

**Factors and Criteria that contribute to achieving proficiency in Greek Sign Language
(GSL) by hearing GSL adult learners**

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Abstract

There has been among hearing people in recent decades a growing interest in sign language. This increasing interest for Sign Language is attributed to a number of things ranging from academics to professional job skills to personal interest. In Greece, Greek Sign Language (GSL) learners, after taking courses of 480 hours in total, can acquire *Certificate of Proficiency in Greek Sign Language* by the successful participation in the final examinations, which take place under the aegis of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf. The research herein discusses the factors and the criteria that contribute to achieving the acquisition of Greek Sign Language proficiency. More specifically, the research records the Greek Sign Language instructors' views as well as those of Greek Sign Language learners on this topic, sets up a comparison and extrapolates a conclusion whether they coincide or not. A multifaceted, 25-item questionnaire was filled out electronically by 35 Greek Sign Language instructors and 143 Greek Sign Language learners via Google.docs platform. The results have shown that both instructors and learners are on the same wavelength on most individual factors and criteria. Despite the homogeneity of the responses, a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) is evident due to divergence of the replies of GSL instructors and learners concerning the GSL syntax's type that they teach or they have been taught respectively.

Keywords: Greek Sign Language, Skills in Greek Sign Language, Greek Sign Language instructors, Greek Sign Language learners

Factors and Criteria that contribute to achieving proficiency in Greek Sign Language by hearing GSL adult learners

Greek Sign Language (GSL) is the language of the Deaf in Greece as it is used by most Greek Deaf individuals, by many hard of hearing people as well by many hearing people such as children of Deaf adults (C.O.D.A.), hearing parents of Deaf children and hearing experts who work with the Deaf (Kourbetis, 1999^a; Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou, 2010; Lampropoulou, 1997). In Greece, Greek Sign Language has been officially recognized as the language of the Deaf and hard of hearing individuals by the federal law N2817/2000. Furthermore, the federal law N3699/2008 defines the Greek Sign Language as the primary language of the Deaf and hard of hearing individuals and the Greek Language, which is perceived and expressed by the written form, as secondary.

No study in the Greek literature has conducted a survey to investigate in depth the essential and significant elements of the GSL teaching/learning process for the purpose of success on the exams.

Our study is attempting to record, for the first time, all the parameters and criteria for the successful teaching/learning of the GSL. Our initial queries, classified in four research topics, were:

- (a) whether the teaching of linguistic and structural elements that govern the GSL is important for successful learning of it (first research topic).
- (b) which factors contribute to better practice, use and comprehension of the GSL (second research topic).
- (c) whether the successful learning of GSL is linked to specific parameters of learning environment, those concerning the settings, environmental elements and layout of classroom as well as the duration of the courses (third research topic).

(d) whether the success in the exams of proficiency in GSL is interdependent to the comprehension of Greek written language by both the GSL teacher and learner (fourth research topic).

This study is attempting to record the view of those who are directly involved in the educational process of Greek Sign Language. GSL instructors and learners expound on their concerns, the positive and negative aspects of the teaching/learning process. From the very first lesson to the successful completion of the exam, this study aims to clarify, classify and highlight the factors and criteria for success in the GSL classroom and the eventual acquisition of a GSL proficiency certificate. More specifically, the aim of our research herein is to investigate GSL teachers' opinions on this issue and compare them with the views of people who either have learned or are currently learning the GSL, in order to conclude whether they coincide or not.

Greek Sign Language is a complete, complex language, rich in vocabulary and has its own grammar and syntax rules, as the word order requires the verb to be placed at the end of the clause or sentence (Papasprou, 1994, 1998). It is also a visual - kinetic language like all Sign Languages in the world. Its components are the *signs* which correspond to the words of spoken language and are required to be learned in order to be understood. With regard to its grammar and syntax, these differ from those of Greek language. For delimitation of rules of grammar and syntax, Greek Sign Language uses both space and movement. To avoid misunderstandings, although the *signs* of Greek Sign Language represent words of spoken language, Greek Sign Language is not a representation or an accurate translation of Greek language. A strong evident is the *classifiers*, linguistic elements that do not exist in Greek language. More specifically, the classifiers (signs using handshapes) are used after the declaration of the object which is going to be classified (Johnston & Schembri, 2007). Clearly, it is very difficult to define what exactly the classifiers are as there is no

correspondence with the Greek language. Therefore, it becomes clear that certain aspects of Greek Sign Language do not exist nor can be interpreted in Greek language or can be analyzed without great difficulty.

Greek Sign Language, just like every language has its own characteristics. As a consequence, learning the Greek Sign Language is considered as difficult or easy for the learner as learning any other foreign language. There are certain factors that make the learning of Greek Sign Language difficult. Some of them include the lack of standardized sign language curriculums for teaching the Greek Sign Language, the limited number of users of Greek Sign Language as well as the limited number of faculty of teaching Greek Sign Language (Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou, 2010).

The acquisition of Greek Sign Language and how this can be achieved is a difficult question to answer. When Deaf children grow up in an environment where Sign Language is used and they are exposed to it, they acquire Sign Language like hearing children learn to speak (Lampropoulou, 1999).

On the other hand, the Deaf children of hearing parents who are not exposed to Sign Language do not develop Sign Language or develop it with some delay. In some occasions, Deaf children develop signs of their own in order to communicate. In literature, these signs are referred to as *homemade signs* and are not included in official Sign Language vocabulary (Kourbetis, 2007; Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou, 2010).

With regard to hearing children of Deaf parents, known in literature as Children of Deaf Adults (C.O.D.A.), in most cases they consider Sign Language as their mother tongue rather than spoken language. Wanting to communicate with their parents, C.O.D.A. develop Sign Language skills at a young age, and because they are people with normal hearing, they also simultaneously receive the necessary stimuli to develop spoken language. It could be said that C.O.D.A. are bilingual since they develop in parallel both spoken and Sign

Language. It could also be considered that these children are the first Sign Language interpreters as it is their common role from a very young age (Antzakas, 2001).

But in case a hearing adult wants to learn the Sign Language either for extra professional job skills or for personal interest, how can the acquisition of Sign Language, in this particular case of Greek Sign Language, be achieved? In order to answer this question, it is essential to investigate the following key parameters surrounding the learning of Greek Sing Language:

- GSL teaching methods
- learning environment
- the academic skill levels of both the GSL instructor and learner
- teaching the GSL techniques (handshapes formation, body movement, facial expressions etc.).

What applies to Greece today is that the Greek Sign Language learners, after taking 480 hours in total of Greek Sign Language courses in private schools (120 hours a year, two times a week by 2 hours each), can participate in the examinations which take place under the aegis of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf. Success in the exams leads on acquisition of Certificate of Proficiency in Greek Sign Language by the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf, which is the only certificate recognized by the Greek government since 2009. Examinations are carried out both in Athens and Thessaloniki three times a year and last for three days, from Friday to Sunday as scheduled by the Greek Sign Language faculty of the Hellenic Federation of Deaf. At this point it should be noted that the GSL instructors are both Deaf, certified by the Association of Greek Sign Language Teachers, and Greek Sign Language interpreters who usually teach advanced classes.

At the examination the candidates are tested in three areas that include (a) *text performed in GSL* where the candidates read two texts whose topics vary and they have to

perform them in GSL, (b) *illustrated story performed in GSL* where the candidates see two illustrated stories and they are called to perform them in GSL and (c) *GSL comprehension*.

The candidates watch a video on a TV monitor showing Deaf people narrating two separate stories in GSL which they have to comprehend and perform them in GSL. The duration of each story is up to 2 minutes in length.

Each candidate, before his/her examination starts, receives both the two texts and the two illustrated stories and must prepare them in 45 minutes. For the GSL comprehension test there is no preparation time.

In the test room there are two examiners, usually Deaf GSL instructors, but we cannot exclude the possibility one of the evaluators to be a GSL interpreter. Each examiner evaluates separately and both scores are averaged to obtain the final score of the candidate.

