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Thirty-one and counting in the shadow: A teacher's autoethnography

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Abstract

In this autoethnography, I explore the ways in which my dual teacher identity, that of a Greek state school EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher and that of an EFL private tutor in the 'shadow education' sector, has impacted and shaped various aspects of my life throughout my career. To that end, I rely on data from my daily planners I have been using for three decades, as well as my own memory and recollections of events occurring in parallel with, or as a result of, my professional life. Moreover, treating the SE literature as another data source, I position myself within this educational framework, reflect on my actions and choices over the years and draw conclusions indicating that my private tutoring has consistently provided me with illegal income almost twice as high as my official salary, and has, thus, been a priority over my official teaching obligations; has offered me professional satisfaction deriving from my students' success; and has fatigued me physically, mentally and emotionally over time. Any ethical concerns have been pushed aside in view of the financial gain and the idiosyncratic nature of the Greek educational context where fee-charging tutoring appears culturally and socially accepted.

Opposite, Argolida, like a relief map, indented, edged by small bays with pink-orange cliffs and further inland, dark green pine-woods. (...) All the colours are vivid, but soft, pastel without being furry, aquarelle yet solid. To the right, over the bay of Nauplia, the big mountains of the Central Peloponnesus - snow-covered, like pink clouds low on the horizon, glittering faintly in the oblique sunlight.

- John Fowles, *Behind The Magus*

1. Introduction

I have been a state school EFL teacher in Greece since October 1990. At around the same time (and, not so systematically, some time earlier) I started teaching English to learners of all ages on a one-to-one basis - and have been doing so to this day. Hence the *Thirty-One* in my paper's title. But what about the *Shadow*? Officially speaking, what I have been doing for the past thirty-plus years is illegal (because I am paid tax evading money for my private tuition), oath-breaking (because, upon my appointment as a permanent state teacher in September 1995, I swore that I would honestly and conscientiously carry out my duties obeying the Greek Constitution and the laws of the state), and immoral / unethical as I have repeatedly tutored privately learners from my regular school classes¹. The *Shadow*², therefore, is what Bray (2006, p. 515) describes as the "shadow education system of private supplementary tutoring in academic subjects beyond the hours of mainstream formal schooling".

Following Adams *et al*'s advice on designing autoethnographic projects (2015), I connect my personal long-term experience with, and first-hand knowledge of, private one-to-one teaching of English as a Foreign Language, performed by me, a state school teacher in Greece, to the broader educational, sociocultural, political and economic context of this country. In the hope that I, as an autoethnographic writer, can achieve that connection between my story (*auto*) and the wider cultural point (*ethno*) "that shifts a story from just interesting, to research" (Emerald & Carpenter, 2017,

p.27), positively answer Adams *et al*'s call to narrative and storytelling.

But where is this present study situated in the relevant literature? According to Bray and Lykins (2012, p.1), "the period since the turn of the century has seen considerable expansion of what is widely called the shadow education system of private supplementary tutoring". They add: "Now the shadow sector is strongly visible throughout Asia as well as in other world regions." However, "prior to the present century it [SE] attracted very little professional discussion or academic research" (Bray *et al*, 2013, p. 1). In Greece, research has concentrated on private supplementary tutoring offered at secondary education level, and particularly to high school students wishing to continue their studies in higher education (Kassotakis & Verdis, 2013). In this paper I focus on the type of SE which takes the form of English private lessons illegally delivered by appointed permanent state schoolteachers in Greece – an unresearched field, to the best of my knowledge. I am going to concentrate on the variety of multifaceted lived experiences in the course of a thirty-year spanning career of such a teacher, i.e. myself. From a methodological point of view, therefore, this study adopts an autoethnographic approach, whose scarcity in the Greek context has been pointed out by Sergis (2018, p. 696), who acknowledges that "Autoethnography is an uncharted issue in Greece" and presents eight cases of (non-Greek) autoethnographic studies in his work. Even rarer is research into shadow education adopting an autoethnographic approach from the perspective of the teacher as provider of shadow education. I have been able to spot an autoethnography of a private English tutor (Yung, 2019) for whom, however, there was no ethical conflict involved as he was not a schoolteacher at the same time. The only autoethnographies by Greek educators that came up during my literature search were two music teachers' personal stories (Stamou, 2016; Kontovourki, 2019) an adult educator's narrative (Strikka, 2019), and a primary teacher's "critical self-ethnography" (Tympa, 2018) – all written in Greek. Autoethnography appears to be a terra incognita for researchers in Greece in general, let alone the more specialized issue of shadow EFL education which this paper attempts to tackle.

Following Creswell's recommendation (2009) on using literature in qualitative studies, instead of including a separate section on literature review, I have incorporated the related literature in the narrative sections of this study, where it is compared and contrasted with the themes and categories as they emerge from the analysis.

1 According to Law 1566/198, art. 13, par. 9 (Government Gazette No. 167 of 30 September 1985), state school teachers in Greece are not allowed to deliver private tuition.

2 When I first researched SE, I thought the *shadow* implied illegal practices and transactions hidden in the shadows, away from official monitoring. Later, I read Bray (2013, p. 83) and realized SE "is described as a shadow because it mimics the school system. When the curriculum in the school system changes, so does the curriculum in the shadow; and, when the school system grows, so does the shadow".

