

PROFILING GREEK HERITAGE LANGUAGE SPEAKERS IN THE USA AND RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

Heritage language studies have been gaining ground in the last decade while those in heritage Greek are in their early stages. The present study reports results from the MIS 5006199 project on Heritage Greek. It aims at initial profiling of Greek heritage language speakers who live in the USA (Chicago) and Russia (Moscow and Saint Petersburg), in order to gain a clearer understanding of their characteristics. For this purpose, we developed an online survey in order to collect information from different generations of Greek heritage language speakers about their backgrounds, attitudes, and goals in maintaining/studying Greek. More precisely, we sought to record the respondents' demographic data, language learning history, self-rated proficiency, language use, and language learning motivational profiles. Eighty-nine (N=89) Greek heritage language speakers living in Chicago (U.S.A), Moscow and St. Petersburg (Russia) participated in the research. The results show that they exhibit defining characteristics found in heritage language speakers. Also, the participants' responses witness diversity, probably caused by various factors influencing their bi/multilingual development, such as the quantity and quality of linguistic input at different period of life as well as the family, the local community and a wider social background.

Keywords: Heritage language, heritage speaker, linguistic input, language maintenance.