truth that I was unable to contact the advisor in my prefecture because she is non-existent. I told her that I phoned her quite a few times and that she never came to the phone, of course she had given us the number of the head of the administration so whenever I phoned I was actually disturbing the head of the prefecture, who of course had nothing to do with me. It was her fault because she should have left us another phone number so that we could come in touch with her.

I: Hasn't she even organized a seminar or a workshop?

S: She happens to be in the composition programme, which has to do with more than teaching just English, I read those things in a journal. I actually read her article and realized



what her interests are, at least the most basic, I think that her doctoral dissertation was about such an issue, which has to do with theatrical performance of the teacher and not necessarily of the English language teacher, but all the other teachers of other subjects. There was an announcement that she was going to give a seminar on this topic and I thought it was needless for me to go and attend.

I: Therefore I should assume that there is not any kind of training or workshop for you to attend this year. So things in this respect are worse.

S: No, there is nothing.

I: Let me now ask about the administration. What is your relationship with the administration?

S: Do you mean with the headmaster?

I: Yes,

S: Because he is the only person from the administration that I come in touch with, because at school he/she is the only person we come in touch with. We do not come in touch with the administration from the central office, even though the head of the office did visit us at school. As regards my relationship with the headmaster they are formal. There is a mutual aversion as it is the case with all the other teachers. We have completely different perceptions both for issues that concern the education and school matters. The man is quite old and his only concern is when his time comes for him to retire. His problem is that things run smoothly so that he doesn't get involved with problems that concern the school, how to cover up things to solve them casually and how we can avoid being in the spotlight for the society. That we are malfunctioning if there is a chance that this will be revealed, how to cover things up so that people won't have to say anything that could be offending. I don't think he has any other interest as regards the matter of things. Because the essence of the matter, for me, is our concern on how to be successful with the educational process.

I: If you had to compare this headmaster with the headmistress last year what would you have to say?

S: I could say that, if we exclude that the headmistress did not treat me properly when she was moody, I could say that certainly she was a person that was interested in not only the picture that the school gave to society as is the present one, she also was interested that the school run properly. She did not allow teachers to be absent just to show them that she is goody good. She did not have constraints not to be goody good when it was necessary. From the very beginning that I came to the school here I had the impression that she made an effort to be fair with all the teachers. This is since the day that they drew the schedule, which

is drawn at the beginning of the school year, when she clarified that everyone will have one day when he/she will be finishing school an hour earlier. This did not happen at this school, because this headmaster with the four or five or six teachers I don't know how many they really are, that is, the ones that have been here for many years and are local teachers, that is, they come from this village and permanently live in this village with their families he was in favour of them. It is a fact that he was in favour of the them as regards the schedule which had to do with the schedule being in favour of them, that is, they have most of the teaching hours early in the morning whereas we the ones that don't belong to the village community like the French teacher who comes from a different prefecture – the gym and the art teacher alike also come from a different prefecture we all were not favoured and we had all the teaching at the end of the school day. We started school at 10 or 11 and we finished at 2 whereas the other teachers finished teaching at 10 or 11 on a daily basis. That was the first impetus for a confrontation we had both with the head and the rest of the teachers because I demanded that they change the schedule in favour of me so that I can finish earlier at least one day. However, this contributed negatively to my relationship with them. The headmaster may not be the same as the headmistress, who yelled at me whenever she got angry, he will not shout, but there is an aversion and contempt for him.

I: Do you think that he is concerned whether you as a human being are well.

S: He is not in the least concerned. He is only interested, as are most headmasters are, in you being able to solve your problems on your own especially discipline problems in such a way that you will not bother him. And if possible not to expel students during your class and not to have problems with him.

I: What is your relationship like with your colleagues?

S: If I exclude the ones that are not local and not permanent if you exclude these teachers the rest five or six local teachers who happen to have their own clique, unfortunately, the relationship is very bad. Firstly, they realized that they were of a different species, people who have a different mentality as regards work matters and this is convenient for them.

I: What is your mentality, can you please tell me even if I think I know it.

S: My mentality is that regardless of the organizational problems that may exist and the lack of technical support and many more other problems we are obliged to what is best in the framework that is provided to us. That is, to show in reality our interest for our subject the students and the school. Unfortunately, the perception that the local and permanent teachers have is exactly the opposite. Without even showing or saying anything about it in practice, by being say a third eye that observes, they make sure how to get a good leave, how to be absent from school, how to finish school earlier. It is not a coincidence that all our

pedagogical meetings take place at 10 in the morning, which has never happened before and I think it is quite illegal and it has never happened before. This happens because these colleagues finish school early and they want to even miss an hour's lesson and if they had to finish school on that day at 11 they can finish teaching at 10. So the meeting takes place at 10. The rest of us go back to the classrooms to teach until 2 after having attended the meeting. This is an example of how they try to have things in their favour, to leave school an hour earlier, to work as little as they can and not to be burdened by not even one hour's lesson or any other type of work for the school.

I: Do your colleagues at this school your subject?

S: No, because as you very well know even the students I have now learn English at the frontisterio or have private lessons and what is more they have the same perception that the subject of English language is of secondary importance so it is not a subject that would concern them whether I would teach them or not in this school. They had a better time with the teacher last year, who had never created any problems. She was also given a bad schedule, but she never complained. However, they helped her get as many leaves as she could. I have personally been absent only three times since September either because I was ill and was given a sick leave from the doctor or I needed to be away and they have been away 53 times you can imagine that this also makes them feel uncomfortable.

I: Do your colleagues value you as a teacher?

S: As teachers I presume that, because as I have already told you there is a different relationship with the six colleagues and the others, so with these six colleagues my relationship is quite restricted. We only talk when it is necessary, that is, when there is a practical matter that we have to resolve, say like I have to ask or tell a colleague about a job that needs to be done. So I don't talk to them about other matters, but I presume because I even heard that they were talking about me behind my back and among the things that were said when I applied to be appointed in an experimental school in Athens and one of them had to see the application to give it a serial number, they commented about my Master's degree and of course they were ironic about it. I assume that they do value me as a teacher without showing it, but this has contributed to the envy that they have towards my personality. What is more, they [her colleagues and the headmaster] have very well understood that I have a good relationship with the students and I am sure that they must have heard comments from students that are quite positive so this has also created the envy they have. Because it is definite and obvious that from the moment I enter the courtyard until I reach the staff room many groups of students will stop me to talk to me about different things, things that students will talk to you if you have shown that you are interested in them.



They [her colleagues and the headmaster] never do this thing; they don't talk to the students or pick up on issues and have discussions in the break. So they see this and I am certain that they have commented on it, that the students like me and want me. There is a student who is the daughter of one of my colleagues and she has shown me that she admires me in front of all her classmates even though she knows that her father hates me.

I: If you had to compare them to your colleagues here?

S: The school here was much bigger so you could find people even if they were few that you could communicate with for some matters or have the same ideas that you could support at the meeting so you did not feel lonely. What is more, I have the impression that the teachers were much more serious with their job. It could also be because the headmistress is a bit more serious, or it could be that the colleagues were more serious. I had the impression that some of them were interested in their subject and their job than my colleagues now.

I: Does the administration value your subject?

S: No, I don't think so. They have the same perception as my colleagues, but I think that they don't value any of the subjects any way. What I mean is that they are convinced that, and because their children happen to be very good students the children of the six colleagues and the headmaster's are in their majority excellent students, so I was telling they are convinced, and unfortunately you can tell there is a discrimination in this school between the very good students and the rest of the students, that is, the good students are preferred when an environmental group is to be set up or a group that will be in the national celebrations, they have the perception that the very good students will learn because they want to learn. They don't care whether the other students will learn.

I: Does the administration value you?

S: Do you mean the headmaster?

I: Yes,

S: The headmaster value me Eleni at the beginning, that is, before I started having the confrontations due to the changes I wanted them to make on the schedule and many other unfair things that were taking place. He told me that his daughter, who is in the advanced class in the third grade told him that I was good. What is more, her mother who also is a teacher at the same school, she was also in the headmaster's office, and they told me at the beginning of the year, that they were very grateful for the good job I was doing in their daughter's class even though she had already taken the exams. I presume that their daughter, must have been impressed and she told her parents and these people thanked me for the good job that I am doing in the classroom and in particular for their daughter. However, since then

because our relationship turned out to become cold and distant due to the differences we had I did not hear any more good comments and I think that I will never hear a good comment again in there. It is a fact. Imagine, I am now watching my back, that is, that they want file any reports on me.

I: When you have the meeting do you participate actively?

S: Not on matters that I think are serious, but still last time we had a meeting concerning a disciplinary problem, there was a boy who bullied younger children he was in the third grade and the children that he hit were in the first grade... bullying isn't it in English, I asked them to take action, but they wouldn't let me speak. So I asked that democratic procedures should be maintained so that they would allow me to speak and I could express my opinion. When there are matters that are not that important I avoid interfering, unless they ask my opinion, I avoid giving my opinion.

I: So you do it in order to have peace of mind, not because they won't let you do it, or because your opinion does not really count.

S: No, it doesn't count and that is the reason why I don't make an effort. But because there are issues that I can't let go just like then I do speak and if necessary I shout so that they listen to my point of view, whether they like it or not. The fact that they don't want to listen is a fact.

I: Is your work recognized by any member in the school, say parents, students, colleagues, administration?

S: Yes, yes, there is this colleague, she is the French language teacher, who comes from a different prefecture with whom we have coffee every now and then and we talk about the children and some cases we have in common because she also gets into classes as I do. Eh she actually values what I do and what I am trying to do, she of course values me as a person first of all. Recently, I found out that... I actually had another incident, where I had to confront them as regards the national holiday, since they wanted me to be there and I didn't. So they threatened to file a report, she actually took my side while I was not present and she told them I was a very good teacher and that they should be aware of that fact and that she is competent in her subject and she is not just a girl who gained her degree by force as could be the case. Anyway I realized that as long as she is a member of the staff I know I have somebody who will support me even to the head of the administration. She will tell the truth. I hope that she will be there even next year. Because I see her as a shield of protection in case things reach the administrator's ears. I don't know when, but I think that they are capable of doing it.

I: What do you find positive in this school?

S: The children of course. Yes, the students.

I: Whom I presume you got to the level you wanted them to be.

S: Yes, but not that I am satisfied with their level. I am sure that next year things will be much better. The third graders will be leaving. They were difficult to handle as they had their past habits especially the lower level of the third grade. The second graders even at the low level, we have a very good climate in the class. As for the first graders I was the one to start them off so we have no problems and they are really good. Therefore next year I am certain that I will have a better time with the students and I will be able to do better things with them. I am certain. Of course this happens in all the schools, I always see better results the second year. They find out about you and they know what you are asking of them and they do not react even when they get their results, about anything else.

I: Anything else that might be positive?

S: There is nothing else positive, except for this colleague that is making the same efforts as I am in her subject to is effective with her teaching.

I: ... and the fact that you have no one to impose things onto you, to check on you.

S: Yes, I don't have the problem of having an English language colleague that would be antagonistic, whether I have moved on with the units or not, whether I am the most popular and not she and thus create situations.

I: And what are the negative points?

S: The negative point is the bad climate that has been created by the local teachers and the headmaster who also is a local. They have the perception that this school is theirs and they have their standards which I have come to destroy. In fact, I am not destroying it I am improving it. This perception that, they do not say it, but you can infer it by observing them, that this job is a job where you can laze of and sit back doing nothing.

I: How do you see yourself in this school?

S: Very marginalized and in a very dangerous position. As I have already told you that these personal differences could lead me to very unpleasant situations and the fact that I want to stay for another year means that I have to be very careful and to start to be very careful while disregarding many things, like the unfairness on the schedule, this and that, and I should pretend that I do not understand what is going on. Anyway, I do not protest unless it is something very important. For example we have the meetings at 10 I do not complain and I won't even make the effort to complain. By the way the headmaster and the head of the



administration know each other very well and I am sure that all these things happen and the head of the administration is aware of the whole situation and he is turning a blind eye. He doesn't want anyone to mess up the things and to wash the dirty linen in public. I won't do this thing, I avoid it for defence reasons, but I do not know that this personal rivalry and antipathy might lead me to a difficult position. Because the threat was that they were going to file a report on me on behalf of the staff due to my absence on the national holiday march. And I called upon to the fact that since the beginning of the year I have been away for only three days and I would like to know their reasoning with regards to having me work on an official holiday for which we should be paid overtime. It is an official holiday and what is more it is Sunday and they want to make me work. It is a different thing if I do it voluntarily. They called upon an order that came from the ministry recently, which I have not seen yet, I am waiting to get it from a colleague who is working in another school so that I can see it and check what the legal penalties are in case someone does not attend the national holiday, but I assume that they are lurking. I know that it was not a coincidence that they threatened me. I know that they have discussed it behind my back and I know that their disposition is this: that the moment that I make the wrong move they will take action. The first things that I do illegally they will bring it into play and they will tell the head of the administration and file a report as a united staff.

I: So if you have to compare yourself in this school and yourself in the school that you were appointed last year what would you say are the differences?

S: Well, if we assume that I will not give them the occasion for them to put me in their foresight with certain documents and reports the conditions are much better in this school, because I can function better with the students in the classroom. For all the other issues the conditions are as bad. They are the things that I told you last year like the value that has been attributed to our subject by the ministry of education firstly. What means have they given us to work? Say a video, a projector, a book – we still have one book in the class to work on, the photocopies, the number of students in the classroom. It is obvious that by allowing the frontisteria to prepare the students in order to take the national certificate even the ministry of education is degrading us. This law was passed in Parliament as you may know and our function is just to fill in the schedule. I can't see any improvement on behalf of the Minister of Education (Euthimiou). They do not require anything from us nor do they give us a line of work which they could do at least by giving us a syllabus.

I: But there is a syllabus.

S: Is there a syllabus for the junior high school?

I: Yes, there is.

**S: Do you mean the leaflet they gave us?**

**I: Yes.**

**S: Well, they gave us this leaflet not to use as a syllabus but as keynotes that we could follow. That is, when you teach them this point say a grammatical or syntactical point it tell us the manner in which we are to teach it nothing else.**

**I: So in your opinion there is no syllabus.**

**S: Have you seen one? The advisor that I consulted last year had told me that there was no actual syllabus for us to follow, but to move on having a good pace, there is no such thing as a syllabus for the subject of English language. It is a common secret that English is a subject that we do just to fill in the schedule, it is a second class lesson and all the other things that the ministry can do say like the seminars and so on they do it just for the public's opinion sake, and of course it is well meant that there are even some financial benefits. There is money that is granted by the EU for the seminars and as you may well understand they benefit from these as well.**

**I: By moving to a new school, did you find what you really wanted?**

**S: No, I wouldn't say so, but the difference now compared to last year is that I have been persuaded now that I will never find what I am looking for in the public sector. I am certain that it is a lost case.**

**I: Why?**

**S: Because as I told you it is a matter that concerns the problems that are faced by the administration and the way that the school is run the way they confront the subject. They are problems that even if the headmaster or the members of staff wanted to solve they could not solve. I still suggest to parents and students that if they want to learn English the children should go to the frontisterio.**

**I: Despite the fact that you make efforts.**

**S: Yes, they are not enough. The efforts I make they are made for principle reasons only and since this subject exists in the schedule I tell students that they are obliged to make an effort, but I do not in any case have the illusion that a student will learn English at school. Firstly and most importantly they can't learn English by having two hours of English weekly which could be even less either because there is a celebration or a meeting that makes them miss the lesson. Unless they increase the hours to four or five on a weekly basis, as our union has demanded, then we might be facing only the other problems.**

**I: What are your plans?**

S: I plan to stay at this school for this and then in autumn to ask for a transfer to a town closer to my house I will be in a school where the staff will be more collaborative. As for the students I think that I can manage them even if it takes me more than one trimester to show them what I require of them, until I find things about them and they find things out about me. I am sure they can find out things about me. If we assume I will be able to collaborate in the necessary things with the rest of the staff then I may say that I am quite satisfied more than that since as I have already told you there is no career for us. If you have the capital you can then open up your own business your own frontisterio.

I: What are your plans for the next five years?

S: In the next five or ten years I can't really tell whether I will be able to do anything special, but my dream would be if I could resign some time earlier and be able to open up my own business and not necessarily as an English language teacher, which means that this aspect of my life has to close down at some point.

I: Do you think that the problems that you had to face last year are the ones that created this negative feeling. Don't you feel that your problems have been solved in your new school?

S: No, some may have.

I: Which are the ones?

S: The things I told you about me feeling I could do different things in my class. With regards to the other problems I can't see any improvement in reality. Except for the fact that the head master is not neurotic as the headmistress and would shout at you make lose your well being. The essence is the same.

I: So you have not been salvaged.

S: Not at all. I feel better since last year because as I have already told you it is very important for me the fact that from the very moment that I entered the classroom I am in control of the class I am the one in charge, I am the boss and it all depends on me and there won't be anyone that will come and interfere with what I am doing at least for the things that I do in the four walls of my classroom. This is already very important, but it is not enough in any case it is not enough. I don't feel it is enough especially to me who I have been appointed at an older age and I had the interest of work to compare with the golden era of the frontisteria. Not all the frontisteria, but the frontisterio I was working at before I was appointed I was doing a job that was very efficient and with an essence. I know I can't avoid this comparison and I know you can't find those things in any public school. Simply we have to work so that we can earn our living. It is obvious that I remain at this position because of this otherwise I would have resigned.



I: Would you like to add any thing else that I might have forgotten to ask you about?

S: I can't think of anything.

I: Well, then I thank you greatly for giving up your time.

S: By all means.

## **Interview 1 with HM**

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2000**

**Location: Cypriot community hall**

I: How long have you been teaching for?

S: I have taught in the private sector for two years and the state nineteen years.

I: Why did you choose to become an English language teacher?

S: I chose to become a teacher because I first of all come from a family that most of the members were teachers, therefore I was influenced by the environment I lived in. Secondly, I had very good recollection from some of my own teachers when I was young and I thought that I could resemble them and offer my services to the young ones. The most important reason that I became an English language is that the job prospects were very good when I decided to take the general exams.

I: Coming to the private sector where you are working at present, how would you describe yourself as a teacher within the system?

S: Do you mean as an English language teacher or just a teacher?

I: I mean as a teacher.

S: Well, I feel as all the other teachers, that we function in a system, which is not well organized by the Ministry of Education. I would say, with a curriculum that does not help the teacher to do the things that he has to and wants to in the classroom so that he/she can help his/her students. There is a programme for each subject that limits you. However, we English language teachers have an advantage that the syllabus we have to teach from is quite extensive and what is more this past year we were allowed to choose the book we would like to teach our students. This was very good for us especially this year because we didn't have to teach from a book that the Ministry imposed on us. We choose what to teach our students according to their needs and level.

I: How different do you feel now that you are able to use the book you have chosen than when it was imposed onto you by the Ministry?

S: My feelings are closely related to the students' feelings. Nevertheless, things are much better now than they used to. This year we chose the books according to the needs of the students and therefore there is a lot more interest in the lesson so our job is much easier. However, they are not as interested as we would expect them so that we can be much better at our job.

I: How would you describe your relationship with the administrative staff?

S: Do you mean in the school where I am working? This particular school and this particular headmaster?

I: Yes.

S: As far as their administration is concerned generally speaking and not as far as the teaching is concerned our relationship is quite good. As for the teaching they are not involved in it. They are not interested in what we might be doing. Anyway, even the Ministry doesn't give them the right to interfere with what we might be teaching. I teach the students according to my conscience without anyone checking on me. This has been going on for years even though we haven't been checked on by either the headmasters or the school advisors. There isn't any kind of control; no one ever comes to see what you do.

I: Do you get any kind of help if you need to have a cassette recorder or have your own classroom?

S: Yes, as far as these issues are concerned we naturally address our needs to the headmaster, and he in his turn addresses to the organization that can provide us with what we might need.

I: Are they positive towards you?

S: I have to inform you that in particular this year we were given four cassette recorders and a video recorder, a TV set, slides, a slide projector. All these things were provided this year.

I: How about the other years?

S: Well, the other years there was no case of dispensing. I forgot to tell you that if I have a problem with my teaching I personally have the possibility to have direct access to the school advisor and ask him his opinion. However, I would have liked him to be closer to us.

I: If you had to list the strong points as regards your relationship with the administrative staff and then list the weak points what would they be?

S: I have already told you.

I: Let's recap then.

S: As far as my personal relationship with the heads of our school I would say that they are excellent. They are friendly towards me and I am also very friendly and I do whatever they ask me to do. However, we have no collaboration and we couldn't possibly have any collaboration as regards the teaching practice. This is because they have no knowledge and connection with the teaching of English or any other special subject, such as maths or physics. I want to make it clear to you that everyone of us and each one of us functions in the state school system on his/her own. There is a set curriculum from the Ministry at the school which we follow according to our own beliefs and that is all.

I: And how do you feel about the fact that you are not checked?

S: [Laughter] Well, at a certain point it is good because we teachers here in Greece, to tell you the truth because we are not well paid, say that since we are not well paid we are not checked. What I mean is that if we were paid well then they could check us, they could have a tighter check on us. They don't check us because they don't pay us well. However, if you are a bit conscientious you try to do your job as better as you can, at least the students will not be mocking you. It is bad when the students say that the teacher doesn't know, he is useless. This is the reason that we do the things we do. This is the so-called 'philotimo' of the Greek people.

I: Which areas are the most difficult to handle when it comes to technical and practical needs?

S: Sometimes there are disciplinary problems. I wouldn't say that I have particular problems because I happen to have a very good relationship with the students. However, there is always the chance that there is a problem. What I mean is that I might enter the classroom and the children in the classroom might be agitated either because they had taken a test the previous period or because they didn't have a class and they are not in the mood to have a lesson, either because it is the last session or the previous day they went on an excursion. This means that I have to give them the time to cool down. This is one of the problems I face because I might get annoyed. I most commonly try to be calm, because I like to get in the classroom and have a quiet class. The other problem I have is, I actually faced this year, and there are two or three students in the class who don't have any exercise books. I like them to have the books and exercise books with them. They sometimes forget one book or exercise book. Lately there were students that said that they don't have any exercise books and this really gets at me. I don't have any other problems; of course there are problems when I teach. I don't know whether I am answering the question. I actually believe that in the state school there should be a classroom, a lab for the foreign languages, in particular of the



English language. It would be the place where I would have the video the TV set the slide projector, the cassette recorder. The students would have to come to this class so that I could have a proper lesson and not for me to move around in each class and this doesn't exist at the moment.

I: Is there any other problem that you might have thought of?

S: It is what I have already told you that since I am moving around I can't be carrying the projector with me as one of the school advisors told me once in order to show something to the students. Oh and it is only lately that they put the curtains so that I could show the students the slides. The lesson is actually carried out in the traditional manner and the only thing I use is the cassette recorder.

I: You said that the thing that gets at you is when you find the students agitated for the reasons you stated. Do you think that they tend to behave in such a way because it is the session when they are going to be taught English or is a general tendency they have.

S: No, they do it generally. They do it at every subject. You have to be strict. If you are very strict from the beginning then as I have come to this conclusion after so many years of experience, maybe the teacher has to be very strict from the very beginning so that the students know from the very beginning what the teacher requires of them to do. I personally can't be strict and I like to have a good relationship with them, that is, I like them to accept me as a human being, to like me and then I can be their teacher to offer them things. Because I could be a small dictator, very strict on the other hand as the students perceive it, as a tyrant, a bad person therefore a bad teacher. However, this is not the way things are. There is a difference between their mentality and our mentality. This is why I try that they accept me as a human being and then as a teacher. At this point there is a problem, because there are students who misunderstand my kindness.

I: How do you manage to show students both your kindness...

S: Children happen to understand whether you like them or not. However, I said that there are students either two or five in each classroom that take advantage and this is due to their immaturity, they take advantage of the kindness, but the majority of students appreciate it. They pay attention to the lesson, they participate and they feel at ease to come and tell me if they haven't done their homework. There are however four or five students who believe that since the teacher is good he/she won't tell us anything, it doesn't matter (if we are naughty). They take advantage of you.

I: How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues, the ones that teach different subjects?

**S:** This might sound funny, but I am always talking about myself, because if you ask somebody else they might give you a different answer.

**I:** It is about you that I am interested in.

**S:** Yes, as far as it concerns me I think that it would be better to ask them instead of me. However, I would say that my relationship with them is excellent, because I love them. I like them and they like me. We are very good colleagues, they value my subject as I value their subjects. However, I have managed to make them value my subject and me as they esteem the mathematician and maths. They value me and my subject because they have realized that nowadays you can't get on in your life both in Greece and in general in Europe if you don't know at least one foreign language.

**I:** Do you mean that in the state school there isn't anyone who would consider the subject of English language as a subordinate subject?

**S:** There maybe some who don't accept the new technology, the PCs at school, they don't accept whatever has to do with progress, whatever is new. They don't even accept to use the cash card they don't accept anything new. Well, they are very few and they happen not to accept the English lesson.

**I:** So, you don't have the problem...

**S:** No, I don't have such a problem; I personally don't have such a problem in the school where I am working. However, I am certain that there are such problems in other schools. However, I think that there are very few who are behind with things. They are not worth talking to.

**I:** Could you please tell me what kind of educational approach do your colleagues nurture towards the EFL teacher? You have answered this question, but just to clarify things.

**S:** I have answered the question. I have stated that in my school, I haven't heard anyone say that English shouldn't be taught. On the contrary I have heard people say that the subject of religion shouldn't be taught.

**I:** Really?

**S:** Or I have heard that the hours that religion is taught should be curtailed. Here, I think that we should refer to the students as well.

**I:** Of course.

**S:** Students in our school this year have been complaining, making serious complaints to me and to other teachers I believe. They complain about the fact that they have to have three hours of French instead of having English, which they have to attend for only two hours.

Therefore, the students have realized that the first and most important language is English. Even if they are taught English at the frontisterio they want to be taught at school as well, at least as many as hours as they are taught French.

I: What is the best thing about the staff in your schools and what is the worst?

S: [laughter] it's a little difficult to answer. I don't know if I will be answering your question with what I am going to answer, if you are not pleased let me know so that I can reconsider. I will answer generally. I have the perception that due to the fact that the state school unfortunately isn't a private enterprise – it is not a private business so if it does well it will be successful and if it doesn't do well, say the students don't do well with the exams, and then it will fail. Therefore, if the students fail the school won't have the same number of students, as it happens with private schools, private enterprises and frontisteria. Whichever school has a good name, that is, the students are successful at the exams, and then it has many students. If the school has no successes (among the students) then it will fail therefore they have fewer students. This would interest a private enterprise. Due to the fact that the state school isn't a private enterprise and whether it has successes or not, the teachers because they are the ones that run the schools, they won't lose their jobs, they will continue to be paid, there won't be anyone to curtail their salary. This is because there isn't any kind of assessment, and any connection of salary and output, the thing that is being discussed lately. I think, it might be mean with what I am going to say, but most of them, rather us do not do our job properly. This is because there isn't anyone who would check on us. Therefore, we do whatever we think. We might not be doing it as well as we can, but if we were assessed then we would try our best.

I: I see, so this is the negative point.

S: Yes, this is the negative point. The positive point is that well there are some more negative points. The best thing is that we do not work for long hours. Personally I will be working 16 hours weekly next year. Up until now I have been working for 18 hours when I complete the twenty years I will work 16 hours a week. As you can realize the hours are very few to teach.

I: Does that mean that you could teach for longer hours or do you feel worn out to do so?

S: No, I feel that well I could teach two or three hours more, but I wouldn't be able to teach the 25 hours. Certainly, not. The more years you have worked the fewer hours. It is better that the hours are diminished. However, the teacher who wants to get prepared properly and check the students, their exercise books their homework and if we consider the projects that have been introduced lately. We will need to check the projects and the students; of course



we haven't started yet. This means that the teacher doesn't work only when he/she teaches, but many more hours. And this I believe will happen in years to come.

I: You are not the only one in the school that teaches English, isn't it?

S: Yes, there is another colleague.

I: What is your relationship like with her?

S: I would say it is very good.

I: Is she younger than you?

S: No, we have almost the same number of years. She might have a year less than me. We have a good relationship and she let's me or rather I take on the responsibilities such as the choice of books. So from the point that some responsibilities have been alleviated from her, we can't but have a good relationship with her.

I: Do you collaborate as far as the material you have to cover is concerned?

S: No, each one of us does what he thinks should be done. This is because I teach a different level and she teaches another level. We don't have common classes. When we had the same classes in the past we used to collaborate.

I: What would you say is your status among your colleagues and the administrative staff?

S: Generally speaking, do you mean as a colleague or as an English language teacher?

I: As a colleague and maybe that would include as an English language teacher.

S: I personally think that I would be successful if I had studied public relations. Many people have told me that I am good at public relations. Therefore since I am good at public relations, I can't have but very good relationships. But this, I am answering to the previous question, is the reason I have a good relationship with the students. I believe that if somebody doesn't have good relationships, because this is about public relations, because it is public relations to be able to collaborate with a big number of students, with the colleagues and the headmaster with the administration. All this pre-supposes to have good relationships. If you are good at these then you are good at all the rest. I don't know whether I am a good as an English language teacher, but as far as my relation with the students and their parents are concerned I believe that I am acceptable.

I: Why do you say that you do not know whether you are a good teacher?

S: It should be for the others to say so, not I.

I: You can also tell.

S: I personally try my best; I try to be better eh. Well, some people have told me, actually students have told me that, well I have names to give you if you like, but I don't think you are really interested in them...

I: No.

S: They said that okay I am one of the few teachers in the state sector, who tries to work using a method and a programme. This as you know is not that easy to do in the state school. What I mean is that you sometimes plan to have the lesson and it doesn't come out the way you have planned it. I know for sure that I am not perfect, but on the other hand I don't think I am altogether useless.

I: What are your aspirations, that is, in the future, of course you have been working for twenty years now, but this doesn't mean that your career is over. You actually need another 15 years to retire. What would you like to do in these years?

S: Eh are you interested in my career in the state sector or generally as an English language teacher?

I: As an English teacher in the state sector.

S: They do not offer you anything special, rather I would refer to you. I would never waste time to do a postgraduate course. Firstly, it is not acknowledged at least in Greece. What do I mean by this? When you finish your postgraduate you will go back to the elementary school to teach English or even in the junior high school or senior high school. It is rarely that the teachers who hold a postgraduate degree can get higher positions. I would make an effort to do a postgraduate course, more studies if I did it for myself, but having dedicated time, money and effort, I would like it to have a sort of acknowledgement. If I have to go back to the junior high school and I can do the same thing whether I have the postgraduate degree or not I might be better than the others, but the others can't tell the difference. I have a colleague who teaches religion and she has a Master's degree from the USA, nothing has changed – she is just as the one who has done nothing. However, I esteem and respect the ones that have done a postgraduate; I personally acknowledge them because they certainly try to become better.

I: I didn't mean studies... Would you like to do something different, maybe give up teaching in the state sector.

S: That's what I would like to tell you. This is what I am aiming at, anyway. At least if one of my daughters manages, one of them is not studying to become a teacher. I am trying to persuade the other one to become an English language teacher, and at a certain point I will

give up working for the state, of course I will try to get my pension, as soon as possible, and I will set up a frontisterio with my daughter, a private school and you can ask me why?

I: Why then?

S: Because I can see it from the schools where I am working at. That at the frontisterio, they go to the frontisterio mainly because they have certain targets. That is they will get a certain kind of degree because the mentality that prevails in Greece, which I think that is a good one. There is the aim to study because they pay for it as well. This could be a negative point for the state school. They pay therefore the students study, at least the majority of them, until they get their certificate. In this way the teacher can work better because he/she has students who are interested in learning. The same students come to the state school, but they are not as interested. This is because they come to the state school, knowing or rather being at a level that they know English and they consider it (the subject of English) not as a subordinate subject, but they already know quite a lot. The students come to the junior high school knowing quite a lot of English. Well, actually this year I have in the first grade 12 year old ones and some of them have already taken and passed the First certificate. There are other students that as they finish the first grade they will take the Cambridge or Michigan FC so you can understand the level they are at. That is fifty percent of the students, not all of them. Thank God we streamline them. Half of the students have a very good level of English. From there on in order for the English language teacher to work in the advanced level he/she must use a book that is up to their level of knowledge. There are students in the second grade that take the proficiency degree, not all of them but quite a lot. This year in the advanced third grades the students actually almost seventy or eighty percent of them have the FC and about thirty percent of the rest have the proficiency. Therefore, as you can realize I personally need to teach the students in order to provoke their interest with a much higher level book, which is up to their level.

I: Are you allowed to teach them from such a book?

S: No, I can't because the books that have been approved by the committee for the junior high school are up to the First Certificate.

I: Therefore, your choice...

S: Therefore my choice would be to work in the private sector in order to work better, and of course get a better pay.

I: You have already told me about your relationship with the students. You said that you have a very good relationship with them.

S: Yes, but there are certain exceptions.



I: If you were asked to list the strong points of your relationship with them and the weak points then what would be the list like?

S: The strong point is their ability to recognize whether you like them because I have already said that the students the majority of the students, most of them have this ability. I believe that I like them and the reason I am a teacher. They have the ability due to the fact that they are at a good level to recognize if you have made an effort to have a good lesson. It may not be the best lesson, but at least you are not fooling around. This is again another point that the students can tell. Another point is that I forgive them. For example, I have told them that if a student has not done his/her homework then he/she can come and tell me and there won't be any consequences. They acknowledge this fact and that is why we have good relationships. If for any reason he/she hasn't studied then he/she should come and tell me and I won't ask him/her. They also know that if they try to fool me then I will reprimand them. These I think are the good points and that is why we have good relationships. As for the weak points it is what I have already mentioned. If a student hasn't studied or done his/her homework and he/she doesn't tell me then I can get angry.

I: I don't think that this is a weak point because it is only normal that you get angry.

S: Well the students don't perceive it the way we do. They don't like to be reprimanded; they always like to be forgiven. Always, but there should be certain points that they know that they have responsibilities.

