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The media on media-induced language change¹

1 Introduction

In this paper I consider texts in the Greek print media about media language and media-induced language change. The term ‘media-induced language change’ should be understood in its most general sense, possibly encompassing what are often called ‘folk-linguistic’ conceptions of language and language change (Niedzielski and Preston 2000). In this general sense, the term should be taken to denote nothing less than any perceived alternation in oral or written language behaviour inside or outside the media. The qualification ‘*perceived* alternation’ is necessary, since, as it will become clear from the analysis of the data, the media remain silent about many types of alternations; i.e. there are types of variation and changes that pass unnoticed or are not commented upon. It will also turn out that ‘media-induced language change’ has a much narrower scope in the metalinguistic discourse of the print media: in the Greek print media at least, ‘media-induced language change’ means, almost exclusively, any *deviation* from an established *norm* or *standard*, particularly a *written* one. The very term ‘media’ (Μέσα, ‘Media’, or MME: Μέσα Μαζικής Επικοινωνίας/Ενημέρωσης, ‘Mass Media of Communication’) also has a narrow scope; in the print media it is used to refer mainly to the electronic media, especially TV and internet, which are held responsible for introducing or propagating undesired linguistic changes.

‘Media-induced language change’ is accordingly understood as the subject, the theme or, simply, the set of references to media-induced language changes, i.e. it is here understood as a *metalinguistic* construct. In order to avoid confusion, it should be kept in mind that this paper is not about media-induced change *per se*; rather, it is about whether and how the media conceptualize the language changes they themselves possibly effect. This paper is about reflexivity: it is about language change only to the degree that language change is being observed and

¹ I have profited from extensive comments and suggestions by Jürgen Spitzmüller and Jannis Androutsopoulos on earlier drafts of this chapter. Jana Tereick pointed out to me Microsoft’s text strategies (section 2.2.3). I am particularly grateful to Jannis Androutsopoulos who gave me constant encouragement and put up with my delays.

talked about by possible agents of language change, i. e. by the media people or, more impersonally, ‘the media’. Similarly, the opposition between scientific and non-scientific conceptions of language is also understood, in the present paper, primarily as a set of potential differences between metalinguistic constructs (and not as a difference, say, in their degree of authority, legitimacy, or plausibility).

It should be stressed at this point that the distinction between linguistic (or professional) and folk-linguistic (or non-professional) conceptions, often made in language ideology studies, cannot be readily applied to the texts considered here. In his seminal paper about language ideology, Silverstein (1979: 193) admits that “in certain areas the ideological beliefs do in fact match the scientific ones, though the two will, in general, be part of divergent larger systems of discourse and enterprise”. The emphasis should be reversed: although, generally, ideological and scientific beliefs belong to different types of discourse, they do in fact match in many cases. Niedzielski and Preston (2000: viii), having first introduced the term ‘folk-linguistics’, hastened to caution their readers that there are no real boundaries between linguistics and ‘folk linguistics’: “professional linguists themselves are also a folk group, with their own rich set of beliefs”. Most of the people who write about language and language change in the Greek media are not linguists, yet they cannot be considered as ‘folk’ or ‘lay’ persons either. Journalists practicing the craft of writing are professionals in their own right. They have variable access to expert opinion, one may assume. Probably they do share some of the ‘folk-conceptions’ of language and language change, yet it so happens that such conceptions are being propagated in and through the print media by linguists themselves (as it is the case with George Babiniotis; see *infra*). Hence, I do not assume any hierarchy of expertise on matters linguistic. My intent is to use the terms ‘non-professional’ and ‘professional’ in as neutral a way as possible in order to indicate simply where a conception comes from: the print media or a linguistic study, respectively. I will also not presume that there is an ultimate substratum of ‘folk’ concepts, although I wish to show that those who write about language in the print media share the same attitudes, they are guided by similar beliefs or convictions about language, and, to reverse B. L. Whorf’s famous dictum, they are pointed toward *the same* types of observations and evaluations.

In all the media texts I have considered, an unequivocal belief in the reality of media-induced language change is either emphatically stated at some point or other or it is presupposed throughout. In order to document and critically analyze this and related beliefs, the present paper employs a corpus-driven approach to metalinguistic discourse. It focuses on publications about media language in the Greek print media, in the period from the mid 1980s through the early 2000s. During this period there was an upsurge of public interest concerning (electronic)

media language in Greece, due to the privatization of the media sector. The first legal private radio station in Greece, Athena 9.84 FM, started broadcasting on May 31, 1987 and the first private TV channel, Mega Channel, on November 20, 1989, soon to be followed by ANT1, whose first broadcast went on the air on December 31, 1989.

In what follows, I will describe a corpus of texts about media language (Section 2.1.), I will provide relevant excerpts (Section 2.2.), and try to illustrate the conception of language change that emerges from these publications. My analysis identifies several motifs (*topoi*) that recur in the texts considered (Section 2.3.). The conception that emerges will be tested for coherence and validity against a larger corpus of metalinguistic texts and it will finally be contrasted to theories of media-induced change elaborated in the relevant linguistic literature (Section 3.). I argue that the very belief in language change might have a certain performative effect, i. e. it might manage to shape language habits through, for example, the exercise of certain linguistic controls over broadcasting. Awareness of change might change its course. The view that linguistic change can somehow be inhibited or directed towards a predetermined goal is consistent with the “non-professional” or “unscientific” view of language change, i. e. with the prescriptive attitude that seeks to prevent language change or direct it towards an accepted standard. That under certain conditions such an attitude may have the effect of a self-fulfilled prophecy is a possibility that, as far as I know, has not yet been seriously contemplated in the scientific literature. It is touched upon in the last section (3) of the present chapter.

2 The media’s conception of media-induced language change

2.1 The corpus

The corpus I consider consists of 295 entries. Each entry comprises at most one page-length text published in the Greek print media, page length varying with the newspaper or the periodical; i. e. a text, as is often the case with feature articles, can extend to more than one entry. There are 16 multiple-entry texts in the corpus and there is no text extending to more than six entries (pages); only two feature articles are six-page long. The earliest text was published on 11 November 1986; the latest on 11 March 2001.

The texts were selected from a larger corpus of 6,838 texts. The earliest text in the larger corpus was published on 1 January 1964; the latest on 1 April 2001. After November 1999, the corpus was systematically compiled with the help of a press clipping agency and, for all practical reasons, it can be considered exhaus-

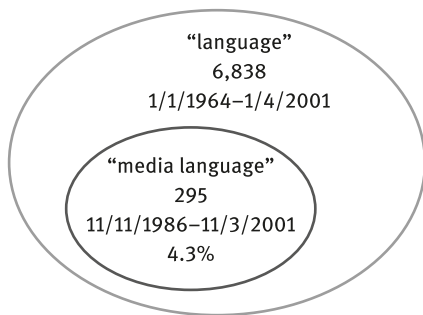


Figure 1: Smaller and larger corpus

tive, i. e. it includes all publications about language in the Greek newspapers and magazines from 15 November 1999 until 1 April 2001. While the texts of the larger corpus refer to any language issue raised in the Greek newspapers over a period of about four decades, the 295 texts selected for the purposes of this study refer, thematically or *en passant*, more specifically to ‘media language’ or to ‘media language changes’ or to ‘media and language’. The relation between the larger corpus and the smaller one that the present chapter focuses on is depicted in Figure 1. In Section 2.3, the larger corpus is discussed as a framework, in reference to which the thematic categories attested for the smaller corpus can be understood and interpreted.

The exhaustiveness of the corpus, i. e. the fact that it comprises all relevant publications over a long period of time, is considered to be a major advantage of corpus-driven discourse analyses vis-à-vis impressionistic analyses, which usually rely on a few text excerpts and tend to read into the texts the intuitions or the presuppositions of the researchers. A corpus-driven approach also allows a wider view on the available texts, the opinions they express and their relative significance. The first thing to notice is that only 4.3 per cent of the total number of print media texts (295 out of 6,838 entries) refer specifically to media language. This measure is of course provided relative to other language issues covered in the Greek press. Since language issues in general form a very small percentage of the total coverage of a newspaper, it may be concluded that neither media language nor language in general give rise to issues that cause much concern in the Greek print media, despite the fact that language issues are usually treated in a we-are-all-very-much-concerned style.

