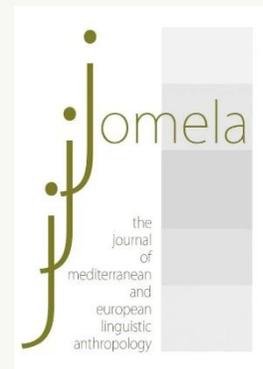


Linguistic Constructions of Authenticity

Lefteris Kailoglou
University of Worcester, U.K.

Mediterranean and European
Linguistic Anthropology
2020, Vol. 2(4): 65-90
(c) JOMELA 2020
Article reuse guidelines
jomela.pub/permissions
DOI: 10.47298/jomela.v2-i4-a4
jomela.pub



Abstract

Traditional variationist correlations between macro-sociological categories (e.g., social class) and linguistic features (e.g. specific pronunciations or morphological variables) have demonstrated amply the “orderly heterogeneity” (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968) of language use and thus legitimised the study of non-standard, and even deviant, language use (e.g. Labov 1972). Situated language use is the primary locus for the construction of meaning. In the Greek context, direct correlations between social class and language use is not as straightforward an analytic tool as is in the Anglo-Saxon context. The reason for this disparity lies on the peculiarities of social stratification in Greece which is characterised by extensive heterogeneity. Three main factors are combined to render social class problematic for the analysis of language use in Greece: a) rural/urban distinction (Mouzelis 1986; Lambiri-Dimaki 1983), b) the associated interplay between clientelism and class (Mouzelis 1978), and c) the status acquisition processes (achieved or ascribed) (Haralambos and Holborn 2013) linked to social class.

Studies examining sociolinguistic variation in Athens have either examined constructions or representations of social class (linked to locality, e.g., Athens’ suburbs) rather than language usage according to class (Theodoropoulou 2010, 2014) or used subcultural affiliation as more relevant for the study of status acquisition in Athens (Kailoglou 2014). Indeed, recent approaches in variationism (for instance, since Eckert 2000) propose that subcultural affiliation (or rather

membership of relevant communities) is an important factor in the choice and perception of non-standard features. Membership of different subcultural communities in specific localities is, in turn, linked to wider macro-sociological categories such as class, gender and ethnicity. These direct and indirect associations are known as indexicalities of language signs (Silverstein 2003, Agha 2006) and they can be discovered through the use of linguistic ethnographic methodology.

This paper looks at the way a young community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) in Athens, associated with a subversive subculture and rock/metal music, employs non-standard language. The usage is not restricted to a set of words (traditionally associated with an argot, e.g., Petropoulos' study on Kaliarda in 1971), but is instead an elaborate complex of slang terms, original swearing, and divergent metaphors. In this way the symbolism of linguistic subversion becomes the arena for a redefining of status ascription in a wider social context. Subcultural status is achieved through linguistic expressions of authenticity.

Keywords: *Subculture, Greek, slang, identity, morphology*

1. Introduction

Authenticity constitutes a central theme in the study of language variation. Language variation and any associated language changes are socially motivated. As language is replete with social symbolism, it also becomes a prime locus for the construction and negotiation of meaning. The intense debate on language issues in Greece throughout the years has led to violent confrontations (e.g., at the beginning of the 20th century, in Volos, central Greece) resulting in human casualties and fatalities. The indispensable connection of Greek language to Greek national identity provides a highly political debate to this day. These debates and conflicts have grounded the emergence of Greek diglossia (as defined by Ferguson (1959)), a process which was officially terminated in 1976, with the establishment of the Demotic Koine as the official language of the Greek State.

A more pragmatic language policy, improved transport links, compulsory education, and improved transport links, as well as migration all contribute to dialect levelling (see for instance, Trudgill 1999, and Chambers and Trudgill 1998) and lexical attrition. Nevertheless, speakers find novel ways to express their identity and this often takes the shape of either what Coupland (2007) calls "stylisation" or "dialect". The latter refers to language use across social groups and is based on traditional understandings of variation in language, while the former will constitute the basis of the ensuing analysis in this paper.

Traditional variationist correlations between macro-sociological categories (e.g., social class) and linguistic features (e.g., specific pronunciations or morphological variables) based on the

pioneering work of American sociolinguists such as Weinreich and Labov have demonstrated amply the “orderly heterogeneity” (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968) of language use. This approach offered a replicable model of data collection and analysis which led to a close, quantitative examination of language use. This way it legitimized the study of non-standard, and even deviant, language use (e.g. Labov 1972).

The broad correlations of the early variationist studies offered an empirical mapping of language variation but did not really address the issue of meaning construction in depth (and, especially, concerning the issue of “covert” aspects of prestige). Instead, this became the focus of what Eckert (2012) refers to as the “second wave” of variationism, whereby ethnographic methods were more implicitly involved in the investigation of meaning of linguistic variation. Researchers now spent a considerable amount of time detailing the sociocultural practices of communities to shed light on the nuances of linguistic interaction. This led a move from wide social categories such as gender and class to locally meaningful socio-cultural groupings (which were, in turn, reflecting these wider categorizations). Groups like the “jocks and the burnouts” in Eckert’s study (2000), the “townies and geeks” in Moore and Podesva (2009), or the Latina girls described by Mendoza-Denton (2007) are examples of such categories. The third wave of variationist studies refines the stylistic analysis further by looking at the performance of specific personas through the employment and construction of innovative linguistic styles.

The analysis which follows embeds ethnographic methodology in the data collection and discussion as with the second wave studies mentioned above. Subcultural affiliation becomes a salient point of identification within the Athenian youth scene, and especially places of nightlife consumption. This paper looks at the way a young community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) in Athens, associated with a subversive subculture and rock/metal music, employs non-standard language. Their language style differs from that of other youth groups in their frequency of non-standard features and their choice of linguistic innovations. The usage is not restricted to a set of words (traditionally associated with an argot, e.g., Petropoulos’ study on Kaliarda in 1971), but is instead an elaborate complex of slang terms, original swearing, and divergent metaphors.

2. Status and Language Use in Modern Greek

The parallel existence of two varieties, a spoken informal (Demotic) and a written formal one (Katharevousa) for almost two centuries, had two major implications on the Greek linguistic science. On the one hand, the early linguists in Greece (Hatzidakis, Psyharis, Triantafyllidis) found themselves preoccupied with this issue rather than descriptive studies of Greek. Secondly, the language which became official in 1976 (Demotic Koine) was defined as ‘a mixture of Katharevousa and Demotic’. In real terms, this definition is not very clear with regards to what

Demotic consists of, and practically perpetuates the century long question about what Modern Greek (MG) exactly is. It is really only in the last 20-25 years that a series of studies and initiatives (for instance, through the Centre for the Greek Language [Κέντρο Ελληνικής Γλώσσας]) has addressed this.

Leaving aside any ideological debates on the matter, what this means for the linguist is that Modern Greek (Demotic Koine) could be characterised as a 'defuse language situation' (in the sense that Le-Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) describe it). In other words, the codification of Demotic is still a work in progress, as even from 1976 onwards, it has been a common practice of speakers who try to give prestige to their speech to 'revive' any Ancient, Byzantine or Katharevousa type. Thus, the simultaneous existence of parallel forms is being perpetuated by the not so sporadic use of unusual forms (frequently leading to various aspects of hypercorrection).