I: You have already mentioned this point, but let's recap. The question is: What are your most effective skills in dealing with students?

S: I think that I have answered it and it is for you to find out.

I: What changes would you make in your workplace to make it favourable?

S: There you are this is an interesting question to answer. In order to change something you need to know what is not good. When you have no control, no assessment, we have not seen anyone else teach. For example how the school advisor would teach or any other teacher at the seminars we go to, or even see teachers teach on a video, I am just giving you my ideas. To see something better so that I can have some ideas I can't possibly change something on my own. I might think that the things that I am doing or the manner in which I teach is good. However, I feel that I need to change certain things about my teaching, but I need to be counseled. At this point I don't have any counseling or any suggestions. This is the reason I said that the seminars, the postgraduate courses are good to do. I have to mention something here. I have attended a series of seminars in Oxford, it was in 1994. I have to inform you that the things that they showed us in the college, it was a teacher's training course, it was

impossible to apply any of the things that they showed us in the state school classroom. They were talking about a small number of students, but we have 25 students the minimum. It is impossible to teach the large number of students the way they told us. They address their teaching to 8 students and I have 28, which means that I cannot apply the things that they showed us. Therefore, we need the school advisors who logically have the knowledge to give us seminars, as I have already told our school advisor they have to do with things that have to do with our practice and not with theoretical points. You can find the theory in books, in practice though things are quite different from theory. How could somebody become any better? As for your question the things that I would like to change and how I could change them – let's give you an example. When I have an advanced group I try to use English all the time. On the contrary when I have a beginner's group and I happen to have one this year, I actually have them every year – a group of students who are weak – it is almost impossible to use English, because the students do not understand. This means that we teach English through Greek. This is a problem. This has to change.

I: This has to do with your teaching, how about some other aspects of your workplace. Are there things that you would change to make things more favourable?

S: There are quite a lot of things, but I can't really think of anything at the moment.

I: Wouldn't you like to have your own classroom.

S: Yes, certainly. I have already told you that the methodology changes all the time. But the framework of the state school doesn't allow the teaching of English to modernize. What I mean is that there are certain pilot schools at which they have applied, I hope you are well aware of this fact, say like the school in X, where there is the English language classroom, there is the history class the geography class, the maths class. It is what I said previously.

I: I don't think that they have an English classroom. (I was thinking of the junior high school).

S: The pilot school is the senior high school.

I: Oh, it is the senior high school, not the junior.

S: The senior school in X1 is also another pilot school and they actually have their own lab. Are you interested in how the school functions?

I: Not really.

S: Actually there are many things that I think should change. I also think that I should change certain things about myself, but I can't think what changes these maybe since I don't have the appropriate help and counseling.

I: If you were the Minister of Education what changes would you introduce to make your work easy, your teaching easy?

S: I don't know whether I am answering your question. The teaching conditions are favourable for a teacher when there is the outmost interest on the part of the students.

I: I see.

S: When you get into the classroom and there isn't any interest then the teaching conditions are difficult and I would say at this point that if I were Minister of Education. I would do two things. I would either close down all the frontisteria at once so that students would learn English as they learn Maths, Physics, chemistry at school and therefore they would start taking an interest in the lesson or if I wanted to keep the frontisteria I would remove the subject of English from the curriculum.

I: I see.

S: My ideas could be radical and I am not sure whether they could be applied, but the thing that I would do is to introduce a state language certificate. And what is more, I don't know whether students can acquire it from the frontisteria or from other language centers, but the whole English language course at the state school starting from the fourth grade at the elementary school, the junior high school and the senior high school I would say that students should take some sort of exams through their school. That is the ministry should set up some exams that would be Panhellenic as regards the English language. If this was realized then the work we did at school would be obvious. I have to re-emphasize that students learn English at the frontisteria but I don't happen to be one who believes that English can't be learnt at the state school. This is because things are a bit funny in Greece.

I: I am surprised by what you are saying. Are there people who believe that students can learn English at the state school?

S: There are quite a few of them. I am one of them who believes that students could have learnt if the frontisteria didn't exist.

I: I see and then our role at the state school would be altogether different.

S: Yes, certainly this is what I was trying to tell you earlier. I would close down the frontisteria so that there would be some interest in the subject of English at the state school.

I: It is claimed that teaching is one of the most stressful professions. I wonder whether this is true about your own practice and the school you work in.



**S:** It is indeed, but because I like it very much whenever I am at school I am much contented and that means okay it is stressful but not so much because I am very happy whenever I am at school.

**I:** So because you are happy it doesn't seem as stressful as it is.

**S:** I mean that I like being at school and teaching, but most of the times it is very, very stressful when students are not interested especially when they are absent minded.

**I:** Then it becomes stressful.

**S:** Yes, that is the case. If they are good students, good boys and girls and are interested in my lesson I don't have any problems.

**I:** So you are happy.

**S:** I mean it and I think that every teacher should feel the way I do. I insist that I am not the best teacher, but when I am at school and the students are interested....I don't like to reprimand, but unfortunately I do reprimand them. It is then that I feel fatigued.

**I:** Say you made the rules with the students about how they are supposed to behave in class.

**S:** With the students?

**I:** Yes. I read it somewhere. You could do it at the beginning of the year. You make the rules together.

**S:** I see, I understand, but there are students that don't need rules. They don't need rules. It is what I have been telling you. Whether there is a rule or not if you know what is correct to do, you are a student and you have particular rights and duties. You are a teacher and you have particular rights and duties. If each one of them doesn't know their rights and duties, imposing rules won't make things any better. Even if we made the rule together, that is myself and the students, to do say 1,2,3,4 and what not to do 1,2,3,4, there are always certain student that won't abide by them. These particular students are the ones that cause the problems. But let's not focus on this problem. The problem isn't the students, because they are only students. It isn't just the four students who create the problem. We know that there will be three to four students who come to school and are not interested in learning. They sort of create all kinds of problems. It depends on us, and actually it is not them who create the big problem. Personally, I don't have any problems concerning their behaviour in the classroom.

**I:** Many teachers complain of becoming 'stupid' during their course of teaching. They tend to lose their expertise. Do you think this is true?

S: I have to tell you that it is quite impressing, that is, I hear colleagues English language teachers even teachers that teach other subjects that they cannot teach the same lesson, the same level.

I: What do you mean?

S: They don't want to teach say this year the first grade and the next year the same first grade. This is an example and the third year again the first grade. They want to teach say this year the first grade and next year the third year so that they can change. I on the other hand have a different point of view. That the more you teach you improve, you correct certain mistakes; things that you can see. If for example I teach the first grade, I teach them a particular material and if the same material is taught the next year, I will teach better. This doesn't tire me at all. There are other teachers who don't like to teach the same things.

I: What I actually asked you is whether they lose their expertise and if this is true?

S: I will tell you about myself. I believe that when I was appointed and bringing to my mind the way I used to teach in relation to nowadays or even five years ago, I saw myself improving on a yearly basis. Even now that I have been teaching for 19 years and I think that the way I taught having just graduated university I was altogether incompetent as a beginner. What I mean is that I would never teach the way that I used to teach.

I: And how did you gain this expertise. Was it just by teaching or by reading books as well?

S: It is the experience. Every person can see his/her faults but at the same time it was the seminars that I attended. I actually attended every one of them. I mean the seminars given by the school advisors the British Council. Everything contributed to my teaching. I tried not to miss any of the seminars. I attend all of them and I tried to absorb things. I have read quite a lot of books. I haven't read [about] teaching some years now. I don't read at present, after 19 years. I used to read during the first ten years, or during the eight. It was then that I read and I tried to try out things that I didn't try out in the classroom [before] and I added to my teaching. I therefore disagree. Personally, I believe that the beginners are incompetent and I can prove it.

I: Do you think that there are enough opportunities for teacher development or do you have to do things on your own?

S: I think there are few opportunities. When I was new, the very first years, when you are young you have more appetite. I had realized from the very beginning that I missed quite a lot. I firstly said that the university does not prepare us to be teachers. They didn't prepare us to be able to go into the classroom and be ready to teach. It was then that I applied on a yearly basis for seminars that lasted for long. I had also taken exams at the British Council I

had taken the exams for three consecutive years and in the end somebody told me it wasn't worth going and taking exams in order to be chosen to attend those seminars either in England or anywhere else, because only very few people could attend them and actually they had already been chosen [that is, before the candidates took the exams the ones that were supposed to attend the seminars already knew secretly that they were the ones that would attend them]. And I realized it quite late. I managed to go and attend a seminar in Oxford in 1994. I was appointed in 1980, that is, after 14 years. As you can see for yourself the opportunities are quite few for us to develop. So it is upon each one of us to do things on his/her own, or by discussing with other colleagues.

I: You have already answered this question, but maybe you would like to add something. On a working day would you say that you look forward to going into classrooms to teach or are you reluctant to go for different reasons?

S: This depends even on the mood I am in. Most of the times as concerns myself I love going into the classroom to teach, but if once and this can happen if I feel tired or I am depressed for a reason, yes I would like to go on an excursion instead. I try to find ways to avoid teaching on that particular day.

I: Supposing you were enthusiastic one day about going into the classroom to teach, and from what you tell me it is almost always that you are enthusiastic could you think of anything that would inhibit this enthusiasm?

S: Do you mean before I go into the classroom?

I: Yes.

S: Of course there are cases that this happens. Actually, it has happened only once or twice in so many years. A parent might create a problem for a trivial reason. Or it could be a problem with my work. Then I don't feel like working, but even then you could get into the classroom being enthusiastic and find the things that I have already told you.

I: What do you mean?

S: Well, the students could be edgy, not to want to have a lesson. Some times they have told me "Sir, please let us not have the lesson today." This is because they want to relax, either because they had difficult lessons before I came in or they had to take a test, or they wanted to go on an excursion and they didn't. You go in and you see the students not being interested in anything.

I: What do you do then?



S: I have a method. Not that I try not to do them a favour, but I try not to impose things. I tell them “It’s okay if you don’t want us to have a lesson, we won’t have a lesson now, but let’s play a game”. After five or seven minutes that is, after having played quite a bit, I try to motivate them to start the lesson. I use certain tactics. This doesn’t happen all the time and it is not always that I am successful. However, you have to find a kind of motivation.

I: Thanks a lot for giving your time to do the interview.

## **Interview 2 with HM**

**Date: 4<sup>th</sup> May 2000**

**Location: Cypriot Community Hall**

I: In the previous interview you mentioned that one of the reasons that you chose to become a teacher was because you had good experience with some teachers and you wanted to be like them. What in your opinion is the ingredient that made them good teachers?

S: The characteristics of a good teacher as I told you in the previous interview, firstly he/she should like his/her job. Secondly, to like his/her student so that the teacher can communicate with them and offer them as much as they can and in particular as regards the teaching. To be a teacher doesn’t mean that you have to just be good at teaching, but also to have good communication with them. To try and form good characters as much as you can and generally when they leave school to remember something from you. For example I remember that some of the teachers had the characteristics I told you. Firstly that they liked us secondly that they were interested in us and finally that they were good at their teaching. They didn’t come into the classroom just to have fun, but to teach us.

I: How different would you be as a teacher if the school in which you are working was more organized?

S: Organization in all aspects is the best thing. That is, if you are working somewhere where everything is organized then you are also part of the whole, which means that you can also organize things in the school where you are working. You can organize your schedule, your syllabus. Therefore, when there is organization in the school the teacher will be better as well.

I: Do you think that you would be a better teacher if the school you worked in was more organized?

S: I believe that everybody would be better if, even myself if we functioned in a system that was organized in such a way that the student was the focal point – a school that aimed at the student and their education.

I: Does the fact that it is not organized very well inhibit you from being a good teacher?

S: It doesn't really stop us, but we try hard in these conditions, that is, most of the teachers, we try to do our best even though things are not well organized. However, if things were more organized then they would be even better.

I: Even though you have chosen the teaching material (book) to be used in the classroom having taken into consideration the general needs of the students, you mentioned in the previous interview that the students do not show the appropriate interest. Why in your opinion is it difficult to raise their interest?

S: If I can remember well I had said in the previous interview that this year having chosen the material the students are more interested in the lesson than they used to. It is not though at the levels we would like them to be. I had explained the reason. The reason at least the one that I have realized this year is that at least at the advanced levels, because the material we teach them is quite advanced from the actual books – the students already know it from the frontisteria and it is quite natural that from the moment that you do not learn something for the first time but you listen to it as a revision, then they can't be that interested. If we could teach those students the material that suits their level then I believe that they would be very interested. Another reason is the big number of students we have in the classroom. Another reason is that we don't have the teaching aids, that is, projectors and others. We got those things but we don't have the right conditions. We don't have the English classroom for example.

I: You mentioned in the previous interview that there isn't any kind of assessment or control over what you teach and how you teach. Do you believe this affects your way of teaching?

S: Well, I told you that we have a set material to teach and based on this we proceed in order to complete part of the material or the whole of it. For example, I asked the students this year to buy the workbooks, which was not imposed by the ministry of education, the students bought them though. However, there is a set syllabus, which refers to the general and specific aims of it. It is certain that in a course book these aims can't be covered through one course book, and this is what I was trying to tell you that a teacher who wants to do his/her job perfectly and wants to follow the syllabus then he/she can by using the course book – even if it is best following the syllabus having taken into account students' needs – the teacher can supplement the material. This is what I meant. He/she can do things using supplementary material in order to cover things that are in the syllabus, but are not covered

in the course book. I personally don't do such a thing and I think that very few teachers would go into the trouble to do so. And I don't do it because as I told you there isn't the control. That is, if someone came and checked the syllabus book, he/she controlled what I taught every time I got into the classroom then I would obligatorily do it.

I: So it does influence you the fact that there isn't any kind of control.

S: Yes, of course it does.

I: When the school year starts and you get into the classroom do you have aims? Do you say to yourself I would like to cover certain points, or do you simply follow the course book

S: This is what I have been telling you. Having chosen the book for the particular level always based on the list that has been provided by the ministry, because I could have chosen to teach them a different book one which isn't in the list.

I: Are you allowed to choose a book that isn't in the approved list?

S: No, I can only choose a book from the list given by the ministry that suggests 8 or 10 or 15 books I can't remember. I could have chosen something else. The most important thing is that they don't allow us to get books that are at a higher level than the ones suggested. As I told you, there are students in the first grade this year in particular this happened to be true this year as students are at a higher level than the expected. In the third grade there are students around 80% who have taken the FC. Therefore, I should be teaching them from a book, which addresses to Proficiency level students, which is impossible to do.

I: What I meant is, say you have chosen the book you want to teach them when you get into the classroom do you have aims? That is do you say by the end of the school year they should have learnt this and that or do you just follow the book?

S: No, this is exactly what I don't do. I just follow the course book even if I know that I could do extra things. I admit I don't do enough things; I just do few things when I could have done more.

I: Why don't you do it?

S: Why I don't do it? Because in the end I would have covered half the book and in case the school advisor came, he could come and ask me why I hadn't completed the book. Why I hadn't covered at least 20 units from the 25 units. What could I explain to him then? That I did supplementary material. That is, there isn't the so called co-ordination. If he approved that I did supplementary material, which would benefit the students then I would do so. I have two aims to cover the course book and the points it gives us.

I: That is, you are obliged to cover a course book for the sake of the school advisor.



S: Not really, no one defines what we are supposed to cover, but you couldn't possibly cover only 10 units out of the 25. You have to cover 20 or 22.

I: And this is in case they check on you.

S: We don't even have the time to cover the units. I believe that the teaching hours are few at school. I think I have already mentioned it at the previous interview. Even the students pinpointed that they can't be taught French or German three hours weekly while they are taught English only two.

I: You mentioned that your colleagues value the subject of English as they value the subject of Maths, which is considered a difficult subject. Do you believe that they value the subject of English in the state school or is it a general thing since it is taken for granted that no one can progress without having knowledge of the English language?

S: This is a difficult question. The most important thing is that everybody and our colleagues know that foreign language and in particular the English language is essential for the student to progress whatever he/she might do, whatever he/she might study. I think that they know that English is essential, but they don't care where they will learn it. In fact, it is the rule that English is learnt at the frontsterio and they also value our subject at school because they sort of see it as supplementing or revising things.

I: You mentioned that you wouldn't be able to make changes in your teaching because you can't really tell what you need to change and this is aggravated by the fact that there isn't any kind of help by someone who is knowledgeable to help you detect the changes you would like to make. If you were given the chance to change things because of the help you would be provided with, how different would you be as a teacher?

S: I think that I would certainly be much better. I am not sure how good I am, but I think that I would be better. It suffices to tell you that I have sometimes come to the point to ask the students that when they think that they don't like something about my teaching to tell me. This is what I was telling you about. I don't have anyone, actually not even one of us has, somebody to show the new teaching methods, things that we could do in the classroom so that we could attract the attention of the students so that the students could learn something more. We are used to, and this is the rule, and this is difficult to change unless they suggest things for you.

I: You mention that the university does not provide us with the skills to be teachers.

S: That was when I was a student.

I: The same was when I was a student, too. And I still believe that students don't come out prepared to be teachers. I saw the curriculum while I was doing my Master's because I needed to refer to it for my dissertation and it still doesn't prepare students to become teachers. What in your opinion is missing from the curriculum, which would enable us to be properly prepared as teachers?

S: I think that... this is quite obvious. The answer is very easy for me. If someone from the department of English asked me then I would answer that from the moment that you aim at having a teacher to teach you should aim at that and not to just teach those English or American literature, or Shakespeare or the history of American literature, or the history of England. They have to aim at preparing people to teach be it at the state school or private school or at the fronisteria. That is they should teach them practical teaching methods, which is not done in the Greek university. At least when I graduated we hadn't even visited a school to see how things functioned and to discuss about teaching methods. This is something that is done in the Greek department I don't know if this is done in the English department.

I: We had a methodology course when I was a student.

S: Well, we did have a methodology course, but it was just theoretical.

I: Yes, it was theoretical.

S: Yes, but I am talking about having something practical. We should have teaching practice at least for the last six months of our attendance or even a year and it should be in locations where teaching takes place.

I: In your opinion how much do you think it affects our teaching and self-confidence the fact that we are not ready to teach when graduating university?

S: I have answered this question indirectly in the previous interview. My personal experience is that the very first months that I taught and judging now how I taught I would say that it was altogether experimental what I did. However, the state appointed me to go into the classroom and teach them, while I wasn't shown how to do such a thing, that is, to teach. I got into the classroom and I was experimenting.

I: Did this affect you?

S: Well, then I thought that I was doing my best. Now I realize that what I was doing was terrible. I don't know whether I should mention this, but it is something that I totally disagree with here in Greece. I know what is going on in Cyprus at this point. In Cyprus the candidates who would like to be teachers are required to have been taught psychology, pedagogic and methodology. This is because many school such as the Math department and

other schools don't teach them those courses, they have to attend seminars that could train them on those aspects. However, starting from last year or the year before last, I can't really remember, before anyone is appointed I think they have to take courses on pedagogic and psychology for two years in the pedagogic institute in order to prepare, the Ministry of Education in Cyprus, those candidates as teachers. This doesn't happen in Greece and this I think is very negative.

I: Do you believe that you have overcome this obstacle?

S: Having taught for so many years I think that having attended the few seminars given by the school advisors – I must point out here that they have not given many seminars at least not as many as they should have – and having stayed in England, in Oxford and trying not to miss any of the seminars I think that I have improved very little. The things that I did and I thought were correct to do I did. It is certainly not what I expected it to be like.

I: It is said that our commitment and enthusiasm to teach are very rarely constant, but rather show a dynamic fluctuation. To what extent is this true about you? Could you mention some examples?

S: I think that no one and nothing can oblige anyone to do anything. If I do something because I am obliged would mean that I wouldn't do it properly. That is, if I taught because I was obliged to teach and it is not because I wanted to teach then I wouldn't be a good teacher either. I go because I need to. And this is what we say. If somebody likes to be a teacher and this is the difficult point and that is the difficult point to judge who wants to really be a teacher and should become a teacher or not. Well, now even with the exams that the ministry has designed which teachers have to take in order to become teachers I think this is a wrong way to choose teachers. The person who passes the exam is appointed as a teacher. This is wrong because he/she could be the best scientist (academic), but could be unsuitable as a teacher. As regards the enthusiasm the ones that are enthusiastic are the ones that like to teach. There is a difference here it is one thing to do something because you are obliged to and another if you like it. I believe that the ones that are enthusiastic to teach will become good teachers, at least they will try to be good teachers and this is because they want to be good teachers. As I told you in the previous interview, it is many times that this enthusiasm stops, for different reasons it vanishes. I don't know if you would like me to give you an example.

I: Yes, please.

S: When I was first appointed I was so enthusiastic that I was appointed on the island of Samos and on this island in those days most students didn't attend the frontisteria, only a few attended. I was appointed at the senior high school, and in those years grades meant a lot



to enter the university I had suggested to the headmistress to allow me to teach the students who didn't attend the frontisteria in the afternoon. And she actually allowed me to do so. So I started teaching these students in the afternoons. It was then that I was accused by two frontisteria owners, there were two frontisteria in those days in Samos, that by teaching those students I had been taking work away from them plus that I was illegally paid for the work I was doing. This was the thing I was telling you about. Say you are enthusiastic but different external factors inhibit you from being enthusiastic. I tried to do things in the classroom, but I was new I can't say that I was perfect.

I: At this point of your career having worked for so many years would you say that you are enthusiastic?

S: I don't really know, despite the fact that nineteen years have gone past since I first started teaching when I get into the classroom I like it. I like to teach. However, when there isn't the appropriate interest then you are not in the mood. That is where I detect the problem to be.

I: Could you list the factors that contribute to making a class interesting to teach? Could you mention some examples as well please?

S: Do you mean motivation?

I: No, what I meant is factors that make a class interesting?

S: Oh the classroom?

I: Yes.

S: The class not the teacher?

I: Yes.

S: For me when I get in a class, who are interested in learning, they want to learn then I give them my best self. I will in my opinion teach them the best lesson that I could ever teach them. However, when I see that certain students, it is an example I would like to give you, who say as soon as I am ready to teach something they say that they already know what I am about to teach them and I am certain they know things from the frontisteria, then I am not enthusiastic at all. You tell yourself "What should I tell them since they already know the things I was prepared to teach them?" But, for me it is something I have to teach since it is in the syllabus and this is what I was telling you. When there isn't the appropriate interest from the students usually from all the students then, it doesn't really mean anything when there are two or three students say out of the thirty students. If it is a big number of students that are not interested in the lesson, not because I am not teaching them in an interesting way, but because the things that I am going to tell them things that are included in the book or are in the syllabus that they already know because they have been taught those things in the

frontisterio then I say to my self, how can I put it, you don't feel like teaching them. I personally think that the most important reason that a teacher wants to teach is when the students are interested in learning, which is when I give my best self. However, the problem here is that, and I emphasize it is the fact that the students come to class with quite a lot of knowledge from the frontisteria. This is the reason I think that it is better to teach younger students that are beginners and want to learn, and not to teach older ones.

I: Could you think of other elements except for the one you just mentioned that make a class boring to teach?

S: Basically a class consists of people, the teacher and the students. We are not really interested in the desks if they are colourful or not.

I: Not really.

S: That is why I said that the interest derives from the teacher and the students. The students and the teacher then if there is a good relationship and some interest from the students I think that the teacher can teach even better. If the teacher can also use new methods that would interest the students, new teaching methods using for example slides, actually you can't show them slides every day, the thing that we use a lot here is the cassette recorder when you do the listening.

I: Does this interest them?

S: Yes, it does.

I: Was there a class or is there still a class that is a nightmare to go in and teach?

S: No, I have never had such an experience despite the fact that in each class there are students, who trouble both the classroom and the teacher. However, they are so few that I have never thought that I have to get into this classroom. However, I hear from other colleagues that they have a problem.

I: How would you describe a day on which you felt satisfied with your teaching and the students seemed to have learned?

S: There are quite a lot of days that I have felt satisfied. Unfortunately, it isn't all the days that are this way and this is where I lose my enthusiasm and interest. It is quite often that either because the point that I have to teach be it a text or a grammatical point or the listening, that is the material that I have to teach on that day is interesting either because they don't know the words or it is something that moves them, it could be about technology...something that interests them then I am happy because I feel I have offered them something. The students are satisfied and I feel I did my job in the best way.

I: How would you describe a day on which you are not in shape and everything in class seems to go wrong?

S: Well, in those days I just wait until the bell rings and I feel like fleeing. I like to teach the classes that have weak students. The reason is that these weak students haven't been taught the things that the others have. They don't know as much as the others therefore what I teach them and if the book is suitable and it has quite a lot of interesting topics nice activities on vocabulary, writing and speaking, then I like it. This year is the first time that the weak ones are better students than the advanced ones. This is because they are very much interested in the lesson and they want to learn. The teaching material is designed in such a way that they understand everything. However we proceed in a much slower pace.

I: You have already answered this question but you might want to add something. Do you think that your teaching is satisfactory on most of the days or the contrary?

S: No one can say that teaching can always be satisfactory. I think, as I have already mentioned, that in certain cases when there is interest in the lesson then it is satisfactory. In other cases when there isn't the appropriate interest either because the material is not that interesting, but let me not...always say that we are the best....

I: What I was referring to is the lesson. Would you say it is satisfactory or not?

S: I would say 50, 50. I don't really know the percentage, but it's 50, 50. That is sometimes actually half the time I consider it to be satisfactory, but it is better that we ask the students.

I: Truly, why did you choose to join the public sector? What were your expectations when you joined it?

S: Eh, I didn't actually choose to that is, even now I believe it was a mistake to have joined the public sector. That is the way I feel personally. Why did I study? I studied, I have already mentioned why I became a teacher. I was aiming at setting up my own frontisterio. That is, a private institution, my own workplace, a teaching workplace not like the one in state sector, because I know it isn't the best teaching environment you can offer students. However, when I graduated the conditions weren't the best financially in order for me to set up something of my own and I had thought that if I joined the state sector for a while even though I knew that it wasn't the best place to work in, and this I realized I don't know if I have already mentioned it in the previous interview.

I: No.

S: As soon as I got my teaching license, that is, when I was in the third year of my studies at the university of Thessalonika I started working in a frontisterio, which means that I was teaching in the frontisterio while I was studying at the university in the fourth year... and I



remember that something made a bad impression on me concerning the state school.

Although I hadn't even graduated I remember the students trusted me more than their teacher in the state school. I, in particular remember the students telling me, "Sir, the state school teacher told us that the reported speech is like this. Is what he told us correct?" The students were senior high school students. They questioned, actually they doubted whether the teacher was telling them the right thing. They were not sure what the state school teacher was telling them and they came to the teacher, that is, me, who hadn't even graduated. That is, they trusted me and the reason is that I was teaching in the private sector.

I: Why do you think this is so, because the same thing is still going on?

S: I know and this does not happen only in our subject, but in many other subjects. I think that one reason that this happens is because they pay at the frontisterio whereas they don't pay at the state school. This is one reason, of course there are others, as well. It is a fact that when you pay for something you appreciate it even more.

I: Could you possibly tell me the other reasons, too?

S: It is that the state school is not well organized and that the ministry expects us not just us English language teachers but teachers of other subjects as well that we teach them so many things that we don't have the time to cover. The whole syllabus, thus we rush to cover things. As I told you about myself I teach them in order to cover the book. Not that I have, as an aim that the students learn. Thus, the teacher doesn't have the time to let them practise the things that he/she has taught them say there is no time to do speaking and writing. So the teacher does everything, but what he does is incomplete. This is the reason they have to go to the frontisterio in every subject. When I say every subject I mean the subjects that are impossible to cover properly at school. This is another reason, because in Greek society the teacher and the student consider and this is true in my opinion that the student can't learn everything at school and they need to attend the frontisteria in order for the students to learn. The same thing happens with the English language.

I: You have answered this question, but you might have to add something to it. Supposing you could choose to work either in the public or private sector, having the same pay, which would you choose to join and why?

S: Without doubt I would choose to join the private sector although you said I was going to get the same pay?

I: Yes, the same pay.

S: Even if I was going to get the same money the job in the private sector is more responsible. It is more responsible because firstly students, who attend the frontisteria in

Greece, attend them so that they can acquire a certificate. Therefore, you have certain aims when you teach, whereas in the state you don't aim at anything. You teach just to teach. Whereas in the private sector there is a certain aim. The students come to the frontisteria to attend the different levels until they get to the point to be able to take the exams. Therefore, the job requires you to be more responsible. You can't just teach just for the sake of teaching and what is more, a thing which is important – they check on us and you can't just sit back doing nothing. You are accountable, you are even afraid that you might lose your position. That is because if a student or a parent complains to the headmaster that teacher X doesn't teach well and they don't like him they give him the sack. Whereas in the state sector this doesn't happen and if it does then it is very rare that it happens.

I: If you were to reflect and report on when you think you were most motivate to teach in your teaching career when would that be?

S: Well, I can't really remember ..how can I remember after so many years? I think that well if I go back in time I think it was when I taught in my fourth year of my teaching experience. This was because well even before that I was interested in teaching, but I think that I wasn't the best I could have been, even if the students at the beginning of my career loved me very much, that is, I even remember that the frontisteria owners called me after the incident that had occurred, they phoned me so that they could meet me and see for themselves the reason that the students like me. I was more competent or better ready to teach properly when I was in the fourth or fifth year of my career and that is when I came to this town. I stayed there (in Samos) for four years and when I came to this town. I was appointed to teach the junior high school, whereas there I taught senior high school students. So when I got in the first or second class of the junior high school, I think that, let alone that then the students weren't as advanced as they are now.

I: It was then that English was introduced in this school.

S: Yes, exactly. So I had to do with students who knew very little and that is where the students had more interest in the lesson and I was ready to teach properly and I knew what mistakes I had made what I had improved. I know I was better than when I was appointed at first. I had the appetite to work hard, that is, more appetite to work than now.

I: And the reason you had an urge to teach is that the students didn't know English so you had to teach them first hand.

S: Exactly.

I: How do you think students learn a foreign language and how does this belief correlate with your teaching strategies?

**S:** English is taught, as a foreign language, it is not our mother tongue. We learn our mother tongue whether we like it or not and the reason you learn it is because everything you hear around you is said in Greek. It is what I have always claimed that the child attends elementary school already knowing the Greek language. The teacher teaches him/her knowing that the students already speak Greek. The thing that the teacher has to do is to teach him/her how to read and comprehend a text. He teaches him how to answer questions, to learn the grammar. This is where the difficulty lies when teaching a foreign language in my opinion and I think that most people agree with the point I am going to make. Teaching a foreign language means that the students come to class knowing nothing, neither how to speak nor how to read. That is, when they have to start learning they have to learn to read, to speak, to listen and understand, to write. So in order for someone to learn a foreign language is a combination of many things, that is, reading, actually all the four skills, reading, speaking, listening, writing. All these are learnt as a combination. We can't say that someone can learn exclusively reading texts or just speaking. It is quite impossible. In Greece and generally all around the world people learn English as a foreign language, that is, we start off from nothing. The child that starts learning English is as if he/she is a one-month old baby.

**I:** Can a one-month old baby speak? Well, I am actually forgetting that the students' brain is quite developed.

**S:** Exactly, this is why the experts, it isn't me that is saying it, the experts say that the ideal age to learn a language is between the ages of eight and nine. However, here in Greece and this is quite unfortunate they start learning a foreign language when they are much younger and this I don't really know whether it is any good.

**I:** You said that in order to learn a language you need to combine all four skills. When you teach does this apply to your teaching?

**S:** First of all the course books that we have been using combine all the four skills, that is they start off with a dialogue or a text which they have to listen to either from a cassette recorder or the teacher reads it to them and then a couple of students read it and then some other students will read it and then we will do reading comprehension. The book that I have been teaching this year I believe is very good in this aspect. Then we do the vocabulary practice. The students have to find the words in the text, we do the derivatives and then we do the listening. At the same time we do the speaking and in the end we do writing on the topic we have been working on and using the words the students have learnt. This is the reason I said that everything is combined. The only thing is that the time is not enough the



hours are not sufficient. This is the reason we have to rush so the weak students, they are the ones that learn nothing.

I: Does it affect you when parents say that their child performs well at the private language school despite his/her performance at school and this is verified by the low grade that you give the student?

S: Well, this affected me at first, but I have got over it now. Indeed, there are many parents that are right. However, once I proved that this was not true. I had asked the student to come in front of her mother and read the text that she had been taught earlier that day and she couldn't read it. So I told the mother that if the frontisterio believes that she is as good as they think she is then she should have been able to read the text I gave her without even me having to teach it to her. I had taught this particular text, but she couldn't read it therefore it is not exactly the way they have been presenting you about the progress of your child. At the beginning of my career it did affect me truly, but now it doesn't bother me. I can see what is going on in the classroom and the performance of each student in my class. There maybe a student that doesn't care what grade he/she might be getting and to be interested in what is taught in the frontisterio because there he/she will get a certificate, he/she aims at a certificate. And even though he/she could perform well at school, he/she doesn't really care. This is the reason they get a low grade and the parent comes to complain, but this doesn't really mean anything

I: Do you have a teaching philosophy?

S: This is a question that one of the school advisors asked one of us. He asked somebody if he had a teaching methodology and a teaching philosophy and this person answered both seriously and jokingly that I teach spontaneously. (Laughter). That is, we certainly get ready to teach something using a method, a strategy. This happens because we teach living organisms, students. We plan things differently and they come out different. Therefore at least in my opinion you can't apply a particular method. Yes, I do have a teaching philosophy. I tell my students that you learn English because you need to communicate. I can't tell them that you learn English because our aim is for you to get a certificate, because this doesn't happen in the state school. Therefore, I have found out at least this is what I think I found that... I tell them that the English you learn at the frontisterio when you take the exams in combination with the things that we do here in school, your aim is not just to get a certificate and I do it so that I can motivate them. I tell them that they will get the certificate from the frontisterio, which of course doesn't mean that you will be able to communicate. And I explain to them, and this is my philosophy that they learn the English language in order to be able to communicate with people from different countries either by

writing or by speaking. This is my philosophy and based on this I try in the classroom that whatever I do in the classroom to aim at speaking, writing and understanding. This, however is not 100% successful I have already told you the reasons. Either because the number of students in the classroom is big or most of them are not interested or because the hours are few, or because we don't feel like succeeding in the aim. This is the general philosophy.