2. Research questions

In my autoethnographic study, I endeavour to answer the following research questions:

- RQ.1 What are my teaching practices in general?
 - a. What are my “legitimate” practice duties and obligations as a state EFL school teacher?
 - b. What constitutes my “illegitimate” practice as a private EFL teacher and what are its benefits?
 - c. What is the mutual relationship between the two practices?
- RQ.2 How has the interplay between my “illegitimate” and “legitimate” teaching practices impacted on me and shaped me as an individual psychologically, emotionally, professionally and financially?

3. Research methodology

March 2020³. An acceptance letter (Figure 1) from a university I have applied to for a PhD arrives in my inbox, filling me with joy, expectations, awe, and concern – all feelings rolled up into one, and robbing me of that night’s sleep.

Summer 2020. The ‘cannot-wait-to-start’ PhD student has eagerly searched the university’s website for modules, tutors and their publications six months before the commencement of his doctoral course. First things first and the first module tutor’s first article I come across gets downloaded and printed out: “Autoethnography as an Authentic Learning Activity in Online Doctoral Education ...” by K. Lee. ‘Autoethnography’ being a Greek word is instantly recognizable to me as such, but what does it actually mean? The meticulous student googles the term, makes do with a Wikipedia definition, and annotates its meaning on paper (Figure 2).

Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research in which an author uses self-reflection and writing to explore anecdotal and personal experience and connect this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings.

But why do autoethnography? This question is posed by both Muncey (2010) and Adams *et al* (2015). According to Lee (2020, pp. 578-579), for a doctoral student like my self, AE can serve as an authentic learning activity situated

Figure 1. Accepted!

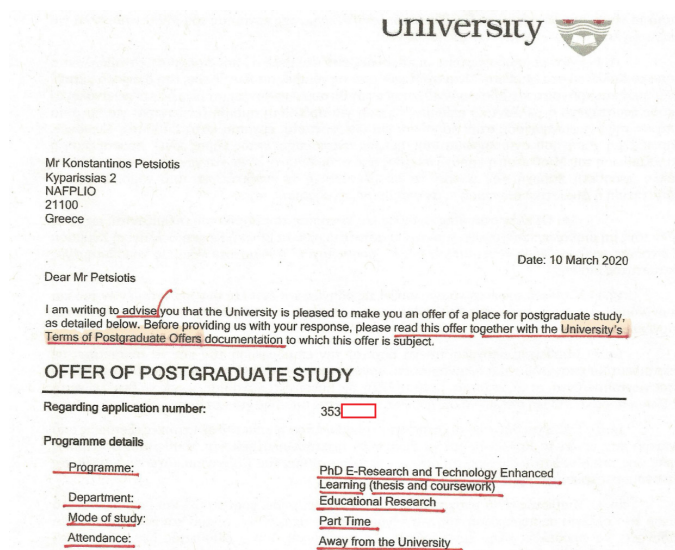
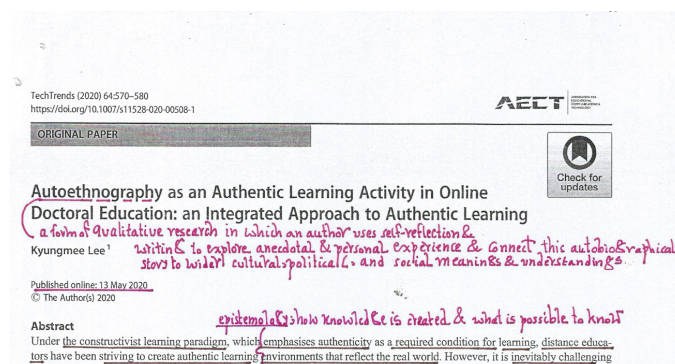


Figure 2. First encounter with AE



in a personal context, and enabling me to identify my “own meaningful problem”.

Turning to Adams *et al*’s reasons for doing autoethnographic research (2015, p. 36), and sifting through them, I come across one or two reasons that I believe apply to my paper – some humble or bland ones like making contributions to, and/or extend existing research and theory, some more ambitious like disrupting the taboo of SE in my professional field. But, put more simply, and in line with Muncey (2010), as I have first-hand experience of the concept I am studying, I simply want to write myself into the study and make myself the focus of the study.

Cohen *et al* (2017, p. 29) warn us that “planning and conducting educational research cannot follow simple recipes”. In my autoethnography, I adopt a hermeneutic phenomenological approach so that I can focus on my lived

³ Throughout this paper, italicized writing indicates a narrative.

experience of a phenomenon (private tutoring versus / in parallel with schoolteaching) as well as on my cultural (professional) location as a state schoolteacher, and my subcultural one as a private tutor of English within the Greek educational sociocultural context. I go beyond describing this phenomenon and, following Bynum & Varpio, I explore and convey its meaning in the context of my everyday life. Bynum & Varpio (2018, p. 252) point out that this approach includes the researcher's experience in the process of data collection and analysis and allows the "dynamic, thoughtful process of reflecting and writing that guides data analysis". Following Grix's account of grounded theory (2010), I therefore do not start out with any hypotheses; rather, I seek relationships between concepts among the data I have collected and code them accordingly. I (the researcher) am the lens through which the data are viewed and subsequently interpreted in their social and cultural context.

The use described above of two qualitative methods, i.e., hermeneutic phenomenology and grounded theory, in one study has been discussed and endorsed by Annells (2006).