During the examination the examiners test whether candidates use proper handshapes (whether the correct handshapes are used to express a single word or concept and how clearly these are formed), classifiers (whether the classifiers are used appropriately in order to convey motion and visual characteristics), placement (whether the persons and objects are correctly positioned in space), dialogue technique and role taking (whether the interactions among characters are set up in space with accuracy and properly demonstrated), facial expression (whether facial expression is used and whether it is consistent with the context), the GSL syntax (whether the proper GSL syntax is used), sign space (whether the sign space is appropriate, not too large or small) and finally, the overall performance and the appearance of the candidate.

Method

Participants

In this survey, 35 GSL instructors and 143 GSL learners took part (the 143 learners were not necessary under the guidance of the specific 35 instructors). Initially, the thought was to be a 1:5 ratio between instructors and learners which is the minimum number of learners in a class. However, this ratio has changed to 1:4 due to great response by GSL learners. The GSL learners' sample consisted mainly of students in advanced classes (third and fourth year), people who participated in examinations in order to acquire Certificate of Proficiency in GSL but did not succeed, people who have already acquired the Certificate of Proficiency in GSL or people who studied in GSL interpreting classes. At this point it must be noted that in order to participate in GSL interpreting class the acquisition of Certificate of Proficiency in GSL is a prerequisite.

As it is shown in Table 1, 18 instructors (51.43%) were men as well as 17 (48.57%) were women. The majority of the GSL learners (126, 88.11%) were women and only 17 (11.89%) were men. With regard to age ranges of both group of respondents, only one (1) of the GSL instructors (3.45%) was in the age range of 18-24, in contrast with the GSL learners where 81 of them (56.64%) belonged to the corresponding age range. As for the remaining instructors, 9 (25.71%) were in the age range of 25-31, 10 (28.75%) were in the age range of 32-38, 6 (17.41%) were between the ages of 39 and 45, and the last nine (9) (25.71%) were more than forty-five (45) years old. Concerning the remaining GSL learners, 47 (32.87%) of them were in the age range of 25-31 as well as 9 (6.9%) belonged to the age range of 32-38. Finally, six (6) of the learners were either in the age range of 39-45 (2, 1.40%) or in the age range of > 45 (4, 2.80%). Regarding the educational level of the GSL instructors, 20 (57.14%) of them had a university degree, 3 (8.57%) had completed a post-graduate degree and 4 (11.43%) were still university students. It is noteworthy that 7 (20%) of GSL instructors had only graduated from high school and one (1) of them (2.86%) had just completed compulsory education, i.e. gymnasium. Correspondingly, only 4 (2.79%) GSL

learners were high school graduates. The others either were studying at a university (66, 46.15%) or had already graduated (38, 26.58%). A significance amount of 33 (23.08%) learners had acquired master's degree as well as two (2) of them (1.40%) acquired the academic title of Doctor.

In Greece, not only Deaf instructors can teach the GSL but GSL interpreters can teach the language as well. In Figure 1 is depicted the total number of Deaf and Hearing GSL instructors who took part in the survey, where 28 of them (80%) were Deaf while 7 (20%) were GSL Interpreters.

In Figures 2 and 3 are shown the years of experience of GSL Instructors in teaching the GSL and the current year of taking GSL courses as for the GSL Learners. A little more than one-third of instructors (12, 34.29%) had over twelve (12) years, while the experience of the remaining instructors ranged from one to ten (mean 5.5) years. As for the GSL learners, six of them (6) (4.20%) they were attending the first year of GSL lessons, 14 (9.79%) the second year, 26 (18.18%) the third as well as 20 (13.99%) they were attending the fourth year of GSL lessons. Furthermore, 17 (11.89%) of the GSL learners failed the final exams, 36 (25.17%) they acquired the proficiency certification of GSL and 24 (16.78%) purport to be GSL interpreters.

Data Collection Tool

For the actualization of the research we established two questionnaires aimed at recording both the GSL teachers' and GSL learners' views. Furthermore, we adapted these questionnaires respectively to the two categories of people who were asked to fill it out. Thus, the questionnaire that was addressed to the GSL instructors is consisted of twenty six (26) questions, of which the first four (4) are demographics, in eighteen (18) the respondents were asked to express their opinion using a 5-level Likert scale where 1 indicates *Strongly Disagree*, 2 *Disagree*, 3 *Undecided*, 4 *Agree* and 5 *Strongly Agree*, three (3) of the questions

are multiple choice and the last one is open-ended in order for the respondents to freely express their own views regarding the issue. Likewise, the questionnaire that was addressed to GSL learners is also consisted of 26 questions, with the difference that in this case there are two multiple-choice questions instead of three that are used at the questionnaire for GSL instructors and two open-ended questions instead of one. The 5-level Likert questions on both questionnaires are divided into four parts, each of them is addressed to one of the four research topics.

More specifically, on the questionnaire of GSL instructors, the first research topic was consisted of four (4) 5-level Likert statements (No 9, 11, 12, 13), the second research topic was consisted of five (5) 5-level Likert statements (No 7, 8, 10, 14, 15), as well five Likert statements (No 5, 6, 18, 19, 20) was addressed to third research topic and finally the 5-level Likert statements No 17, 23, 24, 25 were related to the fourth research topic. With regard to GSL learners' questionnaire the numbers that indicate the 5-level Likert statements are the same apart from No 22 and 24 that are the same with statements No 24 and No 25 of the GSL instructors' questionnaire respectively. Tables 2 and 3 display the type of questions on both questionnaires. Moreover, we generated a weighted average score according to all responses from both groups of respondents in order the central tendency of the responses across the Likert scale to be recorded.

Procedure

We forwarded the questionnaires to both GSL instructors and learners and received them back through Google's service Google.Docs. Each filled-out questionnaire was returned and saved to Google.Docs automatically, making it easy to process the data. The entire process of sending and receiving the questionnaires lasted approximately a month.

Results

First research topic

On the first research topic we investigated whether teaching of GSL' linguistic and structural elements is important for successful learning of GSL. Tables 4-5 display the statements that constitute the first research topic along with percentages of both groups obtained for each response option in the 5-level Likert scale. The numbers 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. indicate *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Undecided*, *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* respectively as well as the *W.A.* in the right end column of the tables refers to *weighted averages* for each response. Parentheses indicate the number of the respondents.

As for Q9, the majority of both groups believed that during the four-year GSL courses not all of the topics, such as music, poetry, religions matters etc., are covered. Specifically, 23 out of 35 GSL instructors (65.71%) responded either *Strongly Agreed* (13, 37.14%) or *Agreed* (10, 28.57%). There were 5 (14.29%) of the instructors who neither *Disagreed* nor *Agreed* as well as a 7 (20%) who either *Disagreed* (4, 11.43%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (3, 8.57%). Correspondingly, 84 out of 143 GSL learners (58.73%) responded either *Strongly Agreed* (35, 24.47%) or *Agreed* (49, 34.26%). A neutral stance on the matter kept 33 (23.08%) of the learners as well as 26 (18.19%) either *Disagreed* (19, 13.29%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (7, 4.9%). The weighted average for Q9 is 3.74 and 3.57 for the GSL instructors and learners respectively.

As for Q11 20 of the GSL instructors (57.14%) *Strongly Agreed* as well as 10 (28.57%) of them *Agreed* that during the four-years of GSL courses the required vocabulary must be taught in order learners to succeed in the proficiency exams. Furthermore, the responses of 5 (14.29%) GSL instructors showed either neutral tendency (4, 11.43%) or disagreement on the matter (1, 2.86%). Regarding the GSL learners, 130 of them (90.91%) either *Strongly Agreed* (99, 69.23%) or simply *Agreed* (31, 21.68%). Five (5) (3.5%) GSL learners either *Strongly Disagreed* (2, 1.4%) or simply *Disagreed* (3, 2.1%) as well as eight

(8) of them (5.59%) had no opinion on the matter. The corresponding weighted averages are 4.40 and 4.56 respectively.

Q12 refers to classifiers of GSL. Twenty nine (29) (82.86%) of the GSL instructors as well as 104 (72.73%) GSL learners *Strongly Agreed* that is more than necessary that the classifiers must be taught adequately. The remaining six (6) instructors either *Agreed* (3, 8.57%) or *Disagreed* (1, 2.86%) or they had no opinion on the matter (2, 5.71%).

