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***Greeklish – on the Influence of New Communication Technologies
and New Media on the Development of Contemporary Greek***

KEY WORDS

Greeklish, Greece, language, writing, media

ABSTRACT

The growing importance of English in the Western cultural circle is also an issue in the countries of the Mediterranean Sea. Research in the region shows that with the increasing popularity of electronic communication, especially with the use of SMS, the development of new media and the market offensive of social media like Facebook and Twitter, Greek is influenced not only by English, but also by Latinization, a process which has been termed *Greeklish*. The article presents a short history of Greek, as an introduction to its current development in the context of *Greeklish*. Its characteristics and origins in Greek writing are illustrated with the most representative examples from press, television and internet sites, along with typologies. The research outcome of documenting different aspects of using *Greeklish* have been discussed, as well as the most important issues in discussions taking place in Greece on possible consequences of this phenomenon on the development of Greek.

The growing importance of English in countries of the Western culture is a phenomenon, which has also influenced the region of the Mediterranean Sea, among it Greece and Cyprus. The Anglicisation of the Greek language, but also of Polish, takes place by including English words in common, everyday use (e.g. weekend, lunch), structural borrowings¹ or giving proper names in English (e.g. “Sea Towers” in Gdynia or “Wiśniowy Business Park” in Warsaw), and is only a certain element of the transformation process of contemporary Greek. Equally important, if not more, in the issue of linguistics, is the Latinization of the Greek alphabet, which is writing Greek words, sometimes functioning in use from ancient times, in Latin alphabet.

Research done in Greece, and also the personal observations of the author suggest, that with the growing popularity of modern forms of electronic communication, especially the

¹ E.g. Have a nice day – *Milego dnia*; How may I help you? – *W czym mogę panu pomóc?*

exchange of information through SMSes, the development of new media², the market offensive of social media services such as Facebook or Twitter, and creating social functions by Internet services provided by traditional media, the process of Latinization has clearly intensified. It even has its own term – *Greeklish* – which was created by combining the words Greek and English, and in itself shows the essence of the issue.

The aim of this article is to present contemporary transformations of the Greek language in the context of *Greeklish*, based on the history of its development. The most representative examples from press, television and Internet portals, along with their typology, will illustrate the linguistic changes. Results of a number of research documenting diverse aspects of using *Greeklish* will be discussed, as well as the most important points of the discussion taking place in Greece and its possible consequences for the further direction of developing the Greek language, way of life and perception of the world by more “networked” social groups³. The article may contribute to a more general thought on the influence of a geographically boundless Internet, online media or social network services on the language and culture of certain, territorially limited countries and nations (especially small ones) in the conditions of globalization.

3500 years of language history

It is difficult to grasp the actual significance of *Greeklish* and its current and potential influence on the development of Greek without at least a brief look at selected issues from the incredible history of the evolution the oldest, universal language of Europe⁴. The first written examples of the language are more than 3500 years old. In 1953, two British linguists, Michael Ventris and John Chadwick, published the article *Evidence for Greek Dialect in the Mycenaean Archives*, in which they prove that the plates discovered on Crete inscribed with linear B script were in fact the oldest known archaic forms of Greek⁵.

Another highly meaningful event in the history of Greek was the division, functioning from the first ages after Christ, between the language of the educated group of users, who nostalgically reminisced the classical era, and so-called common language⁶. During the period of the Second Sophistic, it was established that the obligation of the Greek-speaking elite was

² See: M. Szpunar, *Czym są nowe media – próba konceptualizacji*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2008, No. 4, p. 34.

³ Which is a direct result of the change in the way we use our native language.

⁴ Cf. M. Borowska, *Z dziejów najstarszego uniwersalnego języka Europy*, “Heksis” 1997, No. 4, p. 76–85.

⁵ The script, with earlier Linear A (its connection with archaic Greek has not yet been proven), belongs to the Crete-Mycenaean group. For more on the history of deciphering Linear B See: H.G. Wunderlich, *Tajemnica Krety*, Kraków 2003.

⁶ In Greek philology, it refers to *diglossia*, when two dialects are used by a single language community.

upholding the heritage of Classical Greece, and one of its expressions was to use the Attic dialect, in which the most famous works of the period were created. A negative consequence of this idea was a gradual decline of the language of elites (called *Katharevousa*, the “puristic” language), and what followed – the language of schools, universities, theatres, books, and the Orthodox Church liturgy – in way of the everyday language used by the majority of society (*Demotic* – “common” language), in itself a rich vehicle of tradition and culture. This resulted not only in the majority being excluded from the public debate for hundreds of years, it also deprived them of education or the use of written text, among it, the press.