The fact that there are several co-existing types has been often regarded as evidence of the 'richness' of the Greek language, although it slows down the standardisation of Demotic. Despite this morphological variability frequently being a common cause of stigmatisation (as the 'correct' type is not always obvious to speakers) the availability of a wide range of forms enables speakers to employ such diversity as a means of constructing their own identity. Labov (1972) has demonstrated how overt and covert prestige (as reverse stigma) is a social motivation for language change, but he has also shown that deviant language features such as insults ("ritual insults") are systems with their own logic and norms (and their mastery helps speakers make status claims in specific settings). Language variation is not characterised by random patterns, but rather from "orderly heterogeneity" (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968) and is socially functional, i.e. it serves a purpose.

Speakers do use the indexicalities (Silverstein 2003, Agha 2006), or associated meanings (direct, indirect or stereotypical), of linguistic features to evoke stances and in order to position themselves within an interaction (local) and a social setting (macro-identification). As with the inner-city setting of Labov's studies, street-oriented and non-institutional settings call for subversive and contra-hierarchical norms. Prestige is carried not necessarily through standard forms, but through innovation, creativity and rebellion (linguistic and attitudinal). Situated language's use is the primary locus for the construction of meaning and is discovered through close study of language performance.

In post-war Greece, a rift emerged in political discourse whereby the progressive/socialist/leftist speakers tended to favour the Demotic forms (or neologisms and register borrowed from the communist left), whereas the conservative/nationalist/religious speakers favoured the Katharevousa or Ancient Greek forms (either lexically or morphologically). This conservative versus communist distinction was predominant in the Greek

political and social system until the late 1970s/early 1980s. However, with the societal change which accompanied the restoration of democracy, the stabilisation of the political institutions and the change in the social landscape that followed the collapse of 'existing socialism' in Europe later on, social classification in the Greek society took an entirely different shape.

Social stratification in Greece has not traditionally had the rigid differentiation which can be found in the Anglo-Saxon context, and therefore makes social class a problematic category for sociolinguistic analysis. There are three main factors which combined explain the peculiarities of social stratification in Greece: a) the rural/urban distinction (Mouzelis 1986; Lambiri-Dimaki 1983), b) the associated interplay between clientelism and class (Mouzelis 1978), and c) the status acquisition processes (achieved or ascribed) (Haralambos and Holborn 2013) linked to social class. This means that status acquisition can, in non-institutional contexts, be achieved using unconventional linguistic means (for instance, in subcultural contexts).

The new political landscape led to new social hierarchies. The new dividing lines across Greek society have been initiated by lifestyle magazines and TV shows since 1990. Social status became not so much defined strictly by income, residential area or education, but rather by the lifestyle adopted. The urbanisation of Greece (with almost 50% of the population concentrated in Athens only) and a high percentage of the population residing mostly in the big towns, the spread of obligatory education and the high social, and regional mobility that occurred, meant that local dialects have weakened under the influence of the Demotic Koine (as heard in the news and taught in schools). The fact that the majority of the young population of the big cities have been born, raised and educated there, meant that gradually, the linguistic features which characterised their parents' speech have been abandoned.

Moreover, the drop in interest in party politics which characterised the generations X (the youngsters of the late 1980s and early 1990s) and Y (the teenagers of today), meant that the construction of identity shifted from political influences to socio-cultural ones. By drop I refer to the practice of active participation in political parties and their youth departments, not the lack of political beliefs. The linguistic material is always there (for the reasons I explained above); what is different now is the sort of self that people try to present.

Taking under consideration the existing structure of Greek society and the particular characteristics of the language's form and history, it becomes evident that a traditional variationist approach co-relating linguistic features with macro-sociological categories (such as class) would perhaps not be the most appropriate. Instead, an ethnographic analysis, based on Eckert's work on 'Communities of Practice' (1989, 2000) was chosen. Social class was not dismissed, but it was examined indirectly through lifestyle. And lifestyle as well as subcultural affiliation was centred around localities of cultural consumption and nightlife activities (see the different central squares in Athens and their associated patrons and clientele of their nightclubs).

Keeping in mind the dangers of applying generalisations on the local findings described by a qualitative study, an ethnographic method to a metropolitan urban environment, such as Athens, can shed new light on findings that traditional urban-dialectology studies have so far missed. This is how young people in Athens construct their identity, not based on the use of a specific linguistic feature, but rather on the way that they use a specific linguistic mechanism of productive and derivational morphology (comprising of innovative combinations of the existing linguistic material available to them).

Being aware of the ideological load of each linguistic element they use, they co-construct linguistic and social meaning (along with other means of being distinctive such as adopting a special lifestyle), and while expressing an ironic attitude towards the language guardians, they use a playful method of word creation and meaning reversion. As such, linguistic style becomes the main means of distinction (Irvine 2001) and claims to difference from the 'others', whoever those others may be.

2. Methodological Framework

In the period from 2005-2010, I examined three different groups of young people in Athens looking at their socio-cultural practices (including language) and the ways they were signalling group membership and identity through their careful use of language. These groups were each associated with one of three squares in the city centre (Mavilli square, Kolonaki square, and Exarheia square); these squares were in turn associated each with a different subculture: alternative, mainstream and hard-core respectively. This paper discusses the group associated with the Exarheia square (called the "cavemen" and consisting of 5-6 males in their twenties) and, specifically, their use of morphological variation as part of their own distinctive style and a way to signal their authenticity. Morphological innovations form part and parcel of the same process which characterises their use of metaphors, slang and swearing as will be discussed in the following pages.

2.1 *The Cavemen*

The Cavemen is a group of people who had known each other for about 15 years at the time of the recordings. Three of the four core members went to school together in an urban district of downtown Athens; later on they studied different subjects. Through their studies they met other people and two of them joined the group and participated in the recordings. As with most groups, there are some "peripheral" members who join in some, but not all of the activities. Some of the members lived abroad (in Germany and the UK; for study purposes). One of the group members has a small studio apartment which they use as a gathering place. This is where they spent lots of time together playing computer games, playing music or just talking. The group even shot an

amateur movie using a photo camera over a period of two years. They go on holidays together, they go out together and, in general, they spent lots of time together. They explicitly stated that no women are allowed in the group, although this is more of an exaggeration. There are girls but they have a peripheral role. Girlfriends of the male members sometimes participate in the activities. Nevertheless, the central members are males and the recordings consist of their speech.

The Cavemen adopt a non-mainstream lifestyle. They mostly hang out in Exarheia, the anarchists' district, and listen to heavy metal music, rock music and garage bands of the 1960s. Around the time of the recordings, they went to two concerts in Athens; one by the rock band Uriah Heep and one by The Love. Both bands had their heyday back in the 1970s. Going to these concerts is not merely a chance to enjoy one's favourite groups; it is also a statement that they reject mainstream culture and what is considered to be fashionable and best-selling nowadays. As such, choice of live concert attendance is not merely a recreational experience but also, a statement of embodied membership in a certain lifestyle (associated here with a musical subculture).