Correspondingly, 22 (15.38%) of GSL learners *Agreed*, 3 (2.1%) either *Disagreed* (1, 0.7%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (2, 1.4%) and 14 (9.79%) had no opinion on the matter. The weighted averages of both GSL instructors and learners are 4.74 and 4.58 respectively.

We observed similar tendency in Q13 regarding the teaching of idioms and facial expressions. Thirty one (31) (88.57%) of the GSL instructors and 123 (86.01%) of GSL learners believed that both GSL' idioms and facial expressions must be taught adequately. Furthermore, 3 (8.57%) of the instructors either *Agreed* (1, 2.86%) or kept a neutral stance (2, 5.71%) on the matter as well as one (1) (2.86%) *Strongly Disagreed*. Regarding the GSL learners, 18 (12.59%) either *Agreed* (12, 8.39%) or had no opinion (6, 4.2%) as well as 2 (1.4%) of them either *Disagreed* (1, 0.7%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (1, 0.7%). The corresponding weighted averages are 4.74 and 4.78.

Finally, regarding this research topic, we gave a fifth question (Q21) to both groups of respondents. In particular, we asked GSL instructors and GSL learners about the syntax of GSL that they were teaching or that had been taught, respectively. The respondents had to choose among three options: (a) GSL syntax (b) Signed Greek (Greek language with signs) (c) both. The responses of both, which are shown in Figure 4, brought out statistically significant differences. More specifically, 25 out of 35 GSL instructors (71.43%) claimed that they were teaching the GSL syntax while 68 out of 143 of GSL learners (47.55%) claimed that the type of the GSL syntax they have been taught is that of GSLs' (chi squared method, p

= .0115). In addition only 8 out of 35 GSL instructors (22.86%) claimed that they were teaching both GSL syntax and Greek language with signs while 71 GSL learners (49.65%) claimed that they have been taught both syntaxes (chi squared method, $p = .004$). Finally, 3 GSL instructors and 4 GSL learners, (5.71% and 2.8% respectively) were using in their classes the Signed Greek.

Second research topic

Our second research topic was looking into which factors contribute to better practice, use and comprehension of the GSL. Tables 6-7 display the number of responses and the weighted averages of these factors.

As seen in Tables 6-7 both groups of respondents strongly believed (weighted averages of 4.77 and 4.7) that frequent communication with Deaf people is an efficient way of practicing the GSL. The majority of both GSL instructors (29, 82.86%) and GSL learners (119, 83.21%), concerning the Q7 statement, *Strongly Agreed*. An amount of five (5) (14.29%) of the GSL instructors and seventeen (17) (11.89%) of the GSL learners just *Agreed*. Finally, only one (1) (2.86%) of the GSL instructors *Disagreed* and seven (7) (4.9%) of the GSL learners ranged from *Strongly Disagree* (1, 2.86%) to *Disagree* (6, 17.14%).

Regarding Q8, we observed a differentiation on responses. More particularly, 27 (77.14%) of the GSL instructors, whose replies ranged from *Agree* (11, 31.43%) to *Strongly Agree* (16, 45.71%), claimed that during a year of GSL courses learners should have more than one instructor. Furthermore, six (6) (17.14%) of GSL instructors *Disagreed*, one (1) (2.86%) *Strongly Disagreed* and one (1) (2.86%) was *Undecided*. In contrast, 73 (51.05%) of the GSL learners either *Agree* (34, 23.78%) or *Strongly Agree* (39, 27.27%). Noteworthy is the fact that 33 (23.08%) had no opinion on the matter. The remaining percentage ranged from *Disagree* (27, 18.88%) to *Strongly Disagree* (10, 6.99%). The corresponding weighted averages of both groups of respondents are 4 and 3.45.

Regarding the GSL learners and what they have to do in the class (Q10), apart from one (1) (2.86%) neutral GSL instructor who did not take a side, the remaining of them either *Agreed* (4, 11.43%) or, mainly, *Strongly Agreed* (30, 85.71%) that all learners without exception, should practice every exercise that they are given. The weighted average that resulted from the GSL instructors' responses is 4.83. The GSL learners' views coincide with the views of GSL instructors, with both groups believing in the importance of practicing all exercises and tests assigned in the class. More than three quarters of the GSL learners (114, 79.72%) strongly believed that practicing every exercise is beneficial for them to comprehend the GSL. Furthermore, 25 (17.48%) of the GSL learners either just *Agreed* (19, 13.28%) or were neutral (6, 4.2%) to this view. Also, four (4) (2.8%) of the GSL learners believed that is not necessary for them to practice every test. The weighted average of the GSL learners' responses is 4.69.

Regarding the statement of Q14 that the younger age you begin taking GSL lessons the easier you learn and comprehend the language, both GSL instructors and learners seem not to agree on this statement. More specifically, 15 (42.86%) of the GSL instructors and 37 (25.87%) of the GSL learners did not take a side on the matter. The belief that the starting age of taking GSL lessons does not play important role to better comprehension and learning of the GSL was expressed by the seven (7) (20%) and 72 (50.35%) of GSL instructors and learners respectively. The exact opposite view was claimed by the 13 (37.14%) and 34 (23.78%) of the respondents respectively. Both groups' responses performed a weighted average of 3.28 and 2.69, which means that they keep a neutral stance on the matter but from different directions.

As for Q15, two (2) (5.72%) of the GSL instructors believed that the GSL learners should not spend several hours a week studying the GSL, apart from the time they spend in the class whereas four (4) (11.43%) were neutral on this matter. The majority of them (27,

82.85%) believed that GSL learners should practice the language outside the classrooms as well. The GSL learners' view though, did not coincide with that of GSL instructors'. In particular, 71 (49.65%) either *Disagreed* (23, 15.45%) with the Q15 statement or were *Undecided* (48, 33.57%). On the other hand, 50 (34.97%) simply *Agreed* and 22 (15.38%) *Strongly Agreed*. The corresponding weighted averages are 4.34 and 3.9.

With regard to second research topic we gave a multiple choice question to both groups of respondents as extension of Q15. They were asked to state how many hours a week GSL learners should study and practice the GSL outside the classrooms and they had to choose among five options: a) 0 hours b) 1-3 hours c) 3-5 hours d) 5-7 hours e) more than 7 hours. The replies of both respondents are shown in Figure 5.

Third research topic

As we have already mentioned, the third research topic investigated whether the successful GSL learning is linked to parameters of learning environment. Both GSL instructors and learners' opinions, which are reflected in Tables 8-9 were quite neutral. Notably those of learners' replies tended to *Undecided* (neutral) in four out of five statements while those of instructors tended to *Undecided* in three out of five statements.

More particularly, as for statement Q5 19 (54.29%) GSL instructors either *Agreed* (8, 22.86%) or *Strongly Agreed* (11, 31.43%), eight (8) of them (22.86%) did not choose a side, five (5) (14.29%) simply *Disagreed* and the remaining of them *Strongly Disagreed* (3, 8.57%). The weighted average that stemmed from instructors' responses is 3.53. For the same statement, GSL learners' responses were quite neutral. This assumption occurs from the fact that 43 (30.07%) of them did not take a side while 38 (26.57%) and 19 (13.29%) of learners *Disagreed* and *Strongly Disagreed* respectively that 120 hours of GSL courses a year are inefficient. However, 43 GSL learners (30.07%) supported the statement by *Agreeing* (28, 19.58%) and *Strongly Agreeing* (15, 10.49). The weighted average is 2.87.

With regard to Q6, eight (8) (22.86%) and 16 (45.71%) GSL instructors *Agreed* and *Strongly Agreed* respectively that an extra year of GSL courses should be added to main four-year lessons for better practicing and preparing for the proficiency exams. Six (6) GSL instructors (17.14%) were *Undecided* and the remaining five (5) (14.29%) either *Disagreed* (1, 2.86%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (4, 11.43%). The corresponding weighted average is 3.90. For the same query, the responses of GSL learners were almost evenly distributed. As it is shown in Table 9, 32 (22.38%) instructors *Strongly Agreed*, the same percentage just *Agreed* (32, 22.38%), 29 (20.28%) did not have an opinion on the matter, 34 (23.78%) of GSL learners simply *Disagreed* on this matter and the remaining 16 (11.19%) *Strongly Disagreed*. The weighted average of these responses is 3.19.