I: You might have answered this question, but I would like you to clarify. Do you think that a teacher is born or made?

S: I think both. There are teachers, who are born and I believe in it. There are many surgeons that study to become surgeons, but they are not successful. There are many that study to become teachers, but not all of them are successful. Some have the talent, therefore they are born to be teachers. There are some other fewer cases because they like teaching but they don't have the talent they do their best to be good teachers and they are successful. There are others quite a few that do not succeed at all. Thus, it is both: A teacher is born and is made. Others are born to be teachers and others are made.

I: Thanks a lot for giving up your time.

### **Interview 3 with HM**

**Location: Cypriot Community Hall**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2000**

I: What are the changes you would make provided it was in your power to make both teaching and learning conditions bearable?

S: This is a difficult question to answer. I have already mentioned that it is difficult to make changes unless there is someone there to suggest things.

I: Let me specify. What changes would you make within your framework?

S: Look, I would like to apply new teaching methods at least the ones that we listen about in the seminars we have. However, it is difficult to apply them in a class where you have 28-30 students. Say for example if you want to do group work or pair work. I would like to have a smaller class. This is one change I would like to make. Another change which has to do with my teaching and I insist on is that I would like to have a lab, a classroom. I would like it to be my class and the students to come in my classroom where I would have all the teaching aids I would like to have within my reach. There are certain things that raise the motivation. In the classrooms that I have to move from one class to another is quite difficult. What is

more, the fact that the desks are placed in a row is something that I do not like. That is, I would like to have it in a  $\Pi$  shape. I would like the desks to be set in a different way.

I: The problem is that the desks are sometimes even difficult to move around.

S: Yes, it is. Of course it is. The whole organization of the class as it is, that is the big number of students the way the desks are set don't allow you to change certain things. What should I change? Do I have to change the way I teach them a text or a listening? These are quite standard. Whereas, I should have a smaller class and I think that everybody would like to and I would like to teach in a lab.

I: What is the driving force of our profession and what are the elements that slow down our progress?

S: What do you mean by driving force? Is it something that pushes us forward?

I: Yes.

S: I think that I have answered it, but let me say it again for a teacher to be motivated depends on the environment that he/she finds himself/herself in. What I mean is that the teacher should be in a school that is very well organized, the administration the other teachers, the students and the parents appreciate the subject, your teaching and yourself of course. To be able to say to yourself what you offered the students or they say to themselves what they have learned when you have finished a day's or rather an hour's lesson. Of course these things do not happen in practice. Neither the students ask themselves whether they have learned something, that is, they ask themselves I learned five words, phrases something that I can use. I don't know...

I: Do you ask yourself?

S: Yes, I do sometimes. Sometimes, I find that certain things I should have taught the students. However, I am not certain. This is because I don't have the chance to revise, to see again and this is, as I have already told you, because I have to move on.

I: Do you seek out other colleagues' collaboration either in the school you work in or in other schools, to share problems and ideas? Do you consider this collaboration helpful? Do you see a role in them?

S: I do it many times. I think it is very useful when teachers that teach the same subject meet and exchange ideas. That is, what problems each one of us he/she has faced and how he/she has solved them. Another thing is how he/she teaches a particular point It is certain that each one of us has a lot to offer to each other. Unfortunately, this doesn't happen because even when we meet with the school advisors this doesn't happen. That is the experience of each



one of us whether they are good or bad to be expressed. Everybody should express them, everybody should see what could be done to improve things. This doesn't happen.

I: Yes, indeed it doesn't.

S: If I ask two of my colleagues I know well because I can't ask the ones that I don't know, because they could misjudge me, I do it with colleagues with whom I am very friendly. We do it.

I: And do you find this useful?

S: Yes, I find it very useful.

I: How about the professional associations? Do you see a role in them? Are they of any use to you?

S: Yes, sometimes I find certain useful things, this is, because they have been written or rather suggested by people who are more specialized than me.

I: If there was an appraisal system that you have faith in would that influence you as a teacher?

S: I have already told you that an appraisal system is useful, but it is what you just pointed out. You should trust it. It should be a correct one. Of course before the appraisal takes place, and I insist on the institution of the school advisor, whose role I believe has not been used correctly here in Greece. The word itself says it. He is an advisor a school advisor. His/her role is to advise you. He /she has not provided us with anything, but certain theoretical seminars they haven't provided us with anything in practice. Therefore how can you expect him/her to come and assess us, for something that we haven't been instructed? I have already mentioned that the university has not prepared us well to be teachers, I personally, whatever I have managed to do I managed on my own, that is, the Ministry of Education has not provided me with anything in order for me to improve. Therefore, how can it come and assess me when I haven't been taught to do something. That is where the problem lies.

I: What do you do to stay abreast?

S: I don't really know whether I always keep abreast. However, I try when there seminars are given by certain publishing houses I try to attend them. I don't go to everyone of them because it is impossible to attend all of them. When I was younger I used to go to them all. I therefore try to stay abreast through the seminars of the publishing houses. I have been to the British Council a couple of times. I attend all the seminars that the school advisor gives us

and I could say actually I bought a lot of books in the past, now I don't really buy that often. Thus, I don't know whether I am well informed. I could have been more informed.

I: Why is that you don't try to be informed as you would like to?

S: Because the enthusiasm that you have at the beginning fades for the reasons that I have already mentioned.

I: Do you think that your job within the state system is recognized? What sort of recognition would you like for work that is well done by you?

S: Well, usually there are both students and parents who do recognize my work or at least so they say. However, it is not everybody. Because primarily as mentioned since the parents pays for his/her child to learn English in the frontisterio and they do succeed in learning – quite a big percentage does – but they have to pay for it. That is where they think they learn the foreign language and this happens in other subjects as well. The parent pays to have his/her child prepared in subjects such as maths, physics and in essay writing. The parents think that their son/daughter learns in the frontisterio. Whereas, I insist that the students can learn even in the state school, or at least they could learn under different conditions. But at least the thing that I want is for my effort to be recognized. I get into the classroom to teach I don't go in to tell jokes and have fun until time is up for us to leave. This is a good thing if it is recognized by the teachers and students. This is not recognized always because when they pay they learn.

I: You have told me and I can tell myself that you have a very good relationship with the students. Could you please tell me how you manage to have such a good relationship?

S: I think that I have already told, I think it was in the first interview. They have the ability to understand certain things. They have their own criteria.

I: Would you say that your hopes and expectations have been justified while practising teaching in the state sector?

S: No. The question should be answered with a NO. This is due to the fact that at the beginning of my career I wasn't aiming at getting appointed in the state sector. I was actually planning to open up my own school, or with some other colleagues to open either a private school or a frontisterio. However, as I have already mentioned, due to financial problems I couldn't open my own school. The way schools are. The way the state school is. I don't know for someone who has aims or rather had aims I can't really say that I have aims. I can't really do much now. I can't really stop working now and do something else at my age, I am 45 now. I can't open a frontisterio at this age or do something else and it is the

financial thing again. Therefore, if someone has aims the public school doesn't help him/her to justify his/her expectations.

I: If you could change your profession would you do so? Why? Why not?

S: No, I wouldn't, but if I was a millionaire I would. (Laughter) I am just joking. No I wouldn't change it. I like it.

I: We have talked quite a lot about different things, now tell me what is it that irritates you the most?

S: I think that I have already told you. But let me remind you again. Firstly, that the students come to school knowing English very well. Therefore, the fact that they do not expect to learn from me is what gets me. Another thing that irritates me a lot is that the students are not interested in my lesson at all.

I: And how about something that makes you happy at school?

S: The thing that makes me happy to tell you the truth is that no one checks on me  
(Laughter)

I: Thank you for giving up your time.

## **Interview 1 with MP**

**Date 19<sup>th</sup> May 2000**

**Location: My flat**

I: Could you please tell me your name and how long you have been working for both in the state and private sectors?

S. My name's X and I have been working as a teacher since 1987. Okay which is like 13 years and for the last three years I have been working for the public sector.

I: Did you say the last five years?

S: No, the last three years. Yes. Prior to that I was working either in Athens in a private institute, which was just for adults, which was great, I really loved it and prior to that I had my own school. My own frontisterio, but I closed it down.

I: Why?



S: Eh, I don't know it wasn't going where I wanted it to go. It wasn't going well so I decided that I have to shut it down and besides it was too many hours. There was nothing there just work, work, work. And that's it.

I: Why did you choose to become a teacher?

S: Eh. Why did I choose to become a teacher? I always wanted to become a teacher. (Laughter). But besides that I had great teachers. I always wanted to become a teacher. I mean where I used to go to school in South Africa eh I had great teachers. From primary school right up to high school. They were eh perfect raw models. I wanted to be like them. Now seriously they were very good and I aspire to be like some of them.

I: Coming to the state sector where you are working at present, how would you describe yourself as a teacher within the system?

S: How would I describe my self?

I: Yes, within the system. You know it is quite a unique system.

S: Definitely. I am quite sure it is unique (Laughter) I am quite positive about that. I would see myself trying very hard to overcome certain obstacles, but I seem to sort of come up against the wall each and every time and it is making [me] sort of very hopeless. I feel...if things continue the way they are, which I am quite sure they will, I don't see a change within the near future, eh, I don't know most probably I will leave [the teaching profession] sometime, I'm very frustrated with the whole situation with how things run. And with the colleagues around you, no support no nothing, very difficult.

I: I have a question on your relationship with your colleagues, but let me ask you first about your relationship with the administrative staff? The headmaster.

S: The headmaster eh okay describe it...very...what friendly? We talk to each other on a first name basis, okay rather friendly and everything...eh... it is. We have cooperation together a good whatever...

I: You mentioned that you don't really have any support would that include the headmaster?

S: Okay. I suppose so maybe I would include him. Yes, aha, in the sense that... he is not informed okay about different things happening in our sector I suppose...I don't know whether he should be or he shouldn't, okay that is another thing...but there are many things I would like to ask that he doesn't know the answers to. And of course I have to get in touch with the English consultant whether he exists okay and he informs us. Eh but the school advisor seems to be sort of absent most of the times when you need him when you want something to happen. Or maybe in the classroom okay when you have some sort of a

management problem okay because they do come up. Well, he doesn't normally support you in the way he is supposed to okay. He will just say "You deal with the problem".

I: Which would mean that he has no knowledge to help you or is it because you are the English teacher?

S: Yes, something like that. Something like that...

I: Which is?

S: You are the English teacher and English teachers don't count. I mean unfortunately they sort of, you know...

I: Why is that English teachers don't count.

S: They should very much so. I don't know. I don't know what kind of a mentality that is. You know the way of thinking. The way of thinking why they don't count. No, because I don't know I haven't thought of it.

I: Which areas are the most difficult to handle when it comes to technical and practical needs? It could be having access to a cassette recorder or...

S: We don't have the cassette recorder. We don't have the cassette recorder, we don't do any listening, Okay. But a few times that we have done a listening I have brought in my own material, Okay my own cassette recorder. Eh we don't have a video we don't have any equipment, you know to help us work properly you know the way we want to do it. Eh to be ill equipped school actually...

I: If you presented the fact that you are facing difficulties because you are lacking all the teaching aids would the headmaster...

S: I have asked him if we could have a cassette recorder and he said that we'll deal with that. I mean that was right at the beginning of the school year. Because this is my first year here like I said and I did mention a few other things that we didn't have at school and one of the things was a cassette recorder and he said we'll see about that and we are still seeing about that still somewhere there.

I: Why do you think there is such lack of support? Is it because they might not have the financial means?

S: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so. For heavens sake I mean they are busy building a laboratory now and they are busy buying all the equipment and two of the classes are being altered completely that they might turn them into science labs. Okay, that means there is a lot of money there. I don't know it is just indifference there. Who cares sort of thing attitude...

I: Isn't English supposed to be a language that students are supposed to learn.

S: Of course it is supposed to be. English ... they don't just care. They don't just care.

I: Let's go to you colleagues now. How would you describe your relationship with them?

S: Eh. How would I describe my relationship with them? Eh, formal to friendly. Okay with some of them it's a very sort of formal relationship and with some of them it is a friendlier one. My relationship with the other English language teacher is, you know there are two English teachers in the school, my self and this other teacher. She comes from Athens everyday. Eh, that's a rather difficult relationship in the sense that, eh, she sees things differently. I want to, how can I say this? I work in a completely different way than she does. Okay. Shall I say what she does and...?

I: Yes.

S: She sort of walks into a classroom and she presents her unit or whatever it is or passage. She does translations in the classroom. And this is something I don't do. I work completely different, in a completely different way. Eh, I do pair work I do things. Speaking activities lots of things like that, okay. Students are involved in doing what they want. I prepare my lessons a lot etc. Eh, she doesn't seem to think that way, okay, which means for example now she has reached unit 40 something and I am in unit 20 because I have done other things, okay, and a lot of revision work etc so that things can sink into their minds and you know, eh, she just marches on. Okay. We just can't communicate and that's a very difficult thing, okay, and you don't get any support from that person. We just can't seem to get down and you know discuss things in a normal way.

I: And would that affect you with your teaching?

S: It doesn't affect me in any way. No, because I do things the way I have been taught to do them. Okay the way I want to do them in class which is using a completely different method from the one she is using. So we don't meet anyway, that is, it's impossible to communicate with such a person. Okay. So it is difficult. I wish, I mean I did have a person that, there are lots of things that I think. You know we could communicate sit down and see how we can do things, you know.

I: And exchange ideas.

S: And exchange ideas, that is, the whole thing about it. But it is not possible.

I: Now tell me about the other colleagues. What kind of educational approach would they nurture towards the EFL teacher? What I mean is would they value you as teacher or are they indifferent towards you or do they tend to be aggressive?



S: Aggressive? I wouldn't say so. Eh, but they tend to undervalue you. OK. Well, English big deal. You know. I mean it is not a subject that even counts. You know how the school system is like. Eh, they don't just, they seem indifferent to you.

I: Does this affect you with your teaching again...

S: It doesn't affect me with my teaching no, but I wish things were different. OK But it definitely doesn't affect me. I seem to sort of march on.

I: What is the best thing about the staff in your school and what is the worst?

S: Okay this I don't think (laughter) the best thing about the staff. No, I haven't still found it. The worst thing is, even though they teach different things different subjects we don't seem to sit down and exchange things, ideas maybe or talk about students and how we could help certain students the ways we could help certain students who do face difficulties okay. It's just sort of they tend to gossip, you know, they tend to say awful things about students and I don't like that. I mean. Yes, there are some students that do cause problems in the classroom but eh maybe we could all sit down and talk about that particular student and ways that we can find to maybe change the student's behaviour, attitude towards a certain subject or something, but this doesn't happen and I tend to be sort of to move away from all this kind of ... . You know when they start talking about students and they start saying all these gossipy things about I just get up and leave.

I: What would you say is your status among your colleagues and the administrative staff?

S: What do you mean by status?

I: Like when they see you do they say there she is the good teacher. Do they value you?

S: How do they consider me?

I: Yes.

S: I suppose they do consider that I am doing my job because I am always at the photocopying machine always making photocopies, and doing things bringing in things. You know lots of colleagues of mine ask why I am carrying so many bags and what are those things hanging out of my bags and things like that. Okay things that I have and I do in my classroom. So I suppose they do say I am hard working and I suppose they, the vice headmaster that we have okay the vice principle he is a person that really shows his appreciation and says nice things that makes you feel good and makes you feel appreciated and of course with all the hard work that you do it's a good feeling. But that's only one person who really says it. He says it face to face. You are doing very good work. I see it in students. He has, he's got some of his in one of my classes and he says how the students feel

about having the English lesson and that's good to hear comments to hear comments from people. But okay besides that the other people they have some good things to say but not all of them very few people. Very few. Like two or three that come out of a staff of like 30 teachers I think.

I: Do you think that they may be envious about what you are and this is the reason why...

S: I mean yes, but in the sense that they don't even say 'Good morning'. When I say 'Good morning' they don't say 'Good morning' can you believe that? I have a fit every morning at school so I suppose they are envious, but I don't pay attention to those kind of people. Well, if they have an attitude problem it is their problem not mine

I: You mentioned the students, actually I had a question to ask you later in the interview. Are they happy with your teaching? Could you tell me more about it?

S: Eh, well, I reward students who work hard etc okay. Well, those who don't work hard and are lazy etc for example I give them low grades and they are not very happy and these days we did give them the grades and some of them are very unhappy. You know and they came over to me and said "Why did you do this and why did you give me this kind of grade etc" and I explained it to them and they didn't seem very happy of course because that's what they are interested in, grades not learning. You know it's a different... their orientation is completely different. Instead of focusing you know on what I have learned and in what I am learning, it's you know, "Did I get a 20 sort of thing?" and it's the whole way people think. Parents pass their attitude on to their children. What they want is a 20. Anyway, eh but I do have lots of students who are very happy and I can see that how they do their work, they do extra activities, things that I give them. See what can I use they're really interested in doing their work, which is a completely, excuse me, I am not being mean now I am just making a comparison okay with the other English teacher. They don't seem to be interested in what they are doing. It's not challenging, it's not fulfilling it's you know translating is what...for God sake you know you fall asleep sort of thing. Making them think, making them look up things and finding things and doing things in groups pairwork, outside of school not just in school, okay. It makes things more challenging I suppose.

I: How about the students that sit there just aiming at a good grade. When you teach them do you think that they get bored in the lesson. Do they get bored of the lesson?

S: Of course they do. Definitely the majority of them because there is another problem in senior high schools. Because in junior high school it's different. The previous two years I was in public sector I was in Gymansio, Ok Now I am in Lykeio.

I: Is it in the town.

**S: Yes, it is in the town. It is an Eniaio Lykeio.**

**I: Which Lykeio is it?**

**S: The Second Lykeio. In the gymansio they streamline students, by giving them tests in the beginning and according to what they write they are place in levels A, B, C. In the Lykeia this stops. So you have a class, that is, that has many different kinds of levels. There are students who have the Proficiency, there are students that have the First Certificate, there are students who don't know a single thing in English and it's very hard to make this whole thing roll. Okay, but you have to find ways of course.**

**I: Do you cope with this type of class?**

**S: Yes, of course there are many problems and obstacles along the way. Okay, but, which means that I have to prepare and find more things for these students as well. You know which is very difficult.**

**I: How would you describe your relationship with your students?**

**S: I think it is a very good relationship. They see me not only as a teacher, but as a friend as well. They do come and talk to me during the break, before or after the lesson or whatever. You know talking about other things as well not only about English. Their personal lives or whatever. They seem to trust me as well and feel very friendly and you know close as well.**

**I: Are there any weak points about your relationship with them?**

**S: Let me think about that? I can't think of anything at the moment. Sometimes I am really impatient. That's why... (can't make out what she says)**

**I: What would you say are your most effective skills in dealing with students and which are they?**

**S: Effective skills? You said effective skill in...?**

**I: dealing with students. Or you could talk about your effective teaching skills.**

**S: Effective skills? Would that also be the way I present my material as well?**

**I: Yes, you could talk about that if you like.**

**S: I would say that. Because I do really prepare for my lessons, and I make lesson plans etc and I do spend quite a few hours okay. Finding ways and trying to make things more interesting and keeping involved in things so I would say I work very hard in trying to make an interesting presentation. I am trying to get as many students as possible get involved in things and I seem to be doing that. I can't think of anything else. (laughter!)**

**I: What would you change in your workplace to make things more favourable for you?**



S: Okay everything. What would I change? Eh, first of all something with the classroom itself, which is like absolutely dirty. I would change maybe the whole place. The windows are painted which means that you can't see outside and they are very high up and there is no light sort of coming in natural light, right. The doors don't close; there are no handles and nothing. Some windows are broken, I mean I would change that, okay. Maybe I'd make different sitting arrangements as well because I don't like the way they are seated. Of course I can't do that because it is not my classroom other teachers go into the classrooms afterwards. You can't sit and change all the time because first we would make noise and there is no time to do it they miss their break you know. Eh what else I'd have it well equipped I would definitely have a cassette recorder in the classroom (laughter) and you know other means that are necessary, like maybe a video, not maybe I would have a video and other equipment that are necessary.

I: Are there any changes that you would introduce if you were appointed to be Minister of Education, or the principal of this school? I mean changes in the system, it could be anything.

S: Oh, boy! Oh, definitely, but I would definitely make changes. Eh, now what changes I would make. Eh to make the school a more how can I say, I mean I see colleagues coming in the morning okay and they sort of drag themselves, as if they say another day you know sort of thing. Eh, I'd make it a friendlier user friendly environment okay. Now how would I do that? By making all the changes that I mentioned before okay and I'd make other changes, which need to be made. Maybe the syllabus and ...what would I change? Do you mean in English or about the other subjects as well.

I: Tell me about English first.

S: English. Okay. What would I change there? Eh, the way things are now are sort of how they are like you have to finish a certain amount of units in the book Okay, eh at least half the book or whatever, but if you move at such a pace okay it is impossible to focus on things. Eh, the other teacher does move on, I don't, which means that I am sort of behind Okay. They don't view that as she is trying to make students understand things. They view that as she is slow or something. Eh, so I would change that. I would say that you know you have to focus on certain things. Okay and it doesn't matter how many units you have finished okay I mean a certain amount of units definitely, but you know you have to focus on certain things. And you have you know to teach those certain things as well, focus on certain things.

I: Make them learn.

**S:** Yes, make them learn. It is not just like going through. And what else would I change. I can't think at the moment.

**I:** What would you like to do in 10 years time? Do you have any aspirations?

**S:** I told you that I am not very happy about how the things run in Greece and [especially] the school system. [This why] I have applied to go abroad and teach. Okay and I am waiting for this transfer now. If it doesn't come through... I don't know (laughter) I'll jump off the balcony or something. Eh, no, so I am thinking of going abroad. If things don't change in this country then it is a very difficult thing.

**I:** Have you ever had any kind of feedback on your teaching?

**S:** From whom?

**I:** The school advisor.

**S:** No, I don't have a school advisor. I do that to myself, though you know, I sort of go through you know, I have my lesson plan I guess and I go through with it. And then when I get home you know and I see whether these things worked in the classroom. And if they didn't then I see what changes I could make, things like that. So I do sort of give feedback to myself and how things went.

**I:** If the school advisor was there to give you feedback would you like to be given?

**S:** Yes, I would definitely

**I:** So you think that you need to be given feedback on your teaching?

**S:** Yes, I suppose so. Why not? If their opinion is always valued.

**I:** It is claimed that teaching is one of the most stressful professions.

**S:** You are telling me!

**I:** I wonder whether that is true about your own practice and the school you work in?

**S:** Oh, definitely. It is.

**I:** And how do you deal with it?

**S:** How do I deal with it?

**I:** I haven't found a way of dealing with it yet, because each and everyday is a stressful one. Okay, especially the way things work like I told you. I mean if you have a classroom where the door can't close and there is so much noise outside because the playground is just outside your door and they are playing volleyball and whatever they are just going, shouting and screaming I mean you cannot but have a stressed out day at the end of the day. You

know I just try to relax when I get home. I just try let go off all this stuff and try to do whatever I can do within my classroom. Ok I try not to notice all these happening, but it is not possible. The doors don't close and the windows are broken. You don't have this and you don't have that. You don't even have chalk. Sometimes, sometimes I bring in my own chalk okay coloured chalk because I like colouring things and emphasizing things on the blackboard. And you know when one of the teachers came in, a colleague, he says to me, "Did you bring your own chalk?" For God's sake. So what? You know. I find it something like shocking or something. These are all stressful factors, aren't they? They do stress you out, don't they? It would be nice to have a colleague the English teacher you know to talk to and you know to talk to yes, exactly, how this calculation and try to find ways and making I don't know find a way of dealing with it better.

I: Many teachers complain of becoming stupid in inverted commas during their course of teaching...

S: Definitely.

I: ...and they tend to lose their expertise. Do you think this is true?

S: Yes, it is. I do see it, in. Yes, I have seen it. That's why I try to do things, you know I try to keep myself busy and I challenge myself, above all that I can challenge my students, Okay in the classroom because if I don't do then you do tend to stagnate. Eh. And there is no sort of development and progress, which means you are finished, sort of thing. Then not only do you become stupid but you know you also (can't make out what she says) Okay. Something worse. It depends on me to keep myself on my toes always and keep on thinking and doing things.

I: And you do that.

S: I do that, because if I don't do that I will fall into that sort of stagnant pool and I'd drown myself in there. Then I am finished. I don't need anything else.

I: Do you think that there is any kind of teacher development?

S: I don't think so and that is why I tend to sign up for seminars or different presentations and things seminars and things that are done by private individuals or organizations or whatever, ELT consultants or whatever eh and I do tend to go to this kind of seminars so that as I said keep awake. If you like.

I: I think you have partly answered this question, but let me ask you again. On a working day, would you say that you look forward to going into the classrooms to teach or you are reluctant to go in for different reasons?



S: Well, I'd be lying if I said that I don't. There are some days that I do feel like that when....eh for example. A certain class that I have. I have eight classes altogether okay the first Lyceum the second Lyceum and the third Lyceum. With the first one I have three classes, with the second another three and with the third lyceum I have two classes. With the second Lyceum things don't seem to progress the way I would like them to and the lesson to be. I have students who have an attitude that you know I have the proficiency or I have the First Certificate so I don't need to study English. I am not going to study English because, you know we are not going to be graded at the end so who cares sort of thing and you know we have to focus on the other lessons where we will sit for exams and we have to do something. So they have this sort of indifferent attitude to English, not all of them, but quite a few of them, okay which makes my job more difficult in the classroom. Okay I try to find ways to get them more involved and especially when I start off my day when is it a Wednesday with these two classes sometimes I feel ugh, ugh what a day this is going to be, so I do feel like that sometimes.

I: Supposing you were enthusiastic one day about going into one of these classrooms to teach, could you think of anything that would inhibit this enthusiasm?

S: ... with any of my classrooms. If there is anything that inhibits my enthusiasm?

I: It could be an argument

S: An argument with a colleague or something?

I: It could be anything.

S: With colleagues. Yes, they do make me quite angry, but this doesn't make me lose my enthusiasm. I am not going to be influenced by what they say. No, I can't be influence by what they say from certain people that make comments like the ones that I mentioned, that I have heard okay. I don't value their opinion in the first place and whatever they say. I wouldn't bother. How could they influence me? When people say to you "Are you carrying two bags today?" and "Why do you spend time doing all these things?" and "Why do you care?" "What do you say to these people?" I mean if I stop caring I stop caring for myself, okay I am who I am, I mean I am who I am through being a teacher as well. So what do you say to these people. Nothing. Who cares what they say. I don't I have built a wall around me. Most probably it is.

I: It is.

S: It is, but it is cutting you off from communicating because there is no, you know, essence in it communicating with such people, but that's a tragic part about it eh. Not being able to talk to people on a professional level. And this is what I really miss. When in was in Athens

working in a private institute every like twice a month we had staff meetings and we would exchange ideas I mean. We would come away out of the classrooms...(can't make out what she says) and I would feel sort of fulfilled because I would have learnt a few things more. How to cope with certain problems or difficulties I have in the classroom or even some things that I wouldn't think about, you know. So it is cool, makes you feel good as well makes you try this or that, but here it's like you know, I am missing something.

I: It's been three years that you have been with the state sector and you are still heading your way.

S: Because I told you if I had another way, if I was heading their way I think....I wouldn't be developing as a person or as a teacher, as a professional as a person as well. I mean my job is really important to me. I want to do it and I want to do it well and in order to do it well I just have to sort of like I said not to pay attention to what those people are saying and do it the way I see it fit. Of course like I said I go to all these seminars and I agree with all these magazines and things that are sent to my house.

I: You said that you have applied to get a transfer abroad. When will that happen?

S: If I get a transfer, it will be in January because I have applied to transfer to South Africa, okay because that is my hometown. And hopefully, hopefully I will get a teaching position there, which I pray, truly I pray everyday because I mean I do need something more challenging in my life. Because if I don't?! I don't even dare think about it! I don't dare think about it I can't. I can't move in that direction seriously. All the time I'll have to stop doing it or something, I don't know but I can't think of my self doing something else?

I: You said that you have worked for the private sector, actually you had your own school. When you worked in the private sector did you feel valued?

S: Definitely. Because of course beyond going into your classes well prepared you have all these colleagues, it was a rather large school. There was something like 16 or 17 teachers okay we dealt only with adults. It was great, I mean the whole, how can I say, we used to get things from each other okay and that was great. And it was great going into class even if it was in the afternoons, okay. We never worked in the mornings it was in the afternoons and evenings, all private schools and I really looked forward to going everyday.

I: Why is it then that you gave up going to the private sector and you joined the state one?

S: Why did I do that? To be honest, the reason is that I was not well paid. So much hard work I mean not that you get well paid in the public sector, for God's sake, (laughter) if you call that a salary!!! I don't know what you would call a salary eh, but in the private sector it is not good money at all. Now why did I change? I don't know? Why did I change? If I think

about it? I had applied to get into the public sector I was really fed up with the way I mean so many hours and not getting paid it's something to really think about and I applied for the public sector and I was accepted and just took it up. And I thought that things wouldn't be that bad you know. When you are not in you are not doing something like in the public sector, I mean I had a different image of how things worked. Being there now and seeing how things really work eh not that I can change anything I can't. But doing things different than the others definitely and not bother about whatever kind of criticism or whatever. Wherever it comes from, whether it is their envious feelings I don't know what else it is. Who cares?

I: Thanks a lot for giving up your time.

S: Not at all.

## **Interview 2 with MP**

**Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2000**

**Location: My flat**

I: Is there anything inspiring or threatening that happened within the past week, which you would like to mention?

S: Okay, inspiring or threatening? Eh, inspiring... (laughter) I can't think of anything inspiring, I mean if anything happened I would have remembered. Threatening no I just got sorry, I got very angry with the other English teacher. I just got very pissed off, sorry, sorry.

I: Don't worry.

S: I just got very angry with the other English language teacher because of course she is going through a bit of a personal problem. She had a father; he passed away a few months ago. And she doesn't have sort of the time etc to do things. That's what she says. She has two little kiddies. And she asked me if I could you know make the exams, write the exams for all the classes of the Lyceum. And I said that I could do two and she could do one. I would do the two for the first and the third grades and she can do, you know, the second and she said yes, but she did it like the day we were writing the exams, okay that same day that the two classes were taking the exams together, she brought the exam. We had to make photocopies that particular day. How many students were there? There were about 200 or something like that. A large number of students. I started doing photocopies and doing things at that moment. It got on my nerves. The irresponsibility. I mean if something



happened? If something went wrong with the photocopying machine or something? You know what then? That kind of thing really got to me. It wasn't threatening, but it was something that sort of made me angry.

I: You mentioned in the previous interview that you have applied to get a transfer to South Africa where you were educated. Could you please elaborate on the reasons you are trying to get this transfer?

S: Okay. Why? First of all you feel like a respected teacher, okay, because there is like a perspective towards teachers. One thing and secondly so I can, eh, work with professional people and do my job correctly. I mean I would like my job to be more challenging and with other people, who you know, like their job and do it correctly. Not that they don't here, but I mean. Those are the two main reasons.

I: Is there another reason?

S: I can't think of another reason. Of course I do want to get back home, that is, connected... But eh...

I: You have given me the impression that you are a motivated teacher. Where do you draw your motivation from, that is, how do you sustain your commitment to teach against the odds?

S: Yes, well I try to make things more interesting more motivating like working against the odds, but it is for... so that I don't remain stagnant. By improving myself and finding ways to do things better and more interesting and motivating students. I do that so that they can be motivated but myself as well. Okay. It is something that works parallel. If that is answering your question.

I: You mentioned that you had great teachers and that you aspire to be like them. Could you identify the characteristics that make those teachers your models?

S: Eh, characteristics okay. Eh, let me think. First of all they were very close to us students. I mean they were there for anything outside of school as well. They were very close to us. If you want to discuss anything, then they will be there. Eh, what else, eh, the lessons were motivating. They would do things extra things to make us feel involved in what was happening in the classroom. Many times we were invited to our teachers home for discussions and things like that and I remember all those things very, very fondly and you know very, very I have it in my mind. Eh, what else they were very friendly people they tried to get us involved in doing things and they tried to teach things beyond, you know like learning. You know certain values. That was very important and so what else. I can't think of anything else.

I: Suppose you couldn't get a transfer God forbid what do you think you would have to do to sustain your commitment to teach the way you do now?

S: Of course I will very, very disappointed to be honest, but I'll do what I can. Of course I will renew my application next year (Laughter) and the following and etc and etc, but there is nothing else I can do, besides trying again. I mean I can't stop it's an on going process, eh, learning is. It's not just learning for the sake of teaching, whatever it is for yourself as well. Developing.

I: What in your opinion is the driving force of our profession? And what could be the elements that could slow down our development?

S: The driving force of our profession. Okay. Driving force generally? Okay! I suppose... the hang on let me think a little bit. It could be to motivate your students to try and teach them something like I said beyond learning – teach them some values as well. Okay everything that is connected but I suppose motivating them making them interested and loving what they're being taught? Okay. Wanting to excel wanting to surpass themselves okay their abilities whether it is in English or whatever. And what are the elements you said that?

I: The elements that slow down our progress.

S: Okay there are many outside factors that do that eh and I think that I mentioned them in our previous discussion. Things such as I mean not being able to do your job well. Because you don't have the material, equipment the classroom itself. What else. What other elements could slow down our development.

I: Maybe the lack of support?

S: Yes, definitely. The support of other colleagues and your whole administration. Definitely what else?

I: How about the interest of the students in your lesson?

S: Okay, but then it is your job to make them interested. Hey so. That's the whole point.

