

Gender and the Greek language is the topic of a one-day symposium organized at the Institute of Greek and Latin Languages and Literatures (Chair for Modern Greek Studies) of the Free University of Berlin (FU-Berlin).

The purpose is to bring together scholars who work on gender in connection with the Greek language and provide a forum for the systematic discussion of the issues that have arisen in this field of research over the years.

'Gender' is understood here very broadly as an umbrella under which questions of social gender, grammatical gender, gender ideologies, sexuality, etc., can be discussed, without restrictions as to theoretical stances or paradigms.

The symposium is organized by:

Prof. Dr. Th.-S. Pavlidou (AUTH)
Visiting Professor (FU-Berlin)
th-s.pavlidou@fu-berlin.de

Prof. Dr. M. Pechlivanos
Chair for Modern Greek Studies (FU-Berlin)
m.pechlivanos@fu-berlin.de

Department of Philosophy and Humanities
Institute for Greek and Latin Languages and Literatures
Habelschwerdter Allee 45, 14195 Berlin
<http://www.fu-berlin.de/neograezistik/>

Symposium

**Gender
and
the Greek language**

Abstracts

Friday, 3 February 2012
10:00 – 19:30

Seminarzentrum – Lecture Room L 113
Otto-von-Simson-Str. 26, 14195 Berlin

10 c.t. OPENING

10:30-11:10 The category (Greek) 'woman'

Marianthi Makri-Tsilipakou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

The present study applies the concept of Membership Categorization Device (MCD), as proposed by Harvey Sacks (1972a, 1972b, 1992ab), to the study of authentic data culled from a variety of interactional situations. It looks for category-bound activities, and other related predicates such as rights, entitlements, obligations, knowledge, attributes and competencies (Psathas 1999) that the (female) incumbents invoke themselves or are imputed to them by other members. MCDs have inferences attached to them which are available to members as common knowledge (or culture); they are also protected against induction, with the result that anyone who does not fit the culturally available categorial description runs the risk of being seen as 'defective' (Schegloff 2006). In short, categorization has 'moral imputations' (Watson 1997) for members as categories are, in fact, instances of social order. Nevertheless, categories are not "static semantic grids", but indexical or *occasioned* (Sacks 1992), "*in situ, in vivo assembled objects*" (Watson 1997), and so they can be interactionally negotiated and modified or changed. The aim of this study is to hopefully chart the current categorization of (Greek) femininity and detect any changes that might have occurred in actual interaction against the purportedly prevailing gender norms.

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11:10-11:50 Women and men talking about men, women and people in Greek

Georgia Fragaki & Dionysis Goutsos
(University of Peloponnese, University of Athens)

This paper follows our previous work on the role of gender nouns (Goutsos & Fragaki 2009) and adjectives (Fragaki & Goutsos 2005) in the construction of gender identity in Greek newspapers and magazines. We have now both widened our selection of lexical items under study and changed our data from written to spoken interaction. Specifically, our data comes from the spoken part of the Corpus of Greek Texts (CGT, Goutsos 2010) and includes 270.000 words from everyday, spontaneous interaction between, mainly, young women and men. We investigate the frequency, meanings, collocates and use of the basic pairs of gender-related nouns and adjectives in Greek, namely *άνδρας/άντρας* 'man' vs. *γυναίκα* 'woman', *αγόρι* 'boy' vs. *κορίτσι* 'girl', *ανδρικός/αντρικός* 'male' vs. *γυναικείος* 'female', *αρσενικός* 'masculine' vs. *θηλυκός* 'feminine', *αγορίστικος* 'boyish' vs. *κοριτσίστικος* 'girlish', along with "neutral" items such as *άνθρωπος* 'human being' and *παιδί* 'kid, guy', as well as their augmentatives and diminutives. Our aim is to examine whether the fundamental asymmetry in the treatment of the two genders observed in other text types is also found in spoken interaction. In addition, we study how the gender of the speaker or their interlocutors is related to their linguistic choices regarding the nouns and adjectives above, as is the case with magazines, in which it was found that lexical choices are affected by the positioning of the text producer as a member of an in-group, especially in genres foregrounding gender. Corpus methodology, which offers insights based on quantitative analysis, is thus combined with text analysis, which allows the examination of gender-related terms in situated interaction. In our view, this combination of macro- and micro-analysis can provide a useful approach to gender research.