Concerning the Q18 assertion that classes should be consisted of 5-7 GSL learners for the purpose of better ways of teaching/learning the GSL, the majority of instructors (20, 57.14%) as well as the majority of the learners (95, 66.43%) *Strongly Agreed*. Also an amount of eight (8) (22.86%) of GSL instructors simply *Agreed* as 30 (20.98%) of the GSL learners did too. Three (3) of the instructors (8.57%) as well as ten (10) of the learners (6.99%) had no opinion on this issue, and the remaining four (4) (11.36%) and eight (8) (5.6%) of the instructors and learners respectively, either *Disagreed* or *Strongly Disagreed*. The responses of both instructors and learners emerged weighted averages equal to 4.30 and 4.44 respectively.

The responses on Q19 of the ones they had been teaching the GSL indicated that GSL lessons in regular classes are more efficient than in intensive classes. In particular, 20 (57.14%) GSL instructors either *Strongly Agreed* (7, 20%) or *Agreed* (13, 37.14%) on that statement, nine (9) of them (25.72%) either *Disagreed* (5, 14.29%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (4, 11.43%) and the remaining six (6) instructors (17.14%) had no opinion on the matter. Correspondingly, GSL learners replied to the matter having a quite neutral stance. It is

reflected by the fact that 30 of them (20.98%) *Strongly Disagreed*, 35 learners (24.48%) simply *Disagreed* and 33 (23.08%) had no opinion on the issue. The remaining 45 of the GSL learners (31.47%) either *Agreed* (24, 16.78%) or *Strongly Agree* (21, 14.69%). The corresponding weighted averages are 3.42 and 2.81 respectively.

The last statement (Q20) of the third research topic concerned the effectiveness of private GSL lessons. The majority of the GSL instructors did not choose a side on the matter (15, 42.86%), 16 of them (45.71%) either *Agreed* (13, 37.14%) or *Strongly Agreed* (3, 8.57%) that private GSL lessons are not so efficient. On the other hand, two (2) GSL instructors (5.71%) *Disagreed* as well as two (2) (5.71%) *Strongly Disagreed*. Regarding the replies of the GSL learners on the matter, the majority of them had no opinion (48, 33.57%), 66 GSL learners (46.15%) either *Agreed* (40, 27.97%) or *Strongly Agreed* (20, 18.18%) that private GSL lessons are not so efficient. However, 29 GSL learners (20.28%) either *Disagreed* (16, 11.19%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (13, 9.09%) with the effectiveness of the private GSL lessons. The corresponding weighted averages are 3.41 and 3.24 respectively.

Fourth research topic

Finally, on the last research topic we investigated whether the success in the exams of proficiency in GSL is interdependent to the comprehension of Greek language by both the GSL instructor and learner. The number of responses and the corresponding weighted averages are displayed in tables 10-11.

Regarding the first statement (Q17) of this topic, the majority of the GSL instructors either *Agreed* (8, 22.86%) or *Strongly Agreed* (16, 45.71%) that the understanding of Greek language by the instructors facilitates the learning process, three (3) of them (8.57%) simply *Disagreed* and the remaining eight (8) GSL instructors (22.86%) had no opinion on the matter. As for the GSL learners, concerning the same statement, 68 of them (47.55%) *Strongly Agreed*, 39 (27.27%) simply *Agreed* and 27 of the GSL learners (18.88%) chose no

side. However, there were nine (9) GSL learners (6.29%) that believed that the understanding of Greek language does not play important role on learning process. The corresponding weighted averages are 4.07 and 4.14 respectively.

With regard to evaluation during the examination time (Q23), 21 of the GSL instructors (60.00%) *Strongly Agreed* that the Deaf evaluators must fully understand the Greek language in order to be achieved an unprejudiced evaluation as well as nine (9) of them (25.71%) simply *Agreed*. Also there were two (2) GSL instructors that either *Disagree* (1, 2.86%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (1, 2.86%) and three (3) 8.57% that were neutral on this issue. Correspondingly, 43 GSL learners (30.07%) *Strongly Agreed* and 42 (29.37%) simply *Agreed*, 24 of them (16.78%) *Disagreed* and 10 (6.99%) *Strongly Disagreed* and the remaining 24 learners (16.78%) did not take a side. The weighted average of both groups are 4.35 and 3.45 respectively.

Statements Q24 and Q22 from GSL instructors' and GSL learners' questionnaire respectively referred to potential association between the understanding of Greek language by the instructors and the success in the final exams. Sixteen (16) of the instructors (45.71%) *Strongly Agreed* on that statement and eight (8) (22.86%) simply *Agreed*. On the other hand two (2) GSL instructors either *Disagreed* (1, 2.86%) or *Strongly Disagree* (1, 2.86%). Five (5) GSL instructors (14.29%) kept a neutral stance on the matter. As for the GSL learners' opinion on this issue, 23 of them (16.08%) *Strongly Agreed*, 36 (25.17%) simply *Agreed* and the majority of them (39, 27.27%) chose no side. There are also 32 GSL learners (22.38%) who *Disagreed* and 13 (9.09%) who *Strongly Disagreed* on this issue. The corresponding weighted averages of both groups are 3.88 and 3.17 respectively.

The statements Q25 from GSL instructors' questionnaire and the corresponding Q24 from that of GSL learners' concerned the educational level of the GSL instructors and the role that might plays in the success to the final exams. On that, 22 of the GSL instructors

(62.86%) replied *Strongly Agree*, seven (7) (20.00%) of them *Agreed* and only one (1) (2.86%) was *Undecided*. There were five (5) instructors (14.28%) who either *Disagreed* (3, 8.57%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (2, 5.71%). The corresponding weighted average of the GSL instructors' replies are 4.01. With regard to GSL learners replies on this issue, the majority of them (42, 31.47%) *Strongly Agreed*, 40 (27.97%) simply *Agreed* and 35 learners (24.48%) did not take a side, while 23 of them (16.09%) either *Disagreed* (17, 11.89%) or *Strongly Disagreed* (6, 4.20%). The corresponding weighted average of the GSL learners' replies is 3.66.

Finally, we addressed a fifth question (Q22) only to GSL instructors. Its intention was to investigate the ways in which instructors react when they encounter an unknown word in a text. The respondents had to choose among three options: (a) they ask a GSL interpreter (b) they search the meaning by themselves, or (c) they do not teach the text. We display the responses in Figure 6. Twenty one (21) of the instructors (60.00%) claimed that they search the meaning of the unknown word by themselves, 10 instructors (28.57%) looked for the clarification by asking a GSL interpreter and four (4) GSL instructors (11.43%) did not teach the text which contains the unknown word.

Discussion

As indicated, there has been a growing interest in sign language among hearing people in recent decades which is attributed to a number of things, ranging from academics to professional job skills to personal interest. The aim of conducting the present study was to clarify, for the first time, the criteria and factors that redound to success in GSL proficiency examination. To do so, GSL instructors as well as GSL learners had to respond to a set of statements in order to examine the same issue from different viewpoint.

Concerning the importance of teaching the GSL' linguistic and structural elements, an attentive studying of the results showed that the views of both GSL instructors and GSL learners coincide. This conclusion comes out by looking at the weighted average of each individual statement of each respondent group that is > 3.5 . It seems that both sides agree that teaching the classifiers, the facial expressions, the idiomatic expressions, the vocabulary and other as well as the comprehension of their use contribute to successful learning of GSL. Regarding the GSL syntax there has been a noticeable differentiation of the responses that has brought out statistically significant differences. An informal agreement, a non-typical rule concerning the GSL syntax does exist in the Deaf community and defines that the verb goes at the end of the sentence or the clause (Papasprou, 1994, 1998). The differentiation of the responses however may be due to the lack of common curriculum, a fact which was highlighted by both instructors and learners, or because of a greater influence of Greek language to the Deaf the last decades, a fact which partially has resulted the modification of the GSL's syntax rule.