I: Yes, say in the second and third grade of the senior high school where you have to work against the grade, which doesn't count do you do that?

S: Exactly.

I: And despite this you made it!

S: Well, for the majority of them I think I did. For some of them – I mean a number of students that, eh, who had the classroom and were in the same class, they didn't care at all. Like the one who was absent through out the year, okay he fell of course again. The second

time because he was 300 times eh but for the majority of them even though it didn't count, eh, the way that you present your lesson, you know they understand that you have made an effort, like some of them do, not all of them, but the way that you present it and the way that you make them involved in the whole makes them interested and that's it, they participate.

I: So it is an excuse that other teachers say that the students aren't interested and they can't do much about it.

S: Of course it is an excuse, definitely because you can always do something, you can make them do something in class and to use the language okay. Definitely, I feel it is an excuse.

I: I don't. If you got this month's ELT news, it is Spyropoulos publication and there was an article where there was reference that the grade will count soon.

S: It will soon. Okay.

I: For their entrance at the tertiary level, which means that the problem that teachers have – not being able to motivate them will be alleviated but any way you still think that the fact that it doesn't count is not a factor that inhibits you from motivating them? There are ways that you can motivate them.

S: Definitely, of course you can, and I mean of course it applies with all subjects. What I see is that lots of English teachers okay feel sort of that the majority of work is done by the frontisteria so what? They know their English already. And some of them better than others or whatever, they will go to the frontisteria so we don't even have to try and you know so what? They have this kind of attitude that really annoys me. You can always change [things] and you can always adjust the level in the classroom and you can always make each and everyone of them motivated and do something. Definitely. I believe that, but they don't apply this sort of thing to their lesson so?

I: It is said that our commitment and enthusiasm to teach are very rarely constant, but rather show a dynamic fluctuation. To what extent is this true about you? Could you mention some examples?

S: Okay, okay. Of course it is true. There are times that I am more enthused than other times and it depends on eh it depends on how well things have gone in the classroom, ok if you really got your point across and if they have really sort of done what you really wanted them to do in the classroom and you've seen that you know that things have worked well and if they didn't work as well as you wanted them to work so, you know you sort of feel eh down. But you try again. You try again, you try to make them ...

I: Get to work.



S: Yes. Let me think... yes sometimes like before I get into the classroom we have a discussion and we talk with the other English teacher and she says things like "They don't give a ...they don't try they don't do anything in my classroom, they, it makes me sort of...". Eh, I try to see her point as well and I try to see why the students didn't do this or why they don't do what they are given etc and not that it has to do with what you asked but eh I try to see why? OK and I try to find out the reasons why they don't do what they are supposed to do and it gives me sort of an idea what I should do as well. Okay.

I: Have you found out the reasons her students don't do the things she tells them to do?

S: If she asked me to do the things she asks them to do I wouldn't do them either, because it is always, I mean students have to know very well from the beginning why they are doing something, okay and you have to give them a reason it has to be a real reason. Okay, it is not just doing something for ...completing or finishing the hour okay and like... and I haven't got anything prepared for today so write a composition. So why should I write? Prepare something, do something in the classroom and I will write it. You know make a little activity or something in the beginning so that could lead to this writing activity at home or in the classroom for 10 minutes or whatever. But not like I haven't prepared anything and so you say "Just do this" you know. There is a reason for doing everything and they have to be clear about it so....

I: Do you think that your teaching would be different if the school you are working in was more organized and well equipped?

S: Definitely, I would be doing more things and things that are more ...not maybe interesting but I would be doing things I wouldn't be using or we could be using the internet or a video or we could be using something you know extra things to do in the classroom. Definitely it would be different.

I: If you were to reflect and report on the period in your teaching career that you were most motivated when would that be?

S: When I was surrounded by teachers, that you know, who I knew were motivated and interested and because it was sort of like, how can I put it, a thing in the air challenging...I was challenged, they were challenged and it was something sort of mutual, definitely. And that was the period when I was in Athens, working in the frontisterio with adults as well. My audience ... eh my audience was my students they were adults which means not exactly to work differently, but you know they have different demands than students do. So you had to be sort of jacked up as well. Because ... I enjoyed that period of time because like I said

there were teachers who were really interested in what they were doing. In the staff meetings we always had something to present, or you know share and it was, which I don't have now and I miss a lot.

I: In your opinion is a teacher born or made?

S: Well, I think both actually. Born definitely. Okay there are different types of teachers. There are the inspiring, the kind that (laughter) [Can't make what she says.], but definitely you can be made. Definitely you can learn lots and lots of things methodologies different things. You can be informed about what's happening in your field and definitely you can improve yourself. Not that those teachers who are born don't have to do this and of course they have to keep in touch with what is happening around them hey! And exchanging ideas learning developing, it is a whole process so...

I: What do you think is the role of a teacher?

S: Eh, well beyond teaching what she has to teach them the language, the thematical item and whatever there is okay. She has to or he has to whatever the teacher has to eh play a different role in the classroom eh what... Can I think about this?

I: Of course take your time.

S: (laughter) a blank space there, okay by motivating the students okay the teacher of course wants to motivate the students and show that she is interested and so that they can be interested in what he/she is doing. That's it they have to motivate their students to try, to try harder, to do things for themselves and of course like I said with my teachers they have to teach them certain values as well. Of course you can't do this in a high school, but you know, you know you can continue that... Supposedly, they have started learning this from their primary school teachers up on to high school teachers. There are things that they can find out like if you are an inspiring teacher and you know, you show that you are interested in them, you love them, okay, there is a different way that they see you and it gives each student something doesn't it? I mean I have this student at the beginning of this year sort. They were students from the third grade. It was a girl and we discussed this in the classroom. They were telling me about their previous teachers in their classroom in the first and second grades of the senior high school. They were teachers you know who didn't show any interest in their students and so the students showed disrespect towards the teachers and this is because they showed disrespect towards their students. And it is like you said: when they pick that up element, that you are not interested and you are not doing whatever you can, okay, they behave in that similar way sort of thing. If the teacher didn't care about teaching them and it was like play time when it came to English, and it was play time and it was like we have three hours one or two hours a week, which comes from the disrespect that the

teacher has for her subject okay because that is the way I see it and it goes into how she teaches in her classroom students pick that up and you can't do anything can you? ... besides not giving them anything from the language point of view you are telling them like you know like I am not interested in what you do sort of thing I don't care about you okay so it's the wrong model of the teacher isn't it? Because you are supposed to be teaching them something to make them see things a bit differently if you can sort of open their horizons to open their wings sort of. there is hope there is things that you can do you have to try you have to do things, you have to continue to stress things in the classroom and they could pick up certain things. Not that they always do but you know there are some they do want this from a teacher...you know when you do ask them ...you know that when you have essays and/or whatever little compositions you have and you ask them what other qualities teachers should have and they say it that they should be there for the students, they should try to teach them beyond the subject matter. What the student said was you know. "You are the first teacher we have in these three years that we have been here" I have been here okay because the other colleague agreed we have done like twenty units (laughter) I mean if you looked at last year if you looked at the syllabus book they had done like two units in the whole year. Can you imagine two units in a whole year! This is like nothing absolutely nothing. So they did two units what did they do the rest of the time? So you can imagine what kind of and I mean the vice principle was telling me about the problems that the English teacher had before I was appointed. And how like he was so glad that I did not face discipline problems, which made me feel happy to be honest (laughter). When he said to me like, "Mrs MP, I see you are doing very well today, like, we don't have students all the time in the office and you aren't complaining about the students and having, like, this broiling in the classroom or whatever. That sort of made me feel, okay, nice but anyway what the students did say and I will come back it is like: "We can really trust you as a teacher beyond being a good teacher we can really trust you, you know and really trust you" and that is a compliment isn't it? "We can come to you and we can talk about other things as well beyond because we see that you care and you are there for us". So that made me feel nice as well. You really have to work if you want to have that kind of relationship with your students, don't you? I mean you really have to be committed with what you do with your work how you present it to them and then beyond that working sort of...

I: ...for the students and with the students.

S: Yes, that is how it goes. Yes.

\*13. To be a teacher is a difficult task.



S: Exactly.

I: What is teaching to you? Is it just a profession or a lifestyle?

S: I wouldn't say it is a profession only. Definitely it is a lifestyle. I mean

I: Could you give me an example of how it can be a lifestyle?

S: Because it doesn't just stop there. I mean what I do in my classroom. I'll go home and reflect on what I did to try and find ways of doing things better. I suppose it is part of what a professional should do, okay. But okay I care too much and I want to have a good relationship – something more. It is a step beyond a profession. So it is a lifestyle for me. Caring so much beyond the limit that a professional does care. So it is a lifestyle for me. It is something more.

\*14. If you were to self-evaluate yourself what sort of teacher would you say you are? S: Eh, Ok I try my best of course I do really try hard. I would say I am a good teacher, but there are always like, eh, ways where I could develop more. Okay not that I am not, it is just that I continuously want to find ways to do things differently. You know I strive.

I: And that makes you a good teacher.

S: I try hard to be that, definitely. That's what I want to be. I mean not good for being a good teacher for the sake of being a good teacher, but for the sake of giving that student something that I received from my teachers. Okay, it is just, I didn't say like Mrs. Nichols, she was a good teacher or something, she gave me something more than that, and this is what I try to pass on my students by being more involved and sharing and being close to them.

I: If you could start all over again would you have become a teacher?

S: Eh. There are definitely many obstacles in being a state school teacher. You are talking about a state school teacher not a teacher? A state schoolteacher?

I: Yes, Okay.

S: (laughter) most probably, yes. But there are like as I mentioned before thousands of obstacles in working in the state school and it is you feel sort of by yourself doing things you know having to surpass many things. But most probably I would. But I would like it to be somewhere else in another country. (laughter)

S: Yes, definitely.

I: Would you change your profession at this stage if you were given the opportunity?

S: I think I would give it a few more years and see and try again, but I do feel that things will change. I seriously hope so. Maybe I am too optimistic and I can't see like eh I feel and I hope that things will change. If they don't, well you can ask me the same question like in five years time. (laughter) Well, I couldn't see myself doing anything else. Eh, I don't know. Things can't remain the way they are. Definitely they can't. Eh, you can't have, eh well things have been like that I don't know I feel like this. The way that the state school system works. Okay and the teachers they have been like this like for what... centuries....

(laughter)...Not centuries okay for years and years. But hopefully teachers who are coming into this field to teach in state schools maybe they are seeing things, differently. Hopefully they are. And maybe they are more interested in doing things differently. Hopefully... They get the job you know because getting the job you know... the security that it offers and the salary that it offers and they are doing it for that reason I just hope that things are different.

I: Would this have to do with the new Minister? Because you said you hoped.

S: Yes, he seems different seems a bit more caring Okay. But it depends because one person can't do many, many, many things. Okay there is the new minister but there is the old X (laughter)...oh there is the old whatever his name is. So people have to see things differently. The attitude has to change about things. But maybe younger people see things differently, hey. I don't know.

I: Would you say that your hopes and expectations have been justified while practicing teaching in the state sector?

S: Eh, I wouldn't say that they have been justified, I wouldn't say that they have been justified they can't be justified. In a school like my school how can they be justified, but I'll just have to try. I mean I continue trying hard so that they... I mean I can't have my expectations justified and like you said the example you mentioned while we were coming here these teachers that got the money all the money – subsidies that would be great motivation so that you could change certain things. Okay, I'll definitely look into that and see if things change. That would be a good idea. That would be great. I mean when I was in X town okay my first two years when I was a state school teacher, because there was where I was, I don't know if I told you, we had,.. I was in X village, which is like six kilometers outside of X town okay which was a junior high school, but we had the first Gymnasium in S town which we became a model school and they also received money from the subsidies from the EU. They had their own classrooms they had their own eh things that you mentioned earlier, videos, TV's whatever they needed okay to be able to do things differently. And of course that motivated the teachers. And I remember the contact that we used, I used it, those people showed more enthusiasm about doing things. They seemed to

think that they were people who cared and of course that is not the thing. You know you have to care above all and even without these things. Well, you know like millions of schools don't have them in Greece, you know. You have to show that you care by showing that you do your job correctly. For heaven's sakes don't be a teacher! Do something else!

I: You see it's like I have come to this conclusion about the Greek state schoolteachers, they say, "Well the state doesn't care about us why should we care."

S: Yes, that's the attitude that they have or like "I can't change things", but of course you can. I mean I believe in individuals doing things by themselves, big things as well not just little things. Making little steps making big changes themselves. I mean you can bring changes within your own classroom with your students I mean you can't rest upon the attitude of "That they don't give a damn about me why should I? Look at the salary I get!" Look at this look at that and look at this and there are thousands of things that you have to complain about, but you have to think differently as well. It is not like you are sitting in an office at your desk. You have like little children's faces looking up to you, which makes you more sensitive. You have to think differently. You have to act differently.

I: In your opinion what is the most satisfying aspect of our profession? Even in the state sector?

S: Satisfying aspect? Well, for me it is knowing that I am doing things correctly and eh how can I say want my students respond to that. Okay for me.

I: I think, you said it before that your students respect you and that you are there for them.

S: Well, not all of them. I mean that there are like (laughter) I can think of one now that I am sure that this little guy can't stand me.

I: Why?

S: Because he is a student his name is Christodoulos (laughter) anyway and he failed last year he is in the second grade of the senior high school and he is going to do the same this year. There is a student that is totally, he is not interested or motivated by anything. His life is like music, he plays the drums he plays the guitar, three thousand other instruments, okay he is very good at that okay, but he is not interested in anything else, okay like in the beginning of the year like through out the year okay the school year is finished he has attended my class like about ten times or something. He was always absent. Eh, not only my subject, but other subjects as well. The other teachers you know gave him a twelve, a thirteen and eleven or something, a grade for their subject. How could I possibly give a twelve or eleven or ten to a student when he hasn't done absolutely nothing. It is unfair to the others first of all okay and it's giving him the message that you know "So what you



don't have to do anything, you will pass". He got a fail mark in English I mean I gave him an eight, okay so that you know to show him that he has to do something, he has to try at least. Okay in order to achieve something, if he doesn't want to continue school he has to say I don't want to continue school and finished. But, when you are in my classroom I mean teachers have to have expectations, don't they? You can't just sit in the classroom and do something with them and have no expectations, demands from them. From some of them you have more from some of them you have less maybe, but you do have demands and expectations. When they don't meet your demands and expectations and of course you will so eh what kind of expectations you have from each one of them and they don't do it I personally can't give them a pass mark. And of course I am the very bad teacher who fails students in English. Imagine in English big deal who cares about English. That's the other teachers' attitude, that's how it goes. That's how it goes that's how I feel, so if I gave this guy a pass mark it would be going against what I believe as a teacher.

I: What about the other English language teacher does she have any expectations from her students?

S: No, because if she did have expectations she would be doing things differently, wouldn't she? Now she doesn't have any expectations from the students. The students know they don't have expectations, she doesn't have expectations from them so they behave differently she passes them all with quite good marks as well so automatically there is you see I would prefer to have Mrs X as a teacher because you know she gives us a pass mark. Because she gives good grades. Whereas the other one has like expectations which means that we have to study we have to do something so eh automatically in the long run...

I: I see. Unless they realize that you are the good teacher.

S: I don't know. It depends. Some of them seriously never realize anything or won't even realize anything in their lives it is their way of thinking, but there are others definitely who do. And it is for those people that you do something. You can't touch, you know motivate everyone.

I: What is the thing that irritates you the most?

S: You mean in the classroom?

I: In your profession.

S: In my profession What irritates me.....let me What irritates me is the fact that for example the other English teachers don't care, show disrespect towards their teaching, and their subject, which automatically, it of course affects everybody doesn't it? Okay.

I: Suppose you had to stay on and work in the Greek state school system and considering that there is no career development do you think you would be able to sustain your commitment to teach in the way you are teaching now say until you retire?

S: Definitely. Because I guess like I said, I really believe this. How can I say it? If I stop wanting to develop okay everything stops Okay, you can't, if you don't develop as a teacher you can't do anything else and you stop there you sort of everything stops you can't develop you can't develop can you?

I: You are dead.

S: Exactly. That's what irritates me. The fact that they don't care to do something for their own lives. For heaven's sake. And it reflects on how they are as human beings, as well. Okay which irritates me I mean maybe I have again harsh demands on people, but I really am irritated and I can't stand people who won't do something to better themselves. And to develop themselves.

I: You mentioned that you try to be committed to your teaching because if you don't then you will be primarily hurting yourself.

S: Definitely.

I: What are in your opinion the factors that contribute to your professional growth?

S: Which factors contribute to my growth?

I: Yes, what do you apart from what you do in the classroom to professionally develop?

S: Eh, definitely there is a very good magazine for state schoolteachers that is called *Aspects* do you get it as well? Okay the different newspapers or news letters that you get from different institutions and definitely attending different seminars, okay, I didn't attend the TESOL convention this year (laughter) Okay I feel guilty about it, really guilty about it okay, but there are other seminars I mean if you've heard Suzanne Donores and Lilica Kouri the ETC centre the Educational Training Consultancy have you heard of it?

I: No, I haven't.

S: These two women I mean Suzanne was a secretary of TESOL or something I can't remember I don't know something. These two women okay Suzanne is from America and Lilica is a Greek, but she has studied abroad and everything these are two perfect examples of teachers who are motivated and who try to change things. Because change depends on you the individual. And your will to change and see things differently. These two women I mean if you haven't met them ask Misty she must have met them. These two women are excellent. And every now and then they bring people you know they have this sort of class

where they do the workshops in Athens okay it is near the Polytechnic school and I have attended many of their seminars ok. Very, very interesting. They bring people you know that have to do with this profession for example like last year and the year before and a couple of years prior to that they had brought Herbert Puchta, I mean have you heard of him?

I: No, I haven't.

S: He's what they call the Guru of the Eurolinguisitc programming Okay. He is a teacher a professor at the Academy in Austria. I mean, just listening to this guy and the books of his come out with the things that he's done in his field s like....He's written a lot of books on teaching and there is Kuntbet, Kengrass and Suzanne and Lilica. Kuntbet and Kengrass, they've come out books for students in primary schools, I mean excellent books eh these people are you just adore listening to them and now they are bringing out this if I remember her name her first name is Katerina Solomon. She's studied abroad as well etc and she's having a seminar beginning of September, but if you want to take part you have to, you know, apply before the end of June and I am definitely attending this. It's how to use your voice in the classroom and things you can do. Those are things that really interest me okay how you can again do things with your voice because the voice is the main thing that you have in the classroom, isn't it? Besides all the other things of course or was it last year or toward the end of last year they had brought out this fantastic woman okay her name was Michillan Fluck, she if French I don't know if you've heard of her and she is the head of the institute that she opened up in Paris in the sixties the late sixties eh, it's called the research in using Yoga in the classroom okay. And there were activities of things that you could and we did as well. Of course applying things like this in the state school it's like ...first of all you must know what you are doing ok which means that beyond attending the seminar you have to attend many other things and really study up this issue whatever this is. You have to change people's attitudes I mean if you do something like this in the classroom simple activities that help students concentrate more that help students feel more relaxed and things it's simple little things that you have to do. Very nice activities okay. Of course to do this like you have to explain things first of all to the headmaster or whatever so that they know it is not a time that you are not using the hour to do stupid things. Okay they have an educational background behind that and we have to explain to the parents, as well. I have never met a woman like this. She is short she is some like sixty seventy or something years old. She is so flexible the way she used her body her hands you know I mean this woman she was fantastic. People like that motivate you to do things. You don't give a damn about what happens (laughter) at school what the others do. You see people like that okay and you really just want to do things in the classroom.



I: You mentioned that the students tend to undervalue the subject of English either because it does not count in their final assessment to enter the tertiary level or because they learn the language in the frontisteria. Do you see any meaning in teaching them in the state sector bearing in mind their indifferent attitude students have?

S: Okay. Of course there is. I mean you can always do more things, I mean, Okay maybe they know all the grammatical items maybe they know how to use this and they know how to use that. You could always reinforce that. There are other things to...

I: Supplement?

S: Exactly.

I: But it is the attitude, like: "Since I am learning things at the frontisterio there is no need for me to do the work".

S: Okay but it depends on how you present your work again. Because if you really try to do things to motivate [students] they will do it. Or you know, eh, you do group activities and things like that. You know they enjoy things like that they really enjoy them. So it is just supplementing or reinforcing what they already know, if they have done all these things before in an interesting way.

I: When you do group work isn't there a lot of noise?

S: Yes, but that happens in the very initial stage, when maybe they have to get into groups the way they have to get into groups. Yes, there is a little bit of noise, but that's, eh, it's logical.

I: Because it is an excuse that state school teachers give for not doing group work.

S: No, no judging from what I have seen from other teachers okay the teacher that I am with at the school or other teachers they don't do this kind of activities because this kind of things require a lot of preparation. Okay you have to know each and every step eh so that there is no chaos, you know because if you do such a thing and you aren't well prepared and you don't know from this stage you go on to that stage and this and that then there is definitely chaos in the classroom. If there is, the minute you sort of let them go and they understand that then you have chaos in the classroom. So it has to be very well organized. You have to know each and every activity step and how long it'll last.

I: Most EFL teachers are convinced that students in the public sector are not interested in the subject of English because of the reason we stated before? Do you think that there is remedy to this problem? Are there ways to raise their interest in the subject of English?

S: Definitely. There are thousands of things you can do. It all depends on you. Come on, the teacher plays a significant role and if they are not interested and they show that to the students, I mean why should I be interested. You know the student.

I: If you were to compare and contrast your students to the students of the other English language colleagues how would you describe them?

S: My students in contrast with other the students? Okay. Well, definitely they have done thousands of things that the other haven't done, okay from the beginning of the year I tell my students that they should take great pride in their work okay and the way they present their work and do their work I mean they have their files and everything is organized, but we spend some time doing that. They have to organize their files and how to put their files etc and to display it and to show it and whatever and to take great pride in it. Eh, and I mean and I am very proud of them for doing that because they are also very proud of their work that they have done. And they keep their files things very neat. The others don't even have files, they don't have whatever I mean eh you know, that buying books is not compulsory which means you might have a class you know with three students that have books and the others are like we can't afford to have the book or something you know those stupid excuses. It's just they don't want to do something. I had each and every student in my classroom have a book and they had their files neatly and nicely organized or whatever. They did things okay. And I'm sure that they take great pride in doing these things, and interest as well in order to do something. I think they were more interested more motivated and did their work otherwise they wouldn't have done it.

I: You have answered this question but if there is anything else you could add please do so. What are your expectations for the students?

S: Okay like as I said at the beginning if I remember correctly besides having them learn what they have to learn okay developing as well.

I: And do they respond to your expectation?

S: Some of them yes. The majority of them do.

I: Do your expectations relate to the overall ethos or climate of the school?

S: (laughter)

I: You have to answer it (laughter)

S: (laughter) Is it real? I don't think so (laughter). My expectations definitely not.

Comparing with the other teachers as well and the other subjects I mean eh I don't see. My God, I don't think of any teacher (laughter), that is, who has expectations for... for their

students, because again and the other teachers I have seen it maybe, because we have discussed it with other teachers again. It's not only English that the students aren't interested about because they go to the frontisteria and that's where they do their work – full stop. They know that the other teachers don't care about anything. They come late, they smoke in class they do this they do that.

I: You mean teachers?!!!

S: I know!!! Yes, teachers.

I: Goodness!!!

S: Yes, there was one that goes in with a cell phone. For heaven's sake!!! He comes in with the phone and puts it on his desk and if it rings you know, "Excuse me!" and he goes outside the class. You can see it. There is a corridor and classes are like across or adjacent or whatever. So you can see that. So what kind of expectations do these people have from these students? They don't have from their students? They don't have any expectations. They only have expectations from themselves. For God's sake if you behave like that. So they don't have expectations. The only thing that they do is like, okay, they are doing this at the frontisteria or the private lessons.

I: Why bother?

S: Why bother? There are teachers in the school especially in the school that I am, they have their students in their classroom as private students. They are tutors. You know they don't care about what they do in the classroom as long as they come home afterwards they pay and they receive what they are supposed to receive in the classroom.

I: Do you think that they should close down the state schools?

S: No. I don't think they should close them down. They should be very careful about who they select and there should be, you know we had inspectors in south Africa who came in class and inspected us for two three weeks. They were inspecting the teachers and about the standard of the education, the learning they were offering their students, I mean, if they didn't offer anything then you know they would send them home or do something else.

I: How do you deal with students that are indifferent? Say like Christodoulos?

S: Christodoulos, well there was nothing much I could do with Christodoulos, Okay because....

I: Okay what about the other students?

S: I try to you know to see what they are interested in and at the very beginning of each lesson – each introductory lesson sort of okay eh I have this questionnaire that I give the



students and I keep them in a sort of file and at the end of the year I of course throw them away, because I make new ones and etc and it has – except for their personal information – okay things that they like, you know, in their free times you know hobbies etc material that they like, you know, and I try, not that I do it not that it can be applied like a 100%, but you find things that and ... that these students and their age groups or whatever they are interested in and you try to bring into the classroom do activities that you know will interest them, so that's one thing. So you make the indifferent ones become more interested in something. Not only the indifferent ones, but everyone in the classroom. So this is one thing. What else, I don't know. I talk to the students individually afterwards talk to them and you get some answers. And if you do show them some interest on a personal basis they say like eh she sort of cares so let me try a little more. You know to some of them this applies more to some other it applies less so these are the ways I can think of now and that's what I do.

I: Do you feel you have control over what you do in the classroom even if there is a set curriculum that might restrict you?

S: Who cares about the set curriculum? (laughter) I sort of I, I take the liberty (laughter) of doing exactly what I want. I mean of course I have, I sort of do a number of units that I have to cover I can't [just] cover two units. But the teacher last year, she did [cover only two units]. Okay nobody checked anything so who cares. This year we did like ten thousand more units, but units I choose them in random order you know things, topics that are more interesting than others of course next year if I am here I'll go back to those that we didn't do, but again I act more freely sort of...

I: In the end of the year despite all the difficulties, the indifferent attitudes some students might have, the disorganization etc do you think that students have learned something out of your lesson?

S: Good God I hope so! Yes, yes I am sure. Yes, they have.

I: Isn't it dreary to teach the same lesson [units] over and over again?

S: No, I mean I teach the same units again but eh like I said that is why I prepare three million hours everyday. What's the point (laughter) do I get the point for this. I am joking!!! You try to incorporate different activities different things you know. Maybe find another way to do an activity, like a questionnaire or a pair activity I don't know something like a role something else. And there are thousands of books out there supplementary material things like that. They are bloody expensive books hey, but there are so many good books out there that give you very good ideas about how you can, what you can do.

I: And you do use them, don't you?

S: Oh yes!

I: Do you feel you have had the right training? You were trained in South Africa weren't you?

S: No, here

I: Here?!!

S: (laughter) No, I didn't have the right training. I received all the training...all the training that I got was from all these seminars that I attended and workshops and things like that, ideas. Coming out of university, attending Greek university here, I finished here in Athens. Teachers I don't know what's happening now, but teachers are definitely very ill-equipped to be able to teach in the state school. You see they did themselves. You know it shows you how they disrespect ...if you disrespect you know what you are doing okay that affects the way you do it ok? No, we can do things that we were supposed to do. I mean all those things that I got from all these seminars and things, like, I mentioned I have attended. I never did a single one of them at university. Not a single thing...

I: What was the university curriculum like?

S: DISGUSTING when I was a student. I mean we even had Greek lessons okay like we had history, we had all these things good God I mean who cares?!! Now the methodology lessons that we had. Even if this woman was sort of eh Professor Dedrinos maybe you know her, okay she's very intelligent she knows what she is doing, but it's only, we only had no practise. I think doing nothing in practice okay it was just theoretical. I mean we could have done so many things. We could go to schools we could watch how they do things. You know thousands of things that we could have done, but we didn't do any of these things. I don't know what they are doing now, like I said.

I: It's the same!

S: I am sure it is. I am sure it is. Things like that don't change!

I: Would you say that your performance in class isn't up to the standards you would like it to have been due to the poor resources, stress and other problems that one might face in the state sector?

S: I try to make it. Okay my standards okay are the way things should be done which are far, far higher than the standards you know that exist now, you know and so I am quite satisfied with my performance, but it would be great if I had other things as well.

I: Would teaching be more meaningful to you if you were given the opportunity to contribute to the professional, material, curriculum development or not?

**S: No, it wouldn't make of a difference. It is meaning to me now. I mean it is very important. I exist through my work. You know so it is very important.**

**I: Thanks a lot for giving up time to do the interview. It took us an hour and five minutes to finish. It was quite long.**

**S: Not really!**

### **Interview 3 with MP**

**Date: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2001**

**Location: My flat**

**I: What has changed in the school you're working in this year?**

**S: The things that have changed in the school this year are firstly the principal, who has a completely different attitude to the one that we had last year. Unfortunately, the students' attitude has changed, too. I feel that this year they are displaying a lack of interest and disrespect towards the subject of English language. The effects of this lack of interest and disrespect are reflected in the increase of behavioural problems that have repeatedly cropped up in class. Things are more intense than last year. Colleagues have as always had a funny attitude towards our subject. You hear remarks as "Come on, it's only English. So what give your students 18 and more [in their report cards]" or "Look what's the system doing to us" "The system is not taking the teaching community seriously so don't take it, that is, teaching, seriously". Well, let me tell you an incident that took place at the end of the semester and I think it might interest you. It regards our principal's attitude. He called the other English language teacher and myself; by the way the teacher has changed. She is not the same person as last year. She's more committed and willing and she happens to be a Master's holder. Well, as I was telling you the principal asked to see me and my colleague in his office and he asked us why we had given such low grades, that is, 10's, 11's etc. They were the grades they deserved but since each and every colleague and I can't emphasize that enough gave their students' grades which were very high. Grades they didn't deserve and weren't in accordance to their abilities. That made us look 'bad', that is, the English language teachers. I consider the response my fellow English teacher gave as very smart." We didn't give them low grades, the others gave them very high grades"**

**I: What did the headmaster have to say to this remark?**



S: He didn't respond, of course. But in his own way the message he wanted to get across was "give them higher grades, no matter what".

I: That's interesting to hear.

S: Yes and let me tell you about the parents' reactions. At the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, we also had a number of parents complain about their children's low grades in English especially in cases where some students FC of Proficiency holders. They demanded answers as to why this was happening. They claimed that if their children were smart enough to get an 18 or 19 or 20 in Maths, etc. how was it possible for those same children to get a 10 or 11 in English. Then again, there are some parents who don't even bother to meet up with or talk to the English teachers at the end of the semester and this yet again indicates their view of the subject in the state sector. And this view you know is passed on to their children. They sort of say, "So what, you do English at the frontisterio, so it doesn't really matter what happens at school. On the other hand, they complain. This lack of respect that both parents and students show us, English language teachers, in the state school is really annoying. It is a really sad and disturbing realization. It's a reflection of the unhealthy attitude that parents have, and that is that they aren't interested in the quality of education whether it's English or not, but in the grades they get. An extension of this negative attitude is how our colleagues view us English language teachers. You are the English teacher and English teachers don't count. I mean unfortunately, they sort of, you know, they tend to undervalue you. Okay. Well, English big deal. You know, I mean it is not a subject that even counts. You know how the school system is like. Eh, they don't just, they seem indifferent to you. An extension of this negative attitude is how our colleagues view us, English language teachers. I feel that a 'caste system' has been created. The teachers whose subjects are less important and this is where the "who cares about English" attitude comes in. It is infuriating that they perceive us as inferior and that they categorise us like that.

I: How do you feel about the whole situation?

S: It makes me angry, bitter and on occasions has made me lose interest on what I'm doing and lose sight of my goals or role as a teacher. That is not what teaching is about. The quality of teaching and the high standard of education and the upgrading of English has to do with how well-brained and qualified, how willing and committed we are. The fact that there is absolutely no emphasis on these elements aggravates me.

I: What do you think could be done to change the whole situation?

I: I think that among other things it goes without saying that the system of education should be upgraded by putting emphasis on the quality, the teachers, they should try to appoint well-brained, well qualified teachers. They have to also increase the hours that we teach

English, oh yes they should make sure to fully equip language classrooms. It is also very important that fundamental changes are made as to how students are assessed from primary school level to secondary school level. And definitely teachers attitude should change.

I: Can you briefly describe what sort of school you would have liked to be working for?

I: I would like to work in a school where teachers are definitely well-qualified, committed, willing and equal in terms of each one's status in the school. I would like the school to be students friendly and to have classrooms that are well equipped.

I: would you give up teaching because of the difficulties you have been facing?

S: I have at times considered it because of the number of practical obstacles I've had to put up with and because of the attitudes of all involved which are based on a wide array of sentiments. But, after careful consideration I would say 'no'.

I: Thank you for the time you gave up to be interviewed.

S: By all means.

## **Interview with SH**

**Dates: 21<sup>st</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> June 2001**

**Location: English Language lab**

**Comment:** Interview had to be taken on the 27<sup>th</sup> as the cassette recorder broke down despite the fact that I had it serviced prior to the interview

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2001**

I: Could you please briefly tell me about your career both in the private and public sector since your graduation?

S: Well, I started teaching way before I completed my studies, eh, on coming to Greece I started working right away at a private school, frontisterio and somewhere along the line I decided to take my studies more seriously and took the exams sometime in 1987, the entrance exams I mean and passed into University, but I was also working at the same time again at a private school in Athens eh in 1991 I came back to this area and I worked as a substitute teacher nine years and I only became a permanent teacher last year so this is my second year as a permanent teacher.

I: I see and you said that you attended university here in Greece...

S: That's right

I: I suppose it was at the Department in Athens. What did you think of the course?

S: I would say that eh I was a little disappointed with the standard and because I think I was exposed to much more difficult work at the high school back in Australia so the work done here at the university seemed a lot easier and eh I don't think I gained much out of the four-year course at the university to be honest. Eh, it was very smooth. I didn't definitely grasp parts, eh, but I did find the Greek courses [laughter] totally irrelevant [laughter] I just couldn't understand why I would have to deal with some Greek courses as well, eh, thinking back they have not been of any assistance to my job at all.