Their clothes reflect this attitude; mostly dark shirts, trousers and boots. The shirts sometimes promote the logos of rock bands. The jeans are preferably worn-out with holes. They used to wear the typical flight jackets which were quite common in Athens in the late 1990s. In the summer, the shirts were often sleeveless. Going to a party did not entail changing dress habits. Although this was the most typical clothing style, not only of the Cavemen but of the Athenian rock scene, it should be noted that, on other occasions, the Cavemen wore more casual, 'ordinary' clothes. For instance, as the years passed and they entered the job market the clothing had to be more conventional during daytime (jean, shirt, and sweater). Besides, trying too hard to be unconventional and to look 'bad' is not their aim and they criticise such efforts. Not all members have long hair anymore, although they did in their twenties.

When I met my informant to discuss the recordings, he approached wearing the usual flight jacket, worn out jeans, military style black boots (Dr Martens) and a big silver cross hanging around his neck, over the black shirt. All the recordings took place in Exarheia (either in the studio or outside, in cafeterias). Exarheia is not the district where the Cavemen grew up; it is where they spend most of their time in their adulthood.

Indeed, at least three of the core member hail from the leafy northern suburbs of Athens. Their social origins cannot be deciphered by their clothing and/or speech, and this is one of the reasons why the predominance of subcultural affiliation appears to be the single most important influence on their socio-cultural practices. A deliberate attempt to furnish a flat using free-cycled items, including sofas and a mirror, should be seen through the same prism. During the time of the data collection, I participated in several of their activities (including the independent movie,

which they shot). Likewise, I was invited to a number of parties (by group members or “open” parties, they would attend). The locations were varied. From a poolside party at a northern Athenian suburb, to a rooftop party in the centre of Athens (at one of the small streets around Omonoia square), these gatherings shared a common music soundtrack of indie and garage rock music often involving obscure bands from previous decades. Perhaps the most unconventional invitation concerned an open “porno-funk” party, which took place in a two-floor neo-classical house at the area of Kerameikos (also at the heart of the city centre). Despite the promiscuous undertones of the invitation, this was simply an open party with a funky musical theme and an art installation projecting silent movie images on a wall (with pre-war nude themes in black and white). This was the kind of social landscape where “alternative” and “hard-core” youth were participating in and the way they were distancing themselves from the “mainstream” and “commercialised” lifestyle; subcultural affiliation was not simply a music preference but a statement of belonging.

As a group who spent lots of years together, they are a community of practice characterised by all the indicators which Wenger (1998) defined. They share common stories, they have inside jokes, they have their rules of negotiating what is acceptable and what is not, and they share a common perspective to the world. Each community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) has its rules of how a disagreement should be handled. For example, in one recording one of the members outrages the others by making a reference to a personal vow never to eat pastrami again which is judged as absurd and unacceptable. They exchange numerous obscene words as the norm of the group (in a sense of ritual insults) requires. Closure occurs with everyone laughing after a lengthy exchange of insults in a carefully choreographed manner (which cannot be presented here due to space limitations). The use of obscene words itself is characteristic of the group. They clearly regard it as quite legitimate. The same cannot be said for the other groups I studied, who have their own norms of conducting their discussions.

2.2 Morphological Variation in Modern Greek

From a linguistic structure viewpoint, morphological variation in Greek is related to the diglossic situation in Greece which prevailed until 1976 and the existence of two parallel linguistic systems (Demotic and Katharevousa). Modern Greek is defined as a mixture of Demotic with elements of Katharevousa. The boundaries are not clear. Moreover, there exist numerous types originating in Ancient Greek, and the Byzantine language of the church. Since the national identity of the Modern Greek State is built upon the idea of continuity of the Greek nation, based on the continuity of the same Greek language, ancient or medieval forms are considered far from obsolete. The relation between language and ethnic identity in Greece have been documented well by Trudgill (2002: 125-36) and, in more detail, by Mackridge (2009).

Greek is an inflecting language, where morphology plays a very important role (while for instance, the word order is rather free and is more of a matter of emphasis than having strict syntactic functions). Therefore, the multiplicity of existing morphemes provides a useful instrument for speakers to construct their distinctiveness. Hence, the freedom in the use of the various morphemes and the relative absence of clear and widely accepted grammatical regulation (at least concerning the informal use of the vernacular), makes the field of morphology a prosperous area of creativity for Greek speakers.

In combination with the establishment of Demotic, the re-distribution of wealth in the 1980s under the socialist PASOK administration, extensive social mobility and the weakening of rigid class barriers, the new lines of differentiation across the Athenian population came with the introduction of 'lifestyle' norms in the early 1990s. Therefore, my analysis tries to identify patterns in language use (especially in word-formation) according to 'lifestyle'. A close look at the productive morphology workings employed by the speakers shows that there is a difference both in the range of morphemes used across the various socio-cultural groups and in the semantic category of the roots used (obscene/non-obscene words). It seems that there is no obvious reason governing the choice of morphemes used and that they could be instances of random selection.

For instance, there are 32 different affixes (either free or bound) used by the Cavemen in their construction of informal word-formations in these recordings alone. Moreover, the words that are formed do not belong to a specific word class (for example, there are nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs). Nevertheless, there seems to be a preference for nouns and adjectives rather than for verbs and adverbs. Therefore, trying to focus on one-word category would not present the whole picture. What make these formations so special are not their constituent roots or affixes, but the ways that the former are combined with the latter. It is on the syntagmatic axis that the choices occur. In the same way, another characteristic of the group speech is the way that unusual phrases are formed. Correspondingly, what make these phrases interesting and so salient to the group members is not their constituent words, but rather the unusual character of their combination. In summary, the mechanism the Cavemen use to construct their distinctiveness linguistically is the combination of ordinary existing material in an unusual way. My overall study in Athens examined three groups in total; in addition to the Cavemen, I looked at another "alternative" group as well as a "mainstream" group of young people. The other groups also use the same process, but differences can be found in the ratio of obscene to non-obscene formations and in the level/number of unusual choices made.

These divergences and convergences between the three groups are not random but instead belong to the same pattern of a playful use of the existing linguistic material lying in between the formal and informal levels. In other words, each individual item, if examined on its own, does not

seem to have a special value, but the aggregate of the morphological innovations and the unusual phrases shows a clear differentiation in the image projected by its group. The structure of the Greek language and its (recent) diglossic past account for the flexibility concerning the morphological processes involved in the construction of innovations, if not also for some of the unusual phrases. The nature of Greek society (more accurately, the nature of Athenian youth society) involves differentiation on a stylistic level between the groups.

The “Cavemen” are the most ‘hard-core’ of the three groups. They show higher instances of deviation from the mainstream (both socio-culturally and linguistically). Their speech is highly distinctive, but not because of their use of a single variable. Their distinctiveness is manifested in the general impression created by their use of morphological formations and unusual phrases. This, along with a high use of obscene words, characterises ‘Cavetalk’ and makes it so different from the other groups and styles.

I use the word ‘style’ to refer to the linguistic characteristics of each group. Other may have preferred to use the word ‘register’ instead. As these two terms are overlapping, I decided to follow Coupland’s (2007) generic use of style to cover both terms (and that of genre as well). Halliday’s register is related to “expressions, lexico-grammatical and phonological features, [...] particular words” (Halliday and Hasan 1989). As it will be shown, such an approach does not cover satisfactorily the features which characterised the differences in the language used by the three groups. These differences do not concern the use of specific words, phrases or accents, but rather a stylistic practice whereby any morpheme and any word can be used for the neologisms of the three groups and whereby the use of unusual metaphors and humour is involved. The members of all three groups I studied as part of my research do not vary their linguistic features according to the topic or the tone of the discussion. These features are not static, and therefore registers related to specific groups, but practices of linguistic innovation and differentiation. Eckert (2008) also speaks about styles associated with types in the social landscape, which are “the product of *enregisterment* (Agha 2003)” and she “might call them *registers* were it not for the common use of the term in sociolinguistics to refer to a static collocation of features associated with a specific setting or fixed social category” (2008:456). For these reasons and to avoid confusion, the term ‘style’ is used throughout.

