

**Stories of Emergent Cultures of Distance Learning  
and Collaboration: Understanding the  
CELSE-Hellenic Open University Project**

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**Richard James Fay**

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

To protect, to some degree, my colleagues' personal identities, I have identified them using *noms-de-narrateur* (eg "Xeni") and role-related identifiers (eg the "Educational Broker"). This usage emphasises their project identities and story-telling personae, or masks. The table below provides a listing of the main characters in the stories in this thesis together with a brief sketch of their role and main activities in the CELSE-HOU project.

### *Dramatis Personae*

#### *(Main Characters in the Stories of the CELSE-HOU Project)*

##### **Amy**

One of the CELSE tutors who visited Athens to introduce the HOU 'English' team to the Educational Technology module; she has acted as a Critical Reader and *mea* (or distance learning mentor) for one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced by the HOU.

##### **Andreas**

A Symposiast (see the restored presentation of his narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "Local Distance Learning Expert"; he was one of the influential people shaping the whole HOU idea and was a major contributor to the HOU's in-house conceptualising of distance learning methodology as captured, in part, through the Certificate course in Open and Distance Learning; and he had responsibility in the early years of the project for overseeing the development of the 'English' programme from a managerial point of view.

##### **Christos**

A Symposiast (see the restored presentation of his narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "Distance Learning Enthusiast"; he is a tutor (ie *SEP*) for the 'English' programme who pioneered the team's development of their own materials; he has also acted as a *mea* (or distance learning mentor) for other HOU programmes and, more recently, has been a writer, *mea*, and Critical Reader for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced for the 'English' programme.

##### **Dimitra**

A Symposiast (see the restored presentation of her narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "Academic Responsible" relating to her role on the HOU's 'English' programme; she is also a member of permanent faculty (ie *DEP*) at another Greek public university; she acts as a Critical Reader and a *mea* for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced for the 'English' programme.

##### **Eleftheria**

A Symposiast (see the restored presentation of her narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "Academic Registrar", relating to one of her roles on the HOU's 'English' programme, for which she is a tutor (ie *SEP*); she is a CELSE alumnus with whom I worked in Manchester on initial teacher training courses in ELT; she fulfils a mediating role between CELSE and the HOU; she has also acted as a *mea* (or distance learning mentor) for other HOU programmes and has, more recently, been a writer, *mea*, and Critical Reader for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced for the 'English' programme.

##### **Fred**

A Symposiast (see the restored presentation of his narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "The Dean", relating to his role in the Faculty of Education at Manchester from 1997-2002; he was thus in charge during the middle years of the project and oversaw the Faculty during some difficult years.

**George**

A Symposiat (see the restored presentation of his narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the “Manchester Distance Learning Innovator” since he was largely responsible for driving CELSE’s DL developments and for articulating their methodological basis; he was Head of CELSE during the years when the project was conceived and negotiated; he has acted as a Critical Reader and *mea* (or distance learning mentor) for one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced by the HOU.

**Katerina**

A tutor (*SEP*) from the beginning of the HOU’s ‘English’ programme and a member of permanent faculty (ie *DEP*) at another Greek public university; she has also written distance learning materials for another HOU programme; and has, more recently, been a writer, *mea*, and Critical Reader for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced for the ‘English’ programme.

**Lefteris**

The Patras-based HOU President; he was involved in the negotiation of the Manchester-HOU contract.

**Lucy**

One of the CELSE tutors who visited Athens to introduce the HOU ‘English’ team to the Assessment module; she has also acted as a writer, Critical Reader and *mea* (or distance learning mentor) for one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced by the HOU.

**Malcolm**

The Dean of the Faculty of Education at Manchester from January 2002 onwards.

**Margaret**

The Manchester Pro Vice Chancellor who oversaw the establishing of the CELSE-HOU link.

**Michalis**

A Patras-based *SEP* (tutor) for one of the HOU science programmes; he was also an influential member of the team responsible for the articulation of the HOU’s distance learning methodology.

**Mirto**

A tutor (*SEP*) on the HOU ‘English’ programme from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year; she was also the Patras-based Academic Registrar for this English Programme for several years; she is a Critical Reader and materials writer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation modules being produced by the HOU.

**Panagiota**

The Deputy Academic Responsible of the HOU ‘English’ programme for which she has been a *SEP* (tutor) from the beginning; she is also member of permanent faculty (ie *DEP*) at another Greek public university.