4. The data

The data I draw upon in order to find answers to the research questions come from two sources. First, from the 32 organizers / planners / diaries I have been using in the course of three decades (1990-2021) to jot down my school timetable, schedule my private lessons and keep a record of financial transactions, and, occasionally, note down important events, appointments or assignments. As discussed by Chang (2008), these textual data chronicle my past and serve as an autobiographical timeline listing events in a chronological order (which I do not always adopt in my narrative). Secondly, I rely on my recollections and memories of my own private learners and teaching instances, "personal memory data" as Chang calls them. She points out that "[p]ersonal memory is a building block of autoethnography because the past gives a context to the present self and memory opens a door to the richness of the past as a primary source of information" (2008, p. 71). Instead of merely describing what happened in my life, I endeavour to string together these fragments of memories and analyze and interpret these bits of autobiographical data into a culturally meaningful and sensible text.

Moreover, to answer the research questions, I employ my own experiences and contrast them with literature pertinent to the field. Muncey (2010, p. 2) strongly supports the idea that "individual experiences are a legitimate source of data". In addition, in their discussion of grounded theory (see my

section on Research methodology), Birks & Mills (2011, p. 80) endorse and legitimate the use of literature as a source of data when quoting Glaser (2008): "Published literature and existing theory [...] are data and should be treated the same as data from any other source ...".

5. Ethical considerations

By definition, writing autoethnography entails focusing on the self, but, as Chang, (2008, p. 68) notes, it also involves other people, "either as active participants in the story or as associates in the background". In my AE, some people are "mentioned in passing", while my own English teacher is "more intimately interwoven" into my story (Chang, 2008, p. 68). Thus, I decided to anonymize him by using the initial letter of his first name only. As for the self, "doing autoethnography can create personal and professional risks and vulnerabilities" (Adams *et al*, 2015, p. 63). In my case, I, as the autoethnographer, am readily identifiable in my paper, and confessing my law-breaking educational practice can theoretically even incur penal sanctions in my country. In reality, however, this is highly unlikely in a country where the Minister of Education himself admits that the state "cannot police private tutoring" or "trace the black money", rationalizing those appointed teachers'/tutors' practice as "they don't make a fortune out of this – they merely augment their salary"⁴.

6. Narratives, discussion, and findings

Art Bochner: Why don't you try to show what autoethnography is in a story, much like you did in *The Ethnographic I*?"

Carolyn Ellis: I'll try, though I'm not sure I can do that in this context.

- Ellis & Bochner, *Analyzing Analytic Autoethnography*

I would have liked to have written this paper in a pure narrative fashion in the way Ellis does in her storytelling, but, as a novice autoethnographer, I will make do with a hybrid approach that blurs evocative Ellis & Bochner-style autoethnography (2006) and analytic Anderson-like autoethnography (2006): each textual snapshot of my epiphanies (or more mundane moments - everyday experiences that may not be epiphanical [Adams *et al*, 2015]) will be linked

⁴From a radio interview with Greece's Minister of Education K. Gavroglou, on ERT Proto Programma (March 21, 2019).

in a more analytic fashion to the relevant literature. After all, “[s]ome autoethnographers ... [use] the language and formatting conventions of traditional social-scientific forms of writing—that is, structuring a work using a literature review, research questions, methods, data, and findings format” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p. 37).

6.1 Mentor

In her discussion of collecting personal memory data for doing autoethnography, Chang (2008, p. 76) proposes five thematic categories as a starter, one of which is mentors. My memory goes like this:

I remember myself at around the age of 10 being taught English (but not learning much) at a small foreign language cram school in the old part of the town where I live. I cannot recall much from those early learning days, only my plastic briefcase (but not the textbooks inside it), our teacher, a well – dressed, chic Greek female, and her fragrance. Then, in my first year in high school, I and a schoolmate, Andreas start private English lessons – I suppose it was our mothers’ decision, predominantly a financial one, to share the cost of the tutor. Our private tutor is Mr. S, who instantly concludes that Andreas and I have made a false start in English and, as if in a board game, we land on square one, back to the basics. For some unexplained reason, I am starting to become brilliant at English – so much so, indeed, that Mr. S proposes that I start individual lessons with him since Andrew cannot catch up with me anymore. For the next five years I speak, write and think in English as much as I do in Greek. My university entrance exam grades in Ancient Greek, Latin, History, Essay Writing and English easily secure me a place at the Department of English Language and Literature in Athens.

I remember Mr. S arriving in his 1976 red Ford Fiesta for our lesson. As my mother has remarked, he actually looks English with his fair hair, green eyes and pale complexion. He is passionate about teaching and soon builds himself a name in our small-town circles of English private tutoring. He attended the same university school as me and was tenured as a teacher of English at a state secondary school. Soon, however, he quit as he could not stand the students’ indifference towards the subject. Presumably, he felt confident enough that he would survive in the free market of private tutoring. As a matter of fact, he thrived in it and for about three decades, he charged the highest prices in the area; at my pre-economic crisis peak as an established teacher/tutor with two master’s degrees, I charge less than him. However, when I saw

him a few years ago, overcome by his own and family members’ health problems, he was rather regretful about his early career decision and, I gathered, he would have cherished the relevant safety of a state pension.

According to Chang’s (2008, p. 79) definition of the term, a mentor is someone “from whom you have learned new knowledge, skills, principles, wisdom, or perspectives that have made an impact on your life.” I suppose it is fair to acknowledge that my private tutor of English has shaped me into the professional I am today.

6.2 Into the deep end

To answer the first research question and associated subquestions, I delve into the literature on the state of things as regards EFL teaching and the status of the EFL teacher in Greece today, a “messy and ill-defined term” (Lykoudi, 2016, p. 27), and contrast it with my own life history, situation and circumstances.

April 1985, my junior year at university, savouring student life – academia can wait. In his inaugural presidential address, the then President of the Greek Republic⁵ controversially declares that the Greeks are a ‘brotherless nation’ (Özkirimli & Sofos, 2008, p. 122) – with a ‘brotherless’ language, one can presume.