Slang

Slang is widely talked about, but once it comes down to defining it, problems do arise. As Eble (1996:19) suggests: “Slang must be distinguished from other subjects of the lexicon such as regionalisms or dialect words (you all/y’all in south US), jargon, profanity and obscenity, colloquialism, and cant or argot- although slang shares some characteristics with each of these and can overlap with them”. More specifically, cant and argot are terms describing the specialised and sometimes secret language of thieves and other groups at the fringes of society. One can

include here the Polari (for English; Baker 2019) and Kaliarda (for Greek; Petropoulos 1971) varieties. Sometimes words that start out as the jargon of a particular group become slang for a wider group ('ice' for 'diamonds'), while in other instances, words pass from the jargon of a group into the general vocabulary without ever being slang (e.g. input, output). Finally, slang is colloquial but not all colloquial expressions are slang ('Shut up' is not slang, dialect words are not slang) and slang is not the same as patois (which on its own comes with a number of definitions).

If we examine intra-speaker variation, the key terms are the following: dialect (variation according to region), style (variation according to user), register (variation according to use/topic), jargon (mentioned above and referring to specific vocabulary associated with a group, mostly professional, e.g. doctors, lawyers, linguists, or with a hobby/interest). Jargon examples (army jargon: jam, ejecta). So where does slang fit in? For Eble (1996:19) "slang is an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large" and she adopts a creative approach to its definition, introduced by Dumas and Lighter (1978). They reject the classical formula for definition and instead propose four identifying criteria for slang.

1	Its presence will markedly lower, at least for the moment, the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing.
2	Its use implies the user's special familiarity either with the referent or with that less statusful or less responsible class of people who have such special familiarity and use of the term.
3	It is a tabooed term in ordinary discourse with persons of higher social status or greater responsibility.
4	It is used in place of the well-known conventional synonym, especially in order a) to protect the user from the discomfort caused by the conventional item or b) to protect the user from the discomfort or annoyance of further elaboration. (pp. 14-16)

This is an approach I have found useful too and I have followed in order to decide whether a word or phrase can be classified as slang. There is no intrinsic characteristic which renders a word or phrase into slang; it depends on its function as described above. In the same way, there is nothing intrinsic in the morphemes listed in Table 1, I identified the following constructions in the slang usage of the Cavemen: diminutives, nominal endings, compound words, malapropism constructions, Greek and English compounds, formations based on a new root + usual nominal endings, formations based on an existing root + usual ending combined in a new way, words with obscure meaning, obscene words about religion and the saints, formations based on the change of gender, and back slang. Iordanidou and Anroutsopoulos (2001) had identified a similar range of characteristics on their study in Modern Greek teenage language.

Swearing

Obscenity, profanity and swearing are all categories of what we could informally call “bad language”, alongside taboo phrases and expletives. Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 23) define swearing as “the use of taboo language with the purpose of expressing the speaker’s emotional state and communicating that information to listeners”, but they do explain that “impoliteness, rudeness, and swearing research [...] are impossible to define universally because all are culturally and personally determined” (ibid.). It is the context and the relationship between the participants that determines the way an utterance functions in an interaction and how it is received. Similarly, to what we have already discussed concerning slang phrases and morphological categories, swear words are not characterised by an intrinsic quality that makes them offensive. The key aspects concern the intended function and the perceived intention of the utterance.

For this reason, Jay and Janschewitz list distinguish three possible functions of swearing: a) polite, b) impolite, and c) neither. Each of these functions is associated with two separate types of swearing (propositional and non-propositional). What differentiates one from the other type is the intention of the swearing practice (generally speaking whether it is deliberately used in interaction or it is an emotional outburst). Taboo language is slightly different as a category since the taboo status of a given word or phrase renders them inappropriate to be uttered. Still, one can choose to manipulate the indexical meanings of swearing in interaction and to enhance, or conversely reduce, the offensiveness of an utterance. Finally, taboo status is also interactionally dependent and not universally applicable. In other words, groups of speakers may choose to use words with taboo status in a non-taboo way, as an in-group marker (for instance, the case of /malakas/ here or /cunt/ in British English). Here the terms ‘obscene words’ and ‘swear words’ are used liberally in order to describe what McEnery (2006:2) defines as ‘bad language’. In his use of the term, he includes “any word or phrase which, when used in what one might call polite conversation, is likely to cause offense”. Battistella (2005:72) speaks of ‘offensive language’ and divides it to four categories (epithets, profanity, vulgarity and obscenity) which are not mutually exclusive, while others speak of ‘taboo words’. As a general rule, I employ the term obscene with reference to the content (mostly involving sexual functions and bodily parts) and the term swear word with reference to the usage of the word (for instance, the Cavemen use the word ‘dyslexic’ as a swear word although its content is not obscene).

3. Morphological Analysis

In approximately 4 hours of recording, the Cavemen used 32 *different* affixes in their construction of *informal words*. By informal words, I refer to such word formations that would not be used in formal settings. Some of these formations can be characterised as obscene, and others

as new. Nonetheless, it is not always possible to be absolutely certain whether some informal words/word-formations are new or belong to a widely used slang. The term 'slang' itself is somewhat problematic, although it can be helpful in the discussion of differentiation of formality levels within the vernacular. For instance, the expression 'to éhis' ('you have it') has an informal meaning of 'you are capable of (something)'. Such a phrase cannot be just described as 'vernacular', since people of older age or young people with a mainstream attitude are not likely to use it (and frequently they do not know this meaning). Nevertheless, this phrase is unlikely to occur in a more formal setting. Therefore, I choose to use the term 'slang' albeit with a certain precaution. In order to solve this classification issue, I will firstly examine the aggregate of the informal word-formations and then proceed to further categorisation. The reason for moving through these stages is to show that what makes these words salient in the avemen discourse is not their constituent elements or their meaning, but rather the combination of affixes and roots.

At this point a small comment should be made concerning morphological processes in Modern Greek. Greek is an inflecting language which means that verbs' declensions vary morphologically according to their voice, tense, aspect and person. Similarly, nouns and adjectives inflect according to case, number and gender. All of the above functions are marked with affixes, almost invariably suffixes added to the stem of the word. In some verbs there is an affix *é-* preceding the stem which functions as a past tense marker (e.g., *légh-o*, *é-legha*: 'I say,' 'I was saying'). In case there is a prefix already there as part of the word, then the *e-* affix is positioned between this prefix and the stem. Moreover, the verb has moods as well which are marked by a particle preceding the verb. The differences in verb moods according to tenses, interestingly, denote differences in aspect (continuous versus perfect). A common tactic in productivity here is to alter the suffix and thus alter the gender of the word (for nouns). As for the verbs, what happens is that new verbs are formed by the addition of one of the usual verb endings to a new root. Thus, we find new verbs like *kamper-iázo* (root *kamper* + verb ending *-iázo* = 'I behave like a 'kamper'', which is a group specific word for 'chav').