I: What in your opinion is lacking from the course? What I mean is what wasn't there that would have helped with your teaching?

S: Practical experience. I don't think that anything I was taught there has direct relevance to what I am doing now in school. I think that I gained all my experience eh being in contact with students all these years teaching all levels. I have learned a lot through working and not during that time at university. I gained very little in the practical part of it.

I: Have attended any other course that made up for this deficiency, say like the RSA or any other course?

S: Well, as I said before I was working at the time as well so if there are any courses that I could have taken I certainly hadn't any time for them, but I just stuck to the courses I was supposed to take.

I: Why did you choose to become a teacher?

S: To tell you the truth, I never thought of becoming an English teacher [laughter] I was more into becoming a PE teacher, eh, but that didn't turn out well for me. I kind of realized that I wasn't cut out for it, but teaching eh that came along by itself. In fact, eh as I said on coming to Greece I was approached by school owners and they offered the job to me ... I was excited interested... I said okay let's give it a go [laughter] and it kind of started like that, but I haven't regretted. I think that I have matured in this job and I think I have gained enough experience and I enjoy it.

I: You do?

S: I enjoy teaching very much.

I: In the public sector?

S: Even in the public sector. It has its drawbacks, too. Generally it's been constant challenge [laughter].



I: In what way has it been a constant challenge?

S: Well, meeting new classes every year and, eh, dealing with mixed ability classes eh trying to find things to maintain the students' expectations, eh, was enough challenge for me.

I: Now, let me take you to the context of the junior high school where you are working at present.

S: Eh.

I: How would you describe your relationship with the administrative staff?

S: Eh, purely professional, eh, we have very little of any kind of relation... it's just anything to do with schoolwork and nothing beyond that.

I: Are they in any way supportive?

S: Generally speaking over the years I would say I have never been supported enough... I have felt like eh, that I am out there on my own and I have to make the decisions concerning my work.

I: Why do you think they are not supportive?

S: Well, it's definitely got to do with that, English is not spoken so it is not that important.

I: Is that really the reason? Because my perception was that English is...

S: ...is downgraded?

I: Yes.

S: Well, yes, that yes could have been the reason in the past, but now that English is, I am sure it is becoming, I think people have become aware of the importance of knowing English... I don't think that we are left out as much as in the past, but eh they just can't be of any assistance, where I need help eh so it's up to me to find solutions to approach other people around the school bounds.

I: And how would you describe your relationship with your colleagues?

S: Quite friendly, but we get along well, yes eh I try to impose myself and then I have that in mind and then I look into their opinion about trying to enforce eh. I think we have a good relationship.

I: ...and what kind of educational approach do they nurture towards the subject of English. What I mean by this is what do they think of you as an English language teacher?

S: Well, as I said before there are those who think that English is very important out there, but there are some teachers that think that English doesn't deserve the importance it is given

and have a low opinion of the subject and are sometimes criticized. I am sometimes criticized for giving students more elaborate work which to me seems totally appropriate for their level of knowledge, but my colleagues might think it's too demanding eh and examination results are sometimes criticized by colleagues they think that the marking has been too strict and that ... I totally disagree with that.

I: and what would you say your status is among your colleagues and the administrative staff?

S: Well, eh, I am only new to this school so I needn't make my presence too strongly felt so I'll just let time flow by and I think that eventually whether I am credible or not will show in the long run

I: How would you describe your relationship with your students?

S: Eh I think I usually have a very good relationship with my students eh I try to see them as young adults that is at senior high school, I mean eh students at high school level, take to me quite well and I come down their level so that I can eh make the subject eh enjoyable for them. Because I think that teaching should be fun and learning should be fun.

I: What would you change in your workplace to make things more favourable for you?

S: Meaning as far as ...

I: Say, technical, but I see you are well equipped here. How about the other schools you used to work for.

S: Well, we are quite fortunate to have enough equipment to do our job well here. What I would probably change it's the course book and I would introduce a wide variety of reading material.

I: Well, isn't it the teacher who chooses the coursework?

S: Well, when you are on your own yes, we have a lot of breathing choice, but when we have a colleague you have to compromise sometimes or find a middle solution which is not always what we really want to do.

I: Which means that the course book you are teaching at the junior high school has been imposed on to you?

S: Yes, eh. Nevertheless, it worked pretty well I enjoy teaching that particular book [laughter], but the one being used at school this year at senior level I think could be a little less complex I just felt that we were trying to plan too much knowledge into very little time and the result is not what I would have liked it to have been. I would have preferred the students to have learned half the material and learnt it well than too much and not well.

I: What would like to be in ten years time?

S: Okay, I think I could still be teaching [laughter]. I think I still have enough energy to carry on as I have been in the past ten years.

I: If you were appointed the minister of education or a principle at a school would you introduce any changes?

S: Wow, I could make many suggestions about education in general as I have been strongly influenced by my education in Australia. I feel I still feel after so many years that the education system seems to work much better. It is less of a burden on the students and on the teachers. As far as English goes I would definitely upgrade it even higher. If I were the minister of education I would definitely make English an important subject and I am sure that the results would have been a lot better. Eh, it is disappointing to see that after seven years the kids or rather after so many years that they have been taught English at school they still just can't use the language means that something is wrong.

I: And what do you think is wrong in this case?

S: I think the ... [unfortunately the cassette recorder broke down so nothing was recorded]

I: Now that you mentioned the frontisterio [nothing was recorded as the cassette recorder was not functioning at that particular moment]. Do you think that students are like dull towards the teacher because they think that they have been the same staff over at the frontisterio?

S: I think that that's the general perception?

I: And what do you think about that?

S: I ignore that. I ignore that. In fact I never bother to ask students about their prior knowledge, education in English, I don't want to know "Who has taken his First Certificate or Proficiency I don't want to be influenced by that. To be generous with my grading just because the student has acquired a certificate. So it is mainly the students' work in class well ...

I: Coming now to the school advisor do you think that you are supported enough?

S: Hardly enough, no.

I: And what do you think the reason is?

S: The reason is that they can't cater to everybody's needs. One advisor for a state it's [can't make out what she is saying as the cassette recorder breaks down again]. I was very disappointed by the advice given to me a couple of years ago when I was working at a Technical College and in that particular year I was totally on my own. I had no back up material nobody to turn to give me some advise on how to deal with technical jargon and my



only aid was the student's book and I felt eh, totally helpless. I still wonder how I managed to pull through eh and the advisor was hardly helpful....

[Had to stop interviewing as the cassette recorder broke down altogether].

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2001**

Comments: Questions were repeated as I could not retrieve the previous interview until something happened and I was able to retrieve quite a bit. However, it is fortunate that the interviewee became more confident about me keeping the interview confidential so she sounded more relaxed and open

I: What kind of educational approach do your colleagues nurture towards the EFL teacher?

S: Personally, I think they tend to look down on the language, eh, all this attention given to eh, making students learn a foreign language as soon as they can, it kind of makes me feel eh, eh what is the word eh guilty not guilty, guilty [laughter] that's a wrong word, inferior, eh. They, that more emphasis should be given on the mother tongue and a good knowledge on ancient Greek and eh, so I am not always supported by my colleagues they do understand the urgency of knowing English, but they think that it can be done away with at school at least.

I: What would you like to do in ten years time?

S: Well, there would be a lot of things that I would like to do, but by the looks of it I still will be teaching. If I were sixty, I would certainly want to retire [laughter], but I won't be sixty so [laughter].

I: It is claimed that teaching is one of the most stressful professions. I wonder if that is true with your own practice.

S: Well, it does take a lot out of you. There are times when you feel totally exhausted eh, but if you enjoy what you do eh, you kind of disregard that, that factor that you are tired. It's more a mental exhaustion rather than physical exhaustion that it might feel at times, when you try to get your message across and you know that there are students whose knowledge of the language is very little and if you stick to just using the English Language and not find the easy way of translating everything into Greek that can be quite exhausting. I have experienced exhaustion by trying to just use English and through mime and through pictures on the board and through improvisation eh, I try to get my message across, which I am not always sure they have understood, but at least I feel good with myself that I have not

resorted to the easy solution of using Greek to translate and eh so I think that I am doing the right thing just sticking to the foreign language.

I: Many teachers complain of becoming “stupid” during their course of teaching. They tend to lose their expertise, do you think this is true?

S: Yes, definitely. That is why I would, I have never been interested in teaching at primary level or high school level because I feel that it wouldn't do good to me and eh dealing with idiot an English on a daily basis certainly would take a lot out of me so I am glad to be able to balance eh both senior and high school level so I eh so I can be a little bit more elaborate a little more eh explicit with my senior students than with my junior students whose vocabulary is very limited. But I agree with that statement.

I: Do you think we get enough opportunities for teacher development?

S: Well, I see some kind of interest in assisting teachers recently, but in the past no. There was no interest in improving their skills, but there are many more opportunities for teachers interested in getting some information about how to do their job these days.

I: On a working day, would you say that you look forward to going into classrooms to teach or you are reluctant to go in for different reasons?

S: At the beginning of the day? I enjoy coming in at the beginning of the day because the students are all right and the lesson usually runs very smoothly and I have, if not 100% participation, the majority have the energy to contribute to class work. But I don't feel the same at the end of the day where students are usually exhausted and they think about it and have very little interest in doing any work for the day, particularly in English.

I: Since you mentioned the school advisors would you like to add something more?

S: Yes, I wouldn't like to be unfair to them. School advisors do contribute in some way, particularly at lower levels like high school level. They do seem to have more ideas about teaching at those levels. But I have not come across an advisor as yet, after my ten-year working experience at public schools with advisors, who deal particularly with senior students. I have not had any kind of help or support on teaching senior students, but fortunately I think I have managed quite well without the advisors (Laughter) so I don't know whether they would be of much assistance in any case (Laughter).

I: Who or what do you resort in the case that you need some kind of advise or what is it that helps come over the problems you face in the classroom?

S: It might be my prior education in Australia that has taught me a lot in getting ideas. Exposure to other educational systems, eh, teachers on television eh even conversations with

foreign teachers, but my Greek colleagues don't seem to be very resourceful. In fact, I am not sure whether they know how to go beyond themselves. And eh they just focus on passing on the knowledge and they think that that's what teaching is all about, but I disagree with all that.

I: What's teaching to you?

S: Well, it should be learning, but eh it should also be entertaining as well. They should enjoy what they do and they should apply that knowledge to practice as well. So just sitting behind the desk and being passive listeners all the time I disagree with that. They should be involved and apply what they know in practice.

I: Have you ever had any feedback in your teaching either from a colleague or an advisor or anybody else? Or you might have done it yourself by having recorded yourself and then listened to what you said?

S: I am not sure about the question, but I have never had any kind of feedback whether negative or positive. Do you mean if someone has attended...?

I: Yes,...

S: and commented. No, this... No, this hasn't happened, yet.

I: Would you like to have feedback?

S: Well, I wouldn't mind eh, I would be a little self-conscious in the presence of an adult, but I think I could manage just as well as I would normally in front of my students. So that would be, that would be interesting!

I: Have you ever had feedback from your students? Like have you ever asked how much they got out of your lesson or whether they enjoyed the lesson?

S: Oh, definitely they have enjoyed eh several activities that we do in class and eh and viewing on television and some quotations I wrote I have written on blackboard. I have been told that eh in fact that I have been the only teacher to do something like that so students like to be pleasantly surprised I think. I think we need to involve variety in our teaching. Eh, and I very often put myself in their position and say how would it be like sitting behind the desk all day long just listening to someone blah, blah and then wait until somebody else comes in. Eh, so variety, I try to eh I am still quite limited in the way English is supposed to be taught yes I am still rather limited in my, I feel I can do more.

I: I can't remember how long you said you have been teaching. Is it the ten years you mentioned?

S: At public school yes. All in all it is 18 years.



I: What gets you going and what is the driving force that makes you want to teach?

S: I think it's because I enjoy the variety in my work. That is why I don't like to stick to one particular book and use it for too many years. I like to renew my interests as well so I change the material as often as I can. Eh if I particularly enjoy a class, I am always eager to work and just being in contact with young people makes me feel good too, and if I am appreciated well that certainly gives me a lot of energy to keep going.

I: And are you appreciated? You said something in the previous interview that unfortunately was not recorded.

S: I may not be totally appreciated by my colleagues, (Laughter) because as I said before I think they think that English is a bother and it kind of gets in the way you know with the levels we have at the high schools and we can't, they can't work out a timetable, but I think that the majority of the students enjoy classes and eh and I have seen good progress and a number of students...

I: Even though they might come up and say well we have done those things at the frontisterio...

S: They have never said that...

I: They have never said that...

S: They have never said that...

I: The reason I am insisting is because most of our colleagues say that their students have been complaining about having done the same material at the frontisterio...

S: Well, that would make me very worried if students came up to me and said I mean... that means that something is going. They don't want to be subjected to material repetition. But, the fact that my junior students can get through a session without having used any Greek eh means a lot to me and I think that in the long run they will appreciate that even more. And I am looking forward to having those students come over to senior high school, because we know exactly where to pick up from. So, I think working at two schools eh is a great idea I hope this doesn't change. (Laughter)

I: You took the students over from another colleague, at the beginning of the year, what did you think of the students?

S: Eh knowledge wise, well I think their standard of English could have been higher.

I: I think that in the other school that is the junior high school there is another English language colleague.

S: There are two of them.

I: Two, I didn't know that, how do you get along with them? What you are going to say is confidential so you don't need to worry.

S: (Laughter) I hope so... Not nearly as well as I would like to, not that there is animosity among, but I just feel that they may evade the subject. I am willing to use English and to exchange ideas with them, but I don't think they would. If they talk to one another in Greek, they talk to me in Greek which I do not understand and at least one of them probably has by now her set way of teaching. I think that it is very hard to change that in a person who has been out of touch with new teaching approaches for so long.

I: And has she been imposing things on to you...

S: No, no I think that she has been critical about it. Even if she gets her own way just out of respect because she has been around a lot longer than I and I haven't... I don't mind. Eh, but I would mind if she thought that her ways are the best or the most correct and everybody else...

I: Has she been checking on you, that is has been asking you how many units you have covered and so on?

S: Towards the end, yes. We had to agree where we would stop and which material to ask our students to study for our exam, but apart from that no. There has been any prying into my teaching, no. Neither have I to be honest I haven't requested much from her.

I: It is said that our commitment and enthusiasm to teach are very rarely constant, but rather show a dynamic fluctuation. To what extent is this true about you? Could you mention some examples?

S: Not always true, but I do have my on days and my off days. I try not to bring my problems, my problems at home if I have any to work eh as soon I step into a classroom I just try to have a happy face and I don't show my students that I am burdened with something and that does the trick for me. I just put aside anything that upsets me or worries me until I am over with my work.

I: If you were to reflect and report on the period in your teaching career that you were most motivated, when would that be?

S: Certainly, during the early years, very early years way before I started working at public school. Eh would that be well or would you like me to focus on public school well so many years the first two or three years were certainly the most productive, I certainly spent a lot more time preparing myself preparing material for my classes. Not that I don't do that any more, but I guess it is not as much as it was. But I do remember putting a lot of time and energy into my work then.

**I:** Do you think that you were affected by the fact that there is no development in the public sector and that made you sort of not as enthusiastic as you used to be?

**S:** Yes, I sort of realized along the way that no matter how much work you do, no one will pat you on the back and say well done so that could be subconsciously, that is, that could be what is happening in. There are colleagues who shirk their duties and there are other colleagues that do a lot more and eh, I get inspired by those people and that makes me realize that I have to keep up my work too.

**I:** Are there many of these type of teachers?

**S:** Not, too many, eh, a handful who I admire have had a good effect on me. I like being inspired positively. I would like to see more of that happening, but eh generally the situation is quite different.

**I:** In your opinion is a teacher born or made?

**S:** I think you got to have it in you. I think a teacher is born, but teaching I found out is a little bit different to other professions. You need to be creative you need to possess an actor's abilities so I think that if you like projecting your personality, then teaching is definitely cut out for you.

**I:** If you were to self-evaluate yourself, what sort of a teacher are you?

**S:** I am generally very modest about my self so I would say good and with a lot of room, a lot of potential for becoming even better.

**I:** If you could start off all over again would you become a teacher?

**S:** (laughter) Well, in this county yes. If I were somewhere else probably not. But I don't see that many options available in this country. If you had asked that question at the beginning of my career I would probably have said no, because I was very disillusioned by the whole thing. The rundown schools, the lack of material and the standard that existed back then, it is very disappointing. Back then I would probably have said that I wanna do something else, but I have seen some progress made and we do have better schools now and more visual aids, material, better books eh the quality of students could be so, that it makes it a lot easier... I don't think I would like to do anything else now.

**I:** Would you say that your hopes and limitations have been justified while practicing teaching in the state sector?

**S:** I will never be totally be satisfied with my students until they make English a second nature to them (Laughter). It would be very satisfying to me to be able to be approached by a student and to say a little more than just hello how are you. I would be very happy to see a



student come up to me and say “guess what happened to me the other day”, or “ I have got this great joke” or “this is what I read in the newspaper”, you know, then I would say that they have reached the expectations that I look forward to.

I: In your opinion what is the most satisfying aspect of our profession even in the state sector?

S: Job satisfaction... eh...

I: Is there any job satisfaction. It's what, I think that you have done a good day's job that's what job satisfaction is. Feeling that you got through decent material and could have caused well and the students enjoyed and understood it and the general feeling is positive, then I would. That's what would be satisfying to me, but nothing else.

I: And what is that irritates you the most?

S: The students you mean?

I: Generally.

S: Eh, oh when you think about that. Yes, I would say the indifference that other teachers show and shrinking their responsibilities [can't make out what she says] and there are teachers who don't eh and just take back [can't make out what she says]. To give their students their knowledge through other means. They know that most students get extra help outside school so there are teachers who don't bother to do their share of the work. That... that's what comes to my mind right now.

I: I would like to ask you a question again as it might not have been recorded, you remember I had a problem with the recorder last time and some things have not been recorded.

S: Yes.

I: Have you ever been affected by students coming up to you and saying that they have the Proficiency or the Lower and saying that they have covered the material that you are about to teach?

S: Well, I haven't had students make that complaint so it means that they need more practice. I tried well even if I was told something like that I would say then “Well fine now, you need to deal with it even more and you need to practice”.

I: Other colleagues have reported that, students that have taken the FC or the Proficiency they tend to be indifferent during the class because they think they have reached the required level...

S: If you ... if you allow this to happen then you are unsuccessful eh, you have to be a step above those students you have to eh you can't lose face with that. Once you do that then

your job is very difficult in class. Students can tell, and particularly those students who have reached a certain level. They can see through us whether we are up to scratch or not and that's why dealing with more proficient students we have to be better prepared, but I appreciate those students because they give me a challenge. I never underestimate them and I am stricter with myself after a session if I have not done my job as well as I could. I come down on my self (Laughter). In fact, I'm not going to allow this to happen again to myself. But, I don't know whether I have any of these students this year, that is, of FC or Proficiency level I never ask those students if they have taken any Certificates because I don't want to be influenced that way, but through our communicating I would say that even if they do have the Certificate they still have a long way to go and they are probably aware of that, too. Sometimes they are not happy with the results they get in their test papers that's when they use their excuse like "Oh, why would I get such a poor mark I already have my Certificate" or "I have got the Proficiency and you give me a fourteen?"

I: What's your answer?

S: What's my answer? I would be worried about that. (Laughter) If I were you I would go back and brush up (laughter) all the books I have done. Well, but generally I would say that I think I know how to deal with all kinds of students. I think I have finally found the middle solution to keep up with everybody's expectations

I: If you were given the opportunity to choose the private sector and the private sector while the conditions of pay and insurance and everything were the same where would you like to be working?

S: I would say, I wouldn't see any difference in that case, no if everything else (Laughter) remained the same if every other factor remained the same apart from the fact that one is the public and the other is private

I: Say if we assumed that the private was more organized...

S: Eh, okay well I would certainly go for the private, the private school, just for the fact that the students might be a little disciplined. Not that I had that kind of trouble particularly this year at both high school and senior high school. Discipline wise they have been well behaved within reason. The students have been well behaved. Back, you know back in the past I have found myself among obnoxious students. I wouldn't probably have said definitely the private (laughter)

I: And why is it that the students were obnoxious then and they are not now.

S: Well, for a number of reasons, probably because English by then was not valued as highly as it is nowadays. It could be because the students have focused their attention on other

subjects and had no time for English, it could have been lack of lack of (laughter) eh the whole environment. The teaching environment could have been wrong.

I: It's not because of you, like the way you got into the classroom the first day they could tell.

S: I am usually taken well to. I haven't had difficulty being liked, but there are some odd exceptions back in the past, which I have forgotten, but even then the most difficult groups were my senior my last year senior high school students, my graders, who certainly couldn't afford to waste any more time on learning a foreign language.

I: Thank you for giving me the interview.

S: By all means.

### **Interview with teacher trainer**

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> May 2000

**Location:** My flat

I: What do you think of the state English language teachers in terms of their commitment/general disposition?

S: (Laughter) It is hard to generalize Eleni, because I don't know all state schoolteachers, but are we talking about English language state school teachers?

I: Yes.

S: I don't know the feel is that they are not....they are not particularly committed to their job because they are not very supported with their job and it is hard to give your all when you don't feel you are appreciated.

I: And do you think that would be a good excuse for not doing their job?

S: No, it doesn't excuse them. Eh, from the moment they have decided they are going to be English language teachers it is their responsibility to teach.

I: And why is it then that they don't.

S: Why is it that they don't? Because I think that many, if not all of them go into English language teaching, because they want to be English language teachers. Here in Greece you don't train as an English teacher you train in English literature and at some stage towards the end of your degree you'll take an elective I think methodology and then maybe if you can't find a job then you will go into English teaching. I just... I was talking to Sophia Lytra last



week (she's a lecturer at the university of Athens in the English Department) and I asked her of the English lit students and how many actually wanted to go into English teaching and she said it is not their first choice and ... they are thinking of going into banking, or businesses or finances that need English that kind of thing they fall into English teaching because there is a demand for it.

I: These teacher students when they graduate and they become teachers and they join the private sector and there is a notion that private language teachers tend to be more committed to their job in contrast to the state school teachers.

S: I don't know this.

I: We happen to be....take me, for example I used to be in the private sector and as soon as I joined the state school, well actually it was after a couple of years I stopped to be committed.

S: After you joined the state sector?

I: Yes.

S: Well, then you know the answer.

I: (Laughter) Can't you sort of judge as a third eye.

S: I don't know I am not sure, Eleni, I have heard that English teachers in the private sector are respected. I didn't realize it was so. Pretty much nobody was respected. I thought that there is this notion that if you pay for it then it must be better. I didn't think that they thought that the teachers were any better. You don't pay for a public education so it must be pretty bad. That was the general notion. I don't know if that is true, but for as why you were committed in the private sector and then not committed in the state sector you and everybody else that has the same experience I don't know maybe it is your conditions, maybe you have many more kids in the class probably you've got mixed ability classes, but you didn't have this in the private school where the numbers are smaller and the owner of the school eh tailor classes to separate abilities. Whereas in the public school you have got every level in your class which is very hard to deal with it especially if you had no pedagogical training, and especially if you aren't in a continual professional in-service support. And I understand that you get almost no in-service support.

I: So if you had to compare the state school teachers with the private language teachers what would you have to say?

S: In my experience I can't say one is better than the other and I certainly can't say, you know it is very interesting how (private language) school teachers will tell you that state school teachers are a waste of time and state school teachers will tell you how private school

teachers are a waste of time. I can't see a difference between the two of you. It is very strange it is very funny to hear private language teachers saying that state school teachers can't do their job, state school teachers can't speak English. It's what they say. And then I hear state school teachers say private school teachers they have nothing they have a proficiency certificate I have got a university degree. So there is an amazing rivalry and snobbery occurring between the two and in my opinion neither of them are well taught to do their job since they don't have any pedagogical training and even the state school teachers who's at least had six months in methodology, has unlikely to have had any practice in teaching. So I am not impressed with either. (laughter)

I: Do you think that there exist any motivated EFL teachers in the state sector if we take into consideration the present teaching conditions in the state secondary school system?

S: Look, I would have thought that there would have to be some motivated EFL teachers because it is impossible that there are any. It is very hard to find them, but I have been surprised to hear that. If had asked me about six months ago I would have thought that ...ugh...no I don't think there is any, I don't think they are even interested in teaching, but I have been able to contact with more state school teachers and I found some very motivated English state school teachers extremely motivated despite their condition and I think that if they were genuinely teachers from the beginning you know they wanted to do their job [can't make out what she says]

I: What made you think that they are motivated, how did you come to this conclusion?

S: Eh, well, the way I came across them they were presenting their work to other teachers. They were presenting it enthusiastically, and in fact they had done amazing things including getting 29,000,000 drachmas out of the Greek government which is I: What did they do with all that money?

S: After two years that's how motivated they were Eleni, after TWO YEARS of putting in their submissions for money eh, they were finally approved for 29,000,000 drachmas to set up their English classrooms as internet computer classrooms and so they....they don't even teach the course book I am not sure how they get away with that since you have to teach some course book. They do have a course book; they chose it especially so that it was simple, so that they could do it very quickly so that they could spend the rest of the time having children doing project work searching the internet by themselves during the lesson time.

I: That's amazing!

**S: Incredible!!! That's what they do. They showed this fantastic, and they have this fantastic multi-media presentation, of their work, para-point presentations slides showing what the kids do with the project work and things the kids have done. They have also showed the problems that they had, for example, you wouldn't believe the big problem that they had. These kids had free access to the Internet okay during their English lessons and some of these kids are very computer literate and a group of three boys and they are teaching the whole class. They didn't get miniature classes for this. This is 27 kids they are manipulating around with group work, pair work Eh... they apparently one day the teacher went to open up their website because she had developed the website advertising the work that they are doing and when she opened it, the pictures.... the pornographic pictures...**

**I: Really!!! (laughter)**

**S: So it was kind of like 'Welcome to Glyfada's 6<sup>th</sup> high school' pornographic website (laughter).**

**I: And how did she react?!**

**S: Waaaaaaaaaaaaa..... (laughter) She said she went insane because she had this vision of people round the world opening up this Glyfada the public high school website and finding all these pornographic photographs. She went ballistic [implying insane] eh and got the whole class in and just [can't make out what she says] and raved at them and came to a conclusion which ....said that she had to find out who did it, she must know who did it. The principle was in and everybody was and finally, and finally the three boys came forth and confessed crying, saying that they didn't mean it and that they had done it as a joke but then they couldn't get rid of it and bla bla bla. And she said that after that experience eh she wrote a note, that she gave all the participants at the workshop. The note was a note that they stole off another school in Canada and translated into Greek and basically each child and parent had to sign that agreement saying that the child would not in any way hamper with the system or visit eh such websites and she said that they didn't have any problems. I mean, even that, after that disaster everybody else said, "I'm not doing anymore." I do this for these kids. I just struggled for two years to get the money to build this room for these kids that no other kids have in Greece and they go and they do this to me?!!! Would you give up?!!! But she continued on and she was so enthusiastic, bubbling with enthusiasm. And she said but I think she is probably a special kind of woman. She's managed to get two other women, two Greek teachers. This is another thing this is a clue, I don't know this woman who's doing this, is a New Zealander pure New Zealander a pure foreigner.**

**I: And does that make the difference?**



**S:** I don't know? Well, I don't know. Would a Greek person have the courage to continue it through? And she said that even though the two women who she got involved in the project were very enthusiastic said, "We can't keep up your pace, we can't do this again!" they were drained you know this is taking too much time, too much effort, I don't..." She runs, she's opened up the classroom to anybody who wants to see, which is another unusual thing. Greek teachers in my experience are much closed eh, she said phone me let me know and come and visit. She obviously wants to share this, they got money also to in-service other teachers in the area. So the teachers could come and see how the class was so this was a very, very motivated person. VERY MOTIVATING! So I was in the room she was speaking to most of the state schoolteachers, because it was a state school teacher talk I didn't see very many private teachers there. I don't know they have got nothing to learn from this, which was a big mistake. Because they had a lot to learn from it! Eh, most of them were state school teachers and they were like this Eleni, [showing surprise]

**I:** (laughter)

**S:** And she was saying it's HARD, but it is POSSIBLE. And once you do it it's GREAT! She said it's great now especially in the classroom the kids sit down at the work sessions and do what they want to do. She said the best thing for her now is that she has time to spend with the children although she has quite a deal of (students) refugee background who had no English and can not go to any frontisteria. So she has time to spend with them in small groups. Of course the other kids are capable of doing project work searching for information about endangered species and eh they are well occupied. So she says it's the first time she's had time to deal with children that she always had to ignore in the past. Because when could you ever deal with the kids who know nothing? You never had time! So there you go you do have some motivated teachers. And another report back I was listening to a lecturer up at the University of Athens the Aristoteleio University and she also had once again European Union money all this money is coming form the European Union to institute practice teaching in the English teachers finishing their course. And not just practice teaching, but it was a special project reflecting on practice teaching so the students had to keep diaries of their time and reflect on what they were doing and think of new ways of doing things and she said the reports back from the students as they have gone into teaching they have come back to her, found her in the university so this has made such a difference and the way they teach just having been put through this process of thinking about what you do, why you do it, how you do it. I presume that out of that they would be some more motivated teachers. If you feel like you know what you are doing why you are doing it.

**I:** So when you answer the question if it is possible to be an effective language teacher within in the state school system would...?

S: Possible, yes, difficult I presume.

I: What changes do you think should be made in order to promote English language teaching in the state sector?

S: Okay one of the changes has just been made if I have understood correctly they have put English back on the ...high school certificates that are counted into the final score so that raises its status in the eyes of students so they'll be taking it more seriously than what they do what else can they do? They could.....they could be the first people to kick this course book notion right out of the country. There should be curriculum for English language not a course book. A course book is not a curriculum. Course book is just a resource that supports the entire curriculum so there should be a central organizing committee, that would ... not that they don't even have to write on their own ... every other country in Europe would have a curriculum for English language. No other country would rely on a particular course book to make the people [can't make out what she says] and once you get that curriculum then teachers would be free to make the decision and how they will teach the students that they have at the time so that they can achieve the aims and objectives that they put forward. So that you are freed up to react to the needs and interests of your students. I presume the state school advisors can do something besides swamping the county-side they could get together they are seven or eight of them I think. They could easily get together and do the curriculum together and what they could do is ask for consultation for English language teachers and then they would feel more a part of it and they would feel ownership of it they would feel more committed to it because they would feel that they have something to do with it. That's what I think they should do.

I: You once told me that you were shocked by the fact that the teachers are usually the first ones to leave the classroom, when they were supposed to be the last ones to exit the classroom. Suppose this is true what does this imply?

S: It implies that they can't wait to get out of the place. (laughter)They can't wait to get out of the place. I still to this day find that, I don't understand how the school could be empty of teachers before it is empty of kids. How can they not have things to get ready for the next day? How, how is it possible not to get ready for the next day, how is it possible?

I: They just follow the book.

S: Ugh.... As long as they continue to that, Eleni, as long as they continue to just blindly follow the book then teaching won't be interesting for them. It's like a self-perpetuating rot! If they don't get out of it they'll keep on doing the same thing over and over again. You don't feel enthusiastic. It is amazing that by just doing one thing differently you have a positive reaction from the kids. It is amazing how it can fill you and think "Hah, that's



good!" I mean they just do one thing. What's the point of just doing the same thing all the time, "Turn the pages, turn the pages. Shut up, shut up, turn the pages turn the pages, shut up, you didn't do your homework! Shut up, turn the pages, turn the pages" all day, every day! They do that! Why don't they want to find a way out?! I wouldn't know!

I: It means work, it means effort.

S: But isn't that better than this mindless boredom that they are always having in the classroom? They feel like the kids hate me, the kids hate English.

I: But then they have their private lessons to look after all.

S: So I hear. So I hear, but in my experience I don't see them putting anything into their private lessons as well.

I: Why?

S: I don't know I think they have no idea how to teach. (Laughter)

I: Why is it you are saying that they don't have any idea of how to teach!

S: They have never been trained to teach! I think at the private lesson, let me tell you Eleni, is the hardest lesson of all. It is the one way you could really find out whether you've got anything to give! If you really know anything about teaching. Because it is really you and the student and if you are going to just sit there and do exercises A B C D E F and that's the end of the lesson [can't make out what she says] the student could have done that with their own student key book. I think there is a lot of kids wasting their time.

I: Do you think that there is any chance for the state sector to take full responsibility for the foreign language education of the students in Greece? Why? Why not?

S: Like, is there any rumours in the air?

I: No, if you think that they could abolish the frontisteria.

S: They could but they won't. I mean anything is possible, but they won't.

I: Why not?

S: Probably too many cans of worms? For a start I have heard that there are 180,000 registered frontisteria in Greece.

I: No, it is 7,800 something like that.

S: So, it must be that 180,000 teachers that have a license to teach. So, I guess that there are 180,000 votes that they lose for a start. (laughter) and I understand that I don't know, but I have heard that PALSIO has a very strong lobby. They could. They should do if they had any sense of responsibility they'd do it.



I: Do what?

S: Get rid of the frontisteria.

I: I mean if they do, do you think that the state school teachers would improve?

S: They could only do it if they improved the working conditions of the English language teachers. Eleni, if the rest of Europe can operate without frontisteria and not only those they learn English, why does Greece have to have frontisteria and the students can't learn English, they still can't learn English. They still have the lowest pass rate on the first certificate despite that. They are doing three hours a week at school and four hours....

I: You mean another six hours.