Indeed, Sifakis (2009, p. 233) remarks that Modern Greek is not widely spoken outside Greece, therefore foreign language learning is deemed necessary in a country which heavily depends on the tourist industry. Unsurprisingly, English is the most popular choice and, as shown by Eurostat statistics (2021, pp. 3, 7), in 2018, nine out of every 10 primary and secondary schoolgoers in Greece learnt English.

Flashback. 1979, I have a summer job on a campground in a seaside village not far away from my hometown. The campground actually provides the perfect breeding ground for me to deploy my fast-developing English language skills: holidaymakers from across Western Europe come and go and I enthusiastically strike up conversations – and later correspond by mail – with whoever I meet, be they native speakers of English or users of it as a lingua franca.

Flashforward. September 1991. I have started teaching English on Tuesdays and Fridays at a foreign language school (frontistirio, singular for frontistiria, in Greek) in a

⁵ Christos Sartzetakis (b. 1929), President of the Greek Republic from 1985 to 1990.

| village 10 kilometres away from my home.

In Greece, English is taught on three different fronts - first, in primary, junior and senior high state schools by teachers who hold a four-year university degree in English studies, or by substitute teachers hired at the beginning of the school year. However, prompted by the value Greek society places on English language learning and certification, parents also enroll their children in English courses offered by foreign language schools, the abovementioned 'frontistiria' (Tsagari, 2006, p.2), where - they believe - foreign languages are taught and learnt more effectively. As parents tend to think 'the earlier the better', they send their children to frontistiria before their school English language learning begins so that they are 'done with their English' "by the age of sixteen, as after that age their time is entirely taken up by their preparation for the general university entrance examinations" (Gheralis-Roussos, 2003, p. 8). Finally, many parents also have their children attend one-to-one English classes. Since private one-to-one teaching takes place in a free market, practically anyone can provide their services.

Back to my (hi)story: I have earned my BA degree in English Language and Literature in April 1991, with a four-year delay (I entered university in October 1982) due to an 11-month paternal illness and untimely death, a one-year military service and a huge amount of time spent for the sake of spending it. Within a week of my baptism of fire at the frontistirio I mentioned before, I am also called in by the Ministry of Education to teach as a substitute teacher at two schools, one primary and one secondary, located in two villages around 20 kilometres away from my hometown. In the meantime, I have also started delivering private lessons in English and, at the same time taking driving lessons. My mother has just bought me my first brand new car but I cannot drive it yet without a driving license. For the first weeks, I am chauffeured to work in my own car by my cousin, or catch the bus. Only a few weeks earlier I was lazing jobless on the beach in my hometown, and now I was in full swing teaching on three fronts, one legal practice and two (literally) illegal ones. So, this was it - thrown in at the deep end, it all happened so quickly there was no time to think about ethical considerations, moral obligations, or legal complications; and there was me - initially wearing three hats (those of a frontistirio, state school, and private one-to-one teacher), later in the dual conflicting role of state tenured school teacher and private tutor.

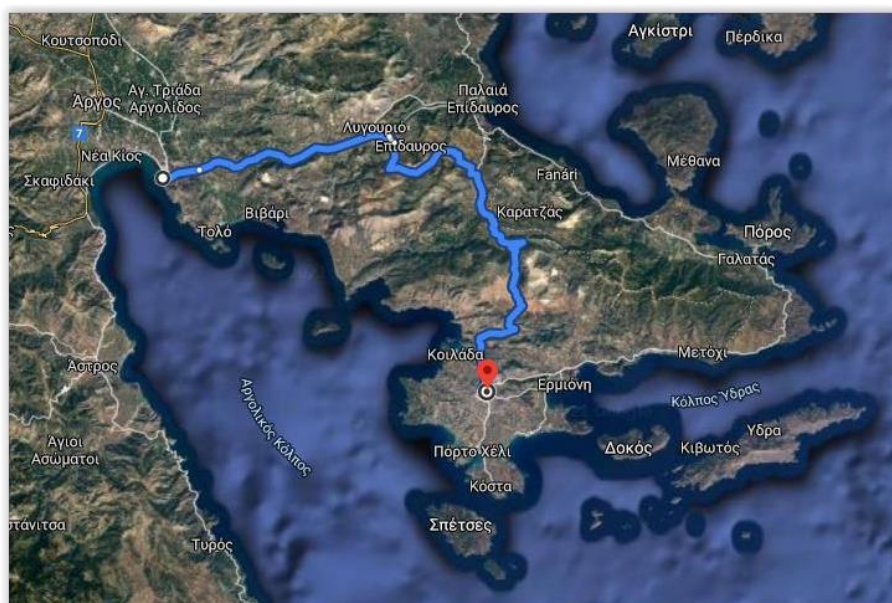
According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018, p. 28), the education system in Greece is highly centralized, allowing little room for teacher autonomy. In this "lethargic state sector" (Tsagari & Sifakis, 2014, p. 213), therefore, I do not have to make any choices regarding curriculum, textbooks, assessment, etc., as these are prescribed by the Ministry of Education and must be adhered to. In my public workplace, "the pressure to prepare candidates for exams is non-existent" (Sifakis, 2009, p. 233) and I 'enjoy' one of the lightest teaching loads in the OECD countries (OECD, 2018, p. 46). When I started my career, I taught 24 hours per week, and at present, 21. This state of things affords me the much needed time I can devote to private teaching - but comes with a cost: demotivated learners, negative attitudes towards English classes at school (treated as a pleasant break from official and demanding EFL learning at private language institutes [Lykoudi, 2016, p. 41]), and undisciplined behavior, which affect teachers' motivation, quality of work and performance (Karavas, 2010, p. 69).

