

## **Teaching classical languages at the secondary school and historical linguistics: a perspective from a former communist country**

(For the workshop: Historical Linguistics at school: An ever-pressing need?)

I report here on the project called Summer School for Classical Languages. This is a week-long program that has so far been organized four times in different locations in Greece (2016–2019) and once in Slovenia (in 2021). It is aimed at high-school students that attend one of the classical or general gymnasias in Slovenia or one of the Slovenian minority high-schools in Italy or Austria. Thus, this project is another one aiming at introducing aspects of modern historical linguistics into secondary level education (e.g., Joseph et al. 2021, Denham and Lobeck 2010: 125–226).

The Summer School has so far addressed various topics from historical linguistics, including the issue of correct (authentic) pronunciation of Latin and Greek; language contact in the ancient world; language change and language continuity; language death; the contribution of Slovenian linguists (e.g., Bartholomew Kopitar) to Greek linguistics; Latin and Greek vocabulary in the modern etymological dictionary of Slovenian; the relation between Attic Greek (as taught in high-schools) and other Ancient Greek dialects. In addition, we introduced a method of teaching Modern Greek to classicists, which is based on a focus on elements of continuity between Ancient and Modern Greek, and using such elements to identify changes as well (Author, Joseph, and Brown 2020).

After a brief presentation of the history of the project, I discuss how (and if) the aforementioned topics are presented in textbooks and materials that are currently used in Slovenian high schools (e.g., Mihevc-Gabrovec 1978). Thus, drawing on my actual experiences with high school students, I address one of the main issues that the workshop aims at, namely whether the study of ancient languages as schools follows the scientific results and the novel linguistic perspectives found in current historical linguistics. Furthermore, I present how we approached the issues within the Summer School, how choices were made about the curriculum, and how adjustments were made from year to year. Approximately two hundred students have so far attended it and I report on the results of an evaluation questionnaire they filled out concerning the Summer School's content. These results show advantages and disadvantages of our approach to the study of ancient languages and shed light on potential obstacles that such attempts may face; for instance, cultural clichés (such as the negative image of the linguist Kopitar in modern Slovenian society, due to his role in censoring Slovenia's national poet).

## **References**

Author, Brian D. Joseph, and Christopher Brown. 2020.

Denham, Kristin and Anne Lobeck, eds. 2010. *Linguistics at School: Language Awareness in Primary and Secondary Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Mihevč-Gabrovec, Erika. 1978. *Grščina: teksti in vaje za pouk grščine*. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta.