

Exploring the Construction of Identities in Written Humorous Narratives by L2 Learners of Greek

Spyridoula Gasteratou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

spyridoulagast@gmail.com

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore how adult learners of Greek as a second language construct their identities through humorous written narratives. Analyzing 135 written humorous narratives with Bamberg's (1997) narrative positioning model and the knowledge resources of script opposition and target from the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo 1994, 2001), we detect two main categories: (a) narratives of legitimizing identities and (b) narratives of resistance identities. Here we discuss one narrative of each category in which narrators position themselves towards aspects of the Greek sociolinguistic context. Humor emerges as a basic tool for identity construction and stance expression, as narrators either align themselves with dominant values of the L2 context or disassociate themselves from it.

Keywords: narratives, humor, identities, L2, GTVH

Streszczenie

Badania nad konstruowaniem tożsamości w tekstach narracyjnych o charakterze humorystycznym na przykładzie uczących się języka greckiego jako obcego

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie w jaki sposób osoby dorosłe uczące się języka greckiego jako obcego (L2) definiują swoją tożsamość poprzez teksty narracyjne o charakterze humorystycznym. Używając modelu pozycjonowania narracyjnego Bamberga (1997) oraz opozycji skryptów i obiektu dowcipu będących częścią ogólnej teorii humoru słownego (General Theory of Verbal Humor) (Attardo 1994, 2001) do przeanalizowania zbioru 135 tekstów o charakterze humorystycznym, wyróżniono dwie główne kategorie: (a) narracje o tożsamości legitymizującej oraz (b) narracje o tożsamości wyrażającej opór. W niniejszym artykule omawiamy po jednej narracji z każdej kategorii, w której została wyrażona postawa narratora wobec wybranych socjolingwistycznych elementów kontekstu języka greckiego. Humor okazuje się głównym narzędziem przy konstruowaniu tożsamości i wyrazicielem postaw, a narratorzy albo akceptują dominujące wartości obecne w kontekście języka L2, albo odcinają się od nich.

Słowa kluczowe: teksty narracyjne, humor, tożsamość, język grecki jako obcy, GTVH

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the construction of identities by adult learners of Greek as a second language (henceforth L2) in written humorous narratives. It adopts an applied linguistic and sociolinguistic perspective taking into consideration relevant studies which have mostly focused on oral narratives coming from migrants' interviews (e.g. De Fina 2000, 2003; Baynham 2006; Enciso 2011) or migrant students' written school essays (e.g. Archakis 2014, 2016, 2018; Archakis, Tsakona 2018).

During the past few decades, the narrative turn of social sciences has contributed to the emergence of narrative as an essential tool for speakers' identity construction (Bruner 1991; De Fina, Baynham 2016: 32). De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008: 308) suggest that the narrative turn offers a holistic approach of narratives as an important means of the construction of diverse realities and identities therein. Following this line of research, a social constructionist approach to social identities is adopted (Sarbin, Kitsuse 1994) considering identity not as an inherent, stable and immutable trait of individuals, but as a product of negotiation, modification and construction through social interaction, mostly through language (Buttler 1990; Bucholtz, Hall 2005: 588; Baynham 2006: 384; De Fina, Tseng 2017: 383).

Viewing identity as something that social agents negotiate and construct through social interaction, as something they do and not as something they are, we specifically focus on the use of humor in the narratives as an essential strategy for learners' positioning vis-à-vis dominant ideologies within the process of identity construction. Our data come from adult learners of Greek who are living in Greece and studying Greek at university institutes. In particular, exploiting analytical tools offered by the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (Attardo 1994, 2001), that is, the script opposition and the target, we intend to demonstrate that our informants build to main kinds of identities: legitimizing and resistance ones (Castells [1997] 2010).

