The distinction between *laiko* and *logio* as a particular characteristic of the Modern Greek language: historical interpretation, contemporary function and didactic usage

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It is well known that the Greek language, despite its long history and the various adventures it has experienced over the centuries and in contrast with other ancient European languages (e.g. Latin), has not undergone any radical changes with the passage of time. Instead, it has maintained a noteworthy diachronic homogeneity and a unified character that have made it intriguing for scholars and, at the same time, give it a unique nature (Mackridge, 1990; Mitsis, 1999; Babiniotis, 1994, 1998).

The functional presence of a large number of diachronic elements within contemporary Modern Greek undoubtedly make it a unique case. They have not, however, been sufficiently researched, and this paper aims to make a contribution in this direction.

Language and linguistic diversity

It is widely accepted today that the linguistic code, reflecting social differentiation, is not an unyielding, unified or uniform system. On the contrary, it is a flexible and multiform instrument that is characterised by its ability to adapt to different communication conditions and the demands of the social environment within which a particular linguistic message is produced.

As such, heterogeneity and multiformity are inherent characteristics of language, the products of its dynamic character, its functional texture and its deliberate use. At every stage of its operation, the language code offers speakers/users a broad range of choices, known as "linguistic diversity", which is a typical feature of all natural languages (Crystal, 1987; Kakridi-Ferrari and Chila-Markopoulou, 1996; Mitsis, 1996, 2004; Babiniotis, 1998b).

Specifically in terms of the Greek language, however, it must be noted that its centuries-long historical presence has contributed to an even greater broadening of

the phenomenon of linguistic diversity, with the addition of a further dimension. This is the distinction between *popular* (*laiko*) and *learned* (*logio*), which forms the subject of our presentation today. Its appearance is connected historically to the division of the Greek linguistic tradition, in other words, with a historical, social and ideological conflict that was linguistic in character and is known as the "language question".

The "language question" and its consequences

The starting point of the "language question" can be located in the 1st century BC, the era of the Hellenistic *Koine* Greek, during which the historical movement known as *Atticism* emerged. This sought a return to the Attic dialect, with the aim of reviving ancient Greek civilisation. Atticism had a significant influence on the later history of Hellenism, as it led to the break up of the until then unified Greek language into two distinct forms:

(i) The written word, with a formal and superficial use of the 5th-century Attic dialect, and which was later used as the official language in education, administration and science.

(ii) The spoken word, based on the language of the era. This was the instrument of daily communication between the members of the community, a linguistic form that was subsequently used and promoted by literature.

In the ensuing Byzantine period, this linguistic differentiation took on a more relaxed form, which was manifested in the distinction between the language of the ecclesiastical texts (based on the *Koine Greek* of the Bible) and the written tradition based on Atticising models. From the 11th century onwards, the presence of the simple form of the language was strengthened by a series of demotic songs and literary works, which brought the two opposing poles closer together by using an intermediary language that attempted harmoniously to blend the contrasting literary trends.

The gradual approach of these two opposing language traditions noted in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire came to an end in around the late 18th century, when there was a new outbreak of the language question. This was now clearly expressed in the form of a conflict between a learned language close to ancient Greek, although without completely identifying with it, and a simplified learned language that acted as the forerunner to the subsequent *simple katharevousa* (Babiniotis, 1998a).

This linguistic dispute became even more intense in the early 19th century when, during the foundation of the free Greek state (1830), the attitudes towards language described above evolved into *archaism* (or *neo-Atticism*) and *katharevousianism*. At the same time a third view known as *demoticism* appeared, which argued for the use of a purely popular/spoken language (Lefas, 1942; Mitsis, 1995, 1997, 1999a; Babiniotis, 1979, 1998a). These linguistic and ideological trends, which constituted proposals for the choice of the official language of the Modern Greek state, had the following characteristics:

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(i) *Archaism* (or *neo-Atticism*): This was a romantic movement that argued for the need to return to the cultivated and tested language of the ancestors. Because of its similarities with the principles of Atticism, archaism has also been called *neo-Atticism.*

(ii) *Katharismos* (later *katharevousianism*): This was a realistic compromise movement that could be described as very progressive for its era. *Katharismos* was a reaction to archaism as well as an attempt to bridge the written (Atticising) tradition with the daily spoken word.