Out of these 295 texts, 36 were published in the liberal centre-left daily newspaper *Ελευθεροτυπία* (seven out of the 36 texts appeared in its monthly magazine booklet *Infotech*); 32 were published in the rather conservative right-wing daily *Η Καθημερινή*; 21 in the centre-left newspaper *Το Βήμα*; 16 in *Ελεύθερη Ώρα* (right-wing); 14 in the conservative monthly periodical *Πολιτικά Θέματα*; 13 in

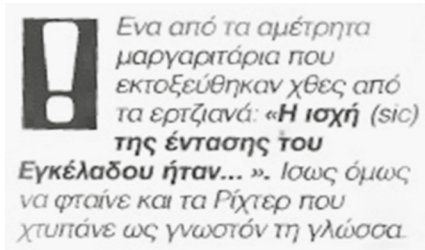


Figure 2: A short comment (*Ελευθεροτυπία* 18 September 1989, p. 9)

the daily newspaper *Έθνος* (centre-left); eight in the daily *Τα Νέα* (centre-left); eight in *Απογευματινή* (right-wing); eight in *Μακεδονία* (centre-right); eight in the financial newspaper *Ημερησία*; seven in the monthly computer magazine *RAM*; seven in the financial newspaper *ΕΞΠΡΕΣ*; six in the conservative right-wing daily *Αδέσμευτος Τύπος* (ed. D. Rizos); and five in its twin *Αδέσμευτος Τύπος* (ed. K. Mitsis). The articles in these newspapers and periodicals amount to about 65 per cent of the total number of publications. The remaining 35 per cent were published in 17 different newspapers and magazines (one to five texts in each). Dispersion seems to be another indication that media language does not attract much attention in the media. I have not detected significant differences in content on the basis of the political affiliation of the newspaper, an issue I turn to later on. (For a characterization of the political affiliation of some of these newspapers and periodicals on independent grounds, see Kollia *et al.* 2013).

The texts belong to different genres (for the definition of genre categories for metalinguistic publications, see Moschonas 2001a). One hundred and thirty-one texts are news items. There are also 66 feature articles (more precisely, 66 entries for 31 feature articles), 34 opinion articles (31 entries for 29 opinion articles), 27 letters to the editor, 24 short comments, three book reviews and ten interviews (ten entries for eight interviews). Short comments are usually anonymous and humorous. An example of such a comment is reproduced in Figure 2; in free translation: ‘One of countless blunders heard yesterday on the airwaves: “the power [= *ισχύ*, instead of the archaistic *ισχύς*] (sic) of the intensity of the earthquake was ...” It is well-known that earthquakes also hit the language’.

The relatively large number of news items in the corpus may be attributed to two events that were systematically covered in the newspapers over some period of time: a) a conference on the subject of “Journalism and Language”, sponsored and organized by the Athens Association of Journalists (ΕΣΗΕΑ), which took place in April 2000 (59 entries in the corpus; presumably, the large coverage is due to the fact that the conference was sponsored by Greece’s most powerful journalists’ association); and b) a peculiar news item referring to the inclusion into the

operational system Windows 2000 of a font for writing ancient Greek (total of 43 entries in the corpus; the importance of this event will be explained shortly). With the exception of these two events, the figures concerning genre categorization are quite similar to the ones reported in our earlier study Moschonas (2001a: 99). I have not taken into account “usage columns”, i. e. newspaper texts that regularly give advice on matters of (media) language usage, since I have extensively studied such texts in Moschonas (2001b, 2005) and Moschonas and Spitzmüller (2010); some results of the latter study will be summarized in the next section (2.2).

The media texts in the corpus were classified into eight thematic categories:

1. *General references* (56 entries, 19 per cent)

In this category belong general essay-type articles with either *en passant* or thematic references to media (mostly TV) language use; for example, the publication of a public speech on Greek language by the President of the Greek Republic, with admonitions on media usage, clearly belongs here (George Stephanopoulos, «Προσοχή στη γλώσσα μας!», “Attention to our language!” *Πολιτικά Θέματα* November 2000). Texts in this category are usually critical of media language use, but, unlike the texts in the next category, they do not contain many references to particular examples. Typically, media language is referred to through definite descriptions such as “the language of TV”, “the language of the internet”, “the language of journalism”, “the language of news”, etc. Since the existential presupposition of these and similar definite descriptions is taken for granted, these texts contribute to the metalinguistic construction of such doubtful entities as “the language of TV”, etc.

2. *Mistakes* (44 entries, 15 per cent)

Although, as already indicated, articles on language usage in general (i. e. outside the media) were not included in the corpus, there is a considerable number of texts that refer explicitly to the alleged mistakes made by journalists, broadcasters, cinema and TV celebrities. Some of the articles in this category also lament the formulaic character of “the language of journalism” and they offer advice for its improvement. Several letters to the editor also belong here.

3. *E-communication* (38 entries, 13 per cent)

New forms of electronic communication are discussed in a separate category of texts, with the following subcategories:

- 3.1. The use of Greeklish (i. e., the representation of the Greek alphabet with the Latin script) and the danger of “latinization” of the Greek language (25 entries);
- 3.2. Foreign words in information technology (nine entries);
- 3.3. Effects of the electronic media on youth’s language (two entries);
- 3.4. E-mails and text-messages (two entries).

4. *Products and services* (26 entries, nine per cent)

These texts report on new computer/internet software products or services. Most of the products presented in this category of texts are ones that facilitate the learning or the use of the Greek language, e.g. computer software for learning Greek or for navigating in the internet (see, for example, «Φιλογλωσσία: Η ελληνική γλώσσα ‘ταξιδεύει’ με έναν κομπιούτερ», “*Philoglossia: The Greek language ‘travels’ with a computer*”, *Ελευθεροτυπία* 27 May 1998). Software products and services are provided mostly for the Greek language (see, for example, «Η τεχνολογία στην υπηρεσία της ελληνικής. Η μάχη κατά της αφομοίωσης», “*Technology in the service of the Greek language. The battle against assimilation*”, *Ελευθεροτυπία* 27 November 1999). There will be no further references to the texts in this category; most of them are reproductions of press releases circulated by manufacturing companies and agencies.

Media multilingualism (15 entries, five per cent)

There are a few texts referring to multilingualism on the internet or to multilingual radio or TV broadcasts (e.g. «Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση: Σχέδια για ενίσχυση των πολυγλωσσικών ΜΜΕ», “*EU: Plans for enforcing multilingual media*”, *ΕΞΠΡΕΣ* 3 July 2000). It is interesting to notice that multilingualism, when not seen as a “threat” to the Greek language, is understood as a platform for the promotion of Greek, for strengthening its status in the EU, etc.; more often than not, however, multilingualism is understood as an obstacle to Greek monolingualism. The texts in this category report on Greek-speaking media addressed to immigrant Greeks in Australia («Προβλήματα του ομογενειακού Τύπου», *Ωρα των Σπορ* 20 July 2000), BBC News or Euronews being broadcast in Greek («Στα ελληνικά οι ειδήσεις του Euronews», “*Euronews in Greek*”, *Πολιτικά Θέματα* March 2000; «Πολυγλωσσικοί συνδυασμοί στα ερτζιανά. Συνεργασία ΕΡΑ και BBC», “*Multilingual combinations on the air: a collaboration between the Greek State Radio and BBC*”, *Ραδιοτηλεόραση* 14 July 2000); Greek news in other languages («Να μιλούν αγγλικά, αν θέλουν να επιβιώσουν τα ομογενειακά ΜΜΕ», “*Greek media abroad should speak English, if they want to survive*”, *Ημερησία* 18 July 2000; «Έγνοια για τη γλώσσα, μάχη για την επιβίωση», “*Concern for the language, battle for survival*”, *Ελευθεροτυπία* 18 July 2000; «Καημός της ομογένειας για τη γλώσσα», “*Expatriate Greeks’ deep concern for language*”, *Ελευθεροτυπία* 20 July 2000); Greece’s presence on the internet («Η ημετέρα παιδεία στο διαδίκτυο», “*Greek culture on the internet*”, *Το Βήμα* 1 November 2000). The import of such publications is clear; no further analysis of their content is necessary.

5. *A conference* (59 entries, 20 per cent)

As mentioned already, a conference on “Journalism and Language” took place in Athens from 15–16 April 2000. The conference, in which both journalists

and linguists participated, was sponsored and organized by the Athens Association of Journalists (ΕΣΗΕΑ). Almost all the texts in this category report on the event of the conference, without going into the details of the proceedings or taking stance on the participants' views. Earlier publications simply reproduce the press release of the conference. Hence, references to the texts in this category will be omitted. (That this is a monitored news sequence is attested by the writer of the present paper, who was one of the organizers of the conference and one of the editors of its proceedings: Boukalas and Moschonas 2001; as well as co-author of the press releases circulated amongst journalists in both the occasion of the conference and the occasion of the publication of its proceedings).

6. *A Greek font* (43 entries, 14.6 per cent)

The inclusion of a polytonic (multi-accent) font in the operational system Windows 2000 was hailed as a big event in the Greek print media. With this font, Greek language, “the language of Plato”, would again be available worldwide through the internet. (Publications in this category may have been triggered in part by an advertising campaign planned by Microsoft's office in Greece.)

7. “*Do you speak Greek?*” (14 entries, 4.8 per cent)

“Ομιλείτε ελληνικά;” (*Do you speak Greek?*) was a popular TV show that used to offer advice on issues of language usage. Participants would compete with each other while being tested for their knowledge of the Greek language and their ability to use the “correct Greek”. The show ran under the advice of George Babiniotis, professor of linguistics at the University of Athens and a very well-known public persona in Greece. The launching of the show's new season in 2000 was announced in all major newspapers. There are three feature articles on the history of the show, which stress its importance for the cultivation of the Greek language; there is no need to discuss them here. Unfortunately, there is no study of the show's corrective repertoires. George



Figure 3: G. Babiniotis (right) on the pronunciation of voiced stops
(«Ομιλείτε ελληνικά;», c. 2007, source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esBeh4YYnio>).