In what follows, the paper begins with the theoretical framework (see Section 2) by briefly discussing relevant studies and their findings, and by presenting the methodological tools which we will use for analyzing the narratives of our data. In Section 2.1. we discuss the fundamental role that narrative has in speakers' identity construction, we highlight the limited research in the Greek language as L2, and we concentrate on the three levels of Bamberg's (1997) positioning model. Then, in Section 2.2. we discuss the role of humor in speakers' identity construction

process, we present the knowledge resources of GTVH (Attardo 2001), mostly the script opposition and the humorous target, and finally, we try to connect the above with the Castell's (2010) distinction between legitimizing and resistance identities. In section 3 we describe our data, which we divide into two different narrative categories depending on, mostly, the humorous target and the corresponding identities which our informants choose to construct: either they target themselves and construct legitimizing identities or they target the locals of their host community and construct identities of resistance. Section 4 includes the analysis of two representative examples from each narrative category. Finally, in section 5 we discuss our findings and how they converge, or, in some ways, they exclude from relevant studies, emphasizing the need for further investigation to explore how humor can be an essential factor in L2 teaching.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Narratives and L2 identities

Several studies highlight the important position narrative plays in everyday interaction and its emergence as an essential tool for identity negotiation and construction (see among others Bamberg 2005, 2011; De Fina, Georgakopoulou 2008; Archakis, Tsakona 2012). De Fina (2003: 19) argues that narrative plays a fundamental role for narrators' identity construction since through narrative, speakers negotiate their individual and social roles, their social relationships as well as their integration into specific social groups. Consequently, narratives reveal who the narrator is, which identities he/she chooses to construct in the specific time and space of his/her narrative performance in answer to the question "Who am I?" (Bamberg 2005, 2011).

The need to answer the above question is becoming more challenging and ambivalent when the narrators are members of multicultural and multilingual communities. In recent years, globalization and the constant mobility of populations have significantly modified the linguistic and sociocultural traits of modern societies and tend to undermine the "one culture" and "one language" rule followed by most Western nation-states (Archakis 2016). Migrants are members of groups who are often marginalized due to the use of languages and/or L2 varieties deviating from the dominant. In this context, research in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics has concentrated on L2 learner narratives and their identities (Baynham 2006; De Fina 2000, 2003; Enciso 2011). A common thread among such studies is the narrators' need to renegotiate their identities within the host community (De Fina 2000: 155), striving to strike a balance between

the dominant expectations and pressures, on the one hand, and their efforts to maintain their own linguacultural traits, on the other (Archakis, Tsakona 2018: 2). This demanding process is traced through students' personal narratives and their identities emerging therein, demonstrating that migrants are sometimes forced to abolish their own cultural and linguistic characteristics and to converge with the dominant ones, while in some other cases they express voices of resistance against such pressure (Archakis 2014, 2016, 2018; Archakis, Tsakona 2018).

Despite the central position of narrative in identity construction and the increasing interest in migrants' and L2 learners' personal stories, such research in Greek is, to the best of our knowledge, limited (see Archakis 2014, 2016, 2018; Archakis, Tsakona 2018). Archakis and Tsakona (2018: 2) point out that the examination of their texts is restricted to the assessment of their vocabulary and grammar skills. This process has a specific goal, that is, migrant/L2 learners' assimilation to standard language use. As a result, migrant/L2 learners' linguistic varieties are stigmatized and the content and sociopragmatic particularities of their texts are overlooked. However, focusing on the content of L2 learners' texts could turn out to be a rich source for the ways they utilize narratives to reconstruct their experiences in the host community.

In this context, we use Bamberg's model (1997) to analyze the ways our learners represent the narrated events and position themselves and other people therein. Bamberg proposes three levels of positioning via narrative: (a) the story world in which narrators position themselves toward other characters of their stories, (b) the interactional context in which narrators position themselves towards the audience, and (c) the wider social context in which narrators strive to position themselves above and beyond the local, trying to provide an answer to the question 'Who am I?' (Bamberg 1997: 337). Through the three levels of narrative positioning, we will examine whether our informants are positioned as members who converge with the dominant perceptions and expectations of the Greek majority or as members who deviate from them.