**Raymond**

The Dean of the Faculty of Education at Manchester from 1994-1997 during which period the CELSE-HOU project was set up

**Richard**

The Project Co-ordinator and for the CELSE-HOU project and the author of this thesis.

**Stamatis**

The Athens-based HOU Vice-President responsible for negotiating the collaboration between CELSE and the HOU and for maintaining good relations between the institutions.

**Tanya**

One of the CELSE tutors who visited Athens twice to introduce the HOU 'English' team to the module in Course Design and Young Learners; she has also acted as *mea* (mentor) for the HOU 'French' programme; and she has, more recently, been a Critical Reader and *mea* for the the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of modules produced by the HOU.

**Thomas**

The Greek Minister of Education responsible for establishing the Hellenic Open University and approving the link with Manchester.

**Tzak**

One of the members of permanent faculty (ie *DEP*) at the HOU who has been appointed quite recently and is therefore part of what I term the Institutionalisation Phase rather than the Pioneering phase; he typifies one type of HOU faculty member.

**Vassillis**

A Symposiast (see the restoried presentation of his narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "Reflective Practitioner"; one of the inner team at the HOU responsible for articulating the HOU distance learning methodology; he has responsibility too for training the *mea* (mentor) teams and also for training the Academic Responsibles how to train their tutorial teams.

**Vassou**

A tutor (*SEP*) on the English programme from the beginning and a member of permanent faculty (ie *DEP*) at another Greek public university.

**Xeni**

A Symposiast (see the restoried presentation of her narrative in Chapter 8) with the role identifier of the "Educational Broker"; she brought to CELSE the idea of collaborative provision in Greece and remained actively involving in brokering the arrangement between CELSE and the HOU and then stepped back from active involvement in the collaboration.

**Note:**

Throughout this study, I make use of the above *noms-de-narrateur*. When I want to refer to particular parts of the participant narratives restoried in Chapter 8, I use data identifiers such as "DP16". These identifiers refer to paragraphs within those narratives and consist of an initial letter to indicate the storyteller (and each case this is the first letter of their name), a second letter ('P') to indicate 'paragraph', and a number corresponding to the paragraph numbering used in each story. Thus, "DP16" refers to Paragraph 16 in *Dimitra's Story*.

## ***Project Terminology*** ***(Main Terms and Places in the Stories of the CELSE-HOU Project)***

### **Academic Registrar**

The role title given by the HOU to the (usually junior) colleagues who carry out many of the academic-administrative roles for the programmes such as the timetabling of Contact Sessions, organising team meetings, and so on.

### **Academic Responsible**

The Programme Directors of its programmes; these professors are often **DEP** (ie permanent faculty) at other Greek universities and bring the caché of that post to their part-time HOU activities.

### **Adult Education**

The MA-level module in Adult Education (in Greek, *Ekpedefsi Enilikon*) for which Vasillis is the Academic Responsible and for which Manchester writers have contributed some materials (a case study of Adult Education in the UK).

### **Athens**

The capital city of Greece, where the HOU maintains a small materials laboratory, or materials production team; also the venue for the Contact Sessions, and for curriculum meetings of the **'English' team**.

### **Athens-based team**

The academic, materials development, and administrative staff based in the Athens office who have produced over time an Athens-team culture of work in contrast to the **Patras-team** culture of work.

### **CELSE**

The Centre for English Language Studies in Education, a unit in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manchester which specialises in language teacher education for teachers of English to speakers of other languages (**TESOL**) with particular experience in distance learning; this team became part of a larger grouping (Language and Literacy Studies in Education) in 2001 when the CELSE name ceased to be used.

### **Contact Sessions (CSs)**

The HOU term for the face-to-face blocks – usually organised over a weekend – in their distance learning courses. For example, the **'English' programme** has four CSs per module.

### **DEP**

This is an abbreviation for *Didaktiko Erevnitiko Prosopiko* (Teaching and Research Staff), a term used for permanent academic posts in Greek universities.

### **DL**

Distance Learning, used as an umbrella term for related terms such as Distance Education, Open Learning, eLearning, and so on).

### **EAP**

The Greek name for the Hellenic Open University is *Elliniko Anoikto Panepistimio*.

### **ELT**

English Language Teaching – one of many terms used to describe the professional practice of teaching English to speakers of other languages.

