

«Πιάσ' μου την αρπακτικήν!»

(«*Piás' mou tin araktikín*»)

Lena Kontakou-Pavlidis
Hellenic Open University

Περίληψη

Στο παρόν άρθρο, εισάγουμε τον αμύητο αναγνώστη στην Κυπριακή διάλεκτο από την ιστορική, πολιτισμική και πολιτιστική, γλωσσολογική και κοινωνική πλευρά ενόσω υπερασπιζόμαστε τη διατήρηση, προώθηση και ενίσχυση όλων των διαλέκτων και ιδιωμάτων. Η Ελλάδα και η Κύπρος, μοιράζονται κοινούς προγόνους, ιστορία, κληρονομιά, γλώσσα καθώς και τον ίδιο Εθνικό Ύμνο· παρόλα αυτά, στην Κύπρο χρησιμοποιείται μία διαφορετική «καθομιλουμένη» («vernacular»): ενώ στην Ελλάδα, η Μοντέρνα Ελληνική γλώσσα χρησιμοποιείται τόσο για το υψηλό επίπεδο ύφους («high register») όσο και για το χαμηλό («vernacular»), στην Κύπρο χρησιμοποιείται μία –μοναδική στο είδος της– ξεχωριστή διάλεκτος για την καθομιλουμένη ενώ η επίσημη Μοντέρνα Ελληνική υψηλού ύφους, είναι η αποκλειστική γραπτή γλώσσα της Εκπαίδευσης, των Δικαστηρίων, της Διπλωματίας κ.λπ. Ποιά είναι κάποια από τα χαρακτηριστικά αυτής της διαλέκτου; Γιατί παρουσιάζουν ενδιαφέρον; Πώς ανταπεξέρχονται οι νεαροί Κύπριου/ες στην κληρονομημένη καθομιλουμένη της οικειότητας και την *de facto* επιβεβλημένη επίσημη και ποιές είναι οι τωρινές τάσεις;

Abstract

In this article, we present a brief overview of the Cypriot dialect from a historic, cultural, linguistic and social point of view whereas we defend the preservation, promotion and reinforcement of all dialects and idioms. Cyprus and Greece, share common ancestry, history, heritage, language and the same national anthem ; yet, Cyprus uses a different «vernacular»: while in Greece, Modern Greek is being used as a high and a low variety («vernacular» and official) in Cyprus, a one-of-a-kind distinctive dialect is being used; in casual daily verbal communication, the Cypriot dialect is being used while the official standard Modern Greek is being used at schools, Courts and Diplomacy matters; what are some characteristic elements of this dialect?

Why are they interesting? How young Cypriots, caught between an inherited vernacular at home and an official at school cope with this *de facto* and what is the actual tendency?

The Cypriot dialect dates back to the Antiquity and is believed to descend from the Proto-Arcadocypriot Ancient Greek dialect, brought to the island of Cyprus by Arcadians, trying to flee the Dorian invasion back in 1200 B.C. It resembles the Linear B-corpus. According to the Academy of Athens, sole Greek Authority for linguistic categorization, Cypriot is considered as a Southern dialect. Southern dialects, including those of Chios, Samos and the Dodecanese islands, start on the 38^o parallel north and are characterized by phonological changes in vowels. It is also considered an «ίντα» and a «πόθεν» («ίντα»= how, what, «πόθεν»=where, from where) dialect, a characteristic shared with Crete. Based on Kontosopoulos' (1994:92) criterium of «mutual understanding» Cypriot is a dialect, because it is unintelligible to speakers of Greek, unless previously familiarized. In fact, Franks, Venetians, Arabs, Turks, British have all left an indelible imprint on this language.

An authentic mosaic of the island's history, Cypriot, reflects the smooth incorporation and amalgamation of languages and cultures throughout the years; «ο πελεκάνος» («ο *pelekanos*» which in Greek means «the pelican» < lat. *pelecanus onocrotalus*), in Cypriot means «the furniture maker» and comes from Venetian and latin. Other words start with a double consonant, such as «*mmathkia*=μμάδκια»=μάτια=eyes, «*μματάκιν, μματούιν*=μάτι, *ματάκι*»; in this dialect, double consonants are particularly stressed when pronounced, resembling the spelling of the modern Spanish Castellano as in «*innato*» (innate), certainly of latin heritage, or the double <ss> pronounced as <shsh> in «*diakossia*» (200), «*triakossia*» (300) etc. Another characteristic is the combination of the delta «δ» or the theta «θ» with the kappa «κ» as in «*αδκειασερός*» («person having free time»), «*μιλιθκιασμένος*» (arc. «Μέλδομαι» «rotten», «having mould»). In addition, this dialect is being enriched and diversified by the thousands of Cypriots of the diaspora, who use the Cypriot dialect and modify it such as «*την πατάτα*» meaning «*potato*» pronounced «*patato*», or «*η αγορά*» meaning «the *market*» becomes «*marketa*» etc.

In regards to social acceptance, one needs to observe the oxymoron, an actual ongoing situation in many countries: although, this home learned dialect is a *de facto* custom and practice for Cypriots, there are indications that young Cypriots tend to consider it as a variety of lower register and therefore, as an index of lower social status; to remedy its effect, young Cypriots attempt to modify their pronunciation in order to

resemble that of the official Modern Greek. This phenomenon affects all rural areas where dialects or idioms might be traditionally spoken. It emanates from the influence of the Internet, the penetration of modernism in the most remote rural areas and seriously affects all dialects in all languages. A clean cut accent is nowadays believed to bestow a high social status upon its speaker and better prospective for work.

The article 21 of the Chart of Basic Rights of the European Union states, among others, that the respect to the linguistic diversity, is a core European Union, value. The European Union «speaks» more than 24 languages. In some countries, the official language is the same spoken by the majority (99% in Greece and Hungary), while in others, the official language coexists with one or two more as is the case of Spain (Castellano is the formal one); in Cyprus there are three official ones and one vernacular; the official ones appear on all public documents such as IDs, Driving Licences, Court Decisions etc.

Finally, a striking example, of remarkable adaptation and inspiration in Cypriot is the following: In Modern Greek, an «αρπακτική» («*arpaktikí*») is the female adjective for «preditor», yet in the Cypriot dialect it is not: in the expression «Πιάσ' μου την αρπακτικήν!» («Bring me the *arpaktikín!*») the speaker does not ask for a preditor to be brought in but, for a photographic camera! Back in the '50s, KODAK advertised its cameras using the moto «*Catch the Moment!*»! Therefore, the object that could «catch the time» became a «catcher» of the time and the moment but in Modern Greek it still is a «preditor».

Cypriot as all other dialects and idioms, is indeed an impressive and unique dialect that needs to be respected, honoured, cherished and preserved for future generations to come; mocking about it, discriminating because of it, stigmatizing anyone for its linguistic past or present should not be an option, or a Directive, or a global guideline; dialects need to be preserved as inalienable tangible and intangible monuments of our global knowledge, *ethos* and respect for multiculturalism and plurilinguism. Cypriot is one of them.

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