2.2. Humor and identities

According to Attardo's (1994, 2001) *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (henceforth GTVH), humor is based on incongruity, that is, on the mismatch between how things are and how they should be; in other words, on the subversion of speakers' expectations. Attardo (1994: 222) argued that a text can be characterized as humorous according to six Knowledge Resources (KR): script opposition, language, narrative strategy, target, situation, and logical mechanism. For the purposes of the present study, two of the six knowledge resources of the GTVH appear to be

most relevant: the script opposition and the humorous target. Script oppositions are contained in what Attardo (2001: 82-83) calls the *jab lines* of a text where two opposed semantic scripts clash and reveal the dominant norms and expectations that are not fulfilled by the narrated events, thus creating humor. At the same time, the individual, the group, or the ideologies responsible for the script opposition forms the target against which humor is directed.

A significant number of studies highlight humor as an effective strategy for speakers' identity construction and identity negotiation (see among others Norrick 1993; Holmes 2000; Archakis, Tsakona 2005, 2012; Bell, Pomerantz 2016: 67). Through the incongruity between what is expected and what eventually occurs, humor brings to the surface the values on the basis of which individuals may be accepted or excluded from specific social groups. Humor also criticizes behaviors that do not conform to widely accepted norms, thus contributing to a negative evaluation and face loss of the criticized 'other' and simultaneously positive self-presentation and the maintenance of the humorist's face (Archakis, Tsakona 2006), that is the social image that every member of a community claims for him/herself (Brown, Levinson 1987).

In our data, L2 learners seem to use narrative humor to evaluate everyday events of their lives in Greece, to highlight their frequent deviations from the socially approved and expected behavior, but also to critically address the linguistic and social norms of the host community. By comparing social expectations with the actual events, their stories reveal the rules that are bent or broken, thus leading to a humorous framing. The combination of Bamberg's positioning model (1997) and the knowledge resources of script opposition and target from the GTVH (Attardo 1994, 2001) will allow us to examine in detail the discursive construction of narrators' identities through the use of humor. As already mentioned, we intend to show that the narrators of our sample and the other characters of their stories are sometimes represented as enhancing the dominant norms in the Greek sociocultural context and sometimes as resisting them.

In this context, we also utilize Castells' ([1997] 2010: 8) distinction between legitimizing and resistance identities, which allow us to divide the narratives examined into two categories according to the identities constructed in them by L2 learners. In the first category, narrators use humor to construct legitimizing identities vis-à-vis the use of standard Greek. Castells ([1997] 2010: 8) suggests that legitimizing identities, in general, are "introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination vis à vis social actors." In this way, the dominant values concerning language use seem to be approved of and accepted by the narrators. In the second narrative category, our learners position themselves critically towards the incompatible aspects of the Greek social context via constructing identities of resistance. The identities of resistance are, in general, "generated by those actors who are in positions

devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society” (Castells [1997] 2010: 8).

3. The data of the study

Our data consists of 135 written humorous narratives of adult learners who study Greek as L2 in schools/institutions hosted and supported by Greek universities. They attend intermediate or advanced courses, otherwise it would have been difficult for them to produce a small narrative in Greek. Most previous studies used oral narratives, diaries, or interviews for investigating the various and, sometimes, contradictory identities of L2 learners (see above). In the present study, we use written narratives assuming that “textuality can serve as a catalyst for expressing thoughts and experiences unique to the non-native speaker and to his or her place between native and non-native cultures” (Kramsch, Lam 2013: 64).

The narratives were collected from February 2018 until November 2018. Students were asked to write a funny story from their everyday life in Greece according to the following topic:

In everyday life small or big things that we see, hear or do seem funny to us. So, since laughter and funny moments are everywhere around us, think and write a funny story from everyday life in Greece.