It is worth noticing that the discussions taking place from the beginning of the 19th century on the “language question”⁷ were not without influence on the press market in Greece. The outward domination of the “pure” language in the area of the written word and its status as “official” forced editors of certain titles to prepare texts according to the binding conventions, and continue the fashion to use archaic words among the potential literate majority. The number of readers narrowed down to small groups of citizens of the country – educated, city elite, often linked by a thick web of relations reaching the times of the Turkish domination⁸. This factor determined the development of the press market, which almost completely neglected the interest of “common” language users⁹. The situation began to change from the famous appearance of the linguist Ioannis Psycharis¹⁰ (the last two decades of the 19th century). As the circle of intellectuals grew, poets and artists began eagerly supporting “common” language as an important element which should be taken into consideration in discussions on the future of the country¹¹. This opened the door for creating other press titles introducing “common” language, and the very fact of publishing *Demotic*

⁷ This is the term used in Greek literature to describe the language division and its consequences.

⁸ The definition of the political period of Greek territorial subjection to the Turkish state.

⁹ An additional burden hindering the popularization of “common” language in press was the fact that most of its users were illiterate.

¹⁰ In the popular book from 1888, with the symbolic title *My Journey* (gr. *To ταξίδι μου*) and in other works, he praised the “common” language, proving that it “emerged from the normal historical evolution of old Greek”. N. Chadzinikolau, *Literatura nowogrecka 1453–1983*, Warszawa–Poznań 1985, p. 62. On the role of Psycharis’s work see also: M. Borowska, *Μπαρμπάχογιώργος. Ksiązka do nauki języka nowogreckiego*, Warszawa 2000, p. 15–16. In the period between the 19th and 20th century, the discussion on the “language issue” also had its dramatic political aspect. In demonstrations and riots after publishing the New Testament in *Demotic*, 8 people were killed and the Greek government had to resign (1901). Two years later, more protests over language (after the premiere of the “folk” adaptation of Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*) took two casualties. Cf. *Historia Grecji*, auth. J. Bonarek et al., Kraków 2005, p. 520.

¹¹ It is worth mentioning here the name of the distinguished poet Kostis Palamas, who wrote: “The common people’s language is my pride”. One of the critics, evaluating Palamas’s contribution to *Demotic*, noticed: “Without the works of the poet, the fate of *Katharevousa* would not have been decided so quickly and definitively, and the fight for the common language would not have taken on such a broad, national character”. Both quotes from N. Chadzinikolau, *Literatura...*, p. 71–72.

was not only an affirmation of the language (and taking on the difficult mission of popularizing it among the educated recipients), but also a certain socio-political declaration: for liberal democracy, or rather against the monarchy, for intensive economic modernization etc.¹² Until the fall of the military dictatorship (1974), diglossia divided the political scene, and what followed – also the politicized Greek mass media market. “Puristic” language dominated in the conservative, monarch and official state publications, and Orthodox Church prints, while the *Demotic* (or certain of its elements) mostly appeared in communist and liberal media, or supporters of the republic.

The long-standing diglossia, the mutual penetration of both variations of Greek, and the above mentioned circumstances were not favourable in shaping a stable language standard. After 1974, it became equally obvious that on the one side, it was not possible to base e.g. scientific, legal or medical terminology on the lexically infantile “common” language, while on the other, the grammar of contemporary Greek could not have been built on the archaic remains of the “puristic” language. Modern Greek had to be shaped as a “third entity”, which – according to the famous contemporary philologist George Babinotis – would stand somewhere in the middle: between the “pure” language and the radical version of the “common” language¹³. It has not been possible so far (and probably never will be) to create one official pattern of Greek in lexical and grammatical terms. Alongside each other, there exist forms characteristic for both *Katharevousa* and *Demotic*. The fluidity and dynamics of a language are a cause of great concern of linguists and sociologists, in the context of the growing importance of different *Greeklisch* forms in traditional Greek media, new online media and communication taking place through mobile phones and the Internet (with detailed attention given to the attitudes of young people). The fear that appears in the context of growing influence of *Greeklisch*, is all the greater since in the 20th century, the Greek alphabet has already undergone many spelling simplifications, which brings us to the question: if some attributes of written Greek language have already been resigned from, will anything be able to stop the triumphant parade of *Greeklisch*?