Babiniotis, who often appeared in the show, is shown in Figure 3 to provide advice on the “correct pronunciation” of voiced stops.

2.2 Examples

2.2.1 “The language of the media”

In this section I present and comment on a few examples. I will start with a text by George Babiniotis on the “quality” of TV language. Although his article is probably a transcribed telephone interview, it is nevertheless published under the interviewee’s name. The text could be confidently placed in the first thematic category, which comprises general overviews of media language, often cautionary in character. Indeed, the text is prototypical in several respects: the author takes it as a matter of fact that the media affect everyday language use, he considers media (television) usage as a model for language use in general and he shows a clear preference for the scripted language over spontaneous oral communication; the latter he considers to be sloppy and full of mistakes. In addition, his views are presented in the authoritative manner of a university professor of linguistics who feels at ease with prescribing –rather than describing– language use (the views expressed by Babiniotis in this short article are expounded in Babiniotis 1994a, 1994b, which contain mostly his newspaper articles and other occasional texts of his).

Τα θετικά και αρνητικά για τη γλώσσα

Γεώργιος Μπαμπινιώτης

(Καθηγητής Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών)

Από τη λειτουργία της ιδιωτικής τηλεόρασης σε σχέση με τη γλώσσα, έχουν προκύψει ορισμένες θετικές και αρνητικές πλευρές και ιδίως παραλείψεις.

Στις θετικές πλευρές, είναι ο λόγος που εκφωνείται και [εκ]φέρεται από ορισμένους δημοσιογράφους, καλεσμένους και παρουσιαστές. Είναι λόγος υποδειγματικός στην εκφορά του αλλά και στη δόμησή του.

Αυτό υπάρχει στα δελτία ειδήσεων, και στις εκπομπές λόγου όταν είναι προσεγμένες σε σχέση με τους καλεσμένους. Γενικά, έχουμε στιγμές πολύ καλές σε σχέση με την ελληνική γλώσσα, στην ιδιωτική τηλεόραση, που μπορεί να λειτουργήσει ως ένα πρότυπο και να καλλιεργήσει το οπτικοακουστικό αίσθημα του τηλεθεατή.

Τα αρνητικά είναι αυτά που ακούμε συνήθως στα ρεπορτάζ, από ρεπόρτερ οι οποίοι μιλούν στον τόπο των γεγονότων.

Βεβαίως οι συνθήκες δεν είναι ιδεώδεις, αλλά εν πάση περιπτώσει, φαίνεται ότι σε πολλούς από αυτούς η γλωσσική τους κατάρτιση δεν είναι η καλύτερη. Έτσι ακούγονται χοντρά λάθη τα οποία δημιουργούν πρότυπα άσχημα για τη γλώσσα.

Επίσης οι σειρές –πλην εξαιρέσεων– έχουν κατά κανόνα κακό λόγο, με την έννοια ότι τα πρότυπα που προβάλλουν έχουν συχνά ένα χυδαίο χαρακτήρα και προχειρότητα στις επιλογές προκειμένου να βγάλουν το «αστείο».

Πέρα από το ξενόγλωσσο στοιχείο που ακούγεται, δεν βοηθάει επίσης την ελληνική γλώσσα, η μεταγλώττιση των ξένων σειρών. Συχνά υπάρχουν σοβαρά λάθη και κακή απόδοση των ελληνικών τα οποία κάνουν κακό στη γλωσσική συγκρότηση του θεατή.

Στις αρνητικές πλευρές θα έβαζα και τα ριάλιτι σόου, όπου ο λόγος που εκπέμπεται είναι κατά κανόνα πολύ κακής ποιότητας.

Θα μπορούσε η ιδιωτική τηλεόραση να δώσει ένα ποσοστό χρόνου αφιερωμένο στην ελληνική γλώσσα. Υπάρχει ήδη ο Νόμος Βενιζέλου που υποχρεώνει τα κανάλια να το κάνουν, πράγμα το οποίο δεν γίνεται. Έτσι, δεν περνάει στην τηλεόραση, αυτό που εγώ λέω, πως η γλώσσα ως αξία, και ως ένα αγαθό πολιτιστικό, πρέπει να προσεχθεί και να προβληθεί. Γιατί ο λόγος στην τηλεόραση λειτουργεί ως πρότυπο και καθώς συνοδεύεται από την εικόνα αποτυπώνεται όσο τίποτε άλλο (*Εθνος* 29 November 1999).

Positive and negative aspects of [the] language

George Babiniotis

(Professor at the University of Athens)

Since the [beginning of] the operation of private television, some positive and some negative aspects of language [use] have emerged and, mostly, some omissions.

To the positive aspects one can count the speech uttered by some journalists, guests and presenters. Their speech is exemplary in its articulation [=pronunciation] as well as in its structuring.

This can be seen on the news and the talk shows, provided the guests are carefully selected. Generally, there are some very good moments for the Greek language in the private television, which can function as a model and it can cultivate the audiovisual sentiment of the viewers.

To the negative aspects one can count what is usually heard in live reporting from events.

Of course, the circumstances are not ideal, but, in any event, it seems that many of these reporters did not have the best linguistic training. Outrageous mistakes are heard which function as bad models for the language.

As a rule – there are exceptions, of course –, the discourse of TV series is also bad, in the sense that it presents models that often have a vulgar character and, in trying to force a joke, often betrays offhandedness.

Apart from the foreign language elements heard, the subtitling of foreign series is not helpful for the Greek language either. There are often serious mistakes and bad renderings in Greek, which harm the linguistic edification of the viewers.

Another negative aspect of the media, I would say, is the reality shows, which broadcast speech of a very bad quality.

Private television could devote some time to the Greek language. There is already a law that forces TV channels to do precisely that; however, the law has not been respected. As a result, television does not pass on the message that, as I say, language is a value and a cultural asset, and it should be taken care of and be projected as such, because the discourse of television functions as a model and, since it is accompanied by the picture, it is impressed in the mind more strongly than anything else.

The author keeps score of the “positive” and “negative aspects” of language use on television. Perhaps out of courtesy to the journalist interviewing him, he first mentions the “exemplary speech” of certain journalists. Their good use of

language functions as a model for the viewers. The bad use of language (in live reporting, in Greek TV series, in the subtitling of foreign movies and series, in reality shows) also functions as a model, albeit a negative one. The evaluation of use as positive-negative, good-bad, vulgar or offhanded is a prerequisite for his prescriptive attitude towards language that extends beyond particular uses to whole TV genres: for example, reality shows are “bad” not only because of but also, one might say, regardless of their language use, as if they were bad in themselves; it is not only a matter of using the correct language but also a matter of being well-mannered or dignified. Language evaluation thus acquires a moral character that touches on deeper aspects of the “audiovisual sentiment”.

The recurring theme in this short evaluation of media (television) discourse (λόγος) is that media language functions as a powerful model, capable of affecting the linguistic behaviour of the viewers. Complaining about loss of standards in media language and, at the same time, maintaining that media (TV) language is itself a *de facto* standard seems, of course, to be a paradoxical combination of views. But the paradox is resolved once we accept that the standard exists outside the media and that the media merely reproduce and propagate it. Babiniotis evaluates media language in the name of a standard; this is the reason why he shows a preference for the written norms of Standard Modern Greek; he clearly prefers the scripted, “careful” articulation of news announcements over the spontaneous use of speech in unscripted reporting or in reality shows; he adopts the widespread puristic ideology of the standard that has to be purged of “foreign elements”; he does not recognize the possibility of variation; and, certainly, he takes a prescriptive stance to language use that also allows for legislative regulation. For Babiniotis and others, media language is a battlefield for the standardization of Modern Greek. Television is judged for its pedagogical ability to cultivate the norms of the standard language. It is a means for the elaboration of a codified language, in the sense of Haugen (1966: 933). Television is considered capable of inducing either upward language change, towards the standard, or downward change, towards more “vulgar” uses of the language. Accordingly, Babiniotis’ “positive” and “negative models” are evaluative terms that correspond to the opposite processes of standardization and destandardization. In either case, the media’s ability to influence language change is taken for granted.

In the process of evaluating media language use on the model of a standard, the metadiscursive act of constructing “media language” should not be overlooked. Television language is always referred to by Babiniotis with the definite article in collocations such as “*the* language/discourse/speech *of/on* television”. Such a metadiscursive construction of “the language of the media” belongs to the “essentialist and homogeneous ideologies of language” (Blommaert 1999a: 18), which tend to label and rank language varieties “on the basis of criteria that have

to do with the perceived ‘quality’ of the language or variety, or, with the degree of ‘full languageness’ of the language or variety” (Blommaert 1999b: 431). To this meta-discursively constructed “language” of television only maximal variation is allowed in the form of different genres or registers; minimal variation at the level of lexicon or grammar is usually stigmatized and rejected. A similar metalinguistic indexing of *the* language of the media is very common in all the articles that belong to the thematic category of general essays about media language. Usually, two types of construction are employed: “the language of (the) [medium]” or “the language in(the) [medium]”, with the former being much more common; a Google search on 8 February 2013 provided 55.800 results for “η γλώσσα της τηλεόρασης”, ‘the language of television’, and only four results for “η γλώσσα στην τηλεόραση”, ‘the language on television’; while “η γλώσσα του ίντερνετ”, ‘the language of the internet’, gave 133.000 results, and “η γλώσσα στο ίντερνετ”, ‘the language on the internet’, only two results (in view of the widespread conceptual metaphor of the internet as a –physical– space, one would expect “the language *on* the internet” to be a much more common construction).