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11:50-12:30 Gendering selves, gendering others in interaction

Theodossia-Soula Pavlidou

(Aristotle University of Thessaloniki & Freie Universität Berlin)

As is well known, languages provide means, like grammatical and/or lexical gender, that render membership categorization, person reference, person deixis, predication and so on, gendered. In this respect, interaction gets a gendered dimension, even before speakers of these languages actually enter an interactional space (Pavlidou 2011). Of course, in the analysis of interaction the question of relevance, i.e. whether interactants themselves orient to this gendering, is of primary importance (Kitzinger 2007). But literature on the subject conveys the impression (cf. e.g. Goodwin 2011, Speer 2005) that it is only through the use of gendered categories (*woman, he, boy, hag*, etc.) that doing gender (West & Zimmerman 1987) or performing gender (Butler 1988) and attributing gender to others can be accomplished in interaction.

In this paper, I argue that gendering is not confined to the employment of explicit means; rather, gendering oneself and gendering others (one's interlocutors and/or third parties) is a dynamic process that exploits inherent features of interaction, such as the indexicality (and constant permutability) of 'I' and 'you' along with common ground inferencing related to category-bound activities and properties. Using extended extracts from the conversational data of the *Corpus of Spoken Greek* (Institute for Modern Greek Studies) the interdependency of gendering selves and gendering others, even in cases where no gendered categories are explicitly deployed, is analyzed and discussed.

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12:30-12:50 COFFEE BREAK

12:50-13:30 Construing marginalised sexualities in Greek tertiary education: a case study

Konstantia Kosetzi

This paper explores the ways marginalised, non-dominant, sexualities, namely homosexuality/bisexuality/transsexuality, are discursively construed by first-year-students of the School of English Language and Literature in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece in their responses to open-ended questions in questionnaires. Employing an adapted Faircloughian Critical Discourse Analysis framework of analysis (mainly 2001, 2003), an amalgam of discourses is identified. Specifically, marginalised sexualities are associated with abnormality and promiscuity, and are construed as going against nature and religion, as well as consisting a potential threat to heterosexual people and societies in general. On top, they are perceived as a source of problems for children adopted by homosexual/bisexual/transsexual couples creating an unhealthy environment and promoting the wrong role models. Underlining all this is a comparison to heterosexuality as the standard against which marginalised sexualities are judged. Quite expectedly, these findings verify existing literature in the field building upon that (e.g. Morrish, 1997; Baker, 2005; Deliyanni-Koimtz, 2005). However, the present study also brings forward discourses of sexualities as one's personal choice, of people's equal rights, as well as of love being more important in a child's upbringing than the parent's sexuality. At the same time, the majority of the students are in favour of same sex marriages, a number of them self-identify as homosexual or bisexual and a bigger number underline the fact that they are friends with homosexual or bisexual people. Given that sexualities are social constructs (Yannakopoulos, 1991), contradictions such as the above show that a struggle is taking place in the Greek (urban) context, a context that seems to be changing.

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13:30-14:10 “Just for fun mate”: the construction of masculinity in Greek youth storytelling

Argiris Archakis & Sofia Lampropoulou
(University of Patras, Lancaster University)

In this paper we explore the process of linguistic and, in particular, narrative construction of heterosexual identities. Based on the model of narrative positioning proposed by Bamberg (1997), we investigate how young men construct their sexual identities and, specifically, their masculinity through storytelling. Our data constitute part of a broader conversational data pool collected in the context of a research project aiming to record and analyze naturally occurring talk of youths residing in the city of Patras. For the purposes of this study we went through about 16 hours of the conversations available, which include about 300 conversational narratives. Our focus is placed on 21 narratives which are related to issues directly or indirectly referring to sexual behavior or sexual relationships. We are particularly interested on how our male informants construct their heterosexual, masculine identities through stories referring to sexuality.