(iii) This movement argued that extreme solutions should be avoided and it favoured the "middle road"; in other words, it proposed a solution that advocated the synthesis and the balancing of contrasts. Its aim was to promote an intermediary linguistic type, which would be nothing more than an evolved and cultivated form of the spoken language and which would ultimately be enriched with elements of ancient Greek. In order to achieve this goal the "katharmon", the catharsis of the spoken language was proposed, with the removal of foreign words and other elements and replacing them with Greek ones, as well as "diorthosin" (correction), i.e. the adjustment of certain structural features on the basis of ancient Greek.

(iv) *Demoticism:* this linguistic movement believed that the basis of the written Modern Greek language (and therefore the official language of the Modern Greek state) should be the living spoken language of the day, i.e. the new *koine* language that was being formed. The main difference between the *demoticists* and the *katharistes* was that for the demoticists the contemporary spoken language hid within it a great dynamism that over time would enable it to be enriched and improved qualitatively, without the need for adjustments and the intervention of ancient Greek. The *koine* spoken language, with its systematic cultivation and gradual improvement, would eventually be able to cover, in addition to literature, all other sectors of public life (education, administration, legislation, science, journalism, etc.).

Out of the above three language forms of *archaism* (or *neo-Atticism*), *katharismos* (or *katharevousianism*) and *demoticism* — and thus of their corresponding proposals for the resolution of the language question, as formed in the pre-revolution era — the official state adopted a position that favoured archaism. This meant that until approximately 1880, ancient Greek was adopted as the official language of the new state and taught at all levels of the education system. The failure of this effort, however, led, from 1880 onwards, to the gradual receding of archaism and the corresponding rise of *katharevousa*, a learned language that was a simplified form of ancient Greek. *Katharevousa* was accepted by both *archaists* and *katharistes*, who now formed a unified movement known as *katharevousianismos*. In fact, *katharevousa* was recognised as the official language of the state in the constitution of 1911.

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During this same period, however, at around the end of the 19th century, the *demoticist* movement also entered the social discourse, leading to a revival of the language question. This now took the form of a dispute between *katharevousa* and the *demotic language*, and the language question was to enter one of its most crucial phases.

The event that was to make the demand for the recognition of demotic official and light the fuse for a new round of the language question, with further disputes and conflicts, was the publication in 1888 of the book *My Journey* (*Το Ταξίδι μου*) by the linguist Yiannis Psycharis. In this work, which on the surface resembles travel writing, an academic and ideological argument was made for demotic; so much so, that demoticism immediately evolved into a social and a little later into an educational movement.

The start, however, of the final and most intense phase of the language question, was ushered in a little later, in 1917, when the government of Eleftherios Venizelos introduced the demotic language into the first four grades of primary school. The period from 1917 until the resolution of the language question in 1976 can be described as a period of intense linguistic controversy, manifested on two levels: the broader social and the educational level. On the broader social level, demotic was the language of daily communication and, as we approached the 1970s, it became more widespread in literature and, gradually, also in scientific discourse. *Katharevousa* was used as the language of government, legislation, journalism and, to an extent, science. In the field of education, the language used in schools followed the political and ideological orientation of each successive government, alternating between demotic and *katharevousa*. Furthermore, because in this period governments changed frequently, the language used in the school would change every so often, thus creating, as might be expected, serious problems and irregularities in the education system (Mitsis, 1999; Babiniotis, 1998a).

In addition to its negative ramifications, the language question, however, also provided the Greek language with certain positive features. These are:

(a) The unified character and structural cohesion of Greek, which has already been touched upon. We should add here that the constant recourse to the past and the internal borrowing of linguistic features and structures from earlier periods have given the Greek language a diachronic unity and an internal cohesion. Despite the language's long history, this has prevented it from undergoing any significant evolution and from breaking up into other separate languages.