S: Yes. And in the frontisteria, they still can't pass the exams. So to me it's a scandal that the government let's this continue. It must be the only the private language system the frontisteria just to take an unchecked ... nobody checks it. There is no, there is no evaluation there is no assessment in what they are doing. Nobody checks anything. Well, they check to see whether they've got a ...you go through how much paperwork to open a frontisterio and you go through lots of paper work, but they do not see whether you are a teacher. They see whether you are five hundred metres from the petrol station, you've got two toilets or ... these things, nothing to do with whether the students are going to learn any English when they go there. They don't care. It's hard to understand, how it is possible I mean they only need to.... send a [can't make out what she says] to find mission to any other European country and particularly the northern ones to find out how is, they manage to learn English in the school I ....When I was teaching in Australia I met a Swedish woman who was down doing a doctorate in Australia, her child came to us at the school. I taught in a public school and I asked her. She was a state school teacher how did it work over there and it was so similar to the way we taught in Australia. It was so similar. So similar! A general curriculum being given to teachers and then the teachers worked out their own way of teaching the students and that's because they had training. You have to have training about teaching to do that. There is almost, it is only, you know, just have the proficiency to get to work in the private sector or just an English literature degree to teach in the state sector. This is the way it is in this country.

I: When you spoke to Professor X didn't you try to find out why there are so many problems with English in the state sector?

S: No, I didn't because I was trying to kind of suck up on other things (laughter), but I was trying to get her [can't make out what she says]. I said "I want your students in TESOL" and she said "I agree, TESOL has lots to offer them, but I can't send them to TESOL because it

costs money to join TESOL so “I can’t say to them go and join TESOL because it’s money”. So we were figuring out what else we could do and we came up with the deal: that I’ll let them come to the next conference for free and she will make them go because she will make them do an assignment on it so that they will be in and while they are there I’m gonna have a special student’s registration table and we can say that “ You can join TESOL for half price for all the things that you will see today plus other things that you will get if you join TESOL”. And plus they will all have the chance to see the things that TESOL offers and it is going to be fantastic from now on.

I: Certainly now that YOU have become THE PRESIDENT.

(laughter)

I: As a professional parent who is concerned about your daughter’s education what do you think about the school?

S: Generally?

I: Yes.

S: Eh, kind of sad by the curriculum and the methodology, which I think is extremely old fashioned. Extremely old fashioned. It’s all about remembering facts and nothing about learning to learn. There is no researching no questioning, no discovery, nothing. It’s very depressing because its’ many, many, many years since people were being taught like that. In the UK in Australia the US eh ... I’m depressed by their methodology that the teachers are... some of the teachers not all of them, there are some extremely well meaning teachers, very well meaning. Very kind and thoughtful teachers. For example her Greek teacher has been very thoughtful. There are other and unfortunately they are mostly men really boofheads (laughter) in Australian, who [can’t make out what she says] don’t hand out exam results just call them out.

I: In front of the other?

S: In front of the other.

I: Not even the basics.

S: No, not even the basics. They don’t even think. They don’t even think, they don’t even think that this is hurtful? I can’t believe that they don’t even think that or that they are so mean that they want to be so hurtful? Why would you want to do that to a kid? And most of them have been teaching teenagers for many years and they must surely know the angst that teenagers go through. Why do they want to do that to them? They think that they are going to motivate them? I can’t think of a worst way to motivate a student than to humiliate them. I

don't know they think that they are motivating? This is, they're very, very ill informed the teachers. Very ill informed. Did the mathematics degree... no they don't do their job in the state school. So that's kind of depressing.

I: And how about the English classes?

S: (laughter) One thing that I found out about the English class and her English teacher I have to say, is that she's been very kind to Rea, to learn English ch... One thing that I found out about the way they teach English here in Greece is that they don't have to teach English.

I: What do they teach then?

S: I don't know what it is.

I: (laughter)

S: How do you think I should know what it is? It's this, it is studied in Examlish because these kids are doing exams. I don't know it some kind of English that they think that you need to know before you can learn real English, so they think you need to know present continuous so they would teach you ... What I have this girl (laughter) that's silly and she's got a new super duper course book called Cross the Border that almost everybody in Greece is using in school this year.

I: Who is it by?

S: Kostakou? Addie Kostakou. She must have made a fortune out of that book.

I: She was on the TESOL board wasn't she?

S: ...just speaking, no, I don't think so. I haven't been to listen to her... oh God (laughter) I can't believe it is such a bad book, I can't believe it! This is a modern it is a multi ....it advertises itself as a multi-cultural approach to teaching English and it is such a rip off of every other book on the market, just a copy. And one of the classic example on how things never change, just because they put coloured photos in, Eleni, nothing has changed. This book might as well been a grammar translation book from....it is exactly the same content. Nothing changes and so in the section where you must know the present continuous before you can even speak English in that part the example of present continuous is asking questions. "Am I sleeping? Are you sleeping? AM I SLEEPING?!!! Has anybody in the world ever asked this question? (Laughter) AM I SLEEPING?!!! (laughter) OII GOD! Of all the examples she could have chosen!!! AM I SLEEPING?!!! (Laughter) It is not often that you need to ask a present continuous question about yourself, Eleni. There is a whole section on it. So and it is this ridiculous answer they go to, to make some learning point that they think you need to know before you can speak English. And the trouble is that the kids



believe it, too. They don't think that they can speak English until they have learnt the grammar. "Oh, I don't know the grammar yet so I can't speak English." I try that to my three year old, he doesn't know grammar either, but he can speak English very well. So, it is a very, very outdated notion of how people learn English here in Greece. I'd like to get into the methodology courses in the university and see what they are teaching. I am not quite sure (laughter) I don't want to criticize.

I: How about the teacher? The teacher I mean how she has changed over the school year?

S: I don't know how she's changed.

I: Well, I remember you telling me some things about her. Before having the course book...

S: Oh, well I didn't notice that. Rea noticed that, Rea said that in the beginning that English was more interesting and then later on, the key turning point was, when they got the course book delivered to the school and then she's been tied to what they have to do in the course book and not doing other things. This is another example of how a course book is a straight jacket and anybody thinks that Kostakou or any other course book they don't know anything about your students in your classroom at that time and then they're...they don't know. And then it is just a rip off. They are just a complete copy of other course book. Who is it that decided that you have to know the present simple before you know the present continuous before you know that, before you know that, before you know that, who decided about that rule. But they all follow it blindly. I'm doing this mini-research project and (laughter) and I am going to write it up as an article. It is called do you speak "Poke mon" (laughter)

I: What is it about?

S: It is about this exact same notion about very young learners and every young learner, pre-junior, junior course book you look at and every child has to know hop, skip, jump, cat, dog, man these are the words that every junior child has to know. And they may only ever speak in the present simple for at least two years (laughter). Now where is the corpus on junior language? What do junior children really say? So I've been noting down my three-year-old son's conversations and he almost never except for commands speaks in the present simple. Except for don't and walk and want most of the time it's 'I'm going to...', 'I saw...' he's talking about his past his immediate future, eh, you have to know these to teach young learners and his vocabulary is about Poke mon, Pikatsu,. Another whole conversation which I didn't initiate is about sharks and whales and seals and his descriptors were like: bigger than, more than all these things. I think you have to be in D class to do all those things? Who says? If a three year can use it, even a four year old can use it because they are using it in Greek don't they? So where is the corpus for young learners?

I: Are there any changes that you would recommend to improve this school?

S: Given, eh...changes that could actually improve I could say many things that could actually help, obviously the teachers need more.....

I: Are you saying more respect?

S: From their administration. Oh well, I have the impression that her English teacher can't do what she wants to do because she goes under pressure by her superior, so she feels threatened. If she felt more of an equal at school maybe she would have more power at school. Things that she feels inside that she should be doing because I think she knows what she should be doing. Someone needs to encourage her within the system, but I don't think that it would change anything. I think that I couldn't change the school but I think I could maybe change the teachers. I feel kind of like visiting the teachers because everybody has to face a hard staff even I mean in Australia didn't I have to face a hard staff everybody? Now as a president don't I have a hard board to face? [can't make out what she says] with different personalities you have to somehow find ways.....

I: Do you think that students are treated well in the state school?

S: I think at her school, at her school I have to say I was surprised really how it turned out and I have to say that I'm not sure whether this would happen in Australia. My daughter was being teased by two girls continually, she didn't even tell me about it. Eh, but one day they put a white out in her hair and eh her friends told her "Don't tell that we did this". And so she did. And I was very surprised because Rea is very, very shy and I was very surprised she did it, but she may be shy but there is a strong will streak and if she thinks that she has been done wrong she will go. She went to the deputy principal who then called the girls and asked whether this was true, and they said that it happened accidentally. So he said "How could it happen accidentally." They said "We had painted it on the table and we were squirting it off with a ruler" Then they were in trouble for painting their tables. (laughter). And in the meantime the teacher who was in the class at the time had a look at Rea's hair and saw that it had white and said that he was very disappointed with the other two girls. The girls were suspended, which I thought was pretty strict and they were suspended for the rest of the day and the next day, and I said to Rea when she told me that "They are going to eat you alive from now. Why did you do that?" Because I never would have in high school. And I had my own share of bullies at high school I wouldn't have dubbed them. Otherwise I would be [shows that she is being hanged] and she said "I don't care they did the wrong thing." Then they didn't bother her again. In fact they are her friends. (laughter) I don't know maybe because they did and she told them. And she said to them, too. I told you to stop and you



didn't. And what could they say about that? When they found out that they were going to be suspended they begged her "Please say it was an accident our mothers are going to kill us!"

I: And they became their friends?!

S: Yes, the one is her friend now and the other is just fine. So that was that in some ways the school is maybe more caring than I think.

I: How about the headmistress?

S: Well, she is tall. (laughter) Eh, I found her my husband had been, she's a classically well trained headmistress. She's...I've had this in Australia as well. They on the outside appear to be taking everything you said on board and so you have this good impression. But I had the impression that she wasn't [can't make out what she says]. Absolutely no problem everything will be fine and then out of the door and then she didn't even think about it again. So, I don't know I think maybe I am more perceptive than other people. Vangelis [Teacher trainers' husband] thought she was nice! And she said whatever you say....and then she forgot all about it (laughter) Because she's very good at making the right noises. And Rea tells me that she loves her. She says, "She's a nice headmistress."

I: Have you ever had the experience with Greek people fearing that English language/culture influence might endanger their Greek identity?

S: Yes, I have got two sides of the story. One is that I, as an English native speaker I am also concerned that English is encroaching on the Greek identity and culture. Not just Greek identity and culture, but all over the world. I am very concerned about it. Eh, about what's happening I think it's, to use a term that a woman who I had heard speak in Australia, she was Finish. She said it was linguistic genocide and with linguistic genocide comes cultural genocide. Once you lose your language you lose your identity. And if I was Greek I would be very worried about it, if I was Greek. And I wondered to myself how people like my mother-in-law, who doesn't know anything, who cannot read in Greek let alone in English, how she copes. When you go to the supermarket and you are surrounded by letters that mean nothing to you, that are totally foreign. I know what Australians are like when they go to Australians walk down the street and they see a sign over the Japanese restaurant and it really annoys them. What does that say? What are they writing up there? How can they stuff that I don't know what it is. This is my and I don't know what it says? So how do they handle that in Greece when they are surrounded by stuff that they don't know what it says....I would be so threatened by it if I was Greek. I am surprised they don't make more noise about it. I don't hear very much noise about it...But I have had strange experiences with husbands of Greek husbands of native speakers here. I think they are scared of their wives finding another identity. I think they are threatened by something if they don't



actually understand it. It is a more personal thing. They worry of their wives, I don't know [can't make out what she says] their husbands are not very keen on them getting together other foreigners and, and I don't know there is something, something very odd in. I can never think of two English out of at least twenty whose kids could speak English. I don't understand it.

I: It is amazing!

S: This is really beyond me. I can't. Their husbands had so much influence over them? I can't believe it. How can you not speak your mother tongue with your child?! And I tell my kids, "Don't speak Greek to Mummy" I tell Dimitri, "Shut up" because he is a little one and he still mixes the languages. If he says something in Greek to me I tell him speak English at school don't speak Greek to Mummy.

I: Thank you for coming and doing the interview.

### **Interview with Math Teacher (Temporarily working for the administration)**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2001**

**Location: My flat**

I: Do you think that the English language subject should be taught at school considering that the majority of the pupils attend courses in the frontisteria?

Why? Why not?

S: In my view one should first learn his/her language in depth and when he/she reaches a mature age when his/her language has settled, he/she knows the structure of his/her language then he/she can learn another language. But for a child to learn a language say French one to learn his/her native language and then at the same time to learn English or Italian I find it a little difficult. You need to learn the structure of your language, the syntax and grammar and then you can translate it into another language, because in my opinion it is much easier when you are mature and you have understood the structures you can understand the structure of the foreign language and then a third language.

I: If we assume that students can learn a foreign language and it is a fact that the majority of students attend classes at the frontisteria do you believe that they must also attend classes in the state sector?

S: I don't think that English must be made compulsory at the elementary level but it can become compulsory at high school. English was introduced at the elementary school for

political reasons so that the state would alleviate the financial burden that families have, as they send their students to the frontisteria. So the ministry of education decided to introduce English at the elementary school so that we can alleviate the expenses of the Greek family. I totally disagree with the learning of English at the elementary level.

I: How about the secondary level?

S: The way that English is taught at school is not in any way helpful, because the general perception is that since the student will be taught at the frontisterio he/she does not pay attention to what he/she is taught at school. I have noticed, as I am responsible in writing the grades in report cards in English that the students get a 12 in their written test [which is a low grade] while at the same time they get prepared to take the First Certificate.

I: Why do you think that this is happening?

S: Because generally I feel that the students don't value the subject of English language and of all the other subjects, as these are free of charge.

I: I don't think that this is at the same level with all the other subjects.

S: They are at the same level. Simply, not many students fail the other subjects because they get the average.

I: Do you think that if the foreign language frontisteria were banned English could be learned only at school? What I mean is do you think that there is any chance for the state sector to take full responsibility for the foreign language education of the students in Greece? Why? Why not?

S: Yes, I think they would, because I think that it is a necessity to learn English nowadays and because there wouldn't be anything beyond the school so that the students could learn the foreign language they would understand that the only place that they could acquire the language is the school.

I: And if this was to happen what changes would need to be implemented.

S: Changes to the curriculum to increase the hours that they are taught English. I believe that this system of streamlining students is a bit discriminating. Why is it they streamline them in English and not in History, in Maths .... I think that the ministry is trying to convey to us that it is essential that we learn at least one foreign language and that is the reason they have small groups, which they streamline according to the potential of each class, the class progresses, but this cannot be perceived by the students. Even if they streamline students according to their knowledge forming in this way two groups one the advanced and the other not the advanced the teachers advance the students' knowledge of the language. But still

even in the advanced group you do not see any improvements, that students from this class can take the First Certificate without them having to attend the frontisteria, without any kind of private lessons. Because the teacher enters the classroom and speaks Greek all the time which is wrong.

I: Why do you think s/he uses Greek?

S: ...because the lady who enters the class does not care, she is not controlled by anyone. I have been teaching for 15 years now and I have never seen an advisor of English set foot in schools, it is not only of the English language but advisors of all the other subjects I have never seen them come to school. To come and check on teachers, to ask students, or to observe the class, or even to give a sample lesson as to how the teachers should teach. And I believe that the teachers who teach English in Greece do not have the teaching skills.

I: Is that true of all teachers both in the private and the state sector?

S: Yes, because when I hear the English language teacher teach in the school – they teach it and it sounds as if I hear my grandma talking boorish. The reason I am stating this, is because the majority of serials on TV are in English I have sort of recorded in my mind the accent of an English, an American and an Australian... The English language teachers in our school speak Greek they do not speak English.

I: Why is that?

S: I think that they do their class as drudgery

I: What does this have to do with one's accent?

S: I'll tell you once we wanted to send a group of students abroad and both the English and French language teachers had a problem to communicate, on how to find their way round. They know the language only superficially.

I: Yes, but they have been to university to study the language

S: So what? I have been to university; this does not imply that I know in depth whatever concerns my subject.

I: So what is wrong in your opinion?

S: The thing that is wrong is our lack of training, why don't they put pressure on teachers to teach at a higher level? Because I remember in the past we used to ask questions. We used to take up the teachers' time in the break. Now before the bell rings the teachers are at the door ready to flee.

I: Why is it so?



**S:** It is because we are not controlled, we do not care.

**I:** Why don't we care? There must be a reason.

**S:** There is the logic that whoever wants to learn will learn. Everybody attends class some shouldn't have been at school because now they have to attend at least nine years of compulsory schooling even if you are good or bad, you have to attend it as a student and the school should help you graduate. What do I mean by help? Well, to raise the grades for example to change your grade from five to nine, for a three to become a nine and so on and so forth as a result the child realises that it is easy to be promoted from one class to the other and so he/she doesn't try and the teacher finds it convenient.

**I:** You mentioned the acquisition of a certificate. Do you think that if the ministry introduced the acquisition of a certificate in foreign languages in the state sector it would change the whole mentality?

**S:** Yes, it would but with the precondition that there wouldn't be the frontisteria that the British Council is taking advantage of... I think financial issues are involved. When a child wants to take the First Certificate and he/she tries two or three times and doesn't pass, how much do they pay each time?

**I:** Around 30,000 drachmas.

**S:** The English receive 30,000 drachmas so that the unemployed can live on. And each time they change the books, each year they change books they get new ones and they are not cheap to buy those books they are quite expensive. Thus, the reasons are political that state schools have not organised foreign language learning.

**I:** If it was organised do you think that teachers' would change their mentality

**S:** Yes, surely they would.

**I:** Do you think that students would change their mentality?

**S:** Yes, they would, yes they would, but the ministry would have to ban the fronristeria.

**I:** I see...

**S:** Therefore the need to speak a foreign language and having banned the frontisteria and the illegal private lessons I think that the teacher would be obliged to do a good job and the students to pay attention.

**I:** What do you think is missing as regards the teaching of English in the state school system (could be staff wise, materialwise and training wise)?

**S:** The thing that is missing is to make the lesson a lively lesson; to have a lesson that would reflect the daily life of the English. I remember they gave us books that had plays from Shakespeare. Who cares about Shakespeare? I want to find out about current writers. To get a text that has financial terms in it and to work on it, to have environmental, social, cultural terms modern issues. I would like the lesson to be lively. Secondly, I don't think it is pedagogic to have few students in the class room there should be quite a few. Moreover, to give the students the opportunity to speak in English regardless of the mistakes they may make. I remember once in the summer some guest had arrived from South Africa and I had a friend who was an English language graduate and she was ashamed to speak, because she did not know the language well and I by just using gestures I was able to communicate. I remember telling her to speak even if she made mistakes because it is through living that you learn.

**I:** You said that she was a graduate of the English department?

**S:** Yes, I am informing you that she was an English language department graduate.

**I:** Do you have this feeling for every English language teacher?

**S:** I think that as a student I would expect the teacher to speak English through out the lesson and the mentality to be English. What I mean is that they should not allow me to learn English as a Greek, but to learn the language as English.

**I:** Do you think that this is the thing that is missing from the English language teachers?

**S:** Yes, I do think that this is the thing that is missing. They don't have this sweetness so that this will attract you.

**I:** What else is missing?

**S:** Like they could show a film, which is quite difficult

**I:** Why is it difficult?

**S:** Because the conditions that exist in Greek schools do not allow such things to take place, because you have a 45-minute-session and it takes like fifteen minutes to settle so they do not have the time to do it and what is more the teacher does not give them time outside the school hours to find the film to find a video recorder to set the desks. The teacher wants to provide whatever he/she wants to provide between 8 and 2 not more than that. We do not devote more time than the 21 hours that we have to teach on a weekly basis. After all why should we devote more time when our pay is so low.

**I:** Supposing there was a teacher who had the zest to work do you think that he/she is provided by the means?

S: The other would eliminate him/her as he/she is doing damage to the system they have.

I: Could you elaborate on it?

S: Well, when we see that something is different from the majority we fight it because it is destroying our convenience [volemá] our idleness, our lounging. It is like when a visitor comes to your house and messes about and you can't just wait the time for him/her to leave as he/she is breaking the habits. When you see such a teacher, who wants to change things then he/she is the target of criticism and if this person happens not to have the guts he/she gives up. He/she is alienated and he/she joins the others. Many teachers in the very first years of their careers have the vigour for innovation and for different things to happen, but after a while the system they get caught in the cogwheel of the system, as they have no support by anyone else. For example if I were an English language teacher I would at the end of the year present an English play for the students to use their English. I would not present it to the parents so that they can show off to the parents, but I would have one class present it to the other. However, I would need the help of the art teacher and of other teachers.

I: Do you get the support you need from the administration?

S: What do you mean? How can the administration be of any help? We are ten people in the administration the schools that we are supervising are fifteen.

I: I am not implying this administration. I mean of the school.

S: The headmaster?

I: Yes.

S: If you think that the headmaster is the leader of ten teachers and ten teachers start asking things do you think that this person can deal with all of them?

I: But isn't this his/her job?

S: No, the headmaster is responsible for the administration, that is, if the timetable is adhered to. The timetable that is given by the ministry whether it is good or not. If a teacher is absent. If an offence is committed by a student, if the bell rings on time if we are to punish someone. The headmaster however willing he/she may be cannot be everywhere and for everything. He/she cannot be the art teacher that would provide you with his/her help.

I: His/her support could be moral.

S: I need tangible help. We need to give time in the afternoon to do the work



I: I am asking you because there has been a general grudge from the English language teachers that when there was a problem in the class – a discipline problem or whatever, there was no one there to help.

S: This is a different matter. If I or you can not impose ourselves in the classroom it would really look bad. If I couldn't sort things out and I need to call in the head, then this implies that we have lost the game, that is, you are disarmed altogether. The students realise that the teacher is incapable of keeping things and when he/she is at loss he/she will call upon the head so things are repeated. You have to find ways to sort things for yourself and not rely on the headmaster.

I: Do you think that pupils value the subject of English at the state school? Why? Why not?

S: They do not. They do not value any subject because nowadays students don't feel like going to school, because they see that learning does not provide you with money, they have realised it. Education is not valued anymore, money is important even if you steal it.

I: Do you think that your colleagues in general value the subject of English?

S: I do value it because it is a means that you will need in future to use in order to communicate with the rest of the world. The way things are now in 2000.

I: How about your colleagues?

S: I have experienced this thing with the other colleagues. I think it is the placement tests that are not good. You give them very easy tests, so what? In essence you do nothing. Students don't learn English because if you take into account that a student has been learning English for, let's see three years in the primary school and six in the secondary and you give him/her a text and you tell him/her to read the text and you ask him/her what the text is about the student cannot reply then. So what has the student been learning?

I: and who do you think is to blame?

S: The system. It is not the teacher's fault as he/she has been told to teach in this manner. Could you go against the system?

I: No

S: Could you teach in a different way?

I: Yes.

S: Would anyone do anything to you?

I: No.

S: See it is convenient for you, too.

I: What do you think should be done in order to restore the value that the subject of English requires in order for the English language teacher to be able to function appropriately?

S: Look this is the continuation of where we stopped before. Everyone and each one of us teaching his/her subject could do something if he/she wanted to improve his/her subject. He/she can raise the subject's status, but they do not feel like it as it requires time and effort.

I: It is the so called volema (that is convenience).

S: That's right. The volema. The teacher says: "Well, I joined the state sector even if the pay is low, I will give a couple of private lessons and that's it"

I: What do you think of the state English language teachers in terms of their commitment/general disposition?

S: Because there is no control either from the state and even the parents, the Parents Association they do not say that their off springs have been attending English classes for so many years. Why is it he/she has not learned? Why is it Mrs X of English language that my son/daughter who took the FC did not pass the exams while you have given him/her a high grade? What is going on? Every teacher is watching for his/her convenience [volema].

I: What do you think of the state language teachers in comparison to the private language teachers?

S: Things are different in the private sector as they go through a lot of controlling they check whether the teacher is suitable or not. I must point out though that there is a difference between a frontisterio and a private school. Because if I want as an owner to have a top school I will be very strict, but if I have a frontisterio in the neighbourhood and it is just me and my friend and my cousin and we are just trying to make a living people will put up with her, but if I am a businessman and I have an institution that should stand out I won't allow my friend to work [if she is unsuitable]. It also depends where the school is because if it is a school of a lower district both teachers and students are not alert. And you see parents who send their students to language centres and they ask them details about the classes. They have a different performance.

I: If you had to compare the state and frontisteria teachers what would you say?

S: I would say that the frontisteria teachers are selling false hopes especially at lower levels and the students are not knowledgeable as to whether they are provided with the right education. Because the frotnisteria teachers know that the mothers are sending their children to the frontisteria and if they don't give them nice grades the mothers say that the frontisterio is no good so they decide to change it.

**I: If you had to judge their competence what would you say?**

**S: Very low all of us, no exception. And the reason is that we learn things to teach our students not because we want to show them the way to find things for themselves, but we just do it to make a living.**

**I: Do you think that there exist any motivated EFL teachers in the state sector if we take into consideration the present teaching conditions in the state secondary school system?**

**S: Motivation? You must be kidding. I have never seen one in my experience.**

**I: What in your opinion would characterise a motivated English language teacher in the state sector always bearing in mind the current teaching conditions?**

**S: The first thing would be for the teacher not to rely financially on his/her job. To teach English, to have some sort of other income and to teach English because he/she likes English. This is it. Money is the enemy of our society. If you do things because you like it you do things much better. You don't do things by force because you need to earn a living for your family.**

**I: Would you excuse an English language teacher for being ineffective due to the unfavourable teaching conditions? Why? Why not?**

**S: No.**

**I: Why?**

**S: Because conditions are created by people, they do not just exist. It is my colleagues who create the conditions. We are the ones who create the conditions.**

**I: So you can become motivated.**

**S: Yes, of course if he/she has the guts and he /she finds two or other colleagues who have the zest to work and to surpass themselves and say that we are teachers because we have to teach for so many hours in order to get paid, but because I want to be a teacher despite the low pay even if I have to work double the time. That is the target must be the students and not his/her convenience [volemá] and the money he/she will make. If two or three such teachers exist in a school they can change the world.**

**I: Many thanks for the time you gave up.**



## **Interview with Greek language teacher**

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2001**

**Location: Her house (living room)**

**I:** Do you think that the English language subject should be taught at school considering that the majority of the pupils attend courses in the frontisteria?

**S:** Considering that English is a language that is indispensable nowadays, as it is a means of communication, English must be taught in state schools. We should not rely on the acquisition of English from frontisteria, which are of ambiguous origin and value most of the times. The state school should take up on the initiative... not the initiative it is not the initiative, to take on the duty to teach the Greek children English in the best possible way. However, I am not certain up to what degree it can be successful. And in order for this to be realized it is indispensable that both factors, that is, the students and the educational system be taken into account. So far, it is the parents who take on the responsibility to make sure that their children learn English much earlier and as a consequence very serious problems occur in the secondary school during the English language class.

**I:** Do you think that if the foreign language frontisteria were banned, English could be learned only at school? What I mean is do you think that there is any chance for the state sector to take full responsibility for the foreign language education of the students in Greece?

**S:** Firstly, let's see the first part of your question.

**I:** Yes.

**S:** If the frontisteria were banned English could be learnt at the state school?

**I:** Yes, if the state sector can altogether take on the responsibility to teach the Greek children the English language.

**S:** You mean that the students can take a certificate from the school and that there is a state credential (she means certificate) that certifies that students know English to the level of First certificate or to the level of Proficiency.

**I:** Yes.

**S:** This needs a re-organization of the state school in order to be realized, that is, taking the present facts into consideration a student cannot learn English at the state sector.

**I:** What are the reasons?

**S:** The reasons are both the students and the present educational system. The educational system: time is insufficient, the time that is provided is not sufficient for the learning of a

foreign language. For the language acquisition at a level that the students can speak it and know its structure at such a level that they can attend a tertiary level education in English. Secondly, the way that education is provided. It is therefore a matter of time and manner. Thus, a restructuring of the educational system is essential.

I: What would be the changes that you would implement if you were Minister of education or someone who is responsible for the educational organization?

S: English language learning would have to start from the pre-school age of a child, as is the case now. I sent both my children to learn English initially with an English lady, who taught them English songs, like a nursery school, at a nursery level. Then the second level of learning was at a primary school level. If you ask me how long they have been learning English for I would answer since the age of four and a half. And of course at the age of 15 they received the Certificate of Proficiency. They received the First Certificate at the age of 14 and the other at the age of 15, but they always attended private lessons with a native English language teacher. They attended these classes regularly all round year, be it winter or summer, for two hours, three times a week since they attended nursery school. Thus, it is essential that the educational system be restructured in order for something like this to take place. Therefore, they should introduce many hours of English, like the hours that are given to the subject of Greek language. If we consider the amount of hours given to the Greek language, which is their mother tongue, and if we take into account the fact that parents of our generation do not speak English (Interviewee must be in her early-fifties) or most of the parents so that I do not exaggerate. Consequently, students don't listen, they do not have any hearing experience (of the English language) and they have to learn it from the teacher. Thus, it is necessary that there is a joint effort, more hours and a system that would start the foreign language from the pre-school level then to the primary school. At the high schools they can reach the level when you can acquire the certificate, which will be awarded after they have taken the Pan Hellenic (Greek state) examinations. It is important that the school can give you a certificate that certifies your knowledge of English at a level that would allow you to attend university. This can be done through the high school, but for the system to change it is necessary that the teachers are suitable to take on this initiative.

I: What do you mean by the word "suitable" (teachers)?

S: Suitable, that is trained, not just teachers who have in their university degree, but with a Master's Degree and pedagogic knowledge for the teaching of a foreign language; because nowadays the English language subject is the session when students play about.

I: Why do you think the session of English language learning has become playtime? I: Because children have no interest, because they consider that at the English language session – they think that at this time they need to have a break – and because they have been provided with the knowledge from the frontisterio. And their knowledge of English is at the



level of the first certificate or the proficiency and they cause problems to the teacher of English at that particular time they want to relax. They look down on the teacher when he/she is not competent, which is true in most cases either because he/she doesn't pronounce things correctly and this because the English language department, from what I hear, is a department where you are taught everything except for English. And there are many instances that a student that has the Proficiency Certificate know more and better English than and better than the English language teacher, who is a graduate of the English department as students learn more about History, Literature, but very little English. Thus, there should be a radical change (in teacher training) in order for teachers to be suitably prepared so that the teacher can provide the students with what is needed in order for the student to learn English from the state sector. Therefore, the student who speaks English does not expect to learn English at the state school that is the reason that they do not pay attention to the English language teacher. The system is a "dry" book and questions, which is boring for the student, who is at the level of proficiency, especially at the senior high school and I can tell [you] about it because I am working. Questions such as "What is this?" and whether we need to use 'Present Perfect or simple Past' are quite boring, the student does not pay attention and he/she loses his/her touch and are prone to create problems and the teacher is obliged to expel him/her or to stop the lesson. It is not therefore a lesson that can offer anything to the student in order for him her to be any better at the end of the lesson. The fault is that teachers don't have the system to make their lesson more interesting. Furthermore, they have to cope with a mosaic of students (What she is implying is the mixed ability classes) There is the indifferent and ignorant student and there is also the student that is at a Proficiency level. Consequently, and this is true for the majority of schools in Greece and in particular in cities and towns and as a result the proficiency certificate level student gets bored in class and the one who has no knowledge thinks it is Chinese and this situation causes great problems.

I: Bearing in mind the mentality that prevails amongst the Greek that (a) since we are paying then our son/daughter can learn the foreign language and that (b) teachers and parents did not disagree with the fact that the state school could take over the responsibility to make students learn English at school and (c) that teaching conditions are favourable, do you think that English could be learnt just at the state school?

S: This is a hypothetical statement. It is a hypothetical statement that we could not consider to be realized even if the conditions were favourable. They are not. There must be a radical change from the departments of the university say of the English department up to the lowest grades. This is how I want to back up my statement that it is a hypothesis that cannot be realized. These are matters that relate to the ministry of education the ministry of finance and the ministry of welfare because if the frontisteria were to be abolished there would be a



serious social problem. The frontisteria, the private schools are a very serious income to the country revenue at least at present, and this cannot change. There will be very serious reactions. We cannot go back to Spain where there are no frontisteria of English language. I remember a friend of my son's, once when my son told her, at the age of 14, that we was getting prepared to take the proficiency, she said that that he must be a genius because in Spain they take the proficiency at the age of 22 because they don't have frontisteria as we do here. In Spain they expect to learn English at school, they speak English from what they have learnt at school.

I: Do you think that schools are well-equipped?

S: I am afraid that teaching aids are non-existent. A plain cassette recorder cannot make up for all the other teaching aids. However, I have seen the English language teachers making copies, which means that they copy a page from a book either to do grammar, or syntax point. They are exercises and the teacher asks the students to fill them in or to answer yes or no. This, I don't regard as a teaching aid. All those teaching aids that exist in the good frontisteria are non-existent and I don't know what will happen in future. Efforts are made to set up libraries though and Internet connections, but there is still a long way to go.

I: Do you think that students value the subject of English at school?

S: I think that they do not value it.

I: Why do you think they do not?

S: The reason lies in the factors that I have already mentioned. There is a huge gap between the students, that is, there is the excellent one, who has the Proficiency Certificate and the student that has no idea of the English language. All these students are in the same class, the teacher feels lost, he/she doesn't know what to focus on and the majority of students and in particular here in this town-students happen to have some kind of knowledge in English – they at least have the First Certificate and there are a few who have the Proficiency. These students do not value the subject; they think that they cannot get anything out of it. So they create problems during the class, they get prepared for the other subjects and the EFL teacher is a tragic character as he/she has to face this mosaic of students and all the disadvantages that I already mentioned. The ministry could do something about it. I think that they have started to streamline students according to their level, but this I have not seen to come off, at least in the senior high school. I have no idea what might have happened in the junior high school. In the senior high school it didn't come off and everybody is in the same class. Maybe it is because there is no time; they have dwindled the time for the subject of English. I think they are taught only one or two hours a week. The teaching of English is quite restricted and this is why the students don't value it. And the grade they get from the subject is not taken into account for the university entrance exams. Most probably they

would start to value the subject if the grade was taken into account for the general university entrance exams. They are not taken into account so the subject is unclaimed.