With regard to factors which contribute to better practice, use and comprehension of the GSL, both groups of the respondents argue that it is strictly essential for the GSL learners to be in contact with the Deaf community, to work on every exercise that given in the class and to study several hours a week. Furthermore, the GSL instructors' replies reflect a neutral stance as for the statement that the earlier someone begins GSL courses the better he/she will learn the GSL as well as those of the learners' indicate a tendency to disagree with the statement. The only differentiation that we observed concerns the statement which argues that GSL learners should have more than one instructor during a school season. A statement were GSL instructors keep a positive stance while GSL learners are more neutral on the matter. Concerning the total of hours per week that learners should spend on study, outside the classrooms, the majority of the GSL learners believe that up to 5 hours a week are efficient

while the majority of the GSL instructors argue that more than 5 hours a week are needed. This differentiation could be due to the fact that the instructors know precisely how the language works and may be quite demanding with their learners. On the other hand, learners may not have enough material for homework or may have limited access to the Deaf community in order to practice the GSL. It is noteworthy that one instructor believes that no extra hours for studying is necessary.

With regard to the third research topic which investigates the potential link between successful GSL learning and parameters of learning environment, such as the settings, environmental elements and layout of classroom as well as the duration of the courses, both groups of respondents *Agree* that classes should be consisted of 5 up to 7 learners for providing better quality of teaching/learning. Concerning an added year to the four-year GSL courses, learners believe that it won't be as efficient as instructors believe. Moreover, learners considered that 120 hours of GSL lessons a year are sufficient whereas instructors seem to disagree. Finally, both groups of respondents distinguish no differences between individual lessons and group lessons as well as between intensive and regular classes. In general, as for the third research topic, it is noticeable the fact that the GSL learners tend to give less positive responses than the GSL instructors. Therefore, it could be said that the parameters related to the learning environment are important but not crucial enough for successful GSL learning.

Looking for a potential link between the relationship between instructor's degree of competence in Greek language and the acquisition of the GSL, instructors believe that the efficient understanding of Greek language can improve the quality of teaching the GSL as well as contribute to a more impartial assessment which will lead to success in the final exams. On the other hand, GSL learners do not consider the understanding of Greek language in a sufficient level by the instructors, essential enough so that it affects their judgement

during the exams or, in general the success in the final exams. However, they consider that it can facilitate the teaching/learning process. The instructor's educational level is a factor important enough to influence positively the outcome.

At the end of each questionnaire we asked the respondents to suggest proposals for changes, improvements to the entire GSL teaching/learning process, starting from the first courses until the final exams. The GSL instructors suggest improvements in several areas. The formation of a standard curriculum of GSL teaching is one of the things the GSL instructors require. Furthermore, they consider that it is imperative to assess the examiners who participate in the final examinations, as well as the conduction of seminars for their professional development. Moreover, GSL instructors propose the formation of common acceptable objective assessment and grading criteria. In respect to the process of final examinations, one of the GSL instructors' suggestions is that of the introduction of a new section, that of free dialogue for the purpose of allowing candidates to interact with the examiners. They also point out the necessity for more preparation time beyond the 45 minutes that is given to candidates prior to their examination. At the same time they propose the degree of difficulty should be scaled (for instance easy text - difficult text). Finally, it is essential for the GSL instructors that the examinations are conducted in more than a weekend so that the examiners would be less exhausted and they would grade more objectively.

As for the GSL learners' proposals, some of them seem to be common with those of GSL instructors'. The proposed changes are about the objectivity of the final examinations. More specifically, they point out the necessity of writing down specific criteria by which all candidates will be evaluated as well as the formation of a standardized curriculum of GSL teaching. At the same time they consider the training, educational level and the instructor's degree of competence in Greek language very important. Regarding the examination procedure the GSL learners suggest the introduction of the free dialogue between candidates

and examiners as well as the GSL learners need more preparation time beyond the 45 minutes. At the end of the questionnaire we asked the GSL learners to respond in one extra open-ended question regarding the difficulties they met or still meeting during the GSL teaching procedure. They consider that the lack of contact with Deaf people and their community is the greatest difficulty in order to practice what they have been taught. Furthermore, they declare they had problems with their instructor either because he/she was very fast in signing or their handshapes in signing used in the classes were not clear. Moreover, the fact that there was no material for homework, for more practice was a big problem. A factor that makes the GSL teaching procedure difficult and is relevant to parameters of learning environment is the number of GSL learners in a class. The GSL learners declare that a limited class of up to seven (7) learners provides a higher quality of teaching. With regard to characteristics of the GSL, the GSL learners encounter difficulties that have to do with idioms, the GSL syntax and structure, as they differ from the respective Greek, as well as the facial expressions and classifiers. Finally, several of GSL learners did not face any problem during the GSL learning process, since they believe that the entire process of teaching the GSL is well structured.

The research herein is a first attempt of recording the views of individuals (both GSL instructor and learners) who interact each other and they constitute the entire process of teaching/learning the GSL, regarding the acquisition of the GSL. Relevant Greek literature is quite limited therefore, continuous research is imperative. It would be interesting the same research to be conducted by including all GSL faculties and their current learners, as well as a relevant research should be carried out that investigates the factors and the criteria that lead to acquisition of certificate of GSL interpreter by asking the views of GSL interpreters on the matter.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper wraps up the views of both GSL instructors and learners concerning the GSL acquisition by hearing individuals. The inference in which we end up is that the GSL instructors' views as well as those of GSL learners coincide with what is or what is not vital for the GSL learners to achieve the GSL acquisition. More specifically, the teaching of structural and linguistic elements, such as classifiers, facial expressions, idiomatic expressions, vocabulary and other as well as the comprehension of their use, is quite important for the learning of GSL. Furthermore, a factor essential enough for the purpose of practicing and using the language is the contact with the Deaf community in regular basis as well as the study of the GSL several hours a week. Moreover, it is considered that a class with up to seven (7) learners as well as the instructors' educational level provide better conditions of teaching and learning the GSL and relate to success in the final exams. Factors that seem not to be playing essential role are the onset age of taking the GSL courses, the type of the class (intensive/regular) and whether the learners are taking individual lessons or group lessons. At this point, it must be noted the fact that the GSL instructors as well as learners propose the formation of a standard curriculum of teaching the GSL for the purpose of learners from all areas of Greece are taking the same lessons and practicing their skills on the same exercises. In regard to the final examination, the introduction of a new section of free dialogue is suggested for the purpose of allowing candidates to interact with the examiners. Furthermore, the difficulty scale for each part of the examination should be the same for all candidates (for instance easy text - difficult text). Finally, it is mentioned that GSL learners need more preparation time, beyond the 45 minutes.

In recent decades, Greeks have shown an increased interest in their Deaf community in general and specifically with GSL acquisition. As a natural consequence, the teaching of GSL has become one of the most important elements of the deaf community. The results of

the study herein suggest changes that should be made among the GSL learning community. Taking these into consideration, the owners of sign language faculties and especially the Association of Greek Sign Language Teachers, could improve the quality of the services provided. This will result in a more efficient teaching/learning process with less barriers and limitations and therefore overall improvement of Greek Sign Language acquisition.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge and express our deep gratitude to Professor Areti Okalidou who has been our tireless supervisor and mentor. Without her invaluable guidance and support from the planning stage of this survey up to its completion, this paper wouldn't have been completed. Furthermore, we would like to thank both the GSL instructors and learners whose attribution and participation to this research was essential.

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Appendix

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of both GSL Instructors and GSL learners

Characteristics	GSL Instructors (N=35)	GSL learners (N=143)
Gender		
Male	n=18 (51.43%)	n=17 (11.89%)
Female	n=17 (48.57%)	n=126 (88.11%)
Age		
18-24	n=1 (2.87%)	n=81 (56.64%)
25-31	n=9 (25.71%)	n=47 (32.87%)
32-38	n=10 (28.57%)	n=9 (6.29%)
39-45	n=6 (17.14%)	n=2 (1.40%)
>45	n=9 (25.71%)	n=4 (2.80%)
Educational level		
Gymnasium	n=1 (2.86%)	-
High school	n=7 (20.00%)	n=4 (2.79%)
University student	n=4 (11.43%)	n=66 (46.15%)
Bachelor degree	n=20 (57.14%)	n=38 (26.58%)
Masters' degree	n=3 (8.57%)	n=33 (23.08%)
Doctorate	-	n=2 (1.4%)

Table 2. The 5-level Likert scale statements in each research topic on both questionnaires

5-level Likert scale	GSL Instructors	GSL Learners
	Questions No	Questions No
First Research Topic	9, 11, 12, 13	9, 11, 12, 13
Second Research Topic	7, 8, 10, 14, 15	7, 8, 10, 14, 15
Third Research Topic	5, 6, 18, 19, 20	5, 6, 18, 19, 20
Fourth Research Topic	17, 23, 24, 25	17,23, 22, 24

Table 3. Type of questions included on both questionnaires

	GSL Instructors	GSL Learners
	Questions No	Questions No
Multiple Choice	16, 21, 22	16, 21
Open-ended	26	25, 26

Table 4. GSL Instructors' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the first research topic.