Despite their naïveté, Babiniotis’ are the views of a linguist and, clearly, they are expressed in the authoritative style of a professional. They have become very influential in Greece. Indeed, Babiniotis’ views concerning the “quality of media language” are very often cited by journalists who report on linguistic topics (this is indeed the case with all publications in category eight). It should be noticed that language critique is almost exclusively addressed to the electronic media and it originates in an antagonistic medium, i. e. the newspapers; consequently, language critique may very well be the expression on the surface of an underlying conflict between the print and the electronic media, a conflict which comprises many more parameters besides the linguistic ones (such as a real competition over readership and finances).

2.2.2 Guardians and their standards

According to Vasilakis (2012), “Babiniotis is a brand name”; he represents the elite of ideology brokers (Blommaert 1999a: 9). Following Thomas (1991: 100–114), one may assume that language ideologies propagate in waves, gradually expanding to outer concentric circles: from an elite to a small circle of devotees and propagators, and from there to the general public. Letters to the editor are representative of this smaller circle of followers and devotees. Letters about media language usage clearly belong to a “complaint tradition” (Milroy and Milroy [1985] 1999: 26). They are usually written by educated people, who are, in one way or another, involved in the craft of writing (editors, proofreaders, teachers, professors, etc.). These “craft professionals” (Cameron 1995: 34) are united in

a common cause: the propagation of a standard language's norms. They belong to an army of self-appointed guardians of the language. The titles given to their letters by the journalists are often polemical in character: "They 'are killing' the language" («Δολοφονούν» τη γλώσσα», *Ελευθεροτυπία* 26 August 1997) "They are slaughtering our language" («Κατακρεουργούν τη γλώσσα μας», *Η Καθημερινή* 7 August 1990), "Our language in front of the firing squad" («Η γλώσσα μας στο εκτελεστικό απόσπασμα», *Απογευματινή* 30 May 2000). The style of writing is often marked by the rhetoric of indignation. Here is a typical example:

«Κατακρεουργούν τη γλώσσα μας»

«Δόξα το Θεό»

Ναι, δεν διαβάσατε λάθος. Έτσι γραμμένη μεταδίνει η Κρατική Τηλεόραση (ΕΤ1) τη φράση αυτή που είναι στα χείλη όλων των Ελλήνων. [...]

Και διερωτώμαι: είναι «τόλμη» ή θεωρείται «γοητεία» η πρωτοφανής αυτή κατακρεούργηση της ελληνικής γλώσσας; Μα τον Θεό, δεν βρίσκεται κανείς στη ΕΤ να πει σ' αυτούς που αποδίδουν ξενόγλωσσους διαλόγους ότι όταν μεταχειριζόμαστε τυποποιημένες φράσεις της αρχαίας ή της καθαρεύουσας δεν μπορούμε να τους αλλάζουμε αυθαίρετα και ανεύθυνα την ορθογραφία.

Ένας άλλος συχνά συναντώμενος «μαργαρίτης» στις αποδόσεις ξενόγλωσσων διαλόγων είναι το «επανάλαβε το» (αντί «επανάλαβέ το»), «ανέπνεε» (αντί «ανάπνεε») και άλλα παρόμοια.

Πάλι κανείς δεν βρέθηκε να πληροφορήσει τους μεταφραστές ότι η προστακτική δεν παίρνει αύξησι.

Αν αφήνουμε την Κρατική Τηλεόραση να διαδίδει συστηματικά τα «τρισβάρβαρα» αυτά ελληνικά, γιατί παραπονιόμαστε για το χαμηλό μορφωτικό επίπεδο των σημερινών παιδιών; (*Η Καθημερινή* 7 August 1990)

"They are slaughtering our language"

«Δόξα το Θεό» [instead of the archaistic Δόξα τω Θεώ, 'Thank God']

Yes, you read that right. That's how the state television (ΕΤ1) writes and broadcasts a phrase that is on the lips of all the Greeks. [...]

And I ask myself: Is this unprecedented slaughtering of the Greek language considered to be "daring" or "charming" or what? For God's sake [Μα τον Θεό], is there no one at ΕΤ [the state television] to tell those guys who translate the foreign language dialogues in subtitles that when we use formulaic expressions of the ancient Greek language or of *katharevousa* [=archaistic language], we are not allowed arbitrarily and irresponsibly to change their orthography.

Another frequently encountered mistake in the rendering of the dialogues from a foreign language is the use of augmented imperative forms such as «επανάλαβε» (instead of «επανάλαβε»), «ανέπνεε» (instead of «ανάπνεε») and the like.

Again, there has been no one to inform the translators that the imperative is not augmented.

If we let the state television to broadcast systematically such wretched and barbarian Greek, why should we complain about the low educational attainment of today's youth?

We noticed above the metalinguistic mechanism through which “full language-ness” is assigned to such undifferentiated constructs as “the Greek language”, typically denoted by definite descriptions. It is interesting to see this mechanism operating in the context of this particular letter. A few instances of rule violations, i. e. just a few “mistakes”, are taken to represent a threat to “the whole language”. For the writer, a mistake cannot be something local, limited, or accidental. Mistakes are always total, at least in their consequences. Hence the bombastic styles of the writer; exaggerated dignity, pomposity, irony, overstatements, an alarmist tone are characteristic of such letters to the editor. This metadiscursive strategy which constructs the “wholeness” of a language also allows the writer to speak as a representative of the whole community. Notice the us-them dichotomy: while “we” is left unspecified (the writer writing in the name of potentially every Greek speaker –or writer), “they” are clearly the journalists, the translators, the subtitle technicians –“they” are the media people. The letter is not neutral; it is polemical, like a libel. “They” are the enemies. All similar texts that fish for mistakes presuppose an unconditional belief in the linguistic influence exercised by the (electronic) media, despite the fact that such a belief is not always explicitly stated. Indeed, such letters are written in order to counter the media’s influence on “our language”. The publicizing of mistakes is a warning that “the Greek language is being molested by the media” («Τα ΜΜΕ κακοποιούν την ελληνική γλώσσα», *Το Βήμα* 1 March 2000, letter to the editor). Letters to the editor are also written with an educational purpose in mind; the general public needs to be warned, but the young people, who are not familiar with the norms of the standard language, need to be educated.

In Moschonas (2001b, 2005) and Moschonas and Spitzmüller (2010) it is argued that letters to the editor, along with “usage columns” in the newspapers, i. e. texts by professionals that advise on common usage and correctness, provide important evidence for the language standards that prevail within a linguistic community; studied in a historical perspective, they also provide evidence for the evolution of the standards over a certain period of time (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010; Schaffer 2010). Instead of concentrating on the often extravagant rhetoric of those who prescribe language usage (see, e.g., Cameron 1995), these studies provide answers to subtler questions such as the following: What type of mistakes do the writers concentrate upon? Are there any regularities in their suggestions for correcting the presumed mistakes and do such regularities form a repertory? More generally, what are the “corrective practices” that prevail among craft professionals during a particular period of time and what do they reveal about the standards of the standard language? I will only present here a summary account of the answers to these questions given in Moschonas and Spitzmüller

(2010), a study based on a quantitative analysis of a corpus far more extensive than the one discussed here.

As it is well-known (Browning 1982), diglossia in Greece has given rise to two conflicting norms, an archaistic or puristic norm (*katharevousa*) and a demotic or vernacular one (*dimotiki*). Standard Modern Greek (Κοινή Νέα Ελληνική), the official standard in Greece after 1976, is supposedly based on the demotic norm; nevertheless a certain number of archaisms is allowed or even preferred, especially in higher registers. In recent years, while the vernacular forms have gradually become standardized, corrective instruction and guidance for properly using the archaistic forms, whose grammar is, so to speak, forgotten, has been urgently provided. Thus, a new “phraseological model” emerged in usage guides, in usage columns in the newspapers and in letters to the editor, a model which can account for constructions belonging to either variety, *dimotiki* or *katharevousa*. This new model corresponds to the mixed standards of Standard Modern Greek, which, although based on a “cultivated” demotic, encompasses nevertheless many archaisms. Archaisms have become formulaic (i. e. “phraseological”) in character. The new model makes in principle no distinction between the new and the ancient language and grammar, it is preoccupied with internal rather than external purism, and its rationale is almost always based on the postulation of lexical, morphological or grammatical *conventions* that have presumably emerged out of the grammar of ancient Greek. In the example given above, «δόξα το Θεό», “glory to God”, with the accusative case, is being criticized because it has replaced the formulaic archaistic expression «δόξα τω Θεώ», with the dative case (the two expressions are homophonous in Modern Greek). According to the conventionalist attitude, the original formulaic expression “should not be allowed to change”, despite the fact that the dative case of the original expression is now obsolete. Similarly, compound verbs in the imperative are not allowed to have a so-called “internal augment” (the second “frequently encountered mistake” mentioned by the author of the above letter), precisely because an augmented form would violate the formation rules of ancient Greek. Conventions are like traditions: they spring from a sacred past; this is the essence of conventionalism. According to the conventionalist attitude, the norms of the modern language belong ultimately to the ancient Greek language and grammar; paradoxically, in order to be respected, the norms have to have become obsolete.

