



Sydney 1954

didn't mind me being based there. But though Dad had pulled through his stroke in 1984, in 1997 he began to suffer from advanced arterial disease. Things looked serious and so I had to come back. When I returned however, he rallied and I started thinking about taking advantage of the academic opportunities Sydney offered. I enrolled in a doctorate at Sydney University from which I have just graduated.

Tell me your motivations for the thesis you completed recently.

My thesis, "Photos in the News" explores visual meaning in a systematic way, and in particular, I explore news photos. I consider mass media texts (both photos and stories) as pedagogic

interaction with words in terms of their complex attitudinal effects on viewers.

In terms of its theoretical contribution, my thesis offers new descriptions of attitudinal visual meaning based on the analysis of 450 daily news photos, showing how they position viewers towards their content in many different ways. These new descriptions are also applied in the thesis to "standout" texts - what I call that combination of photos, headlines, subheadlines and captions that introduce serious stories on critical social issues in broadsheet news reviews. The thesis finds significant contrasts between two sets of standout texts that introduce feature stories on the issue of illegal immigration. Half of the texts are from the Sydney Morning Herald Saturday News Review and half from a similar Greek newspaper - the Sunday Eleftherotipia.

authentic Australian casual conversation, which led to publishing the self-access course called Coffee Break. This was innovative work - little had been done on spoken language anywhere in the world. It gives students the opportunity to listen to Australians chatting, supported by notes both about the spoken language and the social and cultural ideas needed for complete understanding of the conversations.

I went through a very difficult time after this. I divorced, then my father had a stroke, and at the same time I had problems trying to get a promotion I had been promised at work. I am sorry to say that I didn't have the strength to fight for my rights. So, I resigned from this very highly paid and secure job - another decision that disappointed my parents, who were always worried about me.

At that time, I responded to an SBS advertisement for a subtitling position. I got the job and was very happy in my new working environment. It was so much easier than teaching and so much more fun. There were eight Greek subtitlers then - these days there is only one, I think. But after six months I was also offered a government scholarship to do some research in on Greek casual conversation in Greece. I accepted the offer because I really wanted to get away from all the hard times I had had emotionally in the past years. When the research was over, I decided to remain in Greece. Dad had recovered



Early 90's in my Athen's flat

well and I was having a good time. I stayed away for about 10 years. They were the best years of my life. I worked in the media and then at the British Council. I travelled a lot. I bought and renovated a fabulous flat in Plaka near the Acropolis. One of my cousins who knows lots of people in the arts introduced me to whole new vibrant world of exciting people - life was a whirl of galleries, parties, exhibition openings, weekends away...

What brought you back to Australia?

My father's health. My parents had been coming to Greece and staying for more than half of every year, so they

- we learn about the world not just at school but from the media. So my work addresses both contemporary educators and journalists, who must all now produce texts with images. My thesis demonstrates that news photos do not just add visual information to verbal information in headlines and stories. The editors' choice of photo, its content and how it is presented can strongly influence readers' opinions and attitudes about people, events and issues in the news. News photos are not innocent visual 'facts'. The thesis aims to raise consciousness about, and offer tools for analysing photos and their

My thesis project brings together all my passions by combining the two different strands of my professional life - education and media - with my two languages and my love of, and fascination with all kinds of visual art and photography. Overall, my academic career has predominantly been in the field of language and linguistics - as language teacher and trainer, lecturer and researcher in linguistics. I was initially motivated by a dedication to helping migrants learn language. However, in the past ten years, my academic work has encompassed the area of media and communications - both news media and online learning. This has allowed me to bring to my academic career my work experiences in the media: as columnist on ethnic newspapers, sub-editor at the Athens News Agency, subtitler for SBS and interpreter for TV documentaries.

Would you like to add something further?

I'd just like to say how much I wish my parents were alive to see me graduate as a Doctor of Philosophy. Doing this PhD was partly for Dad as he always wanted me to be a doctor. I didn't become a medical doctor as he had hoped at first but I know he would be very proud that I am the first in my family, both on my father's and mother's side, to become a Doctor of Philosophy.

What are your future plans?

My thesis examiners all encouraged me to write at least two books from the thesis - one more theoretical one for linguists and one more practical one for educators and journalists. But I need a rest first - writing a 400 page thesis was exhausting! I have, however, just written a paper (my fifth from the thesis) as a chapter for an academic book and I am also speaking at three conferences this year. I have also been asked to advise on how to use images in an on-line professional training course to help attract and engage trainees with the course content. Interestingly, I have have most interest shown in my work by educators rather than journalists. Maybe journos don't trust a linguist to help them do their work better!

Digest of examiners comments for "Photos in the News"

All 3 examiners recommended the degree be awarded 'without further conditions' (the highest grading possible).

• **Examiner 1**

"superb... groundbreaking... outstanding example of scholarly work on an area ... that has long seemed intractable ... in studies of media discourse"

"I look forward to seeing the work published.... as a fully fledged book on visual semiosis and news making"

• **Examiner 2**

"a fine thesis...breaks new ground on several fronts

"will have important applications in various contexts... "will make a contribution to studies of image and image-verbiage more broadly...beyond the fields of media studies/ journalism.

"much to be published from this thesis ...many papers not just two or three....

• **Examiner 3**

"This thesis is of very high quality.... breaks new ground..., a highly original and stimulating piece of work making substantial contributions to an under-researched field.

"high standard of intellectual inquiry and control of the research process (both theory building and analysis)

"ability to organise and communicate complex ideas and findings together with understanding of the world of journalists and production processes

"contains a substantial amount of material suitable for publication."