(b) The presence of the two language traditions and the parallel teaching of their corresponding linguistic forms, in particular during the period 1917–1976, made a decisive contribution to the modernisation and improvement of demotic. Renewed and enriched by the learned tradition, demotic finally acquired the complex form with which we know it today and which is now called *Standard Modern Greek* (in abbreviation, SMGk). This gives the Modern

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Greek language a significant unique characteristic, as in addition to the elements of the demotic/popular tradition that comprise its basic infrastructure, it contains elements from the learned tradition. This has broadened the range of its linguistic diversity and has created an additional distinction, that between *laiko* (popular) and *logio* (learned) (Mitsis, 1999, 2004; Babiniotis, 1979, 1994; Anastasiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras, 2005).

The distinction between *laiko* and *logio* as a particular characteristic of Modern Greek

According to the above, the modern version of the Greek language, SMGk, represents the creative synthesis of two traditions or trends, which are directly related to the general social developments and intellectual history of Hellenism: (i) demotic, which undoubtedly comprises its main body or base, and (ii) the learned tradition (primarily *katharevousa* and secondly ancient Greek), which has provided a complementary influence on all levels and primarily on the so-called demanding, higher or systematic levels. This duality or polarity is an inherent aspect of SMGk, which on the one hand offers its natural speakers a wealth of expressions and styles, yet on the other hand it constitutes a specific parameter, which creates a series of problems for language learning. Some characteristic aspects of the *laiko/logio* distinction follow, as they appear on various levels of SMGk.

A. The vowel – phonology domain

The most common differentiated subsystems of this domain are as follows:

(i) The presence of parallel consonant clusters, demotic and learned, which are due to the existence of two phonological subsystems, a primary/demotic/popular and a secondary/learned one (Setatos, 1974; Tobaidis, 1998; Anastasiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras, 2005). For example,

demotic/laiko (popular) (D)		logio (learned) (L)	
χτ	*χτυπώ, χτύπος* *χτίζω, χτίσιμο*	κτ	*κτυπώ, κτύπος* *κτίζω, κτίσιμο*
φτ	*φτερό, φτερούγα* *φτωχός, φτώχεια* *γραφτό*	πτ	*άπτερος, πτέρυγα* *πτώχευση, πτωχοκομείο* *γραπτό*, etc.

(ii) *The principle of the relative strength of vowels.* When two vowels meet, either within the same word or at the coarticulation of words, it is possible that: (a) one of the two is dropped (typical of popular language), or (b) both are kept (typical of learned language). In the first case, dropping one of the two consonants is done according to a hierarchisation of the vowels performed by the language itself (Klairis and Babiniotis, 2005; Mackridge, 1990). According to

this hierarchisation, the vowels on the left of the scale below are stronger than those on the right (the vowels /**e**/ and /**i**/ are considered equal in strength):

/ **a**>**o**>**u**>**e**-**i** /

(D)	(L)
Θόδωρος	Θεόδωρος, λεωφορείο, εμπνέω
τ᾽ όνομα	το όνομα, υποομάδα
τά ᾽πα	τα είπα, παραοικονομία
τό ᾽χω	το έχω, δυτικοευρωπαϊκός

B. In the morphological domain

Since in the morphological domain there are numerous parallel (popular and learned) subsystems, we will limit ourselves to a few indicative examples from the noun and the adjective (further examples in Anastasiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras, 2005).