I: Could it be that the fact that students don't value the subject of English have an impact on the appreciation that students have of the English language teacher?

S: I think it is interrelated. It is indeed a fact that they do not generally value the EFL teacher. And the reason they do not value them is because there is nothing that they can get out of them. It is certainly a fact that there are no teachers who would inspire the students, those teachers with the new methods, with the zest. Because teaching is up to a certain degree acting. These teachers are usually the traditional teachers who just ask and expect the students to answer. They have that ancient system. The students have nothing to get out of them, they are not interested in the grade and as a result there is a complete disintegration during the English session. It is many a time that I see through threatening how many students come to the office students from the English language teachers and how many times they come from other subjects' teachers; the same students. They do not cause problems in Maths, but they do create problems during English and the reason is that they want at that particular session to defuse, to relax. They find it as a time that they can do what they like because there is nothing that they can gain out of it. Eh, the fact that they take they exam within the school it is a subject that they take in the school, they do not take it in a Pan Hellenic level, only the ones that are planning to enter the English Department or the Mass Media department. Funnily enough they do not take exams on the syllabus that they have been taught at school but it is rather irrelevant of it. Thus there is no connection between the exam that the candidates take and the school curriculum. And this is one of the principal factors that they altogether look down on the subject of English. They do not value it.

I: In those years that you have been a teacher have you ever met an EFL teacher that has had the zest to teach English?

S: I would say that there has not been any.

I: Why do you think so?

S: I can't remember of any and the reason is that English language learning ... I am going to be a little harsh with that I am going to say now, but I am going to convey a reality. English has always been a subject to fill in the schedule. This has been the status of the foreign language in the state sector. You could see it was just filling the schedule from the time that they assigned the subject. Most of the teachers were women I have never met... and all these women were... I have not heard them talk about a new programme, or a seminar. All of them talked about sweets, about house cleaning, about their walks, that is, I never saw them have any worries round their subject, the systems [methodology]. And we must point out that the system of counseling is not in effect. School advisors do not show up. Sometime I noticed that a teacher who was unable to run her class or teach efficiently was appointed as



an informant of the new system, she, who was incompetent at her job was going to inform us of the new educational system because they couldn't find another teacher. There is no organization on behalf of the ministry that could put in effect the institution of the school advisor and what is more we all start off as teachers and without any hindrance they get a rise in their salary. Any teacher can get the highest salary without having done anything special so why should one bother to

Improve herself/himself? They consider it as a place that they can go and receive their salary on the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of each month. There is no control over the teachers whatsoever. In the state sector I haven't seen any foreign language teacher who has interests, who would be interested in attending certain programmes abroad which have been organized by the EC or in attending seminars or in bringing in something new or in organizing a festivity a special occasion in English NOTHING. They have authorized the frontisteria to do it because the students ... and there is ... and if we look into who might be at fault is it the students is it the teachers? They are both at fault at the degree that one can lay the responsibility, because the student finds that there is nothing to take from the subject and the teacher seeing that the student disdains him/her, he/she becomes indifferent and thus a vicious circle occurs which leads to the complete condescending of the subject of English in the state sector.

I: What do you think should be done in order to restore the value the subject of English deserves?

S: A change from the beginning in the programmes, as well as the phenomenon of streamlining should be extended in the senior high school. The hours that English is taught should be increased, the subject should be given the value it deserves, the grade should be taken into consideration, a Pan Hellenic curriculum should be drawn and the candidate who is to take the entrance exam to be examined on the syllabus that he/she has been taught at school and not the syllabus that they are taught at the frontisterio. Because so far I haven't met a student who has taken the exam based on what he/she has learnt at school. It is common that the candidates are tested on a more advanced level. Thus, either officially or unofficially the Ministry accepts to assess candidates based on the private sector and not the state sector.

I: Regarding the training of teachers what do you think...

S: I believe that this is the point that the ministry should focus all its efforts and to actually train and do in-service training. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers must have all the qualifications/skills that will make the student speak, and what is more, not only to speak English or a foreign language that the student has chosen to learn, as students now have the option to choose the language they want to learn, each school has the principal foreign language and a second one either English, German or French. The students should be skilled enough to stand in Europe and generally internationally. Nowadays with the globalization



we are experiencing in all the languages and the terminology that is used in finance in politics or generally as a means of communication and not just to be able to say a "Good morning.", "Where is the hotel?", or "How can I get there?" Thus, all those should be restructured. The ministry should give more emphasis to the subject of English language which is actually spoken mostly.

I: You might have answered this question, but let me ask you again in case you want to add something else. What do you think of the state English language teachers in terms of their commitment and general disposition?

S: They are not inclined in doing anything; they have no disposition because neither the conditions nor the system, nor the students help them to have the disposition. But even they themselves do not help themselves, at least the ones I know of. I do not know if there are any teachers.

I: I think your school is claimed to be one of the best schools in the region

S: Indeed it is one of the best schools not only in this prefecture, but in the whole state because there are students whose parents make them attend the frontisteria. They are children of middle-class families and their families care about them [their educational progress] and the majority is successful at a Pan Hellenic level, that is, according to the results of success at the highest level. They are at the highest scale. The school is one of the best. Despite all these I haven't met a teacher... I usually see the EFL teachers focusing their attention on the assessment, judgment of the students and not on the provision of knowledge. When they are to assess, they state... "They have written nothing. They could not answer to any thing they did not do that" and they do not ask themselves why the students could not answer.

I: It could be that even the tests they give them are not up to the level they have taught their students [more difficult tests].

S: EFL teachers have many problems in the state school thus the Ministry must take drastic measures.

I: What do you think of the state language teachers in comparison to the private language teachers?

S: I have no experience of private language teachers as my children had private tuition with English native speakers and I did not have direct contact with frontisteria teachers so that I can have a say. However, I would like to mention that there are many cases especially in the lower classes [in the frontisteria]. Incompetent teachers teach at this level, and this is because many frontisteria function without being checked [controlled by the state]. With a simple certificate many [frontisteria owners] employ individuals who are not even teachers to start with. Because it is not possible that someone who has a Proficiency Certificate to be teacher. Most of the times these teachers are young and I don't think that they function at the

standards they should and this is because there is no control. This is what I have derived from things that I have heard from other people, as regards frontisteria language teachers. This is what I have heard concerning the beginner's classes. Teachers have no experience. And this is done by every frontisterio as they profit from it because by employing a teacher against a very low pay it is convenient. However, if he/she [frontisterio owner] was controlled and he/she had to appoint a trained teacher with pedagogic grounding then things could be better.

I: Do you think that there exist any motivated EFL teachers in the state sector if we take into consideration the present teaching conditions in the state secondary school system? I think that you have partly answered this question but you might want to elaborate.

S: Yes, based on the present facts and my experience I do not think that they are motivated, because they would be motivated if they had salary increments. At present, this promotion is unimpeded and they will get a rise whether they are good or not. Whether they do their job correctly or not. The only thing that they are tried on while teaching are their nerves...nerve endurance that is what they must have. I neither find motivation nor teachers who have temperament. I have met maths teachers with temperament, Greek language teachers with temperament, but foreign language teachers... foreign language teachers that are young ...I have met a French language teacher who did not want to teach. She wanted to do everything else in the school, such as to deal with the computers, to do all the clerical works, but she did not want to teach and the students had a great time during her classes, and this is because they never had a class, a French class. And she was in every other aspect exceptional with an MA degree, she had been in France, she was exceptional, very educated and very cultivated she would go to theatrical plays, but she did not want to teach.

I: Previously you mentioned the pay rise as a means of advancement how about a hierarchical advancement.

S: Well, it does not exist.

I: How about if it existed, that is, if for example a teacher wanted to get to the highest level of the hierarchy. Do you think that this would help?

S: Yes, it would help. I believe that it would help because [as the Greek saying says] 'The carriage fare awakens the cart-driver'. I believe that it would help, however I don't think that it would do miracles, but it is a fact that if you are not controlled nothing can be achieved and from what I know in all the other educational systems there is teacher appraisal. A friend of mine who is specializing in Medicine was telling me the other day that there is a monitor that is monitoring her while she is dealing with the babies; she is in the department of babies. The moment that her professor makes comments on her job she is also monitored and assessed on how good she is with her tutee. If this were happening in Greece half the population would revolt by saying that the measure is fascistic. We used to have the



supervisor who is labeled now as the school advisor and he/she has never set foot in schools and he/she would not dare set foot so they would send us occasionally some documents where they would point out what the curriculum is. Their presence is non-existent. I don't know whether they did it either because they want to be discreet or they are incompetent. Because they were appointed with different criteria and they cannot become advisors because they did a Ph.D research in Papadiamantis or Skariba [they are Greek scholars] or the socialists of the generation of the '30s to be an advisor without him having the preparatory instruction in ancient Greek or History to come and advise teachers of those subjects and to guide them in ancient Greek and History and all the other lessons concerning language learning. They might have a specialization in Modern Greek and of literature, but not in all the subjects. That is, there are so many deficiencies in school advisors who happen to be some other tragic characters that got the positions, which as regards the pay is not something special. With regards to their status it is, a high position, but there is no security. They have such insecurity and such angst that they do not set foot in schools, and they can neither assess nor give advice. They do not even know how to advise and as such the situation at present in education is tragic and I would say that it relies on the *philotimo* of each teacher.

I: Which implies?

S: If someone is *philotimos*, if someone is born and because this generation is sort of becoming extinct, as it is the older [generation that are *philotimoi*] taking into account even the decline that is taking place in the educational system, these will become apparent in their lives. The students learn to laze, to be absent relying on the measures that are taken that they can be absent that they have the opportunity to be absent and excuse the absences, to come to school whatever time they like. There is no control over the teachers whatsoever, there is no control over the students and the things will become obvious in a little while because this phenomenon will extend in their actual lives in their jobs. The same reductions have taken place even in Universities in Polytechnics. The condition in education in Greece must very quickly change and measures must be taken. Where will he [The minister of education] find the suitable people, different books? Books are written on a yearly basis, which are unsuitable. How is it that those books are approved, how does the Institute of Pedagogy function? No one has been able to find out. How are books approved? Books that are unsuitable to the point that I can tell. I don't know, mistakes terrible mistakes and those books are approved by the ministry of education.

I: So it is to this point that the inefficiency of the ministry is apparent

S: Well, he cannot control them I don't know what is going on and what their criteria are. The thing I know is that we got a history book which was presented by somebody and I asked "How many hours will we be teaching history [per week]?" "Two" "How much of the



syllabus can be covered in two hours according to the pace that we follow here in Greece?”, “Why is it that they introduced a book that is 350 pages long?” A new book, which was published this year. There should have been a book that is 150 pages long instead of the 350. 350 pages cannot be taught. Why is it since it is a new book, why is it that it is not adjusted? To be illustrated so that the student can put it in his/her school bag. We have a book that is 350 pages long and only 150 pages are covered. What is more this year another history book was introduced, which is about Greek modern history and from this we only teach two pages from one chapter and you just forget the other twenty and then you teach another two and the gaps that are created in between are not in anyway covered. And this creates a problem to the chapter that proceeds as events that are mentioned in the previous unit that has not been taught are related to the events that are mentioned in the following chapter. And you start wondering whether those people who have written those books have ever been in a classroom. They wrote this book to be studied and then to take exams on through out the state... you get to the point that you pity those children and you come to the point to explain things line after line because there are so many things missing that in order for you to understand those two lines you need to know whatever precedes it which is not taught. It is terrible and I think that this is only happening in Greece and the Greek students are really very tolerant, that is, those who want to learn have great powers of endurance.

The people in the ministry know what exactly is going on in other countries, they have dreams why is it they do not struggle for them to be realized? They do have both the vision and the knowledge to realize thing here in Greece. How is it those things can be realized? Through the English languages frontistreria? These things should be done in Greece with the English that they have learnt at school. At this point students take computer lessons without computer terminals. How can the student learn to get in the Internet and to exchange his/her views? These things used to take place in the previous century in Scotland? How can we compete with Europe? It is through private initiative that we parents will buy the computer for our children. We are the ones that struggle if we want our child to learn. The school does not offer anything from these [foreign languages and computers]. Actually, there are no teachers that are specialized in Information Technology and first of all students know much more than teachers. The situation in education is tragic and first and foremost I do believe and I want to emphasize that they should focus on English language learning at least now that it is the basic language for the Internet and the communication with other countries. The state must do whatever is within its power to make the students learn English at school, so that the ministry can check things. The frontisteria cannot be controlled as there is only an annual control that is carried out by a teacher, who is quite irrelevant and he/she checks whether the classes are suitable. And then checks the finances without him/her being the suitable person to do it, as he/she is not skilled.

**I: What in your opinion would characterize a motivated English language teacher in the state sector taking into account the current teaching conditions?**

**S: Well, this person would be more methodical, that is he/she would not rely on photocopies that he/she would have produced for every student regardless of their level. He/she should give the weaker students a simpler exercise to do even if the curriculum does not give such guidelines so that he/she can help them. He/she should try to give them supplementary material that the students could work on at home and then he/she could check their work at home so that he/she can raise their level to a certain degree, because if the students saw this philotimia in their teacher they would appreciate it at least a number of them. I don't think that there is a student that would not want to speak English. I think that students do know the value of English. However, when they are taught points that they have not covered and are faced with many difficulties while trying to attend then the student gives up. He/she does not want to participate and instead does whatever else because this brings about angst to the student. Therefore teachers could individually and regardless of the guidelines they get from the ministry create levels within the classroom. What is more, they could organize certain outings to the British Council to attend different shows, to present a certain theatrical play a simple one it is not necessary for it to be Shakespeare. It could be one which they could present when they celebrate X-mas at school or the carnival, or to set up a choir and have them sing in English, to show a different picture so that they can reveal the English culture or even trips to England in the framework of organizing a trip and there are programmes ... a lady was telling me recently that there are certain European programmes that they could join I have never seen them be involved in such programmes, to find pen-friends for their students I have never seen them involved. I have never seen them. A teacher can find ways to motivate their students. There are sorts of performances at different foreign institutes I have never seen them take the initiative and take them... we take them to theatrical plays in the afternoon. We organize it and we take them to a theatrical play I have never seen them take the students and bring about motivation to the students, to find an outlet for the students instead of throwing them out of the classroom or sending them to the office, because the punishment is to throw them out of the classroom during the lesson so that the student gets an absence. This is the punishment. This is how they solve the problem because next time it is going to be even worse this is not the solution; the expulsion of the student from the classroom isn't the solution. The EFL teacher perceives it as a solution they have never perceived to solve their problem using the other dimension.**

**I: How do the headmaster and the other colleagues regard the EFL teacher's when he/she sends the students to the office?**

**S: I don't know whether they assess her or they set her in a scale of X or Y because there is no teacher appraisal and I don't know if the EFL teacher is in anyway interested in his/her**



appraisal as his/her main concern is how to teach. The teacher does not try to motivate the student when the student is being naughty so that he/she can make him/her want to participate, so the teacher threatens him/her with the grade or expulsion. The student doesn't really care about the grade and things are getting worse. They don't care what might happen in the future if the student by the end of the year is even worse. The teacher only views things that disturb them at that particular moment.

I: Would you excuse this teacher?

S: Since a teacher is a human being and because he/she asks to have the appropriate teaching conditions and the teacher sees the naughty student as a hindrance to his/her teaching and so he/she considers expelling students as a solution. The EFL teacher is tragic character as he/she has to face the mosaic, that he/she has all the disadvantages that I already mentioned, the devaluation of the subject in general by the ministry, the educational systems and both in the conscience of the students and the other teachers, but I can't see anything being done so that they can stop this devaluation to keep it to the level that is necessary. The EFL teacher is a civil servant.

I: As a professional parent who is concerned about your children's education what do you think about your children's English classes at school and the English language teacher?

S: I think I have answered this question. In conclusion, I have the opinion that English – I believe that English must become a language not in essence official, but an essential language. A special focus must be given by the ministry of education in the subject of English or of French and then to the subject of German and all the other subjects.

I: Thanks a lot for offering to be interviewed.

## **Interview with KK and SH's headmistress**

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> September

**Location:** Her office at school

I: Do you think that the English language subject should be taught at school considering that the majority of the pupils attend courses in the frontisteria?

Why? Why not?

S: I do believe that the subject of English language should be taught at the state school regardless of the fact that it is taught in the frontisteria as is the case with other taught subjects. After all, how can you have a school curriculum without a foreign language? I don't understand this perception I think it is necessary.

I: Do you think that the EFL language has something to offer to the students?

S: Yes, I do think that they have to offer.



I: Do you think that if the foreign language frontisteria were banned English could only be learned at school? What I mean is do you think that there is any chance for the state sector to take full responsibility for the foreign language education of the students in Greece?

S: Yes, I do believe in it. After all, this is true to other foreign countries. In Germany, where I have lived, a student learns English at school. There are no frontisteria and they do speak the language fluently. This might imply that we might need to reconsider the methods used in the Greek state sector.

I: Do you think that the existence of the frontisteria influences the students, their parents, and the teachers as regards the language learning in the state sector?

S: What do you mean?

I: For example a teacher might say...well since the students are attending a frontisterio I don't need to put in a lot of effort to ...

S: I don't think so. I believe that the state sector can take on the responsibility because this has been applied somewhere else and it has been successful and why not here. I don't understand why it should not be successful. Certain things need to be improved, but it might be that the fault, the misfortune is...that is, a five-year-old one learns the basic things from an English nanny. If all those things were absent then things in my opinion would be different. What is more, they send their children at a very early age to the frontisteria. I think that the state sector can be successful on its own. I do believe in it.

I: If English was to be learnt at school what do you think are the changes that should be made to promote English language teaching in the state sector?

S: This is not much in my line, but I can just mention some things indicatively, practical matters mostly. There should be classes with very few students, and the increase of hours that English is taught as we are trying to substitute the frontisterio, and it should be that the hours are much more... However, how can we fit all those things in a school curriculum? But I believe that since it has been successful in other countries it can be successful here, as well. What is more, they should provide more books like dictionaries some more specialised things, skill books most probably and I also believe the measure that was taken about the streamlining of students is an excellent idea. Because I like whatever is new and I like to test things out, I think that it would be better, more productive if there were more levels than the two that exist at present, that is, even a class regardless of the school ....I don't know whether you would find this a bit extreme...classes that would have students of the same level in them. It doesn't matter if there are 15 students at the Proficiency of First Certificate level, and so on. I do believe that by having levels most of them not just the two that we have now. What is more, it would be a good idea if they granted a certificate at the end of the course, as is the case with the private institutions. That's the way it is done with the

frontisteria, that is, that they can provide them with a certificate that they have acquired the language based most probably on a Pan Hellenic examination.

I: What do you think is missing as regards the teaching of English in the state school system – could be staff wise, material wise and training wise?

S: Well, we do have the personnel, but as regards their grounding is relative as is the case with other specializations. Some of them are well grounded others are not. Some have the zest to work and others do not. However, in the state school we could have a special class for the learning of English, not so much ... well with all the audiovisual aids why not in the modern schools so that the student can listen. I see.

I: Do you think that pupils value the subject of English at the state school?

S: The good level, let me put it this way, that is, the advanced level I think that they do, that is, when the students have some knowledge and a kind of quality. As regards the other level, I don't think that the lesson is conducted properly because certain students don't value the lesson or they have the knowledge most of the times... and generally they regard it as the easy lesson in which they want to play a little.

I: Do you think that your colleagues in general value the subject of English?

S: I wouldn't say that they value it a lot, most probably because of certain colleagues who could not impose themselves in the classroom. This is an issue not only for the English language but also for the other languages or even for some other lessons most probably. A Greek language teacher has a different approach to teaching and so does the Maths teacher and maybe it is the case that the students are so much under stress that they want to play to ease off, during the foreign language class, or even because they do have the knowledge from the frontisteria you see it functions like a boomerang one against the other.

I: So what you are saying is that regardless of the teacher's ability to impose him/her self on the students and his/her personality the students will react in the same way when it comes to foreign language learning?

S: Certainly, there is a relation and colleagues do appreciate the colleague who works regardless of the subject. This is certain, after all, this becomes obvious by his/her performance and how he/she teaches, naturally. However, there is a great percentage I wouldn't say they are the minority that cannot stand in the classroom.

I: Have you by any chance identified the reason?

S: No, I haven't actually it could be a matter of character or personality, but it could be that teachers get tired with all those things that we said, that is, that some students know while others don't know, others want to play. They do get tired but still colleagues don't have a good opinion of their English language colleagues. However, if they do work I think that they do.

I: So it all depends...



**S:** It all depends on the personality of the teacher certainly.

**I:** What do you think should be done in order to restore the value that the subject of English deserves?

**S:** I would say that the whole problem starts from the fact that knowledge starts from very early and that parents resort to frontisteria and I still believe that if methods changed in Greece our mentality does not change. The Greek mentality for example abroad even if a parent is a university lecturer if a teacher tells him/her that his/her child should attend this school the parent will do it. We, on the other hand, I don't know if it has to do with the mania we have about studies... I believe that the value of subject should be restored mostly as a school subject so that it can gain its value.

**I:** And how do you think that this could be achieved?

**S:** Well, this is the job of the Institute of Education. To draw certain programmes, that is, what I believe and why not teach the students from the very first primary school, why not from the nursery school and a good job to be done.

**I:** Which implies that the curriculum...

**S:** ...will restore the subjects' value

**I:** What do you think of the state English language teachers in terms of their commitment/general disposition?

**S:** There are colleagues who indeed are interested in what they are doing they have a strong personality, but there are also some other teachers who either because they have a weak character or they get tired of the things, I mentioned above, the confusion that goes on in the classroom, or even because they are not competent... this is true of all the other subject teachers. It depends on their competence their education the way that they convey things, isn't it?

**I:** What do you think of the state language teachers in comparison to the private language teachers?

**S:** I wouldn't say that there is anything different, simply. Most probably the private sector is stricter, but the preconditions are different. They teach a group of 8 students, it is a different thing to have 30 students of different levels and a different thing to have 8. The teachers are the same, it is the teaching conditions that differ and they are obliged to stand in the classroom and what is more, their employers are harsher in the private sector. They are afraid of being sacked, isn't it?

**I:** Teachers that I have interviewed have expressed that they were afraid to divide the students into groups so that they can do group work, as this caused some fuss in the class, which might also disturb the others. What do you think?

**S:** No, no I am in for any kind of novelty, that is, I like innovations, anyway whatever takes place for the benefit of the students. Of course this depends on the school and the



headmaster most of the times. They are right because some times when you face rejection you cannot do your job correctly. I believe that one who wants to do his/her job correctly .... Myself, I am a Greek language teacher; I used to carry the cassette recorder for the students to listen to poetry... whatever I could. I think that if a teacher wants he/she can do whatever he/she can. I believe in this firmly as I have been teaching for 30 years.

I: Do you think that there exist any motivated EFL teachers in the state sector if we take into consideration the present teaching conditions in the state secondary school system? Can you please elaborate?

S: Of course there can be, so long as he/she has the zest. I do believe in it, and now that they have the levels they can be productive, at least in the advanced level a good job is being achieved... that is what I believe. They do have the motivation because they have the difficulty of the mixed ability classes.

I: What in your opinion would characterise a motivated English language teacher in the state sector always bearing in mind the current teaching conditions?

S: To be efficient in his job, to be informed, to find ways to enrich, of course with the means they have in the public school. With the cassette recorder I think that they can be productive and I do have specific examples of colleagues who work efficiently. At times we have had teachers that were unable to stand in the classroom.

I: What exactly did those teachers do that made them inefficient?

S: Firstly, they never took up anyone's time. They did not send in the students that misbehaved they obviously attracted their students' interest, because I also speak as a mother. I have two kids that have acquired their certificates from the frontisteria. However, despite the fact that they had the knowledge they did participate. What I am trying to tell you is that if the teacher is good then he/she can achieve everything.

I: Would you excuse an English language teacher for being ineffective due to the unfavourable teaching conditions?

S: Well, yes, because I would say that if they wanted they could do things. The conditions are not that bad. They are not that unfavourable if they want to do their job they can. The condition could be better of course. I don't think that this is the problem. The point is whether teachers want to work or not. I do believe in them having the zest.

I: Do you think that teachers would be more motivated if there was some kind of advancement?

S: I think that the teacher must be praised when he makes an effort, but I don't believe that a teacher can become a good teacher because of this factor. Not at all, just for his/her professional advancement. After all, even with the advancement that exists now the teacher can reach the highest level if he/she likes it. I believe it is a matter of how much he/she likes his/her job. This is where everything starts from.

**I: According to your experience as a headmistress what is the percentage of EFL teachers that had the zest to teach?**

**S: I haven't been a teacher for many years, but I have been a colleague. Very few I would say.**

**I: Why is it so?**

**S: I don't know maybe it is because of all the reasons that I have already mentioned. It could be their tiredness, the mixed ability classes they teach. Maybe they take things not as seriously as they should. Most of them were... I wouldn't say indifferent, but ...anyway they let things take their course despite the fact that they could do something about it. Very few were exceptional, and I do have very good colleagues in my school now.**

**I: And certainly the confrontation of those teachers is completely different.**

**S: Yes, of course. I get satisfied when the schools runs well and it runs well in all its sections.**

**I: As a professional parent who is concerned about your child/children's education what do you think about your child's/children's English classes at school and the English language teacher.**

**S: Well, my children have graduated, but I have to tell you that they both remember their teachers with appreciation and they still have a good relationship with them. They do remember them with affection even if my children were knowledgeable.**

**I: Are EFL teachers willing to offer their services when it comes to duties that have nothing to do with teaching?**

**S: Do you mean if they respond to their duties?**

**I: Yes**

**S: There has never been any problem, never. They even did things that were not their duty. Like organizing performances etc...they have done great things. They have never misbehaved.**

**I: Thank you for accepting to be interviewed.**

## **Interview with the Director of the Local Educational Authority**

**Location: Administration office**

**Date: 22nd August 2001**

**I: Do you think that the English language subject should be taught at school considering that the majority of the pupils attend courses in the frontisteria?**

**S: Well, if I had to focus on the first section of your question I would have a bitter criticism to make, but the question is precise and it refers to the fact that since they attend the**

frontisterio.... If I had to rest on the first section I would have to comment that first of all it is necessary, but I could however indicatively and bitterly say that it is a necessary evil. The Greek language could have the international language, the language that could be spoken, we know and remember it well that for some parameters the English language was the one that prevailed. But, I come back to the unambiguous question. As a responsible teacher and as a parent I have been speculating hard whether the subject of English should exist, as a subject at school, given the way in which it is taught by the people that teach foreign languages in the public sector. I am referring to all foreign language, English, German or French. I don't know whether there is any sense in teaching foreign languages and if it is a real necessity that students are taught [foreign languages]. I have been speculating a lot about this matter. I don't know if the next questions touch upon issues that I would like to state for this question, I have been speculating a lot about this matter... English is taught for so many years in the state schools, foreign languages are taught even in the primary school, three years in the junior high school and three more years in the senior high school and the student [in the end] is unable to produce 10 let alone 20 or 50 words of English, which means that something is wrong with this whole matter.

I: What is the wrong in your opinion?

S: It is difficult to analyse. If one wants to give an analysis that is serious, to say serious things, and to just generalize and be vague – which is funny when someone does not give you a responsible answer, that is, I don't like the easy word. I am quite difficult; I have difficulty in defining what might be wrong. It could be the mentality of the state the general indifference... both as a principle. I mean as the head of the school or of the ministry etc of the state school system, a general indifference even in the syllabus as to which point the syllabus of one class stops and the syllabus of the other starts in combination with practical issues, such as transfers of students from one school to another, one child may be advanced and the other may not. There has been a serious effort as regards the streamlining of students, which of course creates great problems to the schools, what I mean is the streamlining in the subject of English language. It is an excellent theoretical perception, it is very nice as a theoretical perception because we do have a class, I am deviating from the question, but it is all right I suppose.

I: Yes, it is all right

S: We are discussing so that our opinions can be clarified. So we have a first grade class they have to be and rightly so streamlined. I am not entering into facts regarding the practical problems that arise due to the infrastructure the state school has, which has been there ever since and we have had a specific number of classes, specific schedules, specific personnel, there is a definitely difficulty and inflexibility in coping with the separation of the classes when the students are streamlined. These points I just leave them aside because they are



external problems and might be faced appropriately some time or they are faced in the way they are faced. I come to the heart of the matter of the division of the classes into levels. Indeed, we go to school to the junior high school and there are students who have had a year's English language learning or two years or three years or four or five and they are at a serious level and there are students who have had very or no English at all. So by streamlining them the whole matter moves on better, but still there is no outcome. I have experienced it as a headmaster. There is no outcome, I can see it as a headmaster, and I can see it in my child. The child could be doing well at the frontistetio or the private lesson, because there is a specific method, could be doing well, as there is a specific method and is specifically checked on certain grammatical aspects and certain exercises will be used to check on the student, the small number of students, what can I say? It may be the fact that the teacher in the private sector watches or follows the student with more interest. This could be the reason. Whereas in the state school I saw my child fall short. He did not learn either because he was taught things that were irrelevant to him, it could be the terminology the grammar the syntax, which could be beyond ... not that I am altogether for the utilization of the language just to use the language, it has to do with the actual learning of the language so that I can learn it in depth. I am not certain whether this makes sense to you, I don't know whether I should not elaborate.

I: No, please keep it up and elaborate.

S: And I wanted to add that I am not altogether for the utilization of the language, that is, that the school or some time in the future the senior high school or the university somewhere where I can learn the language just for the sake of using the language. It is a matter of learning the language in depth and this could be the only point that could support the fact that the syllabus could be much more difficult. However, I have to point out that, I am coming back to the initial question, as to what we think the reasons are that the students don't learn English in the state sector, even though they have been taught for so many years. And I would like to pinpoint another negative aspect of the state that by paying so many people that teach foreign languages to impose ways that at least when the student attends nine years of English language teaching that he/she is proficient in the language or doesn't know anything, or the knowledge they have deserves 12, or 15 out of twenty. Why is it we know how much they know Maths, how do we know how much they know Physics or Chemistry and English.

I: Well, it is something that all my colleagues have demanded, that is to have a state certificate that would certify whether the child has learnt, and this would give our job a certain kind of essence.

S: Presumably.

I: If the foreign language frontisteria were banned could English be learned only at school? What I mean is do you think that there is any chance for the state sector to take full responsibility for the foreign language education of the students in Greece?

S: Yes, I think that this can happen so long as the teachers become more serious and the syllabuses become serious as well, that is, if we shake off the staid mentality. And I am certain that you know as a mother and a woman of how much work you put in and how much work other people put, even if you are a teacher. You very well know that. And when this mentality is shaken off, because it is matter of mentality and mentalities can be many a time a brake. I am saying these things as the director of the local authorities, even though I do believe in what I said previously. From the position I hold I believe that things can change through the imposition of a new mentality. This can be realized either through evaluation or even the dismissal of the employee and the appointment of the most appropriate person. Yes, I do believe that English can be learned at the state school if frontisteria are banned. If the frontisteria close down your child and my child could also learn foreign language in the state sector as they learn Maths or Physics. Because foreign language learning, in my opinion, is easier than learning Physics or other subjects. It does not need any special perception, what it requires is the will to learn either using visual or audio aids.

I: If we put it simply what you are referring to is I presume the "volima". What I am referring to is the mentality that prevails in acquiring a post at the state school so that the teacher can conveniently laze off. Is this what you are implying? Is this the mentality? Is this what you were trying to get across?

S: I do not exclude, I do not exclude that. Firstly there should be some percentage of enthusiasm not only from the teachers that have been appointed in the past but also of new teachers. What I mean is that there are good teachers who are enthusiastic about their job, but unfortunately the percentage is quite small. It is a general symptom that each one of us can understand; let's say it is a symptom of our era. There is no enthusiasm there is no yearning. Things that we were struggling for twenty or thirty years ago either through the union or any other way, always demanding for bread [pay] or just for anything else, you can realize that we get those things in our head. What I mean is, that the teacher that has the yearning to teach is becoming extinct and I think that this is the case all over the world. However, simply put, in other countries and areas they must have found ways through which they can impose – if not the enthusiasm which there is no way they can make it happen and the so-called 'philotimia' in no way – they can at least impose at least a dignified work conduct.



I: As director of the local educational authority you must have seen teachers who are enthusiastic at the beginning of their careers. In your opinion do you think that these are enthusiastic until the end of their careers?

S: I want to believe referring to psychology that a human being is born with the yearning to do things until the day they die. And when the person is born with broader yearnings and open-minded mentality still there is nothing you can do about it whatever you do to him/her. I would say at this point that people who are born to be teachers have the enthusiasm even though on a daily basis they are inflicted and pressed to change, but I believe that they continue [to be enthusiastic], but they are only very few.

I: If English was to be learnt at school what do you think are the changes that should be made to promote English language teaching in the state sector?