Moreover, one should bear in mind that many such word formations are indeed *hapax legomena*. These sorts of words, which occur only once, should not be considered as *lapsi* or errors. They belong rather to the linguistic device of deviation from the linguistic practices of the majority. Therefore, if examined individually, there does not seem to be any significance to them. But if they are examined as part of a whole, then a clear pattern emerges. Deviation from common ways of speaking is a practice; a subversive one. Table 1 shows a list of the morphemes used by the Cavemen during informal word formation (without distinguishing at this stage between obscene, non-obscene and new words). This means that while all the listed words are informal, they are not necessarily innovations. The examples of the words formed using these morphemes

do not take into consideration here the number of occurrences for each lexical item).

Morpheme	Construction	English Translation	Morpheme	Construction	English Translation
1) piso-	pisoghléntis	back-enjoyer	17) -i	kolobiúti	arse-(com)puter
2) trelo-	trelokampéro	crazy woman	18) -os	pórnos	masculine hooker
3) kufo-	kufódhrasi	silent boiling	19) -ma	kampéiasma	stupid lazy action
4) kontó-	kontóghria	short granny	20) -úla	kavatzúla	little reserve
5) palio-	paliothriller	bad thriller	21) -ra	pústra	gay
6) meta-	metampinelíki	meta-swear word	22) -úra	manúra	whining
7) mpuko-	mpukobaby	stuffed baby	23) -ára	munára	sexy woman
8) ladho-	ladhoghámis	oil-fucker	24) -issa	típissa	lass
9) -ázi	kamperiázi	behaves stupidly	25) -íri	malakistíri	little fucker
10) -á	velonistiká	in a needly way	26) -ári	dhonitári	vibrator
11) -ila	skatíla	smell of shit	27) -as,	arhídhas	fucker
12) -átos	arhidhátos	man with big balls	28) -a,	flómpa	ugly woman
13) -aki	pustaráki	little big gay	29) -iás	skatiás	shitter
14) -ídhi	kamenídhi	burned-out	30) a-	azúmoti	un-juicy
15) -iá	floriá	act of butter-boy	31) -likia	arhidhilíkiá	appetisers
16) -ítsa	lighurítsa	'little hunger'	32) -úhos	parasimúhos	one with medals

Table 1: Morphemes Used by the Cavemen for the Construction of Informal Words

Of the 32 different informal words, 17 are obscene and 15 are not; none of the above is likely to occur in a formal context (written or spoken). As for the morphemes, the first 8 morphemes are free morphemes (although they have undergone the necessary alterations of compound word formation in MG), while the rest are nominal endings, one is an adverbial ending (-*a*, in *velonistiká*), one is a verbal ending (-*iázi*, in *kamperiázi*), one a privative particle (-*a*, in *azúmoti*). There does not seem to be a pattern concerning the type of affixes used which brings us back to the investigation of the combining practice rather than a single constituent. Having said this, the huge majority of the words are nouns or adjectives.

The reason for classifying the informal words altogether rather than singling out the obscene or the new ones is practical. Taboo words have sometimes been used in a friendly manner in the recordings and, therefore, deciding the function of a form based on the lexical content would be problematic. Moreover, it is not always possible to determine whether an informal word is really a new word or one which is used amongst different groups but not widely adopted yet. The fact that in-group speech also involves nonce words makes it more practical for the purpose of this research not to differentiate between these categories (as the aim is not to focus on these words but on the linguistic practice of word formation). Simply asking the speakers whether each word is new, or they have heard it before has been not considered as an option as people's intuitions can be inaccurate for various reasons (not the least as linguistic choices in the groups are

subconscious, although not random).

What is clearly indicated by Table 1 is that there is nothing intrinsically informal in the morphemes used for the construction of these informal words. All morphemes are usual morphemes of MG which are also used in formal words. Summarising, the list in Table 1 shows that neither in the morphology (the morphemes used) nor in the semantic field (obscene and non-obscene words) is there anything special about each of the items used. Indeed, this is the case throughout my research concerning other groups too; high variety (Katharevousa) elements are combined with low variety (Demotic) ones. The indexical associations of each variety are subtly integrated in the register formations of all different groups. The only important characteristic here seems to be the occurrence of a majority of nouns and adjectives. In MG compound words, it is normally the first element which defines the second. An English equivalent would be 'sunglasses', where *glasses* is the head noun. In Table 1 there are 8 compound words; none of them has an obscene word as first constituent.

As shown in Table 1, there is a big variety of words formed. Since innovation is about combining different elements, a further examination of the way the usual elements are unusually combined to form 'new' words will be presented, without focusing any more on the morphemes as it is now evident that they are common MG morphemes. The discussion of Cavetalk shall have the following three directions: a) morphological productivity, b) obscene words, and c) unusual phrases. The aggregate of these three techniques is what makes Cavetalk so distinctive.

3.1 Morphological Innovations

Starting with morphological productivity, the Cavemen use ordinary morphemes in order to construct the new words. A question which arose while analysing these new words has been if word-formation is free, or which are the rules governing it. An initial examination of the different examples points to the following different morphological processes. The examples discuss noun derivation through suffixation of two sorts (through diminutive and augmentative suffixes and through the use of nominal suffixes) and new word formation through compounding. Such a step-by-step approach has been necessary since there are no previous studies researching the relation between lifestyle and language use in MG. Theodoropoulou (2010, 2014) offers a wide discussion of lifestyle, but she has a different focus (analysing representations and discourses using locality in Athens, rather than language use).

3.2 Diminutives

The use of diminutives is very common in MG and its main function is to show affection (e.g. Yann-is (a proper male name) - Yann-ákis, 'little Yannis'), moderation of the meaning of the verb

(e.g. (Na sas enohlíso *ligháki?*, ‘Can I bother you a little?’), *ligh-o* (an adverb of degree): ‘a little’, *ligh-áki* ‘a little bit’) and sometimes a pejorative attitude (*ánthropos* - *anthrop-ákos*, ‘man-little man, insignificant man’). The most frequently occurring diminutive suffixes¹ are:

Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
-akis, -akos, -ulis	-ula, -itsa	-aki

Table 2: Common diminutive suffixes in MG

The following new word formations involving the use of diminutive suffixes occurred during the recording of the Cavemen: a) *lighurítsa* and b) *kavatzúla*. While these words may or may not constitute neologisms, the question which arose is WHY these diminutive suffixes occurred in each example and not the other way around.