L2 learners were asked to complete their written narratives during a class session (45’), while there were no restrictions concerning the number of words or the use of help from dictionaries or study notes. Here we explore the multiple ways L2 learners of Greek choose to position themselves concerning the different linguistic and sociocultural context they live in, while constructing their social and linguistic identities through written humorous narratives.

The difference between the narrative categories mostly involves their humorous target: We focus on the individual, the group, or the specific situation that the narrators of our sample evaluated as humorous to distinguish between two main categories of funny stories examined here. In this way, we argue that the main difference between the two narrative categories is that in the first category our narrators targeted themselves as humorous, while in the second one our narrators chose Greek locals and their incongruous behaviors as humorous targets.

The analysis of our data, as shown in Table 1, led to emergence of two main categories:

Table 1: Categories of humorous narratives. Source: author.

Narratives of legitimizing identities	Narratives of resistance identities	Total
46	89	135
34, 1%	65, 9 %	100%

It is significant to highlight the majority of the data examined fall within the second category, including those narratives which targeted the narrators' host community and its members. This may be because, while in the first category, narrators target themselves mostly for a particular reason (i.e. their incongruous sociolinguistic performance), in the second category local people are targeted for a wide variety of reasons. In other words, the large number of narratives in the second category may be related to the (apparently) large number of reasons have to target Greek people through their humor.

Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate the number of narratives by narrators living in Greece as migrants and by those staying in Greece for a short term and for academic reasons (Erasmus students, academics, etc.).

Table 2: Narratives of legitimizing identities. Source: author.

Migrants	Erasmus students, academics, etc.	Total
21	25	46
45,7%	54,3%	100%

Table 3: 2nd Narratives of resistance identities. Source: author.

Migrants	Erasmus students, academics, etc.	Total
35	54	89
39,3%	60.7%	100%

Our research question concerns the ways our learners utilize humor in their written narratives to position themselves towards the different linguistic and sociocultural context of Greek community by constructing their ambivalent identities in written humorous narratives.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Narratives of legitimizing identities

The first category consists of humorous narratives where the humorous target was the narrator him/herself (*self-targeting*; see Archakis, Tsakona 2006). Narrators target themselves because they use different varieties from standard Greek. In all the narratives included in the first category, the main script opposition is *I speak/I do not speak standard Greek*. Humor functions as a mechanism of indirect criticism and negative evaluation of their non-standard linguistic varieties. Thus, they appear to ideologically align themselves with standard linguistic use, thus constructing legitimizing linguistic identities, since, in terms of ‘correct’ use, they appear to have the same expectations as the local speakers of Greek. In the first category, humor targets the ‘incongruous’ linguistic varieties of the narrators and hence indirectly supports and reinforces the dominant values concerning the use of Greek. The following example is illustrative¹:

Our first informant is 21 years old and he is in Greece as an immigrant from Lebanon. He is currently studying the Greek language at the intermediate level, but his narrated humorous event belongs in a period that he had limited communicative competence in his L2.

(1) Σαν ξένος, στην Ελλάδα θα πάρω στις καταστάσεις που έχουν πάντα αστεία. Όταν θυμήθηκα αυτές, γέλασα πολύ, γιατί είναι, για εμένα, χαζαίς αλλά έχουν χύμορ.

Μία φορά από αυτές καταστάσεις, ήμουν στο ένα μαγαζί, και ήθελα να αγοράσω ρούχα. Όπως θυμήθηκα, ήμουν στην Αθήνα μόνο για δύο εβδομάδες και δεν ήξερα ποτέ ελληνικά. Αποφάσισα να ρώτησα, αλλά μπερδεύτηκα γιατί αν να ρωτήσω στη Αγγλικά, μπορούν να ξέρουν ότι είμαι ξένους και πάντα θα σκεφτούν να κερδίσουν τόσο λεφτά από έμενα.