Definitions, names, origin

Based on contemporary knowledge, *Greeklisch* can be defined as a method of writing words in the Greek language with partial or exclusive use of letters on the Latin alphabet, in numerous

¹² For an interesting case referring to the issue See: T. Fraszczyk, *Grecki dziennik „Rizospastis” jako przykład prasy partyjnej*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2011, No. 1, p. 45–58.

¹³ Cf. M. Borowska, *Μπαρμπαγιώργος...*, p. 18.

spelling configurations, without an established system of coding, being applied in a growing number of communicational situations. In 1999, professor Joanis Androtsopoulos from Heidelberg University proposed a more detailed definition, including the demographic characteristics of current users of *Greeklisch*, writing that it is "a simplified system of writing Greek, whose use is limited fundamentally to certain communication situations and selected social groups: pupils, students, some scientists, media people and engineers"¹⁴. Research done in later years showed however, that while the dominating user groups of *Greeklisch*, pointed out by Androtsopoulos, remained unchanged, the range of its use is constantly growing (in the most part because of the easily accessible – not just on personal computers, but also laptops, tablets, mobile phones – social media), thus the mentioned definition seems a bit outdated¹⁵.

One of the first Latinized Greek texts of great cultural value comes from 1595. It was written on Crete and published in Venice in 1637¹⁶, inspired by folk tales of the tragedy *Erofilii* by George Chortatsis, author of the Cretan theatre¹⁷. The five-act work can stand alongside the best works of Italian Renaissance¹⁸.

In the first part of the 19th century, the so-called centre of *Greeklisch* was Smyrna (tr. Izmir), where Greek books in Latin transcript were published. Here too, an attempt was made to publish a Greek paper with Latin typeface, yet it was not maintained for long. As sources claim, Greek-speaking inhabitants knew the language perfectly, although they were not capable of learning the traditional spelling, due to the Turkish surroundings, making it difficult for them to remember their own native alphabet¹⁹.

Slightly later, favourable conditions for the development of *Greeklisch* appeared with the telegraph and the constantly increasing exchange of correspondence between the inhabitants of Greece and members of their families working abroad, among others, in Great Britain and Asia Minor. The technical limitations of equipment functioning outside Greece and the lack of knowledge of Greek among telegraphists required a phonetic transcription of the information sent and received, using the Latin alphabet²⁰. The era of the telegraph can be perceived as the first case of the distinct influence of technical progress in the field of communication on the Latinization of the Greek language script.

¹⁴ Cf. I. Ανδρουτσόπουλος, *Από τα φραγκοχιώτικα στα Greeklisch*, "Το Βήμα" 5.09.1999. The article in an electronic version at: www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=114039 [accessed: 23.11.2011].

¹⁵ The results of this research will be discussed later on.

¹⁶ There also exists a group of Greek texts written in Latin alphabet from before the fall of Constantinople and slightly later, in which different kinds of songs and folk songs were written, yet there is no detailed information about them.

¹⁷ Cf. N. Chadzinikolau, *Literatura...*, p. 14.

¹⁸ Cf. B. Merry, *Encyclopedia of modern Greek literature*, Westport 2004, p. 364.

¹⁹ Cf. I. Ανδρουτσόπουλος, *Από τα φραγκοχιώτικα...*

²⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*.

Professor George Papanastasiu²¹ of The Aristotle University in Thessaloniki points out that current *Greeklisch*, strongly tied with new, digital technologies in terms of communicating, has its sources in the late 1960s, when Greek-language students and employees of American academies attempted to transfer information in their mother tongue by means of the Arpanet network (which later developed the Internet)²². A number of problems connected with transcription were then encountered, which will later influence the direction of developing *Greeklisch*, although due to the limited range, access and use of this network, and also the political situation in Greece, the pioneer struggle with digitalizing Greek did not reach national public opinion.

The first dial-up Internet access in Greece took place 1990 and the date can be considered the actual starting point in analysing *Greeklisch* in its present shape. The growing networking of professional counting machines coincided with the popularization of access to personal computers, which gradually become connected with the Internet. Still in the mid 1990s, computer equipment imported to Greece (e.g. keyboards, software), or foreign online services did not enable using the Greek alphabet in e-mail, messages sent through IRC and other activities in the electronic environment²³. This required a quick, somewhat spontaneous adaptation of the alphabet to the technical conditions, which were obvious – one could operate on Greek only in its Latin form. At the time, an attempt was made to standardize the transcript of Greek letters into their Latin “equivalents” in the ISO 8432 standard, yet as professor Androtsopulos notices in an article from 1999 “few Greeks know the standard, and even less can consciously use it”²⁴. No other standard transcription proposed in later years ever gained universal application²⁵. In the second half of the last decade of the 20th century, the Greek market became saturated with equipment and software adjusted to the national alphabet, however, it did not stop the dynamic, uncontrolled expansion of Latinized Greek.