### **‘French’ programme & ‘French’ team**

The shorthand name often used for the HOU MA programme for teachers of French as a Foreign language.

### **‘Gang of Four’ (inner circle)**

My somewhat tongue-in-cheek term for the inner team of HOU pioneers (Andreas, Lefteris, Stamatis, and Vassillis), three of whom belong to the **Athens-based team** whose influence has waned as the **Patras-based team** has grown from strength to strength during what I term the Institutionalisation Phase.

### **‘German’ programme & ‘German’ team**

The shorthand name often used for the HOU MA programme for teachers of German as a Foreign language.

### **Governing Board of the HOU**

In Greek, this is called *Diikousa Epitropi*.

### **HOU**

The Hellenic Open University (English name), otherwise known as *Elliniko Anoikto Panepistimio (EAP)*.

### **MA TEFL**

The HOU masters programme for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, based in large part on distance learning materials originally developed by **CELSE** for its **MEd ELT** programme.

### **MEd EdTech & ELT**

The technology-focused sister programme to **CELSE**'s **MEd ELT** programme.

### **MEd ELT**

The masters programme offered on-site and by distance learning by **CELSE** for teachers of English to speakers of other languages (**TESOL**).

### **Manchester**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> city in England, and home of the Victoria University of Manchester (full-title); throughout this study, ‘Manchester’ is often used to refer to the institution rather than the city.

### **mea**

The Greek acronym for *Methodologia eks Apostaseos* (Methodology by Distance); the word *mea* also means ‘midwife’, a good metaphor for the role of these mentors to the distance learning materials writers.

### **ODL**

Open and Distance Learning, a formulation that was in common usage at the beginning of the project to signify all non-conventional provision.

### **ODL Module**

In Greek, this HOU postgraduate certificate module is entitled *Anikti ke Eks Apostaseos Ekpedefsi*; it acts as a training module through which the HOU has developed cohorts of potential tutors; it also provided a vehicle for the HOU to articulate its understanding of distance learning.

### **Patras**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> city of Greece, a major port and university town in the Peloponnese; the ‘seat’ of the HOU where most of its administrative and (increasingly) academic business is conducted.



**Patras-based team**

This refers to the particular culture of work developed by the HOU colleagues based in Patras as opposed that of the **Athens-based team**.

**SAQ**

Self Assessment Question, the embedded tasks in distance learning materials (see Chapter 4).

**SEP**

This is an abbreviation for *Synergazomeno Ekpdefitiko Prosopiko* (Collaborating Teaching Staff), the term for part-time tutors at the HOU (and more widely in Greek universities).

**‘Spanish’ programme & ‘Spanish’ team**

The shorthand name often used for the HOU BA programme in Spanish language and civilisation whose Greek title is *Ispaniki Glossa ke Politismos*.

**TESOL**

Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages; one of a number of acronyms (eg ELT, and TEFL) referring to the particular sector of education addressed by both the CELSE team and the HOU ‘English’ team.

**Thessaloniki**

Greece’s 2<sup>nd</sup> city, the major metropolis of the north; a centre for HOU Contact Sessions.

**UKOU**

The Open University of the United Kingdom which has provided DL training to the HOU and also permitted some of its MA-level materials in Education to be translated and used as part of the HOU’s provision.