Για αυτό το λόγο είχα θάρρο για να ρωτησα πόσο κάνουν αυτά τα ρούχα, όμως χρησιμοποίησα το Google μετάφρασης διότι δεν ήξερα πως πρέπει να ρωτήσω. Όταν έκανα τα μετάφραση για

¹ The unconventional spelling and discursive choices of the narrators are maintained in the Greek original versions but are not reproduced in the English translations. In few cases, square brackets are used to insert our own interpretations of extracts that are stylistically or idiomatically incompatible with standard Greek and perhaps ambiguous even for us as analysts.

φράση, Πήγα στο ταμείο, και με αυτοπεποίθηση είπα: «Πόσο κοστίζεις σήμερα, έχεις εκπτώσεις;».

Ξαφνικά, είδα τα πρόσωπα τους ταμιών φαινηθήκαν κόκκινο, και το security άντρας γεληθήκε πάρα πολύ. Επιπλέον, την γυναίκα εκεί φώνασα και είπε πολύ κακή λέξεις για εμένα.

Στη αυτή κατάσταση, και μετά δύο λεπτά γνωρίσα που είπα πριν είναι μεγάλο λάθος. Είπα πριν φύγω γρήγορα: "Συγγνώμη, Σύγγνωμη, δεν είναι αυτό που σκεφετήκετε!".

Ήταν, για εμένα, πολύ χύμορ! Και κάθε φορά που είπα το ιστορεία για ανθρωπούς Γελάω πάρα πολύ. Τι κρίμα να χρησιμοποιούμε Google μετάφραση.

As a foreigner, in Greece I will start from the moments that are always funny. When I remembered these, I laughed a lot, because for me they are silly but they have humor.

In one of these moments, I was in a shop, and I wanted to buy clothes. As I remembered, I was in Athens only for two weeks and I never knew Greek [I didn't speak Greek at all]. I decided to ask, but I was confused because if I ask in English, they will know that I am a foreigner and they will always think of how they will make more money from me.

That's why I had the courage to ask how much these clothes cost, but I used Google translation because I did not know how to ask. When I made the translation for the phrase, I went to the cash desk and I said with self-confidence: "How much do you cost today, do you have discounts?"

Suddenly, I saw the cashiers' faces turning red, and the security man laughed a lot. Moreover, the woman there shouted and said very bad words for me.

In this situation, and two minutes later I knew that [what] I said before was a big mistake. I said before I went away quickly: "Excuse me, excuse me, it is not what you thought [I didn't mean what you thought]!".

It was very funny for me! And every time I tell the story to people I laugh a lot. It's a pity to use Google translation.

The identities constructed for the narrator and the other characters can be traced using the notion of *positioning* at the three levels of Bamberg's narrative model (1997).

At the first level of analysis, the narrator is introduced into the narrative world and positions him/herself towards the other characters in his/her story. Here, the narrator is positioned towards the Greek employees in the shop by adopting a skeptical and defensive stance towards them from the beginning, since he is trying to conceal his foreign identity for fear of economic exploitation. Convinced that the 'proper' and standard language use can guarantee effective communication, the narrator resorts to Google translation. However, he eventually comes up with the non-standard, ambiguous question *How much do you cost today, do you have discounts?*, which provokes the employees' negative reactions. Instead of asking about the price

of a piece of clothing, the narrator unwillingly asked whether he could buy the (most probably sexual) services of a female employee with a discount. At the same time, employees are represented to react in a negative manner to the narrator's utterance, since they apparently expect him to speak standard Greek. The violation of their expectations was accompanied by embarrassment (*Suddenly, I saw the cashiers' faces turning red*), laughter (*and the security man laughed a lot*) and anger (*Moreover, the woman there shouted and said very bad words for me*).

At the second level, the narrator presents himself to the readers: he is a foreigner in Greece (*As a stranger, in Greece*). The narrated events happened during his first days in Greece, hence he was not quite familiar with the Greek language. However, he positions himself as finding the courage to use Greek with locals and to use humor to frame this rather embarrassing experience (*It was very funny for me! And every time I tell the story to people I laugh a lot*).