First research topic	GSL Instructors					W.A.
	n (%) N = 35 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q9 Four-years of GSL courses do not cover all subject areas	3 (8.57%)	4 (11.43%)	5 (14.29%)	10 (28.57%)	13 (37.14%)	3.74
Q11 In the four-years of GSL courses the required GSL vocabulary must be taught	-	1 (2.86%)	4 (11.43%)	10 (28.57%)	20 (57.14%)	4.40
Q12 In the four-years of GSL courses "classifiers" must be taught adequately	-	1 (2.86%)	2 (5.71%)	3 (8.57%)	29 (82.86%)	4.74
Q13 In the four-years of GSL courses idioms and facial expressions must be taught adequately	1 (2.86%)	-	2 (5.71%)	1 (2.86%)	31 (88.57%)	4.74

Table 5. GSL Learners' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the first research topic.

First research topic	GSL Learners					W.A.
	n (%) N = 143 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q9 Four-years of GSL courses do not cover all subject areas	7 (4.9%)	19 (13.29%)	33 (23.08%)	49 (34.26%)	35 (24.47%)	3.57
Q11 In the four-years of GSL courses the required GSL vocabulary must be taught	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.1%)	8 (5.59%)	31 (21.68%)	99 (69.23%)	4.56
Q12 In the four-years of GSL courses "classifiers" must be taught adequately	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	14 (9.79%)	22 (15.38%)	104 (72.73%)	4.58
Q13 In the four-years of GSL courses idioms and facial expressions must be taught adequately	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.2%)	12 (8.39%)	123 (86.01%)	4.78

Table 6. GSL Instructors' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the second research topic.

Second research topic	GSL Instructors					W.A.
	n (%) N = 35 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q7 GSL learners should be in contact with the Deaf community frequently for better practice	-	1 (2.86%)	-	5 (14.29%)	29 (82.86%)	4,77
Q8 GSL learners should have more than one instructor during a year of GSL courses	1 (2.86%)	6 (17.14%)	1 (2.86%)	11 (31.43%)	16 (45.71%)	4
Q10 Every exercise should be practiced by all GSL learners in a class	-	-	1 (2.86%)	4 (11.43%)	30 (85.71%)	4,83
Q14 One should begin taking GSL courses at a younger age for better comprehension & learning of the GSL	2 (5.71%)	5 (14.29%)	15 (42.86%)	7 (20.00%)	6 (17.14%)	3,28
Q15 GSL learners should dedicate several hours a week for studying and practicing the GSL	1 (2.86%)	1 (2.86%)	4 (11.43%)	11 (31.43%)	18 (51.43%)	4,34

Table 7. GSL Instructors' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the second research topic.

Second research topic	GSL Learners					W.A.
	n (%) N = 143 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q7 GSL learners should be in contact with the Deaf community frequently for better practice	4 (2.8%)	3 (2.1%)	-	17 (11.89%)	119 (83.21%)	4,7
Q8 GSL learners should have more than one instructor during a year of GSL courses	10 (6.99%)	27 (18.88%)	33 (23.08%)	34 (23.78%)	39 (27.27%)	3,45
Q10 Every exercise should be practiced by all GSL learners in a class	3 (2.1%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.2%)	19 (13.28%)	114 (79.72%)	4,69
Q14 One should begin taking GSL courses at a younger age for better comprehension & learning of the GSL	20 (13.99%)	52 (36.36%)	37 (25.87%)	21 (14.69%)	13 (9.09%)	2,69
Q15 GSL learners should dedicate several hours a week for studying and practicing the GSL	1 (0.7%)	22 (15.38%)	48 (33.57%)	50 (34.97%)	22 (15.38%)	3,90

Table 8. GSL Instructors' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the third research topic.

Third research topic	GSL Instructors					W.A.
	n (%) N = 35 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q5 120 hours of GSL courses a year are insufficient	3 (8.57%)	5 (14.29%)	8 (22.86%)	8 (22.86%)	11 (31.43%)	3.53
Q6 Apart from four years of GSL courses, an extra year should be added for preparing for the GSL proficiency exams	4 (11.43%)	1 (2.86%)	6 (17.14%)	8 (22.86%)	16 (45.71%)	3.90
Q18 For better teaching/learning, classes should be consisted of 5 - 7 learners	1 (2.86%)	3 (8.57%)	3 (8.57%)	8 (22.86%)	20 (57.14%)	4.30
Q19 Taking GSL lessons in regular classes is more efficient than taking lessons in intensive classes	4 (11.43%)	5 (14.29%)	6 (17.14%)	13 (37.14%)	7 (20.00%)	3.42
Q20 Private lessons are not so efficient because the learner does not interact with others	2 (5.71%)	2 (5.71%)	15 (42.86%)	13 (37.14%)	3 (8.57%)	3.41

Table 9. GSL Learners' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the third research topic.

Third research topic	GSL Learners					W.A.
	n (%) N = 143 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q5 120 hours of GSL courses a year are insufficient	19 (13.29%)	38 (26.57%)	43 (30.01%)	28 (19.58%)	15 (10.49%)	2.87
Q6 Apart from four years of GSL courses, an extra year should be added for preparing the GSL proficiency exams	16 (11.19%)	34 (23.78%)	29 (20.28%)	32 (22.38%)	32 (22.38%)	3.19
Q18 For better teaching/learning, classes should be consisted of 5 - 7 learners	4 (2.8%)	4 (2.8%)	10 (6.99%)	30 (20.98%)	95 (66.43%)	4.44
Q19 Taking GSL lessons in regular classes is more efficient than taking lessons in intensive classes	30 (20.98%)	35 (24.48%)	33 (23.08%)	24 (16.78%)	21 (14.69%)	2.81
Q20 Private lessons are not so efficient because the learner does not interact with others	13 (9.09%)	16 (11.19%)	48 (33.57%)	40 (27.97%)	26 (18.18%)	3.24

Table 10. GSL Instructors' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the fourth research topic.

Fourth research topic	GSL Instructors					W.A.
	n (%)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q17 The understanding of Greek language by the GSL instructors facilitate the teaching/learning process	0	3 (8.57%)	8 (22.86%)	8 (22.86%)	16 (45.71%)	4.07
Q23 At the time of examinations, Deaf evaluators must fully understand the Greek language so that they evaluate without prejudice	1 (2.86%)	1 (2.86%)	3 (8.57%)	9 (25.71%)	21 (60.00%)	4.35
Q24 The teacher's ability to fully understand the Greek language is entirely associated to the success in the proficiency exams	3 (8.57%)	3 (8.57%)	5 (14.29%)	8 (22.86%)	16 (45.71%)	3.88
Q25 An important factor for success in the GSL proficiency exams is the teachers' educational level	2 (5.71%)	3 (8.57%)	1 (2.86%)	7 (20.00%)	22 (62.86%)	4.01

Table 11. GSL Learners' responses and corresponding Weighted Averages regarding the fourth research topic.