The Cavemen are playing a video game where each one controls a soldier; they play simultaneously on two PCs placed on the same desk. Leon [all names have been changed] discovers the hiding place of his opponent Savvas. Leon says: *Ého vri mia kavatzúla ekí péra tu Savva me ta kagkelákia*² (‘I have discovered down there a little hiding place of Savvas with the little railings’). Similarly, some minutes earlier, Leon, describing a fight in a yard in the game’s screen shouts “*Ksílo stin avlítsa*” (‘Fighting in the little yard’). They have just finished a game and they are about to change the level of the video game or stop playing. Thus, Leon asks: *Pézume álli písta i stamatá’ na pézume?* Savvas: *Álli písta.* Leon: *Pézume taratsakia i íste adherfés?* (‘Shall we play another level, or shall we stop?’ Savvas: *Another stage.* Leon: *Shall we play little terraces or are you gay?’).*

The video game is about to end and a discussion over pizza delivery begins. Renos says: *Kí eghó éfagha spíti, allá tóra m’épiase mia lighurítsa* (‘I have also eaten at home, but now I feel a little hunger’). The words *lighúra* (‘hunger’) and *kavátza* (‘secret depository’) are both nouns sharing common grammatical characteristics (+feminine, +singular, +nominative). In formal speech this word does not take a diminutive affix. Thus, the production of such a word is an innovation occurring in the informal in-group speech of the Cavemen. The question in these specific examples ((a) and (c)) would be: Why do we have *lighurítsa* and not **lighurúla* and why do we have *avlítsa* (‘little yard’) and not **avlúla*? Are there any constraints on the choice of suffixes or it is totally random? Since both new words are informal and not registered in any dictionary it seems that there is no obvious social reason for either choice. On the other hand, a possible explanation could lie in the phonotactic sphere: since /ts/ and /tz/ are both affricate sounds and /r/ and /l/ are liquid consonants, the co-existence of similar sounds in the same word

may have been subconsciously avoided. Apart from this hypothesis, there does not seem to be any other reason why the particular suffix was chosen each time.

As for the neuter diminutives *taratsákia*³ ('little terraces') and *kagkelákia* ('little railings'), what is so interesting is that although the former originates from the feminine *taráts- a* and the latter from the neuter *kágkel-o*, they both occur as neuter once the diminutive morphemes are added. This process of adopting the neuter gender after the addition of diminutive morphemes is widely used in MG and it is one of the system's attributes.

The use of diminutives is widespread in MG and it normally has an affectionate meaning (although not always; it depends on the word and the context in which it occurs). On the contrary, the use of augmentative suffixes frequently bears negative connotations (e.g., *Éllin-as*: 'Greek', but *Ellin-ár-as*: 'big Greek, Greek in a vulgar way without any understanding or respect for other cultures'). Still, sometimes the augmentative suffix indeed increases the quality of the noun (eg. *pékt-is*: 'player' and *pekt-ar-ás*: 'great player').

The main augmentative suffixes in MG are *-áras* (masculine) and *-ára* (feminine). Interestingly, in the vernacular, the initial grammatical gender of the word frequently changes when followed by the augmentative in order to fit either the masculine or feminine paradigm. For instance, the neuter *to mats* ('the football match') becomes *i mats-ára* ('the great match'), which is feminine (the grammatical gender is denoted by the preceding definite article as well). The same thing happens with the use of diminutives where the most frequent suffix is the neuter *-áki* (*o ánt-r-as*: 'the man' (masculine) and *to antr-áki*: 'the little man' (neuter)). This shift between grammatical genders with the use of different suffixes is exploited largely by the Cavemen in order to construct their morphological innovations.

The general rule is that a word with a pejorative notion acquires an even more pejorative meaning with the addition of an augmentative suffix (e.g., *ghíft-os*: 'a gypsy, somebody without manners' and *ghíft-ulas*: 'a big gypsy, somebody with really awful manners') and is slightly moderated with the addition of a diminutive (e.g., *ghíft-ákos*, 'little gypsy, someone with some bad manners'). Similarly, a word with a positive meaning, such as the adjective *kal-ós* ('good') produces *kal-útsik-os* ('a bit good, so and so'). Nevertheless, *kalós* produces *kal-úl-is* ('a little good', with a rather affectionate meaning) as well.

Surprisingly perhaps, it seems that sometimes the meaning of each suffix (either diminutive or augmentative) really depends on the context, thus 'a little' can mean 'a lot' and vice versa. In a way, this is a process of neutralisation of the initial meaning of the suffixes. This sort of ambivalence is used by the Cavemen as an in-group marker, which can be better seen in the following example (and its interpretation):

The word *púst-is* ('gay') is a common swear word in MG. In a very informal style it can

occasionally be used as a vocative pronoun between close friends. Moreover, it can even take on a very positive meaning in uses such as '*Ti káni o pústis*' ('What is the gay doing', in the sense of 'It is really unbelievably good what he is doing'), but always only in a slang manner. In the common vernacular, however, this is a word with very negative connotations, albeit very widely used. The form *púst-is* is grammatically masculine. Normally it can take the suffixes – *áki* (diminutive) and –*ára* (augmentative) and be subject to the gender change described above. Thus, emerge the types *pust-ára* ('big gay', feminine) and *pust-áki* ('little gay', neuter). These are common slang features of MG.

Nevertheless, in addition to these types, other derivations of *pústis* also exist which deviate from the general rule applied to MG nouns (for example, the grammatically feminine *púst-ra* ('gay, but in a very derogative way') and the neuter *pustr-áki* (which implies an even worse connotation than the previous word, although the suffix –*áki* is diminutive). Moreover, they come up with a unique form combining diminutive and augmentative affixes (*pust-ar-áki*). And while the use of the deviations of the swear word *pústis* may be attributed to the obscene character of the word (thus they would not be expected to occur in more mainstream/standard words⁴), the fact that there is a deviation of the deviations should be considered a clear demonstration of new word creation and neutralisation of the meaning of the suffixes.

The word *pustaráki* ('little big gay') is a very interesting formation in the sense that it consists of the root *pust-*, the augmentative –*ar(a)* and the diminutive –*aki*. The co-occurrence of the antonym morphemes –*ara* and –*aki* is an example of the neutralisation of their meaning. Semantically speaking, all of the word formations deriving from the initial *púst-is*, that is *púst-ra*, *pust-áki*, *pustr-áki*, *pust-ára* and *pust-ar-áki*, seem to express the same meaning (of someone whose manners and quality are considered sneaky, cowardly and unappreciated). But this process of the co-occurrence of the antonym morphemes is group-specific and not a typical feature of the MG vernacular. In reality, a major point demonstrated with such a practice is that the meaning of a word is not, in such cases, the aggregate of the meanings of its constituents and that such an occurrence serves social membership purposes rather than describing a semantic content. This practice is not restricted to the combination of morphemes but can also be found in the formation of compound words.

For example, this same word *pústis* may change gender in compound formations and appear as –*pust-a* (feminine) in *kamper-ó-pusta* ('kamper-gay'), probably by analogy to *palió- pusta(s)* ('bad gay'). The use of the salient word *kamper* as a descriptive to *pústis* implies that just the use of the (already heavily) marked –*pusta* is not enough to match the group's criteria of being different from the rest.