From the noun: (i) The unstable position of the accent in the declension of certain nouns and its morphologically related shift (in the genitive, primarily in plural) is usually associated with the *laiko/logio* distinction. The main principle that governs the accent is as follows: modern demotic (simple and complex) words tend to keep the accent on the same syllable whilst in those words with an ancient or learned origin the accent tends to shift. For example,

	(D)		(L)	
case		singular		
nom.	ψαράδικο	αλατόνερο	μέγεθος	κίνητρο
gen.	ψαράδικου	αλατόνερου	μεγέθους	κινήτρου
		plural		
nom.	ψαράδικα	αλατόνερα	μεγέθη	κίνητρα
gen.	ψαράδικων	αλατόνερων	μεγεθών	κινήτρων

(ii) The presence of parallel types in the declension of certain nouns, usually in genitive, is also associated with the *laiko/logio* distinction. For example, *της κατάστασης* (laiko – popular) or *καταστάσεως* (logio – learned), *του συγγενή* or *συγγενούς*, etc.

(iii) Finally, nouns such as *το ήπαρ – του ήπατος, το πυρ – του πυρός* and a series of stereotypical phrases, such as *εκ των ενόντων, τοις μετρητοίς, επί ίσοις όροις, εκών άκων, ποιητική αδεία, εν τω μεταξύ*, etc. are remnants of the learned tradition (Iordanidou, 2010).

From the adjective. An indicative category in which the *laiko/logio* distinction is particularly pronounced is, for example, the declension of adjectives ending in *-ύς*, which produce *two* subsystems: a laiko/demotic subsystem of *-ύς, -ιά, -ύ* (e.g. *βαθύς, -ιά, -ύ*), the genitive of which is formed with *-ύ* or *-ιού* (e.g. *βαθύ* or *βαθιού*); and a logio-learned subsystem of *-ύς, -εία, -ύ* (e.g. *ευρύς -εία -ύ, αμβλύς, οξύς, τραχύς, δριμύς*, etc.), the masculine genitive of which is formed with *-έος* (e.g. *ευρέος*). Some of

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these adjectives sometimes follow the demotic declension and other times the learned declension, according to the level of language use. For example,

ο φαρδύς	ο ευρύς	ο παχύς
του φαρδιού	του ευρέος	του παχιού/παχέος

Compare the difference in declension in the following phrases:

— η τσέπη *του φαρδιού* παντελονιού (D)
— αντιβιοτικό *ευρέος* φάσματος (L)
— χρήση *οξέος* οργάνου (L)

C. The syntactic domain

The *laiko/logio* distinction is much more profound in the syntactic domain, where the speaker has the ability to shift in one or the other direction. It must again be noted that the choice does not depend so much on the free will of the user but on the level of language used, the communication conditions and the style. It is worth noting that employing a learned syntax requires adequate knowledge of the language code, in particular its most systematic and demanding aspects, and always involves the parallel presence of analogous (i.e. learned) elements in the phonological, morphological and lexical domains. For example,

—(D) *μιλάμε για πολιτική*   (L) *ομιλούμε περί πολιτικής*
—(D) *μέσα στις προθεσμίες*   (L) *εντός των προθεσμιών*
—(D) *έπιασαν τον κλέφτη*   (L) *ο ληστής συνελήφθη*
—(D) *το μαγαζί έκλεισε*   (L) *η επιχείρηση κήρυξε πτώχευση*
     —(D) *Ο άρρωστος πάει όλο και καλύτερα.*
     —(L) *Η υγεία του ασθενούς βελτιώνεται σταδιακά.*

D. The vocabulary domain

SMGk, as the contemporary form of the broader Greek language and as a product of the demotic and learned traditions, contains a wealth of words that belong to both the popular and learned linguistic traditions. The duality of SMGk is particularly profound in the lexical field, where we encounter a huge range of synonymous pairs of words, one of which is from the popular and the other from the learned tradition (Tobaidis, 1978; Anastasiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras, 2005). For example,

(D)	(L)
σπίτι	οικία
κοτέτσι	ορνιθώνας
παπάς	ιερέας
θύρα	πόρτα
καβαλάρης	ιππέας
αρραβωνιαστικός	μνηστήρας
δρόμος	οδός

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κάρβουνο	*άνθρακας*
λεκές	*κηλίδα*
λουλούδι	*άνθος, etc.*