6.3 A long day's journey into work

Some important life decisions have been taken solely through the prism of my private tutoring enterprise and the ensuing financial profit.

October 1995. Summers where I live are extra-long, rainless and arid. The first autumn drizzles turn the dust-covered poorly macadamed country roads into a slippery ice rink. I drive to work, two primary schools - my first permanent teaching appointment - in a small town 70 kilometres away from home. Due to the stunningly beautiful but driver-unfriendly topography of the area (see the Epigraph and Figure 3), I literally drive up and down a mountain before I reach my destination. In mid-journey, I take a bend faster than I should and my second-hand infamous rear wheel drive BMW gently skids off the road and into a nearby field. Some time later, a farmer's tractor tows her back to the road, car unharmed, my driving confidence shattered for the rest of the school year. Like I said, 1995, it is my first tenured teaching position after one year as a substitute teacher and another three years at a private secondary school. I have been building myself a good reputation in the private tutoring sector for about five years and have amassed a large pool of clientele. I get up at 6 am every day to be in time for school at 8am, then drive back home and start my private lessons. This 'long day's journey into work' (and back) entails covering 140 kilometres five days a week for ten months. I could have opted to live in the small town where the two schools

Figure 3. 1995-96 daily commuting



are located for one year; I check my organizer for back then: this would have meant quitting private tutoring in my hometown and, upon my return a year later, starting almost from scratch to build a new pool of students.

I now turn to the psychological and physical imprint which my combined teacher identities have left on me.

6.4 Crack under pressure

October 2011. The first two months of my teaching year are always hectic and frantic. I'm desperately struggling to initially work out and subsequently adapt to the new timetable, new private learners, new classes at school. It's Monday afternoon and I'm teaching two young teen girls, Melina and Anna, when, all of a sudden, my voice refuses to come out, I feel paralyzed and let out a faint sigh "Sir?!" Surprised, the two girls watch me sink into the chair, short of breath, unable to speak, and helpless. A few minutes later Melina's father drives me to my father-in-law's medical office—I don't know why but I suppose I must have asked him to do so. My father-in-law is an old-school cardiologist who runs an electrocardiograph on me and declares me healthy. Some time later and two floors up (the surgery and my in-laws' residence are in the same block of flats) my mother-in-law concludes that I am overworked and underfed and fries me two eggs so that I can stand on my feet again. I do stand on my feet, and the incident goes unnoticed and untreated, but I am carrying it around like a time bomb in me. The bomb ex-

plodes a year later (November 2012) while I'm teaching at school, in the middle of a lesson. This time I'm taken to hospital in an ambulance – with all the symptoms of a massive anxiety attack.

As Kokkinos (2007) points out, teaching is a highly stressful occupation and teacher burnout can occur as a result of chronic work stress. After 20 years (in 2011, when the first anxiety attack incident occurred) of practically working two jobs, I might be right in thinking that professional burnout could have ensued twice as early or perhaps twice as severe. Managing student misbehavior has always been a major stress factor throughout my teaching career; this, coupled with time constraints imposed by overlaid work schedules may have taken their toll on my emotional and physical health. In Kokkinos' study (2007), involving 447 primary school teachers in Cyprus, both of the aforementioned stressors predicted burnout. It needs to be stressed here that, according to Kokkinos *et al* (2005, p.79), work overload may render teachers less tolerant of "challenging and aversive" student behavior, thus inflating its significance as a stress factor. In addition to work-related stressors, the teacher's personality was indicated by Kokkinos (2007) to also be associated with burnout. Based on Costa & McCrae's five-factor model of personality (1992), Kokkinos (2007, p. 230) defines conscientiousness as "the tendency towards persistence, industriousness and organization", all of which attributes have characterized my teaching practices. According to the same model, neuroticism - identified by Kokkinos (2007) as a predictor of burnout - is exhibited as,

among other manifestations, the susceptibility to psychological distress and inability to cope with stress – both of which I have experienced over the years.

As regards Greek EFL teachers in particular, Karavas (2010, p. 69) attributes the high levels of stress and burnout expressed by the teachers in her study to learners' lack of motivation for, and interest in, learning English and to the ensuing discipline problems. She notes that students' lack of motivation has been a perennial problem especially for the Greek public school EFL teacher and a source of great stress and a powerful demotivating factor for them.

I am inclined to believe that my own personality characteristics, the status of the EFL teacher and their subject in the Greek educational system, and physical and mental fatigue amassed over time because of my afternoon tutoring, have weakened me emotionally and psychologically.

6.5 The tricks of the trade

"Situating outside regulations, taxation and monitoring by the government, private tutoring in Georgia is part of the informal economy" (Kobakhidze, 2018, p. 7) - just substitute 'Greece' for 'Georgia' and one is afforded an accurate picture of *parapaideia*^{6,7} in this country. In her study on SE in Georgia, Kobakhidze (2018, p. 3) pinpoints the lack of attention in research paid to teachers' views, their rationalization for involvement in tutoring and the market dynamics (decision making, price setting, emotions management and challenges).

I am briefly dealing with each of these aspects as I believe that, combined, they piece together my private tutoring profile.