In a comparative perspective, it is interesting that, in contrast to Greek prescriptivism, which is rather ‘grammatical’ and ‘conventional’ in character, German prescriptivism is more ‘semantic’ and ‘logical’: the former concentrates on formulaic constructions under the rationale of grammatical conventions, the latter focuses on the turn of the phrase; its rationale is rather the logical soundness as well as the cohesion and clarity of the expression (Moschonas and Spitz-

müller 2010: 30–31). Conventionalism is by no means a universal attitude among prescriptivists; but it is certainly dominant in the Greek print media and, more generally perhaps, in the community of Greek “craft professionals”.

2.2.3 New media, new threats

Publications like the ones in category three (e-communication) have been extensively studied in the relevant sociolinguistic literature: on Greeklish and the attitudes towards the use of the Latin alphabet (the “danger of latinization [romanization] of the Greek language”), see Androutsopoulos (2000, 2009), Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou (2003), Spilioti (2006). Iordanidou and Androutsopoulos (1999) and Spilioti (2006: 40–46) comment on the widespread belief that new technologies as well as the use of foreign words and foreignisms have negative effects on youth language (“youth language” being, I presume, still another metalinguistic construct that linguists share with non-professionals). Emailing and texting using the Roman alphabet are very often seen as a source for the students’ low attainment in the Greek language. Conspiracy theories, which claim that “foreign centres” have laid out plans to eliminate the Greek language through the replacement of the Greek alphabet by the Roman one, often reach the press, although their favourite medium is the internet (there are now several blogs and “information” sites specializing on such theories).

How widespread such conspiracy theories are is revealed by the following incident: on 2 June 2000, the issue was brought to the Greek parliament after an interpellation by two members of the socialist party (PASOK), who seem to have accused the Greek minister of Education, also a member of the socialist party, of participating in the conspiracy against the Greek language, because he does not take measures for preserving the Greek alphabet on the internet. It is sufficient to read the relevant headlines in the newspapers:

- “Alphabet. They seek to alter the richest language, Greek, through the internet” («Αλφάβητο. Την πλουσιότερη γλώσσα, την ελληνική, επιχειρούν να αλλοιώσουν λόγω Διαδικτύου», *Αθηναϊκή* 3 June 2000);
- “Efthimiou [the Minister of Education] answers on the language of the internet” («Απάντηση Ευθυμίου για τη γλώσσα του διαδικτύου», *Αυριανή*, 3 June 2000);
- “The Greek alphabet will not be replaced” («Δεν αντικαθίσταται το ελληνικό αλφάβητο», *Εστία* 3 June 2000);
- “Shall we forget the Greek alphabet?” («Να ξεχάσουμε το ελληνικό αλφάβητο;», *Ελεύθερη Ώρα* 3 June 2000);
- “European computers do ‘read’ Greek” («Διαβάζουν’ ελληνικά τα ευρωκομπιούτερ», *Έθνος* 5 June 2000);
- “The Roman alphabet in [sic] the Greek language?” («Το λατινικό αλφάβητο στην ελληνική;», *Θεσσαλονίκη* 5 June 2000);

- “Are there thoughts to abolish the Greek alphabet and apply the Roman one? The Greek people should react by employing a new strategy so that we do not reach the point of mourning a new conquest of the Greeks” («Υπάρχουν σκέψεις για κατάργησιν του ελληνικού και εφαρμογήν του λατινικού αλφαβήτου; Ο ελληνικός λαός ως αντίδρασιν πρέπει να εφαρμόσει νέα στρατηγική ώστε να μη φθάσωμεν εις το σημείον να θρηνησωμεν και νέαν άλωσιν του ελληνισμού», *Ελεύθερη Ώρα* 11 June 2000).

It is interesting to notice that the conservative, right-wing newspapers place emphasis on the danger of latinization, while the newspapers affiliated with the socialist party or the political centre downplay the importance of the issue, following the Minister of Education's line of argument, that adequate measures have been taken to safeguard the “presence of Greek” on the internet. However, concern is expressed in all the relevant publications; also, all publications share similar presuppositions; for example, they all tend to equate language with its written norm, they all are in favour of the standard orthography, they all perceive the use of the Roman alphabet as a threat to the language and the Greek people “as a whole”. The incident illustrates that sharing a common language ideology is a prerequisite for an issue to be debated; the issue of the alphabet has become the subject of political debate not because the participants in the debate favour different language ideologies but rather because they share precisely the same ideology, i. e. the same presuppositions about language, writing, the internet, etc.

There was no uptake on this issue, the reason perhaps being that at the same time that the threat of latinization was brought to the attention of the parliament, the guardians of the Greek language were already celebrating a major victory on the very same terrain of new technologies and the internet. The relevant publications in the newspapers form a category of its own: the thematic category seven (a Greek font). The 43 publications in this category (14.6 per cent of the total number of texts) spread from 12 November 1999 to 28 June 2000.

Here is the story: in December 1999, ten deputies of the Greek parliament (coming from three different parties, the right-wing, the socialist, and the centre party ΔΗΚΚΙ) address a letter to the president of the parliament with the warning that “the ancient Greek language will not be included in the polytonic languages of Microsoft's [operating system] Windows 2000, because the Greek state has not expressed the requisite interest” (literal translation). Notice how inexorably writing is interwoven with the conception of a language as a whole, as testified by such hybrid constructions as “the polytonic languages”; what is meant of course is that Windows 2000 will not have a polytonic (multi-accent) Greek *font* for the *writing* and *reading* of ancient Greek.

The newspapers picked up the issue. Here are the headlines from two newspapers that covered it:

- “Ancient Greek thrown out of the window[s] and out of the internet” («Εκ-παραθυρώνουν την αρχαία ελληνική από το Διαδίκτυο», *ΕΞΠΡΕΣ* 12 November 1999);
- “Indifference drives Ancient Greek out of the internet” («Εκτός Διαδικτύου τα αρχαία από ελληνική αδιαφορία», *Ελευθεροτυπία* 13 November 1999).

We see again that the (polytonic) writing is identified with the (ancient Greek) language. One step further, languages, through writing, are conceived to have a territorial existence, as suggested by the metaphors of space (“in and out of the internet”) employed in the above headlines.

Soon after, the press returned to the issue, but now the tone was quite different:

- “We have won: Polytonic Windows” («Νενικήκαμεν: Πολυτονικά Windows», *Θεσσαλονίκη* 18 December 1999).
- “Polytonic Greek ‘from birth’ in Win 2000” («Πολυτονικά ελληνικά ‘εκ γενετής’ στα Win 2000», *Καθημερινή* 19 December 1999);
- “Windows 2000 will ‘speak’ ancient Greek” («Τα Windows 2000 θα ‘μιλούν’ αρχαία ελληνικά», *Ελεύθερος Τύπος* [ed. D. Rizos] 13 January 2000).

The last headline provides an interesting instance of a reversal: a language that exists only in written form, ancient Greek, is now conceptualized as being spoken through writing.

The “victory” was also hailed by the archbishop of Athens Christodoulos:

- “Under the blessings of Christodoulos, the Greek language enters Windows 2000” («Με τις ευλογίες Χριστόδουλου η ελληνική γλώσσα στα Windows 2000», *Απογευματινή* 13 January 2000; similar coverage in many newspapers).

The line of publications in the press most probably follows Microsoft’s advertising campaign; publications may have been prompted by press releases. There are obvious similarities in the headlines:

- “Gates opens a window to Plato” («Ο Γκέιτς ανοίγει παράθυρο στον Πλάτωνα», *Έθνος* 24/2/2000);
- “Windows 2000: Return to the language of Plato” («Windows 2000: Επιστροφή στη γλώσσα του Πλάτωνα», *Αξία* 1 April 2000);
- “Plato’s language in Windows” («Η γλώσσα του Πλάτωνος στα Windows», *Η Χώρα* 24 February 2000).

In all probability, Microsoft had also used similar expressions in its advertising slogans. The story was also picked up by the international media, where similarities are also found in the way this software issue is presented. Here is a representative excerpt from *The Wall Street Journal* followed by a similar excerpt from a Greek newspaper:

Microsoft Makes Windows 2000 Support Ancient, Polytonic Greek, by K. Delaney

For the first time, a Microsoft product supports ancient Greek, a language that hasn't been spoken for centuries. Users of the 23 different versions of Windows 2000 around the world – not just those in Greece – are now able to type using the polytonic alphabet, invented roughly 2,100 years ago to codify the peculiar pronunciations of Plato's day. [...]

Even Athens' powerful prelate, Archbishop Christodoulos Parakevaides, has weighed in, calling the new functionality a success “for the Greek language, the Greek spirit and civilization”.