Following a social constructionist approach, we do not see masculinities as fixed features which emerge naturally, but rather as projections constructed by the people in the context of their social interactions and based on the various linguistic, semiotic as well as cultural resources to which they have access (Sarbin & Kitsuse 1994, Antaki & Widdicombe 1998). To this end, the ethnographic observations of the community of practice to which our youngsters belong seem to shed some light to the ways they orient themselves towards masculinity (see Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Our main finding is that the construction of the characters' positioning in the narrative world as well as the positioning of the co-narrators/listeners during the narrative interaction, contribute to the overall positioning of the narrators towards the hegemonic ideological norm of masculinity and, more specifically, towards fundamental elements of this norm (see Coates 2003). Specifically, we observe that our male informants construct their heterosexual, masculine identity by projecting sexual experience and toughness, by approaching women as sexual objects and by exhibiting emotional restraint.

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14:10-15:30 LUNCH BREAK

15:30-16:10 Descriptive grammars and authorisation of gender practices: the case of women's surnames in Modern Greek

Yannis Kostopoulos (University of Salford)

In most western communities, women get a “family name” after a male's surname, whether that is the father's or husband's surname. In Modern Greek, this derivation is even morphologically stated, as female surnames are formed after the singular genitive of respective male last names (e.g. Dimitris Bellas, male nominative form— Dimitri Bella, male genitive – Katerina Bella, female name). Although for most paradigms women's surnames coincide with nominative forms of female nouns (eg. Bella – thalassa/“sea”), Modern Greek grammars describe women's surnames as genitives denoting either origin, possession or just surname (see, for instance, Holton, Mackridge & Philippaki-Warburton 1997). However, it is not rare that ordinary speakers produce tokens of genitive for female surnames, following the paradigm of the acoustically similar female noun (eg. thalassa - thalassas / Bella - Bellas). These tokens get commonly rejected and criticised, as they are considered to be ungrammatical (see Pappas 2004); women's surnames are genitives by default and, hence, they cannot develop any inflection.

In this paper, I argue that this is not the complete story on Modern Greek female surnames. Applying a historical and comparative analysis, I claim that what is taken to be a grammatical error is actually an instantiation of reanalysis which is theoretically expected (see Hopper & Traugott 1993) and predicted (Triantafyllides 1982). Most importantly, as data from male matronymics and topographies shows, identical phenomena of reanalysis were grammatically accepted and institutionally reproduced by theorists. Surnames encode an extreme version of the Modern Greek sexism towards the “woman” gender (see also Pavlidou 2006). When developing inflection, speakers unconsciously adjust the address: the linguistic system turns more symmetrical and women get registered as subjects, instead of possessions. By rejecting the linguistic development, allegedly descriptive grammars provide biased authorisation for the sexist practice and prevent women from negotiating their gender.

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16:10-16:50 The social and cognitive implications of the use of grammatical gender in interaction

Angeliki Alvanoudi (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

Grammatical gender in person reference constitutes a semantically motivated grammatical category which is related with the sex of nouns' referents (Pavlidou 2003), produces asymmetrical representations of women and men and constructs the dominant gender order (Butler 1990). Drawing on research on linguistic relativity which assumes that there is a dialectic relationship between the use of grammatical categories, speakers' habitual modes of thinking and sociocultural practices (e.g. Hanks 1996), grammatical gender is conceptualized as an index of sex (Ochs 1992) which constitutes gender identities (e.g. Hall & O'Donovan 1996) and orients speakers to habitual gendered categorizations of the world. This paper employs Conversation Analysis in order to study empirically the social and cognitive implications of the use of linguistic items marked by grammatical gender (gender membership categories, Sacks 1972) in interaction. By analyzing fully transcribed data of naturally occurring interaction among friends and relatives in Greek, this paper examines the gendered meanings that get encoded by the compulsory use of grammatical gender in the composition of turns and explores the implicit ways through which the bipolar gender order and sexism is constructed and reproduced in interaction (Kitzinger 2005).

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16:50-17:30 When *she* and *he* becomes *it*: the use of grammatical gender in the Greek of the Armenians of Cyprus in conversation

Chryso Hadjidemetriou (University of Hertfordshire)

This paper is based on empirical data (recordings with adult speakers bilingual in Armenian and Cypriot Greek) and examines the results of the contact between Armenian and Cypriot-Greek (CG) in Cyprus. The focus is on the use of the grammatical gender of CG (a three-way gender-system - masculine, feminine and neuter – which classifies nouns in CG and triggers syntactic agreement between nouns and articles or other types of modifiers accompanying nouns) by the Armenian of Cyprus.