6.5.1 Finances: Do the math!

I check my organizer for 2010, when I have reached an all-time private tutoring income peak. By my poor maths, I calculate I earn twice as much from private teaching as from my official profession – and this earning pattern continues more or less unchanged to the present. Ironically, my private tutoring income is supplemented by my regular salary rather than vice versa (Figure 4), thus rationalizing away "any

moral qualms, such as guilt, regarding the [SE] market activities" (Kobakhidze, 2018, p. 15). I do acknowledge, though, that my private tutoring can have a social impact in that it "maintains or exacerbates social and economic inequalities" (Bray, 2009, p. 32), since high-income households can afford it and low-income households are less likely to do so.

I admit that the first and foremost reason why I have been involved in SE is financial, as has also been found in Polychronaki's study (2002) involving Greek high school teachers who viewed private tutoring as a supplement to their low salaries. These salaries have actually been decreased by 30 to 40% during the Greek financial crisis (Kalyva, 2013, p. 106). Far from being a shrewd professional, I developed my price setting strategies by starting with relatively low tutoring fees to establish a clientele, then gradually raised the fees as I built a reputation on the market, reaching a point where my fees were fixed and

Figure 4. My Scrooge-like financial records: first row - fluctuating tutoring income, second row - more or less steady salary

April 2009	2.564.0 + 2.031.0	4.595.0
May 2009	2.518.0 + 703.8	3.221.8
June 2009	1.588.0 + 3697.34	5.079.34
July 2009	940.0 + 2.066.0	2.806.0
August 2009	423.0 + 1544.0	2.216.0
September 2009	7.553.0 + 7544.0	5.100.0
October 2009	4.293.0 + 1544.0	5.840.0
November 2009	3.939.0 + 1544.0	5.286.0
December 2009	2.993.0 + 2.559.0	5.552.0
2009	32.150 + 21.847.1	52.997.14
January 2010	3.220.0 + 1544.0	4.764.0
February 2010	3.011.0 + 1544.0	4.558.0
March 2010	3.830.0 + 1448.0	5.278.0
April 2010	3.248.0 + 1412.0	4.660.0
May 2010	2.286.0 + 1449.0	4.735.0
June 2010	2.038.0 + 1444.0	3.482.0
July 2010	400.0 + 1652.0	2.052.0
August 2010	668.0 + 1581.57	2.249.57
September 2010	3.687.0 + 1567.0	5.242.0
October 2010	4.671.0 + 1649.95	6.320.95
November 2010	4569.0 + 1567.0	6.128.0
December 2010	3.208.5 + 1449.0	5.187.5
2010	35.648.5 + 19.163.52	54.812.02
January 2011	372.0.5 + 1567.0	4.087.5
February 2011	3.276.5 + 1567.0	4.843.5
March 2011	3.422.0 + 1567.0	4.989.0
April 2011	3.229.0 + 1442.87	4.671.87
May 2011	3.070.0 + 1567.08	4.637.08
June 2011	1.499.0 + 1469.81	2.968.81
July 2011	782.0 + 3244.91	4.026.91
August 2011	216.0 + 1567.08	1.783.08
September 2011	2.647.0 + 1428.12	4.075.12
October 2011	3.331.0 + 1204.22	4.535.22
November 2011	3.698.0 + 1204.22	4.902.22
December 2011	2.659.0 + 1250.91	3.909.91
2011	30.224.0 + 20.078.24	50.302.24

6 The submerged economy in the educational system in Greece is so widespread that it has a name of its own: *parapaideia* (Kieselbach et al, 2001, p. 262).

7 According to the Annual Report on Education by the Centre for Development of Educational Policy (2020, p. 852), in 2018, Greek households spent 1,178.7 million euros on SE.

non-negotiable, with the exception of siblings or pairs of learners being charged proportionally lower fees. During the economic crisis, however, I had to readjust my fees accordingly.

6.5.2 Job satisfaction: From ABC to C2

I leaf through the pages of my thirty-odd organizers I have been stashing away in my bookcase closets for years⁸; my wife says this is a disorder called ‘hoarding’ or maybe I have an unhealthy attachment to the past, and suggests I throw them all away. Hundreds of students’ first names, often with surname initial to distinguish namesakes, all bringing memories – some vivid ones, some others faded or fading (Figure 5a).

I look at all those learners’ names. So many kids (my two sons included) I started tutoring as early as their second year in primary school and then all the way through to their highest language certification – tangible evidence of my direct impact on them - seven to eight years later (Figure 5b). Beyond finances, therefore, individual tutoring has been for me a source of professional satisfaction and fulfillment away from the pressure, constraints and “uninspiring work experienced in formal education settings” (Soldo & Jokić, 2013, p. 154).

6.5.3 The measure of success

Logged in on the platforms of the examination boards I register my students with (Figure 6), I scroll up and down the pages with their personal details and exam scores as if I’m looking at my trophy case full of my tutees’ certificates. By 2009 I have earned two MAs, one in Applied Linguistic, one in TESOL, and I do know all about ‘teaching, not testing’, the washback effect of testing on teaching (Alderson & Wall, 1993), and so on - yet I am willing to cynically adopt a strict exam-oriented curriculum and the role of an exam coach.

My success as a tutor is not measured so much by whether my students actually learn English but more by whether they pass or fail their exams. Success breeds success: my learners’ achievements in their language certification exams help build myself a good name in the black market of private tutoring, which results in more parents asking for my services.

⁸ This reminds me of Ragan Fox’s ‘auto-archaeology’ (2010, p. 122), although I am aware that he refers to institutional artifacts, not personal ones.