Outside of church circles, the move appears similarly popular. Already, TV networks and newspapers have led with headlines and editorials praising the software giant. (*The Wall Street Journal* 22 February 2000; see also “Plato's Greek is Legible at Last on Modern PCs”, <http://benton.org/node/12246>, last accessed 15 March 2013.)

Ο Γκέιτς ανοίγει ... παράθυρο στον Πλάτωνα

Η Microsoft υποκλίνεται μπροστά στην Αρχαία Ελλάδα και κάνει ένα γιγαντιαίο βήμα στο παρελθόν των 2.100 χρόνων, περιλαμβάνοντας τη γλώσσα του Πλάτωνα στο νέο της πρόγραμμα Windows 2000. [...] Στους χρήστες των Windows 2000, σε ολόκληρο τον κόσμο, παρέχεται πλέον η δυνατότητα δακτυλογράφησης με τη χρήση πολυτονικής αλφαβήτου, η οποία επινοήθηκε πριν από δύο χιλιάδες χρόνια για την κωδικοποίηση της ιδιόμορφης προφοράς της εποχής του Πλάτωνα. [...] (*Έθνος* 24 February 2000)

Gates opens a ... window to Plato

Microsoft is bowing in front of Ancient Greece and makes a giant leap 2,100 years in the past, by including the language of Plato in its new operational system Windows 2000. [...] Users of Windows 2000, throughout the world, now have the opportunity of typing their texts in a polytonic alphabet, which was devised two thousand years ago in order to codify the peculiarities of the pronunciation in Plato's era. [...]

The last mentions of the Greek polytonic font in our smaller corpus (see Figure 1) occur in June 2000. This time, the occasion is the launching of the “Greek Windows”, i. e. the Greek version of the operating system, which became available on the Greek market at about that time. If, six months before, the addition of a polytonic font had made Windows speak Ancient Greek, now, the Greek version of the operating system made it speak Greek –*just* Greek or *all* Greek. And this is exactly what the headlines portray, e.g.:

- “Windows 2000 ‘speaks’ Greek” («Τα Windows 2000 ‘μιλάνε’ ελληνικά», *Μακεδονία* 9 June 2000; exact same headline in *Έθνος* 16 June 2000).

Clearly, the articles in this category form a coherent “text trajectory” (Blommaert 2001), a “communicative sequence” (Moschonas 2009: 304–306). The sequence is not based merely on a thematic coincidence; nor is it based only on advertising motifs, even if it moves to their music. The sequence follows (or constructs) a story. The story cannot be read off a single publication, nor is it developing in particular newspapers, with this or that political or cultural stance, although

there are interesting nuances of attitude. The story develops in various journals of different affiliations. The narrative units are roughly the following: first, there is a threat to the language (latinization) and an enemy. Then, there is the “building of public concern”, which, of course, is the media’s part in the story; the letter drafted to the president of the Greek parliament is an instrument for raising public concern. And then there is an outcome, successful in our case: those who fight the good cause are victorious, even without a fight. The media narrate this story and they also participate in it.

All this sounds as the type of story referred to as a ‘moral panic’ (Thompson 1998: 8–9; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994: 33–41; Cameron 1995: 82–97). But the story is told without a passionate intensity; the increase in the number of publications and the number of persons involved (opinion-makers *and* audiences) is far from impressive. The panic recedes even before it has started. And it cannot reappear: one short-lived recurrence was the issue in category three, which we discussed earlier (interpellation in the parliament with accusations of conspiracy). One, of course, could speak of a ‘minor moral panic’ in cases such as these. But I think that it is precisely in cases such as these that the term ‘moral panic’ should not be applied: the media’s response is not as intensive as in paradigmatic cases of moral panics (Cohen [1972] 2002); the issue can cause a concern only amongst those already concerned; the issue is not capable of causing a debate; it has a low ‘news-value’; it can recur, but never with intensity. Indeed, there are no issues detected in the small corpus discussed here that deserve the characterization of a moral panic. All issues in this corpus are ‘routine issues’ (Moschonas 2009: 305). One should not be trapped by the alarmist rhetoric of the publications. The reader should also be reminded that each and every issue raised about ‘media language’ belongs to a corpus that does not exceed 4.3 per cent of the total number of publications about ‘language issues’ in general. For the media, media language itself is a routine issue.

Except for a few scarce references, I will not comment on examples from categories four, five, six and eight above. In the next section, I will mention some instances of moral panics that occur in the bigger corpus of publications about issues other than media language.

I would not have done justice to the publications about media language in the Greek press had I not mentioned, before closing this section, some popularizing articles, well-informed and solemnly written by linguists such as Jannis Androutsopoulos, on Greeklish («Από τα φραγκοχιώτικα στα Greeklish», “From frangochiotica to Greeklish”, *To Βήμα* 5 September 1999); Alexandra Georgakopoulou *et al.*, on Greek language on the internet («Των Ελλήνων οι νέες ψηφιακές κοινότητες», “New Greek digital communities”, *Η Καθημερινή* 14 October 2001); Panajotis Kontos, on variation («Η ποικιλία στη γλώσσα είναι ευλογία», “Varia-

tion is a blessing for the language”, *Ελεύθερη Ώρα* 1 February 2000, an interview; interestingly enough, Kontos praises variation while at the same time attributing the “maltreatment” of the Greek language to “the language of the media”). I certainly respect scientific journalism; but I doubt its effectiveness. (Of my own opinion articles in the Greek press I can confidently claim that they have not been influential.)

2.3 A conceptual topology

I have defined thematic categories and discussed a few examples. The question I will now try to address is more general: Why these categories? Why the particular topics, and not others? And why the particular examples? What is it, after all, that counts as an example, i. e. as an instance in a well-defined communicative sequence?

A naïve answer to such questions could be that the press simply covers all issues that are current and relevant, including linguistic ones. Under this view, linguistic issues are happenings of some sort; they happen *now* and they are of concern to the public at large or to a smaller public. For example, a conference is taking place and it is covered in the press (category six, above); by analogy, a mistake is being made by a TV announcer and it is observed and stigmatized in a short newspaper comment (category three): this should also count as a kind of reporting. Writing media texts about media language, under this view, is just another type of journalism. The press simply responds to current “developments” concerning media language. Media language has a certain “news value”.

However, not all categories in our corpus have the same news value and some do not seem to possess any “temporality” at all. Certainly, reporting on a linguistic conference (category six) does not seem to have the same relevance to the present, nor is it addressed to the same audience as spotting a linguistic mistake and writing about it (category two). The postulation of news values could not explain the existence of categories with general, untimely references to media language (such as category one, above). Also, it could not explain how thematic categories are related to each other and, possibly, differentiated from each other. For example, there seem to be routine reports on several software products (category four); but what is it that makes the use of a polytonic font in a popular computer operational system (category seven) so special? Why is this issue singled out and covered more extensively in relation to other similar “issues”? And how are ‘language issues’ defined in general? What is a piece of news concerning (media) language? Certainly, there is a difference between, say, a train collision and the “discovery” that some people employ Greeklish in writing their text mes-

sages and emails. Language news is certainly not like news about train-collisions, elections, or wars. “What happened yesterday, language-wise?” does not seem to be a legitimate question. But what is peculiar about it?

In what follows, I try to reconstruct the conceptual framework by means of which language issues are defined as such. I argue that there has to be a tacit agreement on what a linguistic piece of news is about and why it concerns the public. Journalists and audiences alike, in order to recognize language issues and be attuned to pieces of linguistic news, have to use some kind of mental map (Moschonas 2004: 190–193, 2009: 306–314), in which several *topoi* or conceptual areas interrelate (the notion of *topos* is drawn from the tradition of rhetorical studies; see also Spitzmüller 2005: 272–310). Agreement is not limited to what a language issue is and why it is worth reporting; it extends to general beliefs about the “nature” of the language. “News” about language presupposes a collective mentality about what ‘language’ is or what ‘languages’ are, how languages relate to each other, etc. As is probably the case in many other linguistic communities, where an official monologossic ideology prevails, the “Greek mentality” turns out to be egocentric; the Greek language is believed to lie at the centre of the universe of languages.

In order to explain what counts as a language issue and what doesn’t, reference should be made to our larger corpus, from which texts about media language were drawn for the purposes of the present study (see Figure 1, above). The conceptual topology of language issues in the larger corpus can be conveniently explained with reference to Figure 4, below. I will read Figure 4 as a classification of all issues about language in the Greek press (during the period 1 January 1964 – 1 April 2001). As will become apparent in a moment, media language issues or references (out of which the smaller corpus was constructed) tend to focus on the area in Figure 4 called the Interior.

I will now introduce some terminology that is needed in order to read Figure 4 as a conceptual map. Let us call a language an Interior. Let us call whatever does not belong to a language an Exterior. Let us imagine that a language can have within it an Exterior: an Exterior-within-the-Interior. And let us similarly imagine that an Exterior can have within it specimens of an Interior: an Interior-within-the-Exterior. Then, there are precisely four categories of language issues in the Greek press: issues concerning a) the Interior, b) the Exterior, c) the Exterior-within-the-Interior, and d) the Interior-within-the-Exterior. Let us see which issues fall in each of the four categories (the presentation follows a semi-chronological order).