In this case also, the choice and use of each of the above two words depends less on the free will of the speaker as on the level of language used, that is, the context, the communication conditions and the style. More specifically, popular/demotic elements are usually used in conditions that demand the use of a familiar/daily/informal language, and learned elements are used in formal conditions that require a more demanding use of the language. We should add that, in the lexical/semiological domain, they also perform, complimentarily, the following functions (Mitsis, 2004):

(a) They usually declare the abstract in relation to the specific. For example,

  —(D) *πολύ όμορφο αυτό το λουλούδι*   (L) *το άνθος αποτελείται από τα εξής...*

(b) They declare the metaphorical meaning in relation to the literal. For example,

  —(D) *Ένας λεκές στο πουκάμισό μου* (L) *κηλίδα για τον πολιτισμό μας*, etc.
  —(D) *στολίσαμε την τάξη μας*   (L) *θέμα ηθικής τάξεως*
  —(D) *Ψηλή κοπέλα*   (L) *Υψηλή ραπτική*

(c) They characterise the official and formal as opposed to the unofficial, informal or familiar. For example,

  —(D) *Χάσαμε το σκύλο*   (L) *Απωλέσθη κύων...*

As we can see from the presentation of the above indicative features, the contrast between *laiko* and *logio* is a basic characteristic of SMGk, which has incorporated a plethora of learned features that comprise an organic aspect of its system. The speakers/users of this particular code must have a sufficient grasp of it in order to be able to communicate effectively. The teacher is called upon to approach this phenomenon, which is an exclusively peculiarity of SMGk, effectively, especially when teaching Greek as a second or third language, where learners are not able easily to appreciate this distinction. There follows a series of proposals for the teaching approach to and systematic utilisation of the phenomenon.

The teaching approach

A series of necessary preconditions should first be secured and then the specific ways and techniques of teaching be identified, which will enable us systematically to utilise and effectively teach this distinction. These preconditions and teaching techniques are, generally, as follows:

(i) The systematic study of the phenomenon of linguistic diversity and the *laiko*/*logio* distinction. From the moment that the language question was resolved, it has been necessary to research thoroughly and document systematically

those aspects of the distinction that have been incorporated into contemporary SMGk.

(ii) Systematic planning of the teaching programme, in which emphasis must be given, during the initial learning stages, to the simple/popular language aspect. Similar elements from the learned aspect will then gradually be incorporated into the programme, according to the progress of the learners.

(iii) Enriching language teaching textbooks with texts and activities that make clear the phenomenon of linguistic diversity and clarify both the presentation and function of the learned elements on a contemporary level.

(iv) The production of a series of language teaching handbooks (i.e. grammars and dictionaries) which shall fully describe contemporary linguistic reality and adequately express the facts and function of this linguistic distinction.

(v) Appropriate training of teachers in the teaching methods for this particular subject as well as the systematic teaching and interaction with older forms of Greek, ancient Greek in particular.

(vi) During teaching, learned elements must always be presented through examples of their use. In addition, the conditions of communication and the appropriate style and language level of the context in which these elements appear must be identified.

(vii) To attempt, wherever possible, to provide parallel examples between learned and corresponding popular elements and to note the different functions and uses between the two types.

(viii) The learned types that are taught should be incorporated into the analogous examples or subsystems of declension, and parallel examples should be provided between these and the corresponding popular types, so as to enable comparisons and also make apparent their differences and facilitate a total comprehension and knowledge of the language system.

Conclusion

In closing, we would say that specific historical and social developments within the Greek world have influenced the structure of SMGk, creating the *laiko/logio* distinction within the continuum of linguistic diversity. This must be approached with particular care in the teaching of Greek, both as a first and a second language. If our goal is truly to produce speakers who have a deep grasp of Greek and can comprehend demanding and systematic language, then it is essential for us to study in detail and to teach in a careful and precise manner both the popular as well as the learned elements that are a functioning part of the living Modern Greek language. It is here that the principle of the complementarity of modern and diachronic dimension is abundantly clear.

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