3.3 Nominal endings

Another example of the productive use of morphological variation in the construction of new words comes from another category of suffixes: the masculine nominal endings denoting a perpetrator of an action or describing one's quality. Most frequently in MG, these masculine nominal endings take the following forms: *-ós*, *-is*, *-os*, *-ás*, *-as*, *-ías*. The Cavemen present these new words with the endings *-ás* and *-ías*. Therefore, the following new types emerge:

skat- íás ('shitty person') < *skatá* ('shit')

skat- íás ('shitty person') < *skatá* ('shit')

ghamó-spit-as ('house fucker') < *ghamó* ('I fuck') + *spíti* ('house')

The Cavemen do not come up with **kagur-ias*, **ghamo-spit-ias* (or **ghamo-spít-is*, analogically to *erimo-spítis* ('bachelor')). Perhaps the choice is related to the different position of the word stress in these words. Similarly, the Cavemen use the word *skat-íás*, rather than *skat-ás*, which is an unusual but nevertheless existing slang word. Finally, the word *kágkur-as* (masculine), which is a word with a heavy semantic load and highly critical of someone's attitude, frequently occurs in slang as *kagkúr-i* (neuter). In the latter case, a change of grammatical gender occurs since *kagkúr-i* is neuter; however, the meaning is basically the same. This sort of gender change is another mechanism to create informal words based on existing ordinary ones. One thing to be mentioned, however, is that a major point in my argumentation is that all these morphological variations are neither meaningless nor random, but they rather form a consistent and re-occurring mechanism of style formation and identity construction. What seems to be rather random, as in the examples discussed, is the choice of the specific suffixes from the available inventory each time. Put differently, although words exist with the same root, the speakers deliberately choose to alter the ending in order to deviate from the conventions of the majority and thus signal group membership. This process will be demonstrated more clearly with the following examples.

3.4 Compound Words

As mentioned above, the most common masculine nominal endings⁵ are *-is*, *-as*, *-os* and *-ias*. The same endings occur when a new compound word is formed (if the new word is of masculine gender⁶). This is typical of the MG vernacular. What is very interesting, however, in the construction of informal words by the Cavemen, is the fact that the new compound words are formed with the emphasis not on the aggregate of the meaning of the constituent elements, but

rather on the very practice itself of inventing unusual combinations. Moreover, as with the other informal nouns, there does not seem to be a clear reason determining the choice of the nominal endings from the available options. For example, the Cavemen construct the following (masculine) new words deriving from the noun *gham-iás* ('fucker') with three different nominal endings: a) *kolo-gham-iás* ('arse-fucker') and *kuradho-gham-iás* ('shit-fucker'), b) *ladh-o-ghám-is* (oil-fucker) and *gham-ó-spit-as* (house-fucker). What is interesting about these three examples is the fact that while the first two words (*kolo-gham-iás* and *kuradho-gham-iás*) follow the morphological example of the initial noun *ghamiás*, the other two (*ladh-o-ghám-is* and *gham-ó-spit-as*) do not (although in all cases the first word functions as the object of the action of the second). Grammatically speaking, the forms *-ghám-is* and *gham-ó* are bound morphemes and they cannot stand alone in the sentence, contrary to *ghamiás*.⁷ As for the question as to why the word *gham-ó-spit-as* does not occur as **spit-o-ghám-is* or *spit-o-gham-iás*, which are similar to one of the other two words, there does not seem to be an obvious linguistic reason. It might be a random choice.

What is not random though, is the fact that as with the previous categories of word-formations that are discussed in this paper, the same practices re-occur. It is therefore safe to talk about a pattern. This pattern suggests that the reason the words seem to be formed with a random choice of morpheme is because the emphasis is not on the exact morphemes used, but rather on the fact that these words are different to the widespread ones, even when it comes to the most informal styles of the vernacular. The fact that the new compound words do not carry any actual specific meaning apart from 'fucker,' just expressed differently, points in the same direction (and this can be verified by a look at the intra-sentential context). Thus, a careful look at the ingredients and the practices of the Cavemen reveals a fundamental linguistic device to express group identity. Within this framework, it is not surprising that these nonce words do not re-occur (at least not so often or within this corpus). Moreover, the discussion of all the examples so far demonstrates that there is nothing intrinsically special about either the morphemes or roots used, but it is the combining technique which is really salient to the group identity.

Nevertheless, what can be said is that these sorts of 'unlikely' combinations (both at the morphological and the syntactic level) are not random but just two different forms of the same elaborate technique of stylistic performance. The more that this analysis moves to the level of phrase and sentence formation (rather than word-formation only), the more the noun-phrases might appear to actually have a pragmatic function. However, even in these cases, the common factor shall be the quest to come up with original and unusual creations (and this is also evident in the case of whole narratives following this direction, such as the 'pastrami narrative', see Kailoglou 2010). All in all, the distinctiveness of the Cavetalk consists of a) the morphological and word-compounding productivity, b) the unusual use of metaphors and c) the extended use of

slang⁸ and obscene words.

4. Conclusion

What connects the four features mentioned above is the fact that they are all linked to the performative aspect of language, in a way that we could call “poetic”. Indeed, this is the argument that Adams makes who also sees slang as ‘poetry’, with the metaphor being ‘dead centre in slang’ (2009: 44-45 and 112-113). The particular focus on the relation between slang, metaphor and authenticity is discussed in more depth in Kailoglou 2014. The key points on metaphors are summarised here:

1	Metaphor is a feature of figurative language (as opposed to literal).
2	Metaphor is used as an umbrella terms to also cover metonymy, simile, synecdoche and other figurative realisation.
3	Figurative language can be used in the reproduction of stereotypical metaphors (e.g., cold blood, fast like the wind etc.) but also can be used as performative innovation with the creation of original metaphors (here, “the house on the hill like the octopus”).
4	Metaphors (and figurative language more generally) is not only a feature of literature. It is as much a feature of everyday discourse.

Swan (2006) recognised this and also linked it to humour (another form of creative, which lowers the formality of situation and allows the contestation of norms). And Carter (2006: 34-35), also identifies two different sorts of practices in everyday creativity in interaction: pattern-reforming and pattern-reinforcing. It is the former that interests us here. To be sure, diverging from the norm carries inherent risks of rejection, failure and mockery. Hence, Carter (2006: 35) explains that the embarrassment of unsuccessful performances and lapsed “presentationality” acts as a deterrent for widespread usage of such practices. And Cameron provides a similar assessment (2006: 47): “We find that everyday talk does not make much use of novel metaphors...since the communicative pressures of talk do not allow time to compose new and vivid metaphors.” This would then suggest that extensive use of novel metaphors is not coincidental, but highly functional and strategic.

Concerning types of creative people who innovate using metaphors, Kovecses (2010: 35) includes sports journalists, graffiti writers, writers of song lyrics and authentic users of slang as typical examples. Leaving aside, what “authentic” means exactly (there is a wide debate on authentic speakers in sociolinguistics, cf. Coupland 2003 and 2007), what these observations

have in common is a shared understanding of the way metaphors and slang are both forms of linguistic creativity and of norm disruption and contesting. Swearing, taboo language and morphological productivity can also be used for the same function.