First, immediately after the Language Reform of 1976, several post-diglossia issues arose in the Greek press. They all had to do with orthography, usage, standardization and they all related to often conflicting efforts, after years of divided

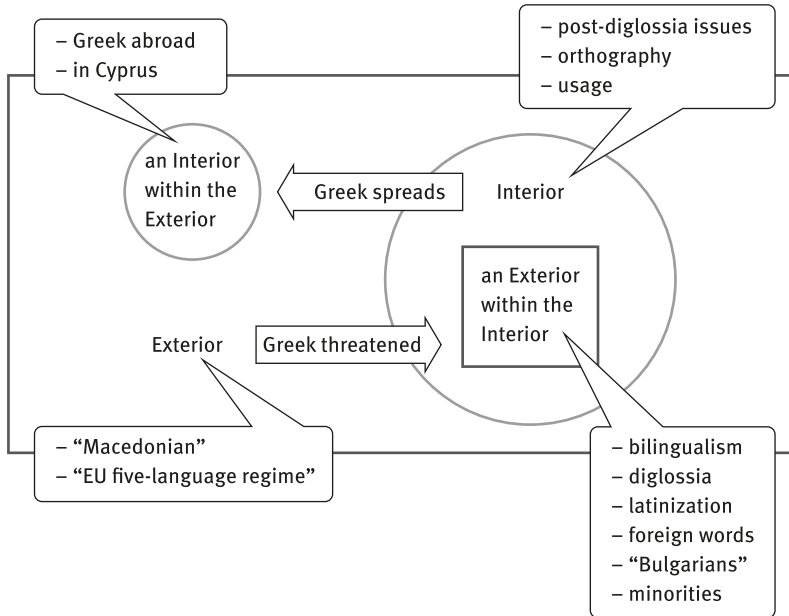


Figure 4: A territorial conception of language

usage, for the definition of a uniform, standard language (an Interior). The major issue now was not so much to arbitrate between *demotiki* and *katharevousa* – which of the two is the Interior (this was the issue of the Language Question); the issue was rather how much of each belongs to the Interior. The most passionate debate of the 1980s was whether ancient Greek should be taught in secondary education. The idea that prevailed during this period was that the Interior is diachronically uniform – that there is an uninterrupted continuity between ancient Greek and the modern language. Greek linguistics has not disputed this idea.

The Interior, of course, cannot be *synchronically* uniform. Remnants of diglossia, the effects of bilingualism, the use of foreign words, the existence of minority or immigrant languages all contribute to establishing an Exterior-within-the-Interior. In the early 1990s, English was identified as an enemy of the Greek language, whose purity was threatened by loan words, the Roman script, etc. The fear of latinization is an instance of this concern with the purity of the Interior.

Moral panics in the Greek press have been caused mainly by issues that relate to the Exterior of the language. One of them is a naming issue, the use of the “Greek name” ‘Macedonia’ as an official name for FYROM (this issue remains unresolved for the Greek foreign policy). According to a “symbolic geography” (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 63), the name ‘Macedonia’ cannot refer to a part of the

Exterior, because it (or what it denotes in the mental map of Figure 4), belongs to the Interior – it is the name of a Greek region and dialect. Another moral panic was caused in 1994 by a suggestion of the French presidency in the EU to reduce to five the number of “working languages” in the European Parliament and other EU institutions, excluding Greek. The media organized a “crusade” against such an “atrocious plan” that would result, it was believed, in diminishing the presence of Greek in the Exterior (i. e. in the EU and its institutions).

Another moral panic, also having to do with a naming issue, shifted the attention of the media to the “internal front”, i. e. to issues relating to an Exterior-within-the-Interior. The cause for concern this time was an entry in Babiniotis’ (1998) dictionary of Modern Greek, stating that the word Βούλγαρος (=Bulgarian) may be used as an insult to the fans or players of a northern Greek sports team (ΠΑΟΚ). The entry itself was read as an insult to northerners, as “a move that divided the nation”. The two naming issues that have caused such intense moral panics are clearly related: just as a name of “our language” (‘Macedonian’) should not be given over to *them*, a foreign name (‘Bulgarian’) should not be applied to *us*. ‘Macedonia’ is an inappropriate name for the Exterior, just as ‘Bulgaria’ is an inappropriate name for the Interior.

The perceived “danger of latinization” also relates to other issues in the category of an-Exterior-within-the-Interior. A moral panic was caused in 2001, when the Greek Commissioner in the EU proposed to have English institutionalized as the “second official language” of the Greek state. The proposal was judged by the media to be “outrageous” or even “inconceivable”.

Last, let us mention the publications in the Greek press about teaching Greek as a second language (in the Interior) or as a foreign language (in the Exterior). Greek as a second or a foreign language is a relatively new discovery (both in linguistics and the media). Teaching Greek to foreigners and immigrants is certainly seen as a means for handling the Interior’s uniformity (i. e. preserving its monoglossic status). It is also a means for expanding the borders of the language; Greek itself can become an-Interior-within-the-Exterior. Of similar concern are publications about Greek-speaking media in the Exterior of the language (e.g. for immigrant Greeks) or in the Interior of the language (e.g. for immigrants in Greece); see category four, above.

The conception of the Greek language depicted in Figure 4 is a territorial conception. Figure 4 is the pictorial representation of a language as a realm, a regime, or a state. It is the representation of a language ideology that is clearly nationalistic and monoglossic. The Greek language itself is identified with the Greek state.

Having defined the conceptual topology on which language issues are raised, let us return to our smaller corpus of texts about media language and change. Most media language issues are raised from the standpoint of the Inte-

rior. Issues of orthography, usage, and standardization are vantage points from which the ‘language of the media’ is conceived and metadiscursively constructed as a uniform Interior. The ‘language of television’, the ‘language of the internet’ etc. belong to the Greek language, they are parts of it, like dialects are; but they are also conceived of as having their own “linguageness”. Standardization of a media variety is accordingly understood as the complete identification of such a variety or jargon with the Interior that the Greek language is. Error-hunting (category two) and educational broadcasts such as “Do you speak Greek?” (category eight) clearly contribute to the standardization of a media variety on the model of the Interior.

As we have seen, issues about the Interior are persistent, but they do not have the power to cause a major moral panic; they are all routine issues. Moral panics occur mostly when a threat emanates from the Exterior surrounding the Greek language; such threats can cause the Interior to diminish or they can cause an Exterior-within-the-Interior to appear. This seems then to be the reason that none of the thematic categories one through seven, above, contains any publications capable of causing a moral panic. The only possible threat is Greeklish and the latinization of the alphabet. New technologies and the Internet could, of course, pose a threat to the Greek language; but, they are also conceived of as territories in which Greek fights for its existence, and it does so successfully. Products and services (category four) are available that facilitate Greek’s presence on the World Wide Web, while Greek also holds its place in the multilingual world of radio and television (according to most reports in category five). And, since Windows 2000, there are fonts that permit writing Greek in both its polytonic and in its monotonic orthography. Greek, it is believed, becomes available worldwide through the medium of writing.

If the territory of the Greek language is mainly identified with the Greek state (and even conceived of as a state), the territory of the Greek language in the print media and the internet is identified with writing. It is as if the Greek language is embodied in writing. A foreign writing (latinization) is considered as «αγλωσσία», as lack of language. A language can get as far as its writing allows it to. Accordingly, the possibility that the Roman script would facilitate the use of Greek on an international scale does not occur to anyone. It is merely inconceivable, because the Greek language is its script. A Roman script would also hide the language’s uninterrupted continuity; it would dissociate the modern language from ancient Greek, challenging its diachronic persistence. These are recurring motifs in the texts of category three (E-communication); typically, texts in this category are critical of Greeklish, or even of texting and emailing (which they see as activities performed under the heavy influence of English). As mentioned above, because it is believed that the new media are mainly – or most confidently

– used by younger people, concern is often expressed about the effects of the electronic media on youth's language.

Media-induced language change is also realized in territorial terms. There are only two possible moves: either an expansion or a contraction of the Interior, and each one corresponds to the exact opposite move by the Exterior. Media-induced language change is thus conceived through the privileged metaphor of language policy studies: as either an increase or a decrease in a variety's fields of use or domains. Territorial concepts have their place in both the folk-linguistic and the professional discourse on language use and change.

The attitude towards language variation in the media is, of course, prescriptive. This does not mean that variation is not noticed at all; it only means that variation is not allowed. Actually, variation is a prerequisite to prescriptivism. Prescriptivists presuppose that there are at least two linguistic variants (a "correct" and a "incorrect" one), and consider it their task to try to promote language awareness of such inadmissible variation to a wider public. Accordingly, for the prescriptivists variation is always transitional, i. e. awareness of the variants is only raised with the aim of ultimately replacing a incorrect variant with the correct one (Moschonas and Spitzmüller 2010: 36).