Figure 5. From ‘Charoulis’ (diminutive), a beginner learner in September 2013, to ‘Charalampos’ (formal name), a Proficiency holder six years later

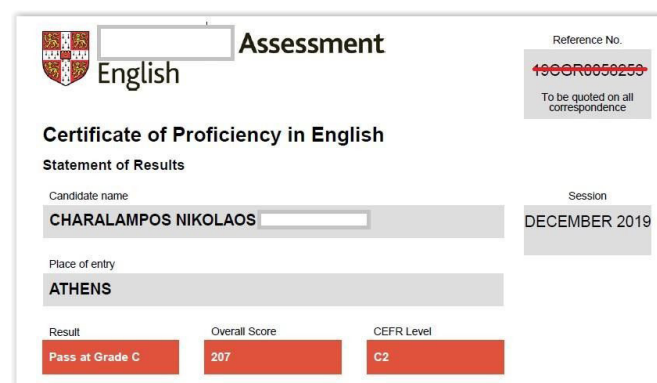


Figure 6. Some of my students on an American EFL examination board online registration platform

EXAMS					
	Home	Why Exams?	About the exams	Exam Preparation	News FAQ Contact
Oct 27, 2018	14966	IRAKLIS VASILEIOS	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 21, 2018	14723	ANGELIKI MARIA	Completed	145,00 €	View order
Oct 18, 2018	14482	STYLIANOS MARIOS	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 15, 2018	14110	KONSTANTINOS	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 8, 2018	13784	KALLIOPI	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Feb 22, 2018	9472	FOIVOS	Completed	145,00 €	View order
Feb 11, 2018	9138	DIMITRIOS EVGENIA	Completed	320,00 €	View order
Oct 15, 2017	6758	STERGIOS	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 15, 2017	6720	GEORGIOS	Completed	145,00 €	View order
Oct 14, 2017	6658	NIKOLAOS	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 11, 2017	6495	IOANNA	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 9, 2017	6314	ANASTASIA	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Oct 9, 2017	6313	NIKOLETA	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Mar 2, 2017	3244	IRAKLIS VASILEIOS	Completed	145,00 €	View order
Feb 24, 2017	2830	KALLIOPI	Completed	145,00 €	View order
Feb 22, 2017	2730	KONSTANTINOS	Completed	145,00 €	View order
Feb 20, 2017	2625	NIKOLETA	Completed	160,00 €	View order
Feb 20, 2017	2624	THEODORA	Completed	160,00 €	View order

6.5.4 Performance and ethics

Silova *et al* (2006) consider private tutoring to be closely linked to unethical behavior by educators, and for Bray (2013, p. 83), one-to-one fee-charging tutoring provided by teachers in regular schools “is the type most vulnerable to corruption, because teachers are tempted to reduce efforts during normal hours in order to promote demand for their private classes.” From a professional standpoint, I plead guilty to the occasionally ‘reduced performance’ part, but it has not been intentional. Rather, I often inadvertently resort to “energy saving mode” (Kobakhidze, 2018, p. 132) for my afternoon classes. Even with the latter, however, there are times (early or later in the afternoon, depending on the time of year) when my biorhythms are at their lowest ebb and I am fighting sleep, all this showing up “in my speech fluency, mixing up words, forgetting a line of thought ...”, like the subjects in Amschler & McKenzie’s study (2010, p. 106) on teachers’ sleep deprivation. On a saving grace note, I have never seen the classroom as a recruiting ground for private students, as has been the case mainly for high-stake university exam preparation, nor have I practiced what Kobakhidze (2018, p. 155) terms ‘coercive tutoring’, whereby teachers pressure students into tutoring through persuasion or otherwise. Rarely, however, have I declined a request to tutor a learner from a class I teach (Figure 5), and certainly not out of ethical considerations.

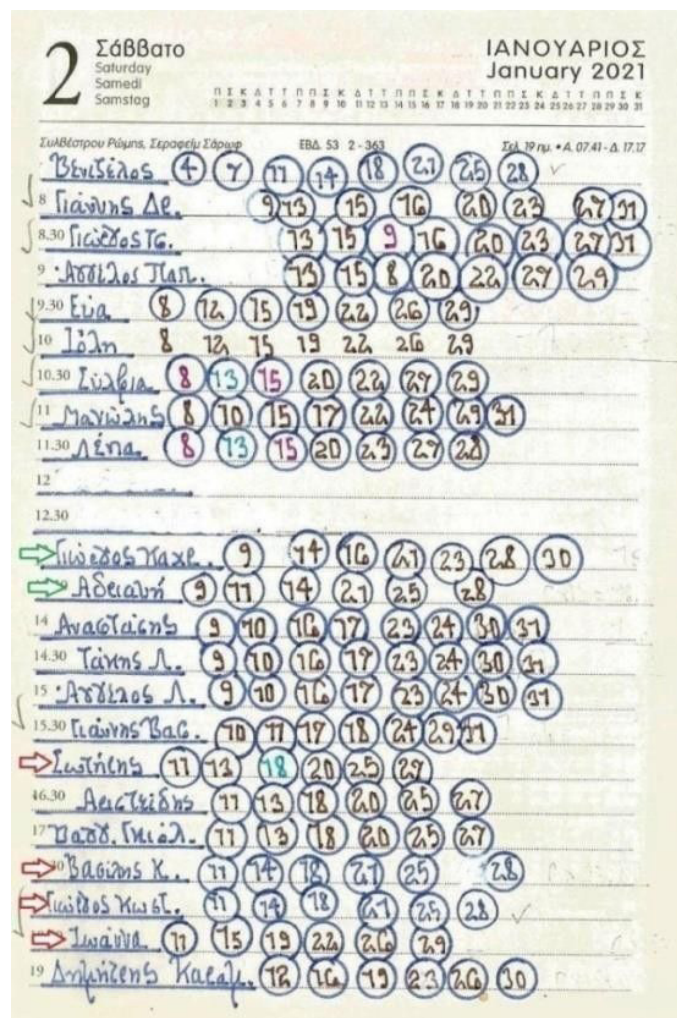
An unfair advantage of the schoolteacher/private tutor over the self-employed freelance teacher is that the former can easily market and sell themselves to learners and their parents in the school environment - a privilege I have been enjoying over the years as, with the exception of one school term, I have not had to teach away from my hometown. However, having your private afternoon tutees in your regular morning classes can be awkward, especially when students have advertised the fact among peers (Kobakhidze, 2018, p. 160), and the teacher-student relationship unavoidably takes on a different form.

