

Historical Linguistics at school(?): The Greek perspective

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What happens when a longstanding philological / educational tradition meets historical linguistics in its current instantiation? The paper seeks out to investigate the extent to which historical linguistics exerts influence on the way the diachronic development of Greek is portrayed in secondary education in Greece. This topic has only been scarcely touched upon in the relevant literature (cf. Sampanis & Karantzola, 2018), and mostly in relation to the thorny issue of the teaching of Ancient Greek at schools and its relationship (?) with the teaching of Modern Greek (cf. Tsafos, 2004, Seranis, 2018, among many others). Still, the main questions that arguably should be addressed and constitute the main issues of this paper are the following:

- a) Is the -ideologically driven- teaching of Ancient Greek linguistically informed?
- b) Is the history of Greek depicted at schools in any systematic way? And if so, is it in any sort of dialogue with the principles of modern Historical Linguistics?
- c) Is it possible -at least in principle- to incorporate current perspectives on language change in the Language curriculum, and if so, how and to what extent?

Based on the current curricula and the recently (2021) published official proposals for their renewal, the paper shows that the history of the Greek language, although omnipresent as a notion and as a significant aspect of the Greek identity, does not feature in any systematic way at secondary schools. On the contrary, the teaching of Ancient Greek is ‘linguistics-proof’ and is based on the linguistic ideology of a unitary Greek language. Hence, the linguistically sound principle of historical *continuity* becomes an ideologically based axiom of *unity*. Moreover, it is shown that the inclusion of language variation as a subject to promote Knowledge about Language (KAL) in secondary education comes into stark contrast with everyday school practice which is very corrective. On the whole, it is argued that, contrary to what would perhaps be expected, a long linguistic history does not necessarily entail a privileged position for historical linguistics at school and, moreover, that the battle against out-of-date linguistic ideologies must predate any serious attempt to incorporate principles of (historical) linguistics in secondary education.

References

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