At the third level, this narrative brings to the surface the narrators' views about expected, that is without grammatical or other linguistic "errors," language use, which appear to correspond to those of the Greek community. The narrator shares with the Greek employees the expectation of standard use of Greek. Their expectations are violated by the narrator's incongruous linguistic behavior and this provokes the employees' dissatisfaction and negative reactions. This intense reaction is represented as 'normal' and 'expected' by the narrator, who is trying to repair the communicative confusion he caused (*Excuse me, excuse me, it is not what you thought [I didn't mean what you thought]!*). Thus, through the negative evaluation of his non-standard use of Greek, he seems to align himself with the dominant values and expectations of the local community, thus constructing a legitimizing identity.

Essential for learner's identity construction is the use of humor. In this funny story, humor is linked to the violation of the narrator's and the other characters' expectations. In particular, the analysis of the jab line demonstrates the narrator's alignment with the dominant linguistic ideology concerning the 'acceptable' use of Greek language that is, the native-like use of the language, namely without grammatical 'errors.'

Table 4: Analysis in GTVH term. Source: author.

Jab line	Script opposition	Target
I went to the cash desk and I said with self-confidence: "How much do you cost today, do you have discounts?"	I speak/I do not speak standard Greek	The narrator

The script opposition identified in the humorous narrative is based on the fact that he assumed that he could and would speak standard Greek (with a little help from Google translate), but he failed. The script opposition *I speak/I do not speak standard Greek* is central to the humorous narrative, revealing the narrator's positioning towards the dominant value system of the Greek community: in Greece, people are 'expected' to speak 'correct' Greek. Hence, the narrator aligns himself with dominant linguistic standards and constructs a legitimizing identity. Thus, the humorous self-targeting operates as a means for indirect criticism for the narrator's 'unacceptable' behavior.

4.2. Resistance identities

The second category consists of humorous narratives in which the humorous target involves Greek people. Their social behavior does not meet narrators' expectations regarding how life and people in Greece should 'ideally' be. As a result, narrators evaluate Greek people's behavior as paradoxical and incomprehensible. Through the narratives of this category, narrators try to build their social identities in terms of how they differ or even clash with those of the Greeks (cf. De Fina 2000: 139). Humor functions as a means of direct criticism of locals' incongruous behaviors. The following story is such an example:

Our second informant is 18 years old, and he is in Greece as an ERASMUS student. He attends Greek language courses at the advanced level.

(2) Μια ημέρα ήμουν στον σταθμό της αστυνομίας γιατί βοήθησα ένας πελάτης μου να κάνει μια δήλωση της κλοπής της ταυτότητας του. Χρησίμευα σαν ένα διερμηνέας και ήθελα να μετάφρασα αραβικά για αγγλικά. Ίσος μετα 2 ώρες που περιμέναμε, είχαμε σειρά και μπήκαμε στο γραφείο της υπηρεσίας του διωξης κοινού εγκλήματος. Ο αστυνόμος δε φάνηκε σαν ένας αστυνόμος αλλά μάλλον σαν ένας αγρότης. Μέσα την μικρό γραφείο δούλεψαν ακόμα δύο αστυνόμοι, αλλά χωρίς υπολογιστές και με πολλά βιβλία. Ιδιαίτερα παράξενος ήταν ότι το πιο σύγγονο πράγμα στο γραφείο και επίσης το μεγαλύτερο πράγμα εκεί ήταν το τηλεόραση και έπαιξε το δελτίο ειδήσεων με φωνή.