## Some Landmarks in the CELSE-HOU Project<sup>2</sup>

Date	Phase	Details	
<b>1994</b>	<i>Phase 1: Discussions with Xení</i>		
Jan		<b>Stage I</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF appointed as Lecturer in Education (TESOL) at CELSE, Univ. of Manchester.</li> </ul>
Feb			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xení (an Educational Broker) proposes collaboration between CELSE and educational Organisation ‘X’ in Greece as mediated by her Company ‘Z’.</li> </ul>
Apr			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xení visits CELSE/Univ. of Manchester.</li> </ul>
May			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Working Document for Anglo-Greek Distance Links” produced by RF.</li> </ul>
Jun			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Univ. of Manchester ready to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Xení and Organisation X.</li> </ul>
Aug			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF “inspection and negotiation” visit to Athens.</li> <li>• Collapse of the proposed link with Organisation X.</li> </ul>
Oct			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative project (modelled on the Greek discussions) set up in Switzerland.</li> </ul>
Nov		<b>Stage II</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF meets representative from “polytechnic-type” Institution ‘Y’ in Greece – possible replacement for Organisation X.</li> </ul>
<b>1995</b>			
Apr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DL collaborative possibilities discussed with the Greek Education Ministry (which was considering setting up an Open University) and also with the Polytechnic ‘Y’.</li> </ul>	
May		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xení visits CELSE / Univ. of Manchester.</li> </ul>	
Jun		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF visits Athens to explore trilateral collaboration with Polytechnic ‘Y’ as mediated by Xení, and also bilaterally with Xení’s Company (Z) directly.</li> <li>• Talks with Polytechnic ‘Y’ stall over financial arrangements.</li> </ul>	
Sep		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open &amp; Distance Learning conference (Athens), paper presented by Xení &amp; RF.</li> </ul>	
Nov	<i>Phase 2: Discussions with the HOU</i>	<b>Stage I</b>	
<b>1996</b>			
Apr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First explicit mention of the Hellenic Open University (HOU) by Xení.</li> </ul>	
May		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CELSE begins to consider the HOU possibilities.</li> <li>• CELSE explores the use of Manchester’s external links agency for handling the proposed collaboration with the HOU.</li> </ul>	
Jun		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First contact with Stamatis, the HOU Vice-President.</li> <li>• Negotiations continue between RF and Stamatis.</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> DL for Language Educators Symposium (Manchester); papers by George on textuality, and RF &amp; Walsh on intercultural aspects of DL.</li> </ul>	
Jul		<b>Stage II</b>	
Jul		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation from the Greek Education Minister to visit Athens to finalise the contract between CELSE and the HOU.</li> <li>• HOU sends CELSE the draft Law for the HOU incorporation.</li> <li>• RF and Raymond visit Athens to meet Education Minister and for face-to-face negotiation of the CELSE-HOU contract.</li> </ul>	

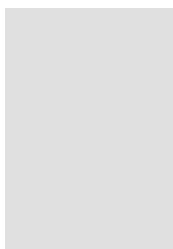
<sup>2</sup> These landmarks are discussed in Chapter 7 as part of *My Project Co-ordinator’s Story* of the project.

Aug			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raymond agrees contractual arrangements with Xenii.</li> <li>• Negotiations continue with agreement of financial arrangements and increasing agreement on the small print of the Agreement used to set out the collaboration.</li> </ul>	
Dec			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CELSE-HOU contract signed.</li> </ul>	
<b>1997</b>	<i>Phase 3: Working with the HOU</i>	<b>Stage I</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original dates for training by CELSE of Academic Responsibles (but postponed for organisational reasons).</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> dates for training of Academic Responsibles (also postponed).</li> </ul>	
Jan			<b>Stage II</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF visit to Athens to train Dimitra (the English Programme Academic Responsible) and Panagiota (her deputy).</li> <li>• RF visit to Patras HQ of the HOU with Stamatis.</li> <li>• RF visit to Kalamata to see Eleftheria, ie the CELSE alumnus who would become the Academic Registrar for the HOU English programme</li> </ul>
Feb				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Programme 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of potential tutors (Athens) – RF in attendance.</li> </ul>
Jun		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF visits Athens to front CELSE training seminar for HOU teams re the development of DL materials.</li> <li>• Law passed incorporating the HOU.</li> </ul>		
Jul			<b>Stage III</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF fieldwork in Athens begins.</li> <li>• Interviews of potential students for Cohort 1.</li> <li>• Interviews of potential tutors for the first year.</li> </ul>
Oct				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor training by CELSE for the English programme begins.</li> <li>• Mentoring meetings (involving RF) begin with the HOU's team for the MA in Teaching French as a Foreign Language.</li> </ul>
Dec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOU Seminars (involving RF) for training mentors begin.</li> <li>• Intensive tutor and materials preparation for the English programme launch.</li> </ul>		
<b>1998</b>	<i>Phase 4: Programme Launch</i>	<b>Stage I</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohort 1 begins the English Programme with tutorial groups in Athens (x2), Patras, and Thessaloniki.</li> <li>• RF attends the first Contact Sessions for the Athens groups.</li> <li>• The French team attend the Contact Sessions for the Athens-based English programme tutorial groups.</li> </ul>	
Feb			<b>Stage II</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative work on the first DL monograph (unpublished) on textuality in DL materials.</li> <li>• Draft Strategic Plan for the English programme presented by RF to the HOU.</li> </ul>
Mar				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF steps down from day-to-day involvement with the English programme.</li> <li>• Inauguration Ceremony for the HOU (Athens) – RF attends.</li> </ul>
Apr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans for a joint seminar for the teams responsible for the MAs for English, French, and German language teachers mooted.</li> <li>• Curriculum-planning (involving RF) begins for the BA Spanish programme.</li> </ul>		
May			<b>Stage II</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thessaloniki Contact Session (No.3) observed by RF.</li> </ul>
Jun				
Jul				
Aug				
Oct				
Nov				
<b>1999</b>				
Jan				
Feb				