The adult speakers analysed are divided into Cypriot-Armenians (CyAs) who were born in or arrived to Cyprus as infants, and non-Cypriot-Armenians (non-CyAs) who arrived to Cyprus as teenagers or young adults. Social variables such as age, sex, generation for the CyA group and length of exposure to CG and intensity of contact for the non-CyA group are taken into consideration.

The overall quantitative and qualitative results of the use of grammatical gender show that even though CyAs were more successful at correct usage of grammatical gender, they nevertheless have similarities to the non-CyAs in terms of the distribution of the location of grammatical deviations in noun phrases. Both groups exhibit the highest percentage of gender deviations with articles (definite and indefinite), with the second highest number being head noun deviations. The percentage of deviant gender articles is the same. When examining the results on grammatical gender preference, both groups had similar results, in that both exhibited a preference for using the neuter gender in gender deviations. The process of assigning the neuter gender seems to indicate that the neuter gender is the default gender for the Armenians. The results of the study are then compared with initial results of work-in-progress with British-born Greek-Cypriots.

17:30-17:50 COFFEE BREAK

17:50-18:30 Grammatical gender variation and sex in Ancient Greek

Amy Coker (University of Liverpool)

It is well known that the grammatical gender of some animate nouns in Classical Greek varies according to the sex of the being to which the noun refers (*nomina communia*/common gender nouns), with the Masculine = [+ MALE], Feminine = [+ FEMALE], for example:

ὁ [M] κύων [+ MALE] 'dog' ~ ἡ [F] κύων [+ FEMALE] 'dog/bitch'

Conversely, other animate nouns have only a single gender, irrespective of the sex of the referent (*epicoena*/epicene nouns):

ὁ [M] λαγῶς [+ MALE]/[+ FEMALE] 'hare'

The formal encoding of sex through grammatical gender as in (1) can be described as typologically more or less likely according to where the noun sits on the animacy hierarchy (cf. Silverstein 1976): those towards the top of the hierarchy (κύων) are more likely to show gender marking which co-varies with biological sex than those further down (λαγῶς). Through investigation of the gender of a small set of animal names in Classical Greek, this paper will outline: (i) where on the animacy hierarchy the semantic line between *epicoena* and *communia* lies, and (ii) using diachronic data, how far this hierarchy is stable over time. In doing so, this paper will also describe the problems inherent in discerning what gender variation in ancient Greek texts 'means': are 'different' gender assignments mistakes, evidence of historical change, an individual author's whim or indicative of the sex of the referent? Subtleties may also be seen, for example, in the language of specialists who are able to discern, or have a requirement for, specification of sex. This study thus sheds light on how the grammatical gender categories of Classical Greek were used to encode real-world distinctions of animacy and sex as they were conceived, and how this changed over time.

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18:30-19:10 Does grammatical gender influence cognition? Evidence from Greek and German

Theodossia-Soula Pavlidou & Angeliki Alvanoudi
(Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

Recent empirical studies of the so-called linguistic relativity hypothesis (Lucy 1992) have provided evidence for the impact of grammatical categories on cognition (cf. e.g. Levinson 2003, Gleitman & Papafragou 2005). In particular, possible effects of grammatical gender on memory, connotations of femaleness/maleness, etc. have been experimentally examined (cf. e.g. Sera et al. 2002, Boroditsky et al. 2003, Vigliocco et al. 2005). Discrepancies in the findings of the various studies are commonly explained by invoking methodological inadequacies in others' research, the difference in gender systems (two- vs. three-gender systems) of the languages studied, and the language of instructions for the experimental tasks.

In this paper, we report on our study on the influence of grammatical gender on speakers' thinking about inanimate objects as 'female' or 'male', based on Greek and German (both languages with a three-gender system). Two experimental tasks (a sex-attribution and a memory task), deriving from two different 'traditions' of the research on grammatical gender and cognition, have been employed. Although our findings, if taken separately, provide evidence for correlations between grammatical gender and cognition, the overall results (across tasks, languages, etc.) do not converge in the same direction – a view also supported by another recent study (Schiefke 2011). We thus raise the question of the suitability of the available methodology for testing effects of grammatical gender on cognition.

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