

Greek language: the value of the present

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“Give me a word, any word, and I
show you that the root of that
word is Greek.”

(Gus Portokalos, *My Big Fat Greek
Wedding*, 2002)

“What about the word kimono?”

“Kimono, kimono, kimono. Ha! Of course! Kimono is come from the Greek word himona, is mean winter. So, what do you wear in the wintertime to stay warm? A robe. You see: robe, kimono. There you go!” (Gus Portokalos)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PI_0camhHUI

Greek language as a synchrony or as
a present process of its various
forms and functions

- The present status of Greek in Greece and in Europe
- The current perceptions and attitudes towards Greek and
- The ways in which they correspond with the language's particularities on one hand but also with views about languages in general

An apparent need to address issues of
teaching contemporary Greek as a
foreign/second language: a flourishing
area! 😊

The emergence of a recently established structure for various aspects of language planning including the increase of the language's codification

“Centre for Greek Language” (“Kentro Ellinikis Glossas”) in Thessaloniki with its twofold aim of the **support** and **promotion** of the Greek language in Greece and abroad

“If we focus on and project the language’s synchrony we run the risk of somewhat stripping the language off its glory which lies in its past”



The past-present dilemma

- The importance of the language's diachrony and its unbroken continuity
- Ancient Greek provided Europe a considerable amount of vocabulary
- Respect for and recognition of Modern Greek in view of this contribution of Ancient Greek
- Modern Greek language has a place in the contemporary world as an equal among equals

An explanatory framework for this past-present dilemma and ways of looking at this present

- Universally attested **popular ideas**
- **Popular sentiments** and **popular fears** about languages

[Folklinguistics]

Language, a very emotional subject

- **Prescriptivism** and **correctness** advocated by a certain body in each society
- Some languages are more equal than others so they can serve as models of grammatical excellences

Language change

- Language changes are inevitable due to societal changes
- All languages have a relative complexity; linguistic differences correlate with cultural and social features

This view that languages are
intrinsically superior to others has no
basis in linguistic fact

The continuity argument in relation to Greek

- An exclusive focus on the past of the language (neoclassicism, romantic Hellenism)
- Inferiority syndroms
- Obsessive denial of natural changes in the language
- Fetish for archaeology

There is no need really when Greek in its current varieties is **a vibrant, “alive and kicking” language** with 10+ million speakers in Greece alone to be presented as a fossilized language full of survivals, or to be in need to apologize for its present day “decline”

Theories of language decline

- The major donor language for science, technology, business and popular culture is American English
- The phenomenon is very frequently presented as unique
- These decline anxieties occur in speech communities all around the world - what about where you live? 😊

Portals for MG Language

- <http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/index.html> “Centre for the Greek Language”; with Tools, Bibliographies, Studies, Teaching - Education, Greek as a Second/Foreign Language, Guides and Sources

- <http://www.komvos.edu.gr/> ΗΛΕΚΤΡΟΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΟΜΒΟΣ για την υποστήριξη των διδασκόντων την Ελληνική Γλώσσα (in Greek)
- <http://www.fryktories.gr/index.php>
- <http://elearning.greek-language.gr/> Routes; Centre for the Greek language

... and 2 Books!

- Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Alexandra Georgakopoulou and Michael Silk eds., *Standard Languages and Language Standards – Greek, Past and Present*, (Publications of the Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College London: 12, 2009)

Ευχαριστώ! 😊😊😊