Mar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lucy (a CELSE tutor) visits Greece to train English team re the Assessment module and to present a joint paper (with RF) at the TESOL Greece conference.</li> <li>• Joint seminar with English, French, and German teams cancelled.</li> </ul>
Jun		<p><b>Stage III</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tanya (a CELSE tutor) and RF visit Athens to introduce the English team to the Course Design module.</li> <li>• Tanya mentors the French and German teams.</li> <li>• Curriculum-design and materials production continue for the Spanish programme.</li> </ul>
Jul		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stamatis officially appointed as a tenured Professor at the HOU, part of the first tranche of permanent faculty appointments.</li> </ul>
Nov	<b>Phase 5: Financial Worries</b>	<p><b>Stage I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohort 2 starts the English programme.</li> <li>• Funding difficulties at the HOU and financial problems at the Faculty of Education.</li> <li>• Additional HOU licence for electives cancelled.</li> </ul>
Dec		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOU begins to develop in-house an elective module for the English programme.</li> </ul>
2000 Jan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dimitra visits Manchester.</li> <li>• HOU launches a further 17 programmes with 5000+ students.</li> </ul>
Feb		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RF gives seminar for the HOU on “<i>How and why DL materials need localisation</i>”.</li> </ul>
Mar		<p><b>Stage II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The French programme begins.</li> <li>• Stamatis sends a Report on the link to Fred (the new Dean of the Faculty of Education at Manchester).</li> </ul>
Oct		
Nov		<p><b>Stage I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohort 3 starts the English programme.</li> <li>• Amy (a CELSE tutor) introduces the English team to the Educational Technology module.</li> <li>• Tanya introduces the English team to the Young Learners module.</li> </ul>
2001 Jan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seminar on appropriate methodology in Athens for RF, and colleagues on the HOU English, French, and Adult Education programmes.</li> </ul>
Feb		<p><b>(Stage II)</b></p>
May		<p><b>Stage III</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> HOU Open &amp; Distance Learning Conference (Patras) – paper presented by RF.</li> </ul>
Nov	<b>Phase 6: A Time of Reflection</b>	<p><b>Stage I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohort 4 starts the English programme</li> </ul>
2002 Nov		<p><b>Stage II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> HOU Graduation Ceremony (Patras) – RF in attendance.</li> <li>• Cohort 5 begins the English programme.</li> </ul>
2003 Jan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English team begin the project to develop the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of materials for the English programme with some limited retention of CELSE materials and with some (ex-) CELSE lecturers acting as Critical Readers and mentors.</li> </ul>
Apr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> HOU Open &amp; Distance Learning Conference (Patras) – Christos &amp; RF paper presented.</li> </ul>
Jun		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDEN Annual Conference (Rhodes) - RF &amp; Christos paper presented.</li> </ul>
Oct		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English team’s development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of materials for the English programme continues (Oct 04 cohort to use these materials).</li> </ul>

Nov

Dec



**Stage  
III**

- Cohort 6 begins the English programme – the last new starters to use the CELSE materials.
- RF and Christos prepare article version of the conference papers given earlier in the year for submission to a DL journal.
- RF presents paper at the IALIC conference (on Intercultural narrative) dealing with the research story of the RF thesis.

## Abstract

This study presents and explores the narratives of participants including the author in a ten-year, international distance learning (DL) collaboration and curriculum development project in the field of language teacher education. The project is innovatory in several important ways: first, one partner institution, the newly-established Hellenic Open University, is pioneering DL in Greece; second, since 1997, the HOU's MA TEFL programme, the first of its kind in a public institution in Greece, has provided professional development opportunities for over 500 English language teachers in Greece; third, the other partner, the Centre for English Language Studies in Education (CELSE) at the University of Manchester, has been a pioneer of DL within its institution since the mid-1980s; and, fourth the collaborative model involves the operationalisation within the new HOU context of DL courseware developed by CELSE, an arrangement requiring consideration of the effective adaptation of the methodology and content of that courseware in the interests of appropriacy for the HOU context.