Ο δημόσιος υπάλληλος μας ρώτησε για την παράκληση της επίσκεψης μας στα Ελληνικά που δεν καταλάβαμε και επιμέναμε να αλλάξουμε στα Αγγλικά. Δυστυχώς ο ίδιος δε μιλάει Αγγλικά αλλά σκέφτηκε όταν Αγγλικά και Γαλλικά είναι το ίδιο και δεν σταμάτησε να μας ρωτήσει στα Γαλλικά. Κανένα από εμάς μιλήσαμε Γαλλικά και εγώ προσπάθησα να του εξηγήσω την διαφορά τις γλώσσες. Αυτός δεν κατάλαβε και στο τέλος εμας γελάσαμε πολύ και ο αστυνόμος ήταν εξοργισμένος.

One day I was at police station because I helped one of my clients to file an identity theft report. I served as an interpreter and I wanted to translate Arabic into English. Maybe after 2 hours of waiting, it was our turn and we went into the office of the criminal investigation department. The police officer did not look like a police officer but rather like a farmer. Inside the small office two more police officers worked, but without computers and with many books. It was particularly weird that the most modern thing in the office was a television and it played the news loudly. The civil servant asked us the reason of our visit in Greek that we did not understand and we insisted on switching to English. Unfortunately, he does not speak English but he thought that English and French are the same and he did not stop to ask us in French. None of us spoke French and I tried to explain the difference of [the two] languages. He did not understand and eventually we laughed a lot and the police officer was furious.

At the level of the narrative world, the narrator is positioned towards the Greek police officers and their paradoxical attitudes, constructing a resistance identity. Through the reconstruction of the narrated events, the narrator is presented as helpful and literate since he intends to help his client as an interpreter. Moreover, he can communicate in English, he can tell the difference between English and French, and he has certain expectations concerning the technology that should be available in a police station. On the other hand, the behavior of the Greek police officers is judged as ‘inappropriate’ by the narrator: they are represented as unhelpful, procrastinating, watching television during work hours, working in a small place, and with outdated equipment. In addition, the narrator disapproves of the appearance of the police officer (*The police officer did not look like a police officer but rather like a farmer*). The latter’s inability to speak English and his insistence on speaking French are negatively evaluated by the narrator. The narrative’s climax comes at the end of the story, where the Greek policeman is mocked by the foreign narrator and his client since both are laughing with his “inadequacy”.

At the second level, the narrator presents himself to his readers as a helpful, patient, and literate person.

At the third level, the narrator positions himself towards the L2 community and seems to disapprove of, and hence resist, their values and practices. He directly criticizes the Greek police and, in particular, their representatives, their appearance, their “inadequate” education, the poor working conditions, the lack of efficiency, and the inadequate service they provide. In doing so, he shows his resistance to the values and practices of the host community, which, is represented as ‘anachronistic’ and to a certain extent ‘inferior’.

In the second narrative category, humor also emerges as an essential and efficient means for framing learners' perceptions and stances concerning the different, incompatible, even absurd, cultural, and social context of the Greek community. Table 5 includes the analysis of the narrative's jab lines in GTVH terms:

Table 5: Analysis in GTVH terms. Source: author.

Jab lines	Script Opposition	Target
The police officer did not look like a police officer but rather like a farmer	Police officers do not look like/look like farmers	Greek police officers
It was particularly weird that the most modern thing in the office was a television and it played the news loudly.	Television should not be on/was on during working hours in a police station	The workplace of Greek police officers
he thought that English and French are the same and he did not stop to ask us in French	English is not the same/is the same as French	Greek police officers

The narrator constructs a resistance identity towards the L2 community. This is achieved via the comic presentation of the police officers and the description of their workplace. Humor works as a means of direct negative criticism of the Greek police officers' unexpected behavior. At the same time, it enhances the narrator's positive self-image, who appears to be more 'educated' and 'competent' than Greek policemen. By mocking the Greek police officers, the narrator highlights his resistance towards the values and practices of the 'inadequate' L2 community.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The main research question concerns the ways through which L2 learners of Greek are positioned towards the different linguistic and sociocultural context in Greece, thus constructing their social and linguistic identities through written humorous narratives. Written texts emerged as an effective means through which our narrators given the opportunity to express and reflect upon their unique experiences as immigrants (cf. Kramsch, Lam 2013: 71) or as foreigners trying to protect and save their faces from the embarrassment they may experience in their everyday interactions due to their nonstandard use of their L2.