Fourth research topic	GSL Learners					W.A.
	n (%) N = 143 (n ₁ +n ₂ ...+n ₅)					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Q17 The understanding of Greek language by the GSL instructors facilitate the teaching/learning process	1 (0.70%)	8 (5.59%)	27 (18.88%)	39 (27.27%)	68 (47.55%)	4.14
Q22 The teacher's ability to fully understand the Greek language is entirely associated to the success in the proficiency exams	13 (9.09%)	32 (22.38%)	39 (27.27%)	36 (25.17%)	23 (16.08%)	3.17
Q23 At the time of examinations, Deaf evaluators must fully understand the Greek language so that they evaluate without prejudice	10 (6.99%)	24 (16.78%)	24 (16.78%)	42 (29.37%)	43 (30.07%)	3.45
Q24 An important factor for success in the GSL proficiency exams is the teachers' educational level	6 (4.20%)	17 (11.89%)	35 (24.48%)	40 (27.97%)	45 (31.47%)	3.66

Figure 1. The GSL Instructors



Figure 2: Years of experience in teaching the GSL

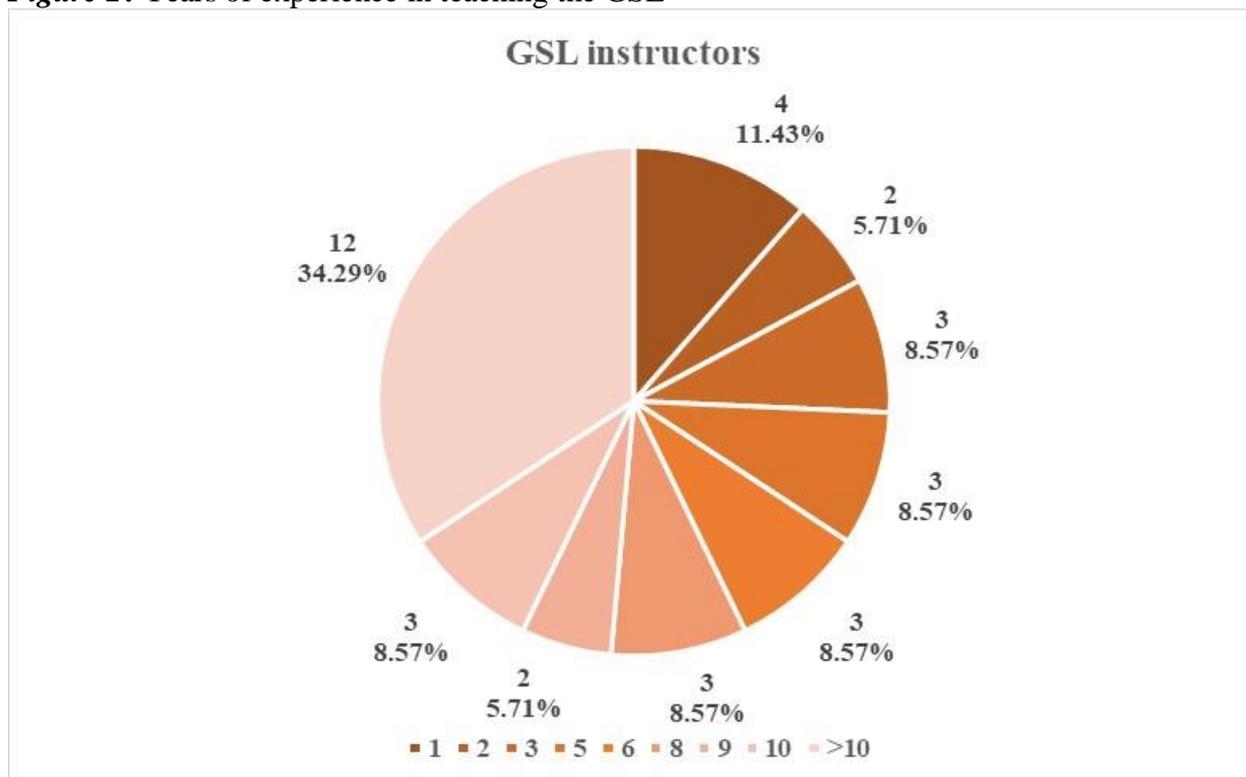


Figure 3. GSL Learners' knowledge level in GSL

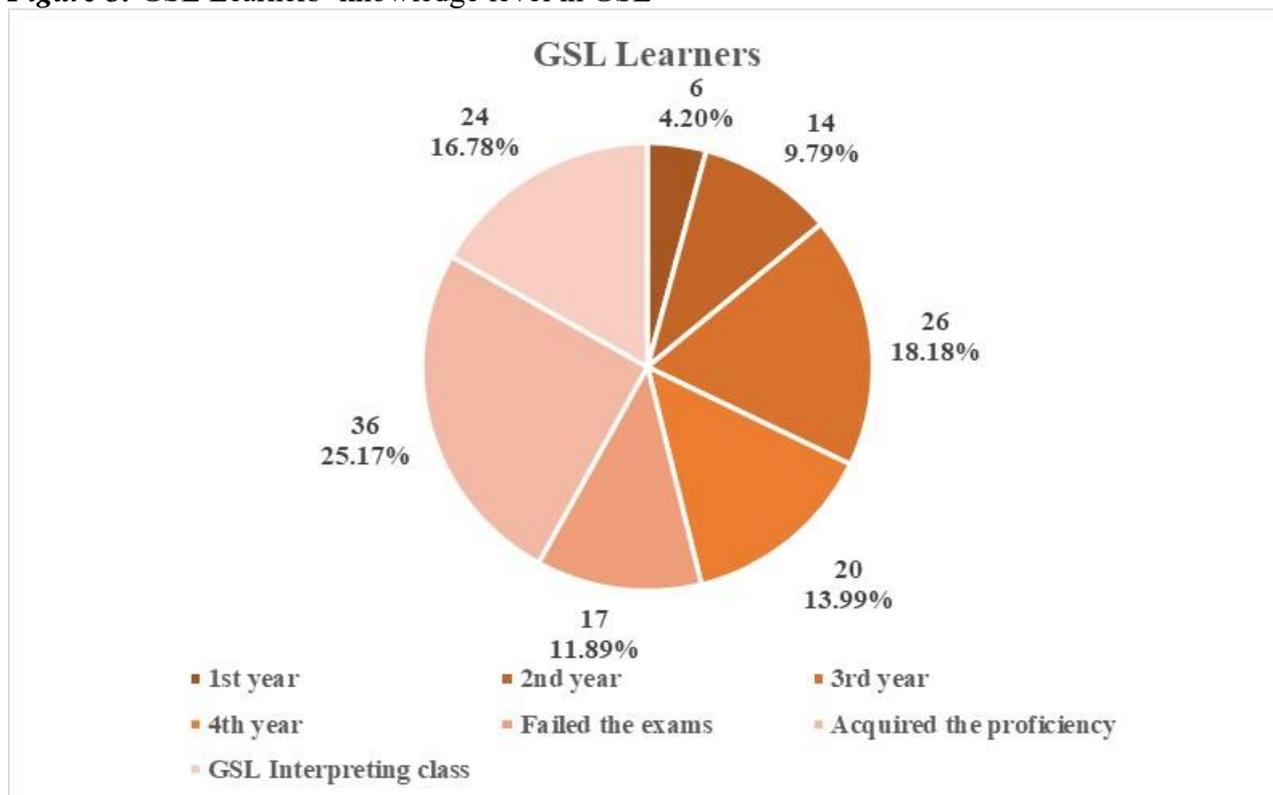


Figure 4. The type of GSL syntax taught in class

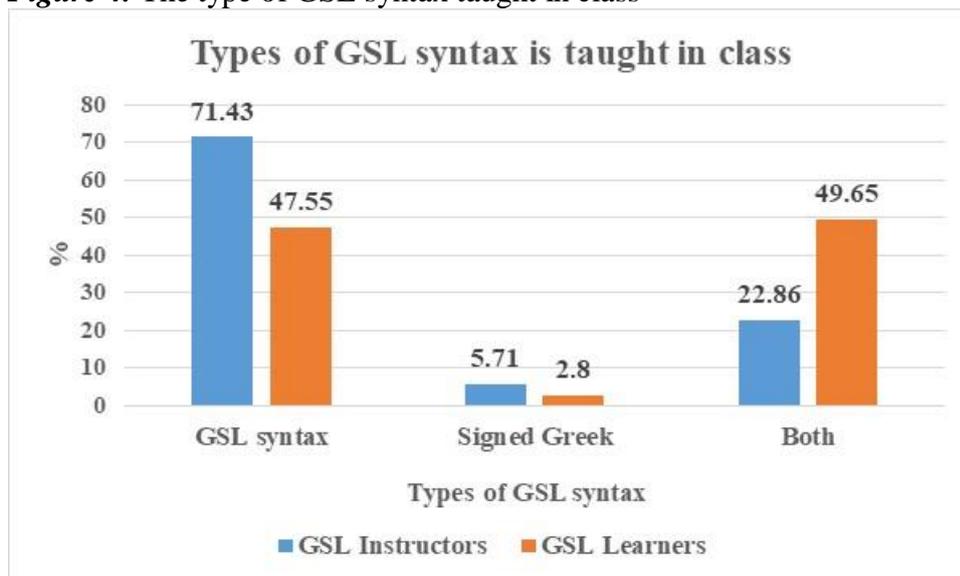


Figure 5. Suggested amount of practicing hours a week

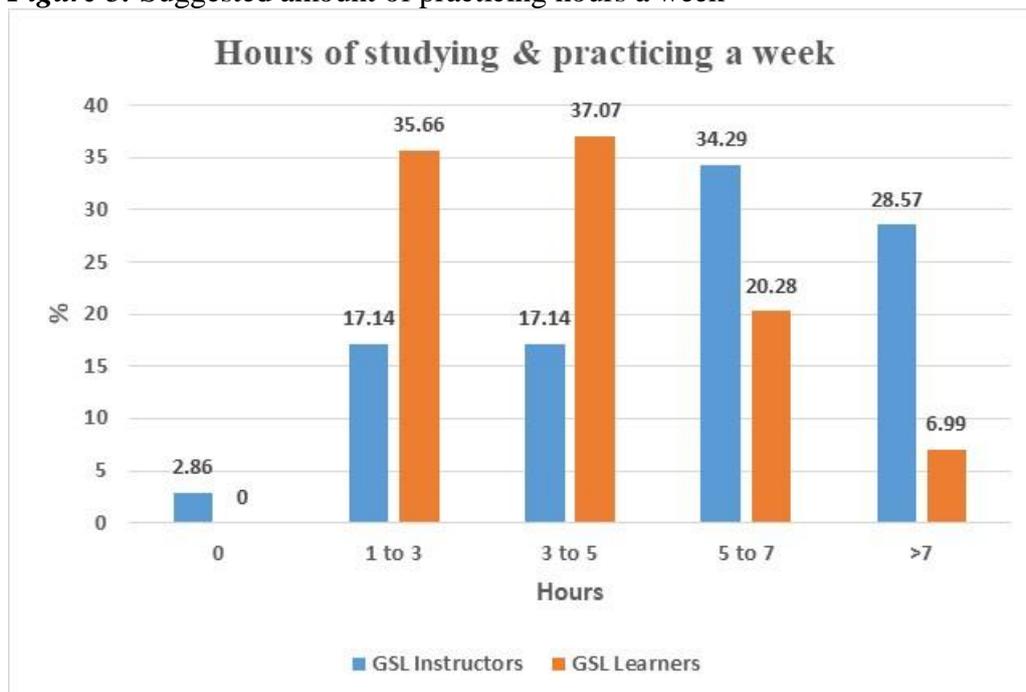
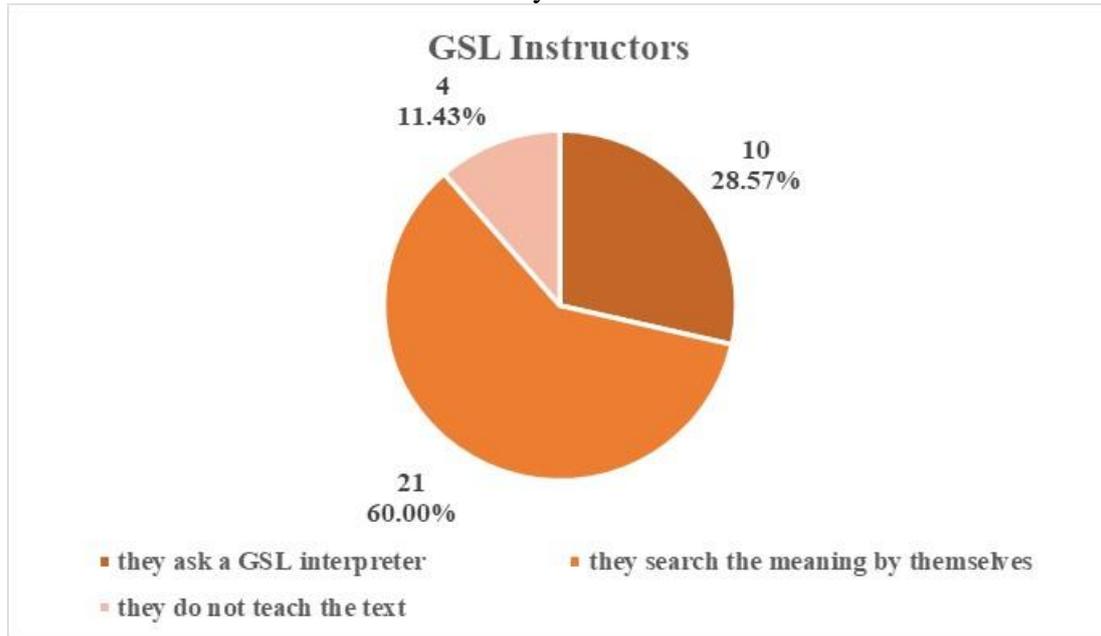


Figure 6. GSL instructors' reaction when they encounter an unknown word in the text



GSL Instructor's questionnaire

1) Gender:

Male Female

2) Age group (in years):

18 -24 25-31 32-38 39-45 more than 45

3) You are a GSL instructor:

Deaf GSL interpreter

3.1) How many years have you been teaching the GSL?

.....

4) Educational level:

Gymnasium High school Technological Educational Institute University

Master's Degree PhD

5) 120 hours of GSL courses a year are insufficient.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

6) Apart from four years of GSL courses, an extra year should be added for preparing for the GSL proficiency exams.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

7) GSL learners should be in contact with the Deaf community frequently for better practice.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

8) GSL learners should have more than one instructor during a year of GSL courses.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

9) Four-years of GSL courses do not cover all subject areas.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

10) Every exercise should be practiced by all GSL learners in a class.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

11) In the four-years of GSL courses the required GSL vocabulary must be taught.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

12) In the four-years of GSL courses "classifiers" must be taught adequately.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

13) In the four-years of GSL courses idioms and facial expressions must be taught adequately.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

14) One should begin taking GSL courses at a younger age for better comprehension & learning of the GSL.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