S: It is a question that you need to think in advance so now my statement will be superficial. It is going to be something that a person would think lightheartedly and unprepared. I believe that whatever can be done for any other subject I believe could be done for the foreign language subject. What can be done for the learning of the Greek language, of the ancient and Modern Greek, of Maths, of History let's say, what needs to be done? Let's start off like this. A very good teaching book. Do you have such a thing? I can see there are 200 books. Who are the people who wrote those books? What was their data, what was their grounding? Could this also be a problem? Who are the ones that write the books? There is the Institute of Pedagogy where a contest is set up and five or ten books are suggested and only one is chosen and the book is imposed. You might say "For God's sake there are more excellent books of English or German, why is it we had to resort to this book?" This applies even to the other books of history, Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, Maths, and Physics, which also fall short. But I would say, that what could be changed, what needs to be taken care of, I am trying to answer your question without me being prepared. So one would have to start from a very good book for the student which can be combined with a very good exercise book. I don't consider a good book a book that has all the foolish things that they try to give as hard as they can and to have as much material as they can, for the student. I don't think that this is the right thing to do. I don't regard this as a good book. I think that a good and successful book tries to get across knowledge requiring from the student as little effort as possible. The exercises should be the kind that the student will enjoy to do. Not to require of the students to refer to a thousand other books. Say like we learnt this thing in biogenetics therefore let's add it to the material so that the student can learn it. Or in Maths we acquired this idea so let's add it so that the student can learn it, too. Therefore starting from a very good book from there and on the teaching hours I think are more than enough. I don't know what is happening abroad and I am not really interested to a certain point, but I think that the hours are enough. That is, three hours weekly of English or two when they are



promoted to higher classes I think are enough. From there and on there should be a good teacher with yearning to teach, which... the good book many a time can put the good teacher into a second footing. That's where we have reached nowadays. A good teacher with yearning could get across quite a lot. Unfortunately, I am saying this thing because I am disappointed. Anyway I think that this should be done both in the elementary and the junior high school, to get across this thing the knowledge of the book. It is not a university or anything else, to get across. What else could I add so that the student could learn? Only that the practical problems arise. A student that is transferred from one school to another, a student that is at a lower level now will go to the second grade. What is the syllabus that he /she will follow? The student will be promoted to the second grade of the Lyceum what is the syllabus they will follow. The student loses track. This is the reason that for a student, who has followed the wrong track or has started off while not having the right knowledge, they go on ignoramus and inadequately for the rest of their school years. This could be a reason I can't really tell you what can be done in this case because this kind of individual teaching could take place in all the subjects. Let's say in Modern Greek. They are graded with two or three or one out of twenty, what happens in this case. How will this child end up? I would then talk about a different kind of education. We would have 20-25 students in each class instead of 30-35 students so that there could be again a more serious and individual teaching, so that we could get rid of the lower level students, that is, the inefficiency of students, what can I say what else could I add.

I: This could be a comparable question. What do you think is missing as regards the teaching of English in the state school system (could be staff wise, material wise and training wise)?

S: Could you please repeat the question, as I was not listening?

I: Yes, of course. What do you think is missing as regards the teaching of English in the state school system (could be staff wise, material wise and training wise)?

S: Yes, let's see what is missing from the state school system. You mean staff wise material wise and training.

I: Are the teachers well trained before they come to school.

S: Yes, this is one thing. We already mentioned that if we presume, I think this relates to the previous question, if we have a good book which, but the good book should have its sequel. If it does not have its sequel this is where the whole damage is created. We should be careful. I don't know I haven't been able to get into the heart of your matter, of your school of the book which every young teacher comes on a yearly basis to choose the best book. And fortunately some other serious people follow and watch things carefully even if they do not all together agree with the selection made by their predecessor. I don't know whether you have experienced such a thing.

I: I have heard all about it.

**S:** At least they accept the fact that there should be a continuation. Where did these students stop and where do they start off from. How do you build on the previous material that they have been taught? This is a problem so that is where I identify the problem. Now as regards their training that is of the English language teachers. Well, my opinion as regards this point is: The worst teacher, that is, the worst teacher I mean the one that has inefficient knowledge and education, because I wouldn't say that the worst teacher is an indifferent one. An indifferent teacher is the worst thing that can occur. An indifferent teacher is the worst, worst of all. I am talking about a teacher who for some reason either because of the conditions or his/her mental capabilities was not able to acquire from his/her training at the university to get the highest possible reserves of knowledge and received mediocre knowledge, they received the lowest level and got the grade of 5 out of 10. He/she is a bad student which means two things either that he/she has not had the ability or he/she did not feel like learning or the conditions were not appropriate for them either because he/she was working and had to stay up at night. This person comes to school as a teacher with a degree that has been acquired with a 5 as a passing grade. This implies that the student was not doing well with his/her studies. This teacher I regard as an excellent one. What I mean is that this teacher can do his/her job efficiently. Therefore, the worst graduate of the English language or German language faculty at FC or Proficiency level can only reach to the point to solve these problems. He/she cannot solve any problem he is given. The worst language teacher or the worst Theologian could be an excellent teacher for the level of knowledge for both the junior and senior high school. That is, is it possible that someone has been studying for four or five years a language to teach students at the junior high school, to start them off with the basics of the English language and then teach them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades and to get them to a point, but maybe his/her [teacher's] accent could not up to standards. Language is not a matter of having the proper accent. I wish I knew the words, the grammar and all and I wouldn't mind if I spoke like a peasant. Do you understand?

**I:** Yes.

**S:** I want to believe that as regards the teachers' training they have the right qualifications. The worst, I would like to repeat that the worst university students are capable to teach. The thing that is missing is the personal yearning and that's where maybe there could possibly be the personality and the personal appearance of the teacher. Therefore it is the education and the character of the English language teacher or the German language teacher or the French language teacher. And this is the point I could tell you and present my experience on certain things. That is, during my career I can say that my best friends were foreign language teachers. I had a special liking towards the foreign language teachers. I recall them with some sort of nostalgia. The first year of my appointment, that is, in 1979, I was in a village in the north of our prefecture and we were all friends keeping company to each other. That



is, where you could see people who were able to keep company to have relationship, clever people; people who were educated and cultivated had the relevant output in the classroom. They had imposing personalities and did not really need other means to receive our respect and they also received the respect of the students. And this is basic element for the subject's success. Therefore, I identify more on the formation of the foreign language teachers and colleagues' character rather than on their knowledge and their professional grounding. In this second section that is in their professional grounding, I believe that they are all able and capable as for the first section, that is, the personal matter and that is where I think they are deficient. And they are deficient for many reasons. There are many young ladies that have become foreign language teachers in our profession [he sounds derogative]. Eh what do I mean by the words young lady? It means that the junior or senior high school teachers will perceive them differently. Eh, we should not be forgetting the parameter of their adolescence. The students are always looking for someone who is more vulnerable, someone who is sweet a little better dressed with the skirt's hem being a bit higher than allowed, which many a time is possible to happen. Unfortunately, when this happens with individuals who are more culture prone – many foreign language teachers tend to be culture prone – they always have or rather they want to present a more refined, a very sweet and superb presence for you to see and as a colleague to relate to, but as regards the pedagogic message they get across and their efficiency in teaching is negative. I believe that the psychology if one reads about the psychology of getting dressed, of one's presence of their movement even in the classroom, you can realize that they fall short. You can realize that people who have no idea about such things get into classrooms to teach English. Do you get it?

I: Yes.

S: Therefore, even the colour of the cloth, even the way you walk and your posture even the voice, of course it is not the teacher's fault when the little girl squeaks. All these things contribute to the formation of the personality and the way that the students perceive the teacher and see. And he/she [the student] can find her vulnerable therefore this is where the whole procedure starts. That is where, I identify indeed a negative, but let me not be unfair, let me not be unfair. Simply for some excellent colleagues' sake with whom I have been working – German or English language teachers who were excellent teachers as regards their character, their personality and their appearance. I would think that I am unfair if I insist and generalize. Unfortunately, if we compare these colleagues with teachers of other subjects ... I think that the percentage of the teachers that I have described is higher, the presence, the much airy presence in the classroom. For a mature person who knows what he/she wants, the knowledge that he/she wants to learn and you like the sweet and airy presence, but for a student it is a problem.

I: I see.



**S:** I could also add that they entrench themselves on this aspect. Maths teachers, it is also the nature of the subject. It is also the fact that it is a foreign language. So students get into the psychology that influences negatively the interest, the quietness of the students. It is also the perception that half the class has been taught those things in the frontisterio, so half the class is indifferent and can be naughty. Therefore, it is a vicious circle, which leads us to the point that we are led. Tell me if I have to speak less or...

**I:** It is all right. Carry on.

**I:** Do you believe that pupils value the subject of English?

**S:** No, they don't. I personally did not value it in those years that I was a student. Of course my statement has no importance because I am talking about thirty years ago. There was no value. For us the session of the English language subject was the happiest adolescent session, because we had a very sweet teacher and we always had fun. Let me make note of this that even though I did attend a frontisterio I got 10 out of 20, even if I was an excellent student. Anyway, they do not value it because of their previous experience and knowledge outside the state school, which is the thing that causes the damage to the subject. As in many cases a vulnerable teacher, say physics' teacher, a student who knows physics excellently through another way and of course there are other factors that contribute here. He/she could undervalue the subject even of the person, but generally speaking the subject of English, because the majority of students are prepared either at the frontisteria or the private lessons they most probably underestimate it. This, I can not relate always to, as I have already told you, for the sake of some exquisite colleagues whom I have met and worked with and they come to my mind now, and I couldn't think of myself being unfair to them if I stick to this perception. I would like to say that many a time the underestimation or rather the appreciation of a subject, and I know that you very well know it, as a teacher, is related you must have come across this event, is related to the appearance of the teacher. Therefore, they are divided, or rather I had the opportunity to work with teachers of foreign languages who were serious personalities and you could see that there is the appropriate quietness the appropriate interest and so on and so forth. Generally, however my understanding is that the students during the foreign language sessions regardless of the language, French English or German they generally undervalue the subject as I would say for the subject of religion [he originally taught religion] and the subject of music. It therefore belongs to a category of subjects...

**I:** You mean second-class subjects?

**S:** Yes, this kind of class. It is a subject with fewer difficulties and of a happier procedure and this is not bad. A clever teacher would keep this easy aspect of his/her job, the easiness of his/her subject the much happier attitude of the students towards those subjects. A clever music teacher could do his job easily. A good English language teacher could, like a good

Theologian, could take advantage of the non-stressful operation of his/her subject to their students.

I: How in your opinion do you think those teachers can function?

S: I met a teacher who except for her subject of English she taught them the subject of the “Conduct of a civilian” and she had some very good ideas. I don’t mean that the teacher should be going round as a niggard with the cassette recorder all around the classroom to do the listening. This is funny and I would never like to tell the teacher to go round with the cassette recorder. He could impose that possibly in the contemporary, foolish and falsely democratic and progressive mentalities falsely democratic and progressive mentalities. It is regarded as stressful to teachers I would never like to go into the classroom with the cassette recorder in the classroom. I could ask a student very politely or to assign to a student to bring the cassette recorder from the class that the teacher had been teaching before or from the office. That is, the first underestimation starts from there. The teacher looks like a niggard when he/she walks round the school carrying a cassette recorder, say cassettes in my opinion, [very derogative even his tone of voice changes, what he means by cassettes is the phenomenon we have here in Greece of African people illegally selling counterfeit cassettes on pavements to make their living as they are not allowed to work legally]. I wanted to say something what was it?

I: Well, the question was: How could these teachers make their subjects pleasant for the students?

S: Well, I started off with this teacher, who found all sorts of games all the different ways to motivate the students. She used tests, or she divided the students into groups, she did these things not only in her subject [that is English] but also did the same thing with the other subjects, too. That is, the “conduct of the civilian”. She separated them and I saw that even though she had all the elements that I would take as negative in a teacher, what I mean is: She was a very sensitive and very delicate lady, who would theoretically be vulnerable to any kind of trick that students might play. Her appearance was very sweet, very nice one that you would look at and many a time having sensitivity to aesthetics I stated my opinion to her like “It is very nice what you are wearing today”. Most probably for the students this could be somehow far-fetched. That is, her fineness the tone of her voice, her appearance the way she dressed... [Was interrupted as a secretary came in to get his signature on certain documents]. Well, where was it I stopped. Yes, despite all these this teacher who I previously described with the negative elements of her personality, this teacher had a big heart, a heart you would say “Let’s not make fun” well she had such a heart she gave out such a personality I liked it very much. She knew how to handle the students she never brought any student to the office for me to tell off. She solved her problems on her own and she received the students’ love, which was magnificent. I got in her class sometimes in



urgent cases to inform them about something. I could see the cassette recorder I could see the students play and there was no noise. She is a successful person. What has this person done? The combination of her past knowledge and her character, or her interest must have contributed. She had found certain ways to attract the students' interest beyond the formal way of teaching which is teacher-centred. And she was successful, and she was successful not only in her subject, but also in the other subject she was teaching which was not her field and she had no idea about it and she could just read it in class. Instead she used games and she formed groups for the students to discuss the topics. I believe that she taught much better than specialized teachers in Civilians' Conduct

I: While I was interviewing the EFL teachers they stated that they all wanted to teach students in groups, but this caused noise in the class. Do you think that they used this as an excuse?

S: Yes, I believe that this is a personality weakness. That is, they have lost the game, although I wouldn't say that they have lost the game, but the game is slipping off their hands, or rather it has already started to slip off their hands. And I do pity them as teachers, because they should certainly be getting tired easily and disappointed as well. Why is it so? Because if they do experience this experience it means... well I did describe to you before you asked me this question the teacher who was altogether sensitive and who had all the negative points and despite of all this she had got across due to her personality, she had got across to the students that she could control the students. That is, this inner discipline cannot be supported externally. The student must perceive of you and accept you. If you are capable of doing this, it is done. This can be done using many ways. By respecting your knowledge, but this is a subject that you cannot show off your knowledge. Can you talk to them in a complicated manner? Therefore, we use a different way to be able to impose ourselves on to the student. A way to confront things that combine love and compassion, but also of ...how can I put it? Of imposition. You may also need to become even an actor, or even a psychologist to be successful as a foreign language teacher, because you start off from an inferior point. You are not the mathematician who will impose yourself through the grades or impose yourself using a difficult exercise. Don't feel that you are pressing me about the time I only hope that something good will come out of this.

I: Yes, it will and quite a lot.

S: I see.

I: This question might require you to repeat certain things that you have already mentioned, but let me just ask you just in case you have something more to add. What do you think should be done in order to restore the value that the subject of English deserves in order for the English language teacher to be able to function appropriately?



S: We are in search of what might be wrong, or we all feel that things are not going well. I am not for the control, because control has no meaning if it does not have the essence of quality, if it is not of quality. And a quality control it is not a control, it is guidance, it is counseling, it is pain and effort to move up having the quality. You and the person that you are going to advise or give counseling. What I mean is that we are as a state, a country that is looking into matters nowadays. And we are referring quite often to words like assessment, meritocracy such things. We just don't like any kind of educational change, we always like to change things and what is the reason? We all, we are 10,000,000, and we have 10,000,000 ideas and positions about the changes that take place. I would suggest this thing and you would suggest the other thing, and the other person would suggest the other thing, which means that we are in search. The good thing is that we are looking for something and we hear that there is going to be assessment of both the teaching and the teachers. I did experience the austerity, the hardness, and at the same time the great bone-dryness of the school advisors in the past. I had experienced three supervisions while teaching. For me it was, I experienced it as a unionist in those days, but they were the best teaching hours. The presence of two different people, that is, two different people had supervised me. As a newly appointed, it was the second year I had been supervised. Yes, it was in a village and then in a town, in the high school. Supervisors have attended my lesson three times using the old meaning of supervisors. It was a fantastic experience for me. We had dinner with the first person, we were happy to have communicated, I did receive certain comments, and I did get pleasure out of the lesson and my students. Having had more experience when I was supervised the second time, I had even more how can I put it... comfort to function as I would like to function. I even tried to experiment with my teaching during my supervised session and I was unsuccessful. I did this to be able to overcome the fear, the picture we had of the supervisor, which was that of a bogey, of a controller of the supervisor in the past to show him that teaching is a living thing and it can block and you need to be ready to restore things using a thousand ways. I certainly did give him a hint before he entered the class that something new was going to be tried. I told him "I am stating, I am requesting before we start that you do not take my teaching as a weakness after I have finished teaching". The man accepted it and actually wanted to attend a class of mine in the third grade and that was when our communication was at its peak. Friendship and mutual respect were born then. I did block the class with questions I asked and no one could move on with the lesson. So I turned to the supervisor and said, "My supervisor, you must have realized that there is liveliness in the teaching and at this point it requires a new way to face things. I need to ask them again to move on this way or another way." The man having as an old supervisor a different mentality, that of a bogey because that is how we perceived him, was enthusiastic about the whole lesson which was sincere and not set up. What I am trying to say is that we

fought this institution and we got to the other end. We have not had any kind of assessment for twenty years, not any kind of control, of what you may be doing in the class, whether you go in having been prepared or not. You must have experienced it, even if you have been teaching in the primary school. What I mean is. Has any one come into your class and ask you whether you know how to do things? If you have a headache or you don't feel like working you can tell your students to lay their heads on their desks and go to sleep you can easily do it without having anyone tell you off. Well, those are not things that serious countries and serious people can accept or serious teachers. You never did it and I never did it, but there are a big percentage of teachers who do it. Where am I trying to lead you? Finally, now we did realize the mistakes we made, we are looking out for assessment, meritocracy the redefinition of certain things and I want to believe that... as we are on the look for better books and the teachers' books. Therefore, I have to come back to the same points, that is, that a very compassionate and full of interest sensitivity, not the style that civil servants have, who just say well why don't we design another change and let's design a new book. The person [who will design those things] should take things seriously. We need to start the training of the teachers, not that of their knowledge, that is I am not really interested in your Ph.D. You can be an excellent teacher even with no Ph.D, or you can be the worst teacher having a Ph.D. I am not interested. The things that you know and you teach your students in the elementary school are a lot. The more you teach those kids you are actually harming them. Do you understand? Because most probably you will overburden them with a lot more knowledge. What does it mean? That your knowledge and training the more you learn while doing the Ph.D I want to believe that you do get knowledge, but you must go in the classroom in a different way. You have to identify your motives, to look for some others and if you can't find any other external motives to put emphasis on your motives in order for you to be able to go in. It has to do more with the training in psychology and the teacher's grounding and somewhere there, if we do get away from the civil servant's mentality, that is, how I see things being treated.

I: You touched upon a point that I was about to ask you. I would like you to comment on whether teachers are ready pedagogically to enter into the classrooms.

S: No, they are not. And I don't think they will ever be ready.

I: Why is it so?

S: Because again it depends on ... of course we do believe and I believe and you believe that if someone is bombarded with a sensitive with a psychology with a pedagogy, with a method the person will acquire something. This something is missing and I believe they can acquire this thing. In order to be a teacher you need to have knowledge beyond that. The spirit, the psychology. With regards to the fact as to how many people can under the conditions that prevail nowadays enter the university and your department, thank God at



least you are examined in the foreign language. Imagine a Greek language teacher or a Theologian that was aiming at becoming a lawyer and is unsuccessful and enters the department of Greek language or that of theology. He/she is a teacher that was unsuccessful as a law student. Imagine the mathematician who was aiming for something different, but was unsuccessful. He/she was successful to enter the school of maths because nowadays you only need to have 13 out of 20 to enter the department of Maths. In your department you can enter by only having 11 or 11 and a half or 12. So what can I tell you? Therefore I want to say that these people are for certain unprepared and I can see it. I have great experience the greatest experience because it is 10 years now that I receive the newly appointed ones and I can see these things. Of course I do meet "diamonds" [excellent people], clever, sensitive and you meet...

I: That means that you attribute their unpreparedness to their training at the department.

S: Yes, yes, I do attribute it to the department as I mentioned earlier. This something when you are bombarded at the university with psychology and pedagogic grounding and teaching practice, to teach and to be corrected on their teaching the thing that could take place at school for a lifetime by having a school advisor, that is, by the teachers not as a controller or a supervisor in order for the person to get a grade. Those things are silly. That is, the quality does not come through the grading and controlling. Quality comes through communication and guidance. Such a person who will be there to watch and see where I made the mistake while I was teaching, I taught them say five words, which I had to teach the students using another five words to present them with the new vocabulary. This needs to be pinpointed and you should take it with a good will and not to take it that your personality is being taken amiss. Do you get it? Assessment does not exist, but it should be put into effect. However, you must perceive that beyond all those things teaching is a yearning. I can't ... if I just stayed at this point I don't want you to misunderstand me ... because if I did stay at this point there is the danger that I might be considered a romantic and being in the heavens. No, I am also in the administration and I am down to earth and that is why I believe that using this first way that I mentioned either with the increase of the pedagogic training and attendance first of all. [There is tendency at the universities not to attend classes and just go and take the exams after having read the books that are relevant to the subject matter] either as a follow-up in a more systematic and austere way. But with the meaning of the systematic presence of the school advisor, with a personality not ludicrous. Not ludicrous as we are used to. Every ludicrous that has a Ph.D becomes a school advisor. He/she is unsuitable if we need to be serious and we have experienced that all the school advisors... I do respect though the memory of some exquisite school advisors who are a handful and have come to our prefecture in the ten years that I have been here. Anyway, we are talking about ridicule. Who is to go and advise whom, for God's sake? We move on.



I: What do you think of the state language teachers in terms of their commitment/general disposition?

S: Yes, their disposition and commitment. My answer is going to rotate to the same points. I have met people for whose sake I cannot put everybody in the same boat. I have met exquisite teachers, but I repeat, I repeat and this is my estimate that there are very few teachers generally speaking. In the category of foreign language teachers in combination with the music teachers and the art teachers they emit a more cultural artistic dimension to the staff and you can see them avoid bureaucratic procedures, office jobs and so on. However, I do recall certain very good colleagues let me not mention their names because you might know some of them or I might forget some of them who were interested in doing office work and had the initiative to communicate with the parents, they have not brought even one student to the office and this means something.

I: What do you think of the state language teachers in comparison to the private language teachers?

S: (Laughter) Well, this is where we have to do with ... Well, I am not allowed because of the location and the advanced thought that I made to compare them with people who have a different mentality. This I disregard and I consider people who work for the state sector secure. A month comes or goes by and they get their salary whatever job they did, no matter what they have offered, even if they are absent for so many days. The person in the private section has to work, has to sweat to get the 3,000 or the 5,000 drachmas, which he/she will get when he/she works, and if he/she gets I don't know what kind of insurance he/she has. This is where I have met and I have friends who work for private schools where you as you may know do a much serious a more controlled job, that is, there is control. I mean with a lot of pleasure or rather inner pleasure I established such rules in the school where I was the headmaster for three years, but it was with a lot of pain and interference of external factors and the internal the colleagues that is. We established some of these rules, but I come back to the foreign language teacher in a private school, who has her teeth taken out on a daily basis. She will be told off if she misses something, if she is not on time, if she is absent, if she does not teach well and there is a single complaint from the teacher and so on and so forth and of course after having worked for three or four years without even having come in touch... . It was yesterday that a German language teacher phoned me, and she was sucked and replaced by another teacher. I don't believe that the new teacher was more related to the owner but probably much better. I don't think that she was more related to the owner because when the notion of the private school, which means profit and it means that you have to yield to make profit. This is where there is no interference in settling the ones you are related to and so on. Instead there is the austerity so that you can do your job as best as you can so that more customers, students can come. Therefore there is no way that you can

compare the two types of teachers. They do know it, the students and colleagues who have been teaching both in the private and state sector or they are working in the private sector and they come to the public. Go and ask those people to find out what is going on.

I: Do you then believe that such systems must be applied in the state schools as well? Do you think that some things need to be changed?

S: Certainly this mentality needs to be changed. On the one hand we have the security of the civil employee, who is a civil servant. All the civil servants are [can't make out]. What does their permanent position imply? It is finished. Of course, of course. I don't think that they can. Of course there are ways that each school can find the appropriate staff. This of course is not going to be the criteria, it is not going to be the criteria of the titles of the knowledge of the Master's or of the Ph.D's that one might have. There is the other parameter without wanting to undervalue for God's sake these elements. I am glad you are on research, these in combination with the other parameters that I already mentioned. Let's move on.

I: What in your opinion would characterize a motivated EFL teacher in the state school sector always bearing in mind the current teaching conditions?

S: I would like you to specify something. To characterize?

I: Well, what kind of teacher would have the motivation to teach, what I mean is can you describe a teacher who is motivated to teach bearing in mind the conditions under which she is working?

S: Yes, well, let me start the other way round so that we can see what is wrong. That is where you see what is wrong... I remember certain good teachers and I suppose that is what you are looking for.

I: Yes, indeed.

S: I remember an excellent teacher, who commuted from Athens. Indeed she was never absent from school because she had an increased awareness of her duty. Her awareness was at such a level that when I asked her not to come at certain celebrations and so on she either thanked me greatly or she used to say that since she had nothing else to do she would be present at the celebration. However, this element I cannot forget it in this person. A quality which was essential for her to make a decision. I am diverting the discussion a bit, but through this I want to prove something to you, she had to make up her mind for an extremely important... for the school most importantly... the image of the school, of the student and the image of the teachers, who would show at least a sacrifice. They would sacrifice one hour in the afternoon... the school reputation the sensitivity that we would show towards the parents who worked in the morning... the suggestion of the PA (Parents Association) to have the trimesterly grades given in the afternoon and not in the morning by sponging on the teaching sessions. I valued this specific teacher greatly, but I was surprised when I realized that this altogether very formal, sensitive teacher voted like all the other teachers in this



really ideal suggestion, which safeguarded the discredited reputation, the scurvy reputation of the staff due to the wear and tear of the relationship between the staff and the parents association, the school that was looked down by the community. This kind of quality which would characterize not in essence a politician or an orator but a sensitive teacher, who despite all these she voted against it and what was the reason. The reason was that she could not stay in our town for some extra hours away from Athens. The fact that we were going to get together at six was practically difficult for her to stay, as she would be restricted time wise. What I want to say is that even excellent teachers need the prerequisites, and this is either a symptom related to our era, which you cannot of course enforce a law which clearly states that a teacher has to reside not more than 20 kilometres away from their workplace. Do you get it? This law is existent, but in abeyance. Teachers come from all parts, from Athens or wherever on a daily basis. You come on a daily basis to fulfill a year's duty and then get a transfer. Now with regards to the yearning they have in your teaching it is a different matter... this is a practical matter.... When you have traveled for an hour and a half and you need another hour and a half to drive back to go back home you must realize that these are parameters that have an impact. Anyway let's say that the person has the 'philotimo' as a trait of their character. Therefore for me a good teacher is a well composed teacher, who even if he/she has not been able to solve the parameters that I just mentioned, that is his/her residence, his/her family's peace because all these things affect the teacher. You must perceive the negative effects either within the family or within the environment. They can affect you negatively, anyway. But say if there is a person that has all these things under control and is well composed, well spoken prepared and with a positive attitude, this is in my opinion a good teacher.

I: Would you excuse an English language teacher for being ineffective due to the unfavourable teaching conditions?

S: Always actually always (laughter). We don't do anything else but excuse them. We are considerate we do not excuse. We are not people who give absolution. We are considerate and we are in pain and if you like I can talk about my personal experience. I personally try to energize people using a certain way for them to be better. And so far with God's help and my colleague's help I have been able to see the improvement, the improved image. Because even if I do look austere and hard with my words and thoughts, I am altogether lenient as far as my behaviour is concerned. And I think that is how a teacher must be. There must be criticism at the maximum level and self-criticism mainly for ourselves and to embrace the others and to be considerate. Of course if the person had a problem, I generously gave them leaves without reporting it to the local administration office, or with an absolute consideration. Whatever problem he/she may have we tried to solve together. And this is what I would like to believe in. This is of course the responsibility of many people who run



or are the heads of the staff and so on that many a times they [the heads] have to manage average teachers that have average interests and output. And the key to this is the way they [the heads] confront them [the teachers]. That is, a negative and harsh and a reproachful behaviour of the head of a school or of the office is the biggest damage one can do to a person even if he/she has interest in her/his job or not. Therefore we all have to be considerate, if the head of the school or the administration are not considerate there is no value. The head of the school and office are not there just to be the head and to manage and to be the leader. It has to do with being more considerate in order to treat the weaknesses.

I: Are they considerate, in your opinion?

S: Certainly. I would also like to add that I can give you some examples as to how this applies. That is there are definite incidents, which can be taken down in your mind not anywhere else as to how this can happen with this kind of behaviour. However, you have to be hurt on a daily basis. And if a thousand true things you say and a thousand sensitivities you show then you will be crucified a thousand times. It is a fact. But since my specialization imposes it on me and I am knowledgeable on these matters I think that this is the duty of each head. You have to firstly try to have something more to give not to ask. You cannot demand only the best and perfect behaviour from the others towards you. You must be the first to give absolution, the consideration the quality that you demand, you ask for. And gradually the person adapts to the conditions. This is something. We had started this thing from the beginning that the personality of a person that imposes him/herself on to the others or rather let me put it somewhat differently, the perfect the best and the most correct impose themselves on to things. You don't really need by force or by using a whip or a law. That is a personality, which is well composed, will be imposing. It is not necessary to shout or be wild both to the students and to the colleagues and to everybody. This applies not only to the heads but also to the teachers as I have already mentioned. The same thing applies to the student. A student with a well-composed personality can impose him/herself even on the teacher.

I: In your opinion, if there was a professional advancement in the teacher's career would this contribute to the teacher's motivation?

S: Yes, professional. Do you mean some kind of advancement?

I: Yes.

S: It did exist in the past and it was compulsory. At present the teacher can ask to be advanced. However, the whole symptom that I mentioned earlier, which was partly disappointing is still worse. The mentality both of this era is that we put in the least effort we can. Therefore in this manner ... [interruption -phone rang]... Well, since motivation concerns your research there are two factors in a person's life. From Pavlov's examples we learnt that if you give a small mouse or a pigeon food they will get their head out when the

bell rings and saliva will be dribbling and so on and so forth. Well, I belong to the people who have the philosophy and who get embarrassed when the food is given and the bell rings for my saliva to dribble; my saliva to dribble and to ring the bell. I ring the bell even if there is no food. I am romantic and that is why I consider myself well I must stop here...a good teacher I consider myself. I would like to come back to the point that we talk about external factors. Motivation of what? Material, financial they are scurvy a zero. I am the head of the office which means that I am a cancer candidate with little money. Let's say if you have motives of ambition in this case you can say that a man's soul is there; because money has been hated but triumph hasn't. I ask you, though. Well, the first chapter nowadays is definitive. With a morsel of soil, you call it of bread, you can close the mouth of any worm, either of an English language teacher or of a German language teacher or of Greek or a maths teacher anyone you can see. Whether it is a politician, or a priest or a mayor or anyone with just a handful of money, of soil you can close the worm's mouth. Therefore, I don't belong to this category I don't expect even though the aspect of finance is very important I don't. I personally don't want but unfortunately the majority of people – I say it despising them this – is their motive. If you give them 20,000 or 50,000 drachmas extra, but they are liars. If you have this as a motive you are a liar, however much you give them however much soil you give the worm receives it, passes it through he/she will transform it into excrement, but the worm will not be advancing. The worm will remain a worm. That is, they are all liars. We, in the union struggled for higher wages and we are liars, do you get it? That is, I won't do any better job if I take another 50,000 drachmas. Isn't that an improvement to my financial condition if I get another 50,000 or 60,000 drachmas every month? I am asking you, isn't it better if you got another 100,000 drachmas on your salary to teach at your elementary school or the junior high school? What will you do any better? The same filth you will be expressing or the same goodness you will be expressing. Therefore the financial motive however important it may be it is for the 90 percent of the people in the materialistic framework and philosophical dimension of our era, which will enable him/her to eat another five pizzas or will buy an extra estate, or will build an extra house he/she will be able to fulfill his/her vanity or the increased necessities of the over consumption where we are led to. As for one's ambition 90% of the people who have been squashed in the previous mentality they do not have any ambition. Because ambition in this case implies politeness. You do not become great when you are a good teacher or you are a headmaster you do not anything big, it is politeness. Therefore a person who is squashed with 50,000 and 100,000 drachmas or feels that he is happy or feels that the 50,000 or 100,000 drachmas represent the maximum motive of their output cannot have ambition. Therefore, and I would like to make sure that this is made clear. Even if I have a lot to think about and maybe my thought sounds a bit complicated, I think that I am answering your question. What do I



mean? If there were motives, but there are motives. For example for the position I am holding the one of the director of the local administration everyone had the right to apply. The thing is for us to demand things through our union, but we are in a society that nothing is done. But I do agree that 50,000 is a motive. But I think it is embarrassing to become a headmaster for the 50,000 drachmas. Of course when all the problems are channeled to me I need to be differentiated from the others through ways. It could be financial which I look down a bit on the money aspect either the image that a head might have which is silly nowadays. These things have been levelled to the ground and the higher you move on the rank the more you are below the others, the more ridiculous you become. Think of a headmaster who is interested in his/her school and runs around turning off the tap because the others are indifferent, or he/she will comment on the late arrival of the teachers and so on and so forth which is ridiculous. How can I put it ... grotesque altogether. I can't ... therefore... The point I want to make is that both the financial aspect and the other thing I mentioned about the glory or the image you may receive as a head is existent, but you need to apply things in order to become a head after having been assessed and we see very few going for it. Of course if they needed financial motives I wouldn't consider them as motives but the safeguarding of a certain position, to be safeguarded, because now the higher you move on the lower you are in comparison to the others. That is as a headmaster you are embarrassed or you are afraid to make a comment to one of the teachers because a procedure might be set off and you will never find justice. Well, the question was if there were motives to advance... well here everybody is advanced without any assessment, everybody... and it is quite easy

I: If this advancement was made to be claimed rather than being given as it is...

S: In this case I think that something may be done. Yes, I would say yes.

I: I think you have answered this question, but I am posing it in case you want to add something else. As a professional parent who is concerned about your child/children's education what do you think about your child's/children's English classes at school and the English language teacher?

S: Yes, I have answered it. I would say that my child should have avoided having private tuition and so on and so forth and should have been able to attend the classes the way he attends all the other classes. But because there are some other parameters some other things may be necessary as the one of the pronunciation, an external help may be necessary I do understand that. I am talking as a parent now. On the other hand, unfortunately as regards my children there weren't ... well I just remember very few teachers who had a positive effect and if I have to consider things the teachers that fell short outnumbered the others. They were people who were altogether incapable, non-pedagogical. I can't assess their work because as I have already told you to teach in the elementary or junior high or senior high



school I believe that even the worst teacher can do his/her job in an excellent way. I can't assess their job, but as pedagogues even though my children are reserved and have never created any problems. I can even remember German language teachers that were negative and English, but anyway they were colourless, that is my conclusion they are colourless. I: Thank you for giving up time to give the interview.