During the author's project sojourns in Greece, the sense-making power of the project narratives was noted. This possibility was developed through a consideration of the characteristics of narratives and the objectives and procedures of narrative research. After an exploration of the complexities of narratives and narrative positioning in general and, more specifically, of the narrativity of this research text, the narrative approach used in this study is delineated. The study presents and interprets four types of project narratives: the co-constructed restoried narratives of key participants from the pioneering generation of activity; the author's archive-based Project Co-ordinator's story; the narratives, based on project-related texts and events, of the development of the practitioner-shaped conceptualisations of distance learning, appropriate distance learning methodology, interculturality and Greekness; and the author's research story as embedded in the project.

A cross-cultural, comparative study of the project in terms of its UK and Greek aspects has been rejected in favour of an intercultural understanding based on a Holliday-an model of emergent cultures of DL and collaboration located within the Host Culture Complexes that the Manchester and HOU represent.

The combination of the narrative approach and the intercultural conceptualisation has enabled an examination of the factors aiding and hindering the project as seen from a participant perspective. A combination of factors contingent on the particularities of the project and its participants is found to be involved in both the establishment and development of the collaboration. Interestingly, although the collaboration itself is seen to be strong, effective, and innovative, the pioneer groups involved have an outside status within their own institutions. This has meant that the collaboration, although impacting on the professional practice of language teachers, DL tutors, writers and mentors in many ways, has nonetheless failed to fulfil the potential that the participants saw in its pioneering beginnings. Their disappointment is understandable and tends to place the many project achievements under a cloud. The vulnerability of the collaboration to institutional politicking and maverick management raises questions about the fitness of the UK institution for such collaborative activities.

## DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In October 1999, after a meeting at the HOU headquarters in Patras, I broke my journey back to Athens with a solitary walk in the mountains overlooking the Gulf of Corinth. I took a path from the monastery at Mega Spileio and passed through a musty-smelling forested slope up onto the ridge. Fine views up to the peaks and back to the sea, nothing moved, the sun was warming, and so I sat awhile before continuing. During these six hours, I met no-one, just me and the mountains. Coming down, I experienced that ‘re-entry shock’ of returning to a familiar world without feeling part of it. At Mega Spileio, unusually for me, I visited the church. Then, as I was leaving, I started down the stone steps, tripped and fell headlong, my shin eye-wateringly taking the brunt of the fall. It would have been worse if it had when I was by myself in the mountain, but only within sight of the car did I come a cropper. I drove back to Athens, exhilarated and also hurting. When I told my friend Niki the story of my fall and she laughed. “*You know why, don’t you? Guess*”. I thought maybe it was a sign from ‘On High’ telling me either not to leave it so long till my next visit to church or to signal that I was not welcome. “*No. Wherever there’s pleasure, there’s always pain - the fall was a reminder for you!*”.

My own experience of producing this thesis conforms to this maxim. But I have been generous in spreading the pleasure-pain around. First and foremost, this study would not have been possible without the support of my wife, Jacqueline, over so many years. She knows the contours of this thesis process better than anyone. I dedicate this thesis to her with heartfelt appreciation. Perhaps we can now look forward to reclaiming with our own stories the space occupied for so long by my work with the stories of the project.

Over the last decade, colleagues at CELSE and the Hellenic Open University have also become my good friends. They too have experienced the pleasure-pain of my thinking take shape. It would be difficult to list them all, and invidious to mention some but not others. They know who they are and how much I value their contribution to my personal and professional development. However, Teresa, my supervisor, is a special case. Without her, this task would never have been completed. She has indulged my epic follies and tactfully directed me towards better paths, a constant source of encouragement, skilled in squeezing out of me the best that I could produce.

Collegiality and collaborative work are not easily sustained in the increasingly stressful world of higher education. Nor do they always thrive across cultures and distance. But this project has given me opportunities for both in great store, a balm for the stresses otherwise so often present. The endeavours of my colleagues that I have been so fortunate to experience are a testament to their professionalism, commitment, and humanity. They have successfully sought the highest standards despite the ‘*hamosity*’ around them. I hope that my attempt in this thesis to capture some of our shared practice meets at least some of their expectations.