15) GSL learners should dedicate several hours a week for studying and practicing the GSL.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

16) Declare the amount of hours:

1) 0 hour 2) 1-3 hours 3) 3-5 hours 4) 5-7 hours 5) more than 7 hours

17) The understanding of Greek language by the GSL instructors facilitate the teaching/learning process.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

18) For better teaching/learning, classes should be consisted of 5 - 7 learners.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

19) Taking GSL lessons in regular classes is more efficient than taking lessons in intensive classes.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

20) Private lessons are not so efficient because the learner does not interact with others.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

21) Type of GSL syntax that you are teaching:

GSL syntax Signed Greek Both

22) Describe the way you react when you encounter an unknown word in a text:

I ask a GSL interpreter I search the meaning by myself

I do not teach the text

23) At the time of examinations, Deaf evaluators must fully understand the Greek language so that they evaluate without prejudice.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

24) The teacher's ability to fully understand the Greek language is entirely associated to the success in the proficiency exams.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

25) An important factor for success in the GSL proficiency exams is the teachers' educational level.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

26) Write down in detail what do you believe that should change (added or removed) in order for the examination process to be improved.

GSL learner's questionnaire

1) Gender:

Male Female

2) Age group (in years):

18 -24 25-31 32-38 39-45 more than 45

3) Educational level:

Gymnasium High school Technological Educational Institute student

Technological Educational Institute University student University

Master's Degree PhD

4) Class that you are attending:

1st year 2nd year 3rd year 4th year Failed the exams

Acquired the Proficiency GSL interpreting class

5) 120 hours of GSL courses a year are insufficient.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

6) Apart from four years of GSL courses, an extra year should be added for preparing the GSL proficiency exams.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

7) GSL learners should be in contact with the Deaf community frequently for better practice.

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1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

25) Write down in detail what do you believe that should change (added or removed) in order for the examination process to be improved.

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26) What is the major problem you've ever encountered during your GSL studies?

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