Another ethically debatable issue is my being paid directly by my students’ parents, thus creating a supplier-customer relationship, which renders me accountable toward them. This feeling of answerability was also expressed by Georgian teachers in Kobakhidze’s study (2018, p. 116).

7. Validation

In order to validate the accuracy of the findings of my study, I employed an external audit, as proposed by Creswell (2014, p. 284). This person, long-time colleague Anastasia

Figure 7. Tutoring my own students: Four learners currently (red arrows) and two from school year 2018/19 (green arrows)



– with whom we have worked together at one state and one private school, and have co-operated in private tutoring through the ‘referral system’ (recommending each other for private teaching, Kobakhidze, 2014, p. 466) - is a very experienced EFL teacher who has followed the same professional route as me, i.e. being both a state teacher and private tutor. I contacted her on completion of this paper (See Appendix) and asked her to review and evaluate my study not only as an auditor but also as a critical friend.

In her written evaluation (See Appendix A), Anastasia notes that her experience corroborates with my own assessment of SE on EFL teaching in the Greek public school sector. The early enrollment of students in English courses outside the official school environment and the emphasis on certification renders the subject of secondary importance as

early as the primary school level. Students arrive in the EFL classroom with previous knowledge of the subject in varying degrees, and this affords them a certain learning arrogance.

Anastasia also remarks that I focused on two main reasons for continuing private tutoring despite the toll it has taken on my physical and mental well being: financial gain and ongoing job satisfaction. For her, it was the latter that kept her teaching beyond the legitimate parameters of school. Given the cursory approach to teaching English at school - anything other than exam oriented methodology is regarded as superfluous - and the perfunctory attitude of students (and colleagues!)[exclamation mark in her original message], private teaching not only provides her (like me) with personal satisfaction but also with acknowledgement of competence from both students and parents.

8. Conclusion

This autoethnographic journey helped me locate my split-self as an EFL state school teacher and a private tutor within a socio-economic educational context whose shared norms and values permit private tutoring (including that by state school teachers) to be a culturally accepted, systematically resorted to, practice. This study also allowed me, for the first time after all those years, to pause and reflect on my legitimate and illegitimate teaching practices, and identify and describe the feelings and emotions I have experienced over the years. In a country whose context “shapes ethically acceptable and unacceptable practices based on cultural constructs and assumptions” (cf. Kobakhidze’s description of the situation in Georgia, 2018, p. 453), I followed a dual professional path: a lawful one and its unlawful counterpart. Looking back, aided by my memory and my obsessive inventorying of my private learners, I now see how the two paths converged and diverged, and where they have led me. The deeply ingrained, long-established practice of private tuition in Greece (Kassotakis and Verdis, 2013), the importance assigned to EFL qualifications⁹, the fact that EFL certification is not provided for by the Greek state school, and the relatively small number of my school teaching hours, have laid the ground for me to practise private tuition in parallel with public teaching since day one in my career. Emotionally, my main guilt has not merely been the “imbalance between academic and other sides of life” (Bray *et al*, 2013, p. 2)”, but all this family time unspent, being “[b]usy with kids of others, while having no time for my own.” (Tsiala, a teacher in Kobakhidze’s study [2018, p. 135]). From a financial

aspect, my ‘illegal’ activity has been providing me with money without which my life (and my family’s) would have been considerably different, while my ‘legal’ one secures me a low but steady salary and a forthcoming pension. All in all, had I been obliged to choose between the two, I would have opted for the private enterprise over public teacher tenure, both out of financial motives and out of recognition for my work, but if one is able to physically and emotionally afford to do both, why not take advantage?

As this paper is just a teacher’s autoethnographic soul-searching journey, I cannot claim it to be a ground-breaking or seminal work. As Méndez (2013, p. 282) puts it simply, “by subscribing analysis to a personal narrative, the research is also limited in its conclusions.” A further limitation lies in the data being based on my own memory, and “[m]emory is not always a friend to autoethnography; it is sometimes a foe” (Chang, 2008, p. 72).

All in all, there appears to be a gap in the literature on autoethnographic work on such “a widespread phenomenon across the world” as shadow education (Parreira do Amaral & Fossum, 2021, p. 305) – a topic that lends itself to the personal, often discomfiting, confessional nature that characterizes AE. The gap is greater in the Greek context (as pointed out in the Introduction), where the private tutoring industry thrives, and even more so in the field of ‘dual’ (public and private) EFL teaching identity. In this respect, therefore, this paper aspires to contribute to, and fill a gap in, the relevant literature.

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⁹What Prodromou (1988, p. 77) calls “the great Greek paperchase for qualifications”.

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Appendix A: Personal communication and auditor's evaluation