Whether the standardization of media language or the strengthening of monologic registers could have any permanent effects on media language usage or, for that matter, on general usage, is not the aim of the present paper to decide. It remains to be seen whether standardization actually manages to eliminate variation, as prescriptivists strongly believe, or whether norms are just the prescriptivists' useless weapons in their futile war against language change, as some linguists seem to suggest.

3 Conclusions and discussion

Discourse in the Greek print media about media language and media-induced language change rests mainly on three interrelated conceptions of language, language variation and linguistic change: 1. a territorial conception of language, 2. a prescriptive approach to linguistic variation and 3. a strong belief in media-induced language change.

1. Language change is understood mostly in territorial terms. For example, norms prescribe the well-defined, delineated regions of language use that have to remain "intact"; language contact may lead to a language's "contraction" or "shrinkage" (συσπίκνωση); the internet is often presented as a territory that has to be "conquered"; etc. The Greek language itself is an all-encompassing regime (an Interior) that has to remain unaffected by change. Language change

is ultimately a matter of shifting the borders between languages and/or language domains. One may argue that the “folk-linguistic” conception of language territories corresponds to a professional sociolinguist’s conception of such processes as “language spread” or “domain loss”. However, in the conceptual topology of media discourse, all domains are ultimately related to each other. If a domain is threatened, the language as a whole is placed under threat. Accordingly, change is understood as pollution; it could spread over the whole language (Delveroudi and Moschonas 2003: 18).

2. The approach to language employed in the print media is prescriptive. Prescription is based on a conventionalist understanding of a (written) standard. Variation is not tolerated; it may lead to a change away from the standard, a change that has to be reversed. ‘Downward’ linguistic change in particular, i. e. a divergence away from the standard, a demotization or vernacularization of the language, is precisely what those concerned about media usage are trying to prevent. Since a standard language is mainly a grapholect, language is very often identified with writing. The corrective practices adopted in the Greek print media give priority to writing, they are conventionalist and lexis-oriented, they are based on monologic conceptions of language and/or they are modeled on monologic genres (such as traditional news broadcasting). A division between the print media and the electronic ones (especially television and the internet) is presupposed throughout. Directives about language usage are issued in and through the print media and they almost always concern instances of speech or writing in the electronic media; the former regulate over the latter. Thus, the metalinguistic discourse in the Greek newspapers reproduces and reinforces an antagonistic relation between the print and the electronic media, which, to a certain degree, exists independently of any differences *in* language.

3. There is a very strong belief in media-induced language change, often expressed in voluntaristic terms. Language change – or rather the prevention of it –, is not just a possibility; it is happening all the time and the media can effect it because they are considered to be too powerful. The ‘language of the media’, especially television, is considered to function as a model of language usage, capable of propagating or consolidating linguistic habits and attitudes. This belief is part and parcel of an ideology of standardization. It is believed that the form and content of media discourse could and should be controlled mechanically, on the basis of linguistic conventions, by guardians of language, i. e. by agents such as proofreaders, editors, the Radio-Television Council, etc.

Expert opinion on media-induced language change, expressed by sociolinguists themselves, is not as unequivocal as the opinion of the journalists or, for that matter, of apostolic linguists appearing in the media and preaching this or that norm. Certain sociolinguists dismiss media-induced language change as yet

another “language myth” (e.g. Chambers 1998, 2005). However, several studies seem to document ‘upward’ linguistic changes due to an increased exposure to the media (for discussion of the relevant studies, see Stuart-Smith 2007, 2011; and Section II of this volume). In other words, the scientific literature seems to corroborate the view that exposure to the media possibly induces the convergence towards a standard – which is precisely what those who prescribe media usage in Greece and, possibly in other countries as well, aspire to.

If this is the case, one should pose the question whether upward convergence is the result not only of significant exposure to media but also of a certain exposure to the *views about language* expressed in the media. It may be the case that exposure to metalanguage might have a certain *performative* effect, i. e. it might create awareness about certain language issues and manage, after all, to shape language habits and practices inside and outside the media. Could we assume then that the metalinguistic conceptions of language have a certain performative effect on language?

Studies of language ideologies have been aware of such an “affective” character of meta-linguistic conceptions. Silverstein (1979) discusses how conceptualizations of linguistic structure possibly affect language evolution. Woolard (1998: 10–11) also stresses the “active”, “affective”, “consequential” – in a word: *performative* – character of language ideologies; such an “affective” aspect she associates with linguistic change. Moschonas (2008) explores the possibilities for applying an appropriately modified theory of speech acts to the analysis of the “performative character” of language ideologies; he proposes “correctives”, i. e. metadiscursive speech acts, as a cover category for practices mediating between metalanguage and language.

Language ideologies are not just sets of beliefs. They manage to perform their magic (Bourdieu 1991: 122) only through collective practices such as standardization, linguistic purism, domain elaboration, language learning and teaching, a certain institutionalization and regimentation of discourse, etc. Accordingly, the possible affective power of the metalinguistic discourse produced in and about the media should be measured relative to the multiplicity and strength of other standardization (or re-standardization) procedures taking place within a linguistic community. The media’s conception of language and linguistic change should also be compared and contrasted to alternative rationalizations of linguistic practices, such as the ones performed by professional linguists, outside or inside the media. In this respect, the media are expected to reproduce conceptions and practices that prevail in other technologically bound and mediated forms of communication.

In standardization, several forces (administrative, educational, etc.) always unite, and they are all necessary in order for metalinguistic conceptions and/or linguistic practices to assume efficiency and spread within the community at

large. Standardization is not a multiplier just of linguistic practices, but also of their conceptualizations. The media participate in the standardization process by reproducing, on the one hand, specific instructions on language usage and, on the other hand, metalinguistic legitimations or rationalizations of such instructions. Needless to say, rationalizations of language usage also relate to other non-linguistic ideologies within a community, such as nationalism, in the case of Greece. Interestingly enough, nationalism provides the conceptual substratum for identifying and “cultivating” (or “elaborating”, in Haugen’s 1966 sense) standards in whole domains of language use (such as the new domains in the new media). Domains are identified through processes of “contraction” or “expansion” of a language’s Interior, i. e. mostly through a language’s writing system, its orthography and similar conventions. It is widely believed that the observance of such conventions in public discourse could be somehow monitored.

I have shown that the discourse in the media about “the language of the media”, about language variation and linguistic change is quite systematic and coherent, in the sense that it is associated with particular genres, such as usage columns in the newspapers; it concerns issues with recognizable “news value”; it forms mass-mediated communicative sequences across different genres and media; and, above all, it is subject to a conceptual topology that is shared between sender and receiver, i. e. a mental map that is of necessity collective. The study of metalinguistic discourse in the media (what could perhaps be called *media metalinguistics*) can thus help us diagnose some of the standards by means of which (re)standardization is endeavored and possibly achieved within a community; in the media one can observe changes in standards, and subsequently form hypotheses about possible *linguistic* changes to which the *changes in standards* respond. The conceptual analysis of metalinguistic discourse can also help sociolinguists understand whether and how linguistic change is perceived and ideologized within a linguistic community and what other ideological forces it unites with.

I have tried to approach language ideologies from a practical standpoint and describe them not just as naïve, incoherent or contradictory rationalizations of language usage, exposed to the overwhelming critique of the professional linguists, but also as capable of performing certain “speech acts” at a metalinguistic level, i. e. as capable of “verifying” themselves. The “direction of fit” of such metalinguistic acts is from a (meta)language to a language or, alternatively, their perlocutionary effect is ultimately locutionary; i. e. their perlocutionary effect is none other than eventually changing collective linguistic behavior and habits – and only towards a standard. Since the metalinguistic discourse of “non-professionals” is mostly prescriptive, its illocutionary force is in essence that of a directive (according to Althusser [1970] 1971, the ultimate directive of all ideologies is simply this: “Act!”). Hence, the felicity conditions for domain specifications, for

corrective instructions, for norm specifications are also conditions for linguistic change: just as the performance of a speech act may be “happy” or “unhappy” under particular circumstances, effecting a linguistic change can be successful or unsuccessful in particular periods of time under socio-cultural conditions that need to be specified and carefully studied.

To sum up: I have in this paper analyzed metalinguistic discourse in the Greek print media as a model for language ideologies. I have suggested that at least that part of media metalinguistics that is preoccupied with correcting the language and prescribing usage provides useful hints as to how media-induced language change may be effected. Corrective instructions and similar metalinguistic acts establish a link between (media) metalanguage and language. Metalinguistic acts are subject to standards, which, when effective, become integrated into what is called a standardized language.

Language ideologies, just like all ideologies, exhibit a certain social organization: they spread from an elite of intellectuals and, through a smaller group of followers and devotees, they potentially reach everyone who is literate. Media metalinguistics also follows the momentum of literacy. In the case of media linguistics, the distinction between folk and professional discourse becomes blurred and problematic.

Of course, metalinguistic acts in the media can only be felicitous under particular socio-cultural or institutional circumstances. And, of course, I have not shown whether the metalinguistic discourse is indeed successful, i. e. whether it actually affects linguistic change; I have only shown that it can possibly effect change, especially when backed up by metalinguistic acts outside the media or in other mediated linguistic practices. But then, in this respect metalinguistic acts are not different from any other category of performatives.

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