The findings of previous studies on migrants' narratives (De Fina 2000, 2003; Bamberg 2005, 2011; Baynham 2006; De Fina, Georgakopoulou 2008; Enciso 2011) tend to converge

with those of the present study. The L2 learners of our data used their narratives to express their stances and positioning towards the different linguistic and cultural context of Greek society, trying to align with it and its imperatives, or resisting them. However, the narrators of our samples are not exclusively migrants but belong to other social groups, such as foreign University students or academics participating in exchange programs and EU citizens working in Greece. The identities constructed by non-migrant learners do not seem to diverge significantly from those of migrants in the data examined here (see Tables 1-3) in terms of seeing their dealing of (mis)communication, either their alignment or their resistance, as “not a question of finding the right words to fit what to say, but of trying to see things as others see them (Kramsch 2014:147).

Regarding the use of humor as a means for identity construction and for signaling ingroup/outgroup membership the findings of previous studies (Norrick 1993; Holmes 2000; Archakis, Tsakona 2005; Bell, Pomerantz 2016: 67) tend to converge with those of the present one. The narrators of our sample use humor to construct their identities vis-à-vis the dominant value system in Greece. Their humor draws a line between the accepted and non-accepted linguistic or other behavior and reveals narrators' attempts either to integrate into the Greek community by constructing legitimizing identities or, alternatively, to distance themselves from it by building resistance identities. This was reflected in the distinction between the two different categories of narratives identified: (a) narratives of legitimizing identities and (b) narratives of resistance identities.

In the first category, the humorous target was the narrator him/herself. In particular, self-targeting concerned everyday interactions in the Greek host community, during which narrators did not manage to speak standard Greek, causing a variety of reactions. L2 learners appear to have the same expectations as Greeks: L2 learners ‘should’ align themselves with the standard use of Greek. If not, L2 learners’ varieties are stigmatized and framed humorously through the script opposition *I speak/I do not speak standard Greek*. Thus, narrators position themselves towards the different linguistic context by constructing legitimizing linguistic identities, since they indirectly criticize their ‘incongruous’ linguistic behaviors, correct themselves, and highlight linguistic ‘norms’.

The second category consists of humorous narratives targeting Greeks. L2 learners narrate funny stories where Greeks behave in a ‘paradoxical’ or ‘unexpected’ manner, and therefore their actions are framed as humorous. In these narratives, learners construct resistance identities disassociating themselves from Greeks. Narrators pointed out their ideological differentiation from the dominant social behaviors and values of the host community.

De Fina (2017: 10) claims that migrants tend to construct acceptable and compatible identities towards the dominant norms of the host community. The above finding seems to be confirmed by narrators' legitimizing identities in the first category of our data. So, we could argue that at least partly the narrators of the first category build stories similar to those of De Fina's informants. However, the narratives of the second category, which outnumbered those of the first one, are significantly different since narrators utilize humor to construct identities of resistance against the different sociocultural context of the Greek community. An ethnographically oriented study could look deeper into this and perhaps reveal that it is those learners of Greek who do not wish to stay forever in Greece (whether migrants or not) who are more critical of the local population.

To the best of our knowledge, research for humor in narratives of L2 learners is limited. In this context, our study may be an initial step concerning humor research in Greek as a second/foreign language. Needless to say, more research is required along these lines. For example, it is significant to investigate humorous narratives as an essential tool for L2 teachers and researchers, through which they can gain access to the stances and positioning of L2 learners who may remain silent and even marginalized in class. The use of humor in various genres in class could enhance student participation and interest in the course and familiarize teachers with students not always overtly expressed values and views concerning their experiences in the host country.

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