As a hard-core group, it is to be expected that the Cavemen would use extensive swearing. The more than 1,000 tokens of ‘malakas’ in four hours are testimony to that. A closer look, however, suggests that this is not the whole story. This word is mostly used as a discourse marker and/or term of address in a playful manner, rather than a direct insult. Insults may take a more elaborate form (“die of lead poisoning”). This is because “malakas” is a widespread word and as such used by all groups and most young people in Athens. As with the unconventional metaphors (“she looks like she has swallowed a submarine”), which are instances of creativity and norm-breaking (while consisting of “normal” and conventional elements) and slang (which needs to include modifications to words widely shared across Athenian youth, in order to achieve the unique effect), morphology becomes a stylistic tool for subcultural groups. The Cavemen have been using the “mundane” and “ordinary” features in an innovative way, which not only signals but also embodies divergence and rebellion. In this sense, the act becomes the message (or the forms becomes the meaning). The everyday “materials” (language) they use make it mandatory to be familiar with the nuanced usage in order to achieve the appropriate linguistic performance. An outsider cannot perform that. One needs to be “in the know” and an insider, partaking in the subcultural and subversive practices in order to master this “style”. Swearing, using slang, or repeating established metaphors alone does not carry currency in the subcultural linguistic market. There needs to be a combination of usage; the main thing is to elaborately be creative and break the “rules”. It is the people who know how to break the rules, who are accepted as authentic, and not as trying too hard. The people who do not miss a chance to innovate morphologically (use of suffixes), semantically (metaphors), lexically (slang) or all of the above combined (in the case of swearing). In a non- institutional setting, or in a setting where institutional norms are not adhered to, status acquisition takes subtle forms (even when using “crass” features such as swearing). Derivational morphology can then become an indispensable tool in status negotiation. The authentic form becomes the characteristic of the rebellious speaker.

5. Bibliography

- Adams, M. (2009). *Slang: The People’s Poetry*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Agha, Asif. (2006). *Language and social relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Asif, A. (2003). The social life of cultural value, *Language and Communication*, Volume 23, Issues 3–4, 231–273.
- Baker, P. (2019). *Fabulosa! The Story of Polari, Britain’s Secret Gay Language*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

- Battistella, E.L. (2005). *Bad Language: Are some words better than others*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, L. (2006). Metaphor in everyday language, in Maybin, J and Swan, J (eds.) *The Art of English: everyday creativity*, 46-53. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Carter, Ronald 2006 Extracts from 'Common language: corpus, creativity and cognition', in Janet Maybin and Joan Swan (eds.) *The Art of English: everyday creativity*, 29-36.
- Chambers, J. and Trudgill, P. (1998) *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coupland, N. (2003). Sociolinguistic authenticities, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7 (3):417-431.
- Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dumas, B. K. and Lighter, J. (1978). Is Slang a Word for Linguists? *American Speech*, 5:(1) 5-17.
- Eble, C. (1996). *Slang and sociability*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.
- Eckert, P. and McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992). Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as community-based practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21: 461-90.
- Eckert, P. (1989). *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Eckert, P. (2000). *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Identity in Belten High*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Eckert, P. (2008). Variation and the indexical field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12: 453-476.
- Eckert, P. (2012). Three Waves of Variation Study: The Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Sociolinguistic Variation. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41: 87.100.
- Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet. (1992) "Think Practically and Look Locally: Language and Gender as Community-Based Practice". *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 21, 461-90.
- Ferguson, C.A., (1959). Diglossia. *Word* 15: 325-40.
- Halliday, M.A.K and Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective* (2nd edn.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. (2013). *Sociology themes and perspectives* (8th edn.) London: Collins.
- Iordanidou, A. and Androutsopoulos, J. (2001). Youth slang in Modern Greek. In Georgakopoulou, A. and Spanaki M. (eds.). *A Reader in Greek Sociolinguistics: Studies in Modern Greek Language, Culture and Communication*. Oxford/Bern: Peter Lang
- Irvine, J. (2001). Style as distinctiveness: the culture and ideology of linguistic differentiation. In Eckert, P. and Rickford, J. (eds.). *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation in Language*. 21-43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Jay, T. and Janschewitz, K. (2008). The pragmatics of swearing. *Journal of Politeness Research*. 4:267-288.
- Kailoglou, L. (2010). *Style and sociolinguistic variation in Athens*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Department of Language and Linguistics, University of Essex.
- Kailoglou, L. (2014). "Being more alternative and less Brit-pop: The quest for originality in three urban styles in Athens". In V. Lacoste, J. Leimgruber and T. Breyer (eds.) *Indexing authenticity: Sociolinguistic perspectives*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 78-96.
- Kovezses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Labov, William. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lambiri-Dimaki, J. (1983). *Social stratification in Greece, 1962-1982*. Athens: Sakkoulas.
- Le Page, R.B. and Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985), *Acts of Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mackridge, P. (2009). *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McEnery, T. (2006). *Swearing in English: Bad Language, Purity and Power from 1586 to the Present*. London/ New York: Routledge.
- Mendoza-Denton (2008) *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Lating Youth Gangs*. Oxford:

Blackwell.

- Moore, E. and Podesva, R. (2009) Style, indexicality, and the social meaning of tag questions. *Language in Society* 38, 447 – 485
- Mouzelis, N. (1978). *Modern Greece: Facets of underdevelopment*, London: Macmillan.
- Mouzelis, N. (1986). *Politics in the semi-periphery: Early parliamentarism and late industrialization in the Balkans and Latin America*. London: Macmillan.
- Mouzelis, N. (1986). *Politics in the semi-periphery: Early parliamentarism and late industrialization in the Balkans and Latin America*. London: Macmillan.
- Petropoulos, E. (1971). *Kaliarda* [in Greek]. Athens: Nefeli.
- Silverstein, M. (2003). Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. *Language and Communication* 23: 193–229.
- Silverstein, M. (2003). Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. *Language and Communication* 23: 193–229.
- Swann, J. (2006). The art of everyday. In Maybin, J. and Swan, J. (eds.) *The Art of English: everyday creativity*. 3-28. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Theodoropoulou, I. (2013). *Sociolinguistic variation in Athenian suburban speech*. *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 13(1): 28-51
- Theodoropoulou, I. (2014). *Sociolinguistics of style and social class in contemporary Athens*. Amsterdam: Benjamin's.
- Trudgill, P. (1999). *The dialects of England* (2nd edn.). Oxford: Blackwell
- Trudgill, P. (2002). *Sociolinguistic Variation and Change*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Weinreich, U., Labov, W. and M. Herzog. (1968). *Empirical foundations for a theory of language change*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Endnotes

- ¹ These are the endings for the singular form in nominative which I shall use as the paradigm for each type. These endings follow the same rules of inflection as nouns of MG in general.
- ² Interestingly, the type kagkelákia is also not a formal one, although its meaning should be clear to all native speakers. Since it is of neuter gender it shall not be discussed along with the other two diminutives here. The diminutive morphemes for neuter are –aki (singular) or less frequently –útsiko/-úli, but the choice does not appear to be as random as with the feminine endings.
- ³ The –a is a nominal ending for the plural of neuter nouns and adjectives.
- ⁴ More widely used mainstream words occur in a sort of fixed morphology; thus, words in the verge of legitimacy may be expected to be subject to more alterations.
- ⁵ I always refer to the nominative singular.
- ⁶ The rule for MG is that all masculine nouns and adjectives end in vowel+s in the nominative singular. The general morphological difference between masculine and feminine is the presence of –s. So, masculine inflection has –s in nominative and –∅ in genitive while feminine inflection has exactly the opposite. Nouns of neuter gender can have either of the two instances. However, there are some nouns namely of ancient origin which do not abide by the –s paradigm and thus are frequently used ‘wrongly’ by the less educated speakers.
- ⁷ To strengthen a point previously made concerning the complexity of MG morphology, the verb ‘to fuck’ in the 2nd person singular in the indicative of the present tense appears as gham-ís/gham-ás; however, the orthography of these words allows for the differentiation in the meaning.
- ⁸ The definition of slang may include the varied use of words and phrases with a standard and an informal meaning.