Typology of *Greeklisch*

As a result of spontaneous development, edging away from standard mechanisms, during the last twenty years of modern Greek history, four fundamental types of *Greeklisch* have taken

²¹ See: Β. Χαρισσοπούλου, *Η Ερωφίλη μιλούσε σε... greeklisch*, “Ta Nea” 2.06.2010. Article in the electronic version: www.tanea.gr/politismos/article/?aid=4577615 [accessed: 12.10.2011].

²² For more on the first distributed systems see: M. Pudełko, *Prawdziwa histori@ Internetu*, Piekary Śląskie 2011.

²³ Cf. Λ. Σταμάτης, *Sou stelno ena minima*, “Ta Nea” 5.06.1999, p. N74.

²⁴ Ι. Ανδρουτσόπουλος, *Από τα φραγκοχιώτικα...*

²⁵ On the consequences of failed attempts to standardize *Greeklisch* later on in the article.

shape, out of which three can be called basic, and the fourth – is a specific variation built on the “fundamentals” of the basic types²⁶.

- The phonetic transcription: based on the sound of Greek letters and words, by substituting traditional Greek spelling with its Latin equivalent. This transcription, to the greatest extent, interferes in the “basic” shape of the word.
- The visual (spelling) transcription: tries to reflect the original shape of the Greek word, using Latin letters and Arabic numbers, which best resemble Greek letters.
- The keyboard transcription: based on the system of coding Greek letters on a standard QWERTY keyboard. It partially overlaps with the phonetic transcription, and partially with the visual one.

Table 1. Three types of Greek transliteration to *Greeklisch* (selected letters and diphthongs)

Greek letter, diphthong	Phonetic transcription	Visual transcription	Keyboard transcription
β	w, v	B	b
γ	g		g
δ	d		d
ζ	z	z	z
η	i	n	h
θ	th	8, 0, 9, C	u
κ	k, c	k	k
λ	l		l
ν	n	v	n
ξ	ks, x	3	j
ρ	r	p	r
σ, ς	s, s	s, c	s, w
υ	i	u	y
φ	f, ph		f
χ	ch	x	x
ψ	ps		c
ω	o	w	v
αι	e	ai	ai
ει	i	ei	ei
αυ	af, aw	au	ay
ευ	ef, ew	eu	ey
ου	u	ou, o0	oy
γκ	g	gk	gk
ντ	d	vt	vt

Source: Own work based on the analysis of Internet texts (sites of traditional media, social network services and discussion forums) and press.

²⁶ See also: *Greeklisch: ελληνικά με λατινικό αλφάβητο. Από το φύλλο της Καθημερινής, “Καθημερινή” 14.10.2001.*

It should be clearly stated that none of the above presented types is “autonomous” or used to transcribe the alphabet separately of the others – in the case of longer words, including diphthongs or certain letters, in one word, two or even three basic types of *Greeklish* can be identified. Even maintaining consequence and great care, there is not always a possibility to write a given word with the use of one type of pattern, as there is no possibility to find a “visual” Latin equivalent for some Greek letters. As already mentioned, all attempts to standardize the transcription have failed, due to which each user of *Greeklish* “uses it as they please, each using their own, personal system of writing, being more or less consistent”²⁷. It was noticed that sometimes the tendency to use a certain type of transcription was determined by the type of profession exercised. And therefore, linguistics more often use the phonetic transcription, journalist prefer the visual one²⁸. This does not however mean that in certain cases both one and the other will not use alternative type of transcription or combine them. Moreover, there is a high probability that within one professional group (or any other, with similar demographic features), the difference in transcription of the same text will be only slightly smaller than in terms of the entire population²⁹. The primary feature of *Greeklish* is the extraordinary wealth of possible transcription configurations and the difficulty in working out a stable pattern, even on the level of an individual user (and all the more institutions). An excellent illustration of the discussed problem is the word *διεύθυνση* (gr. address, direction), which can be written in over 20 different ways³⁰, or the website of one of the universities, on which the very word (*τμήμα*, gr. department) has been written in two versions (*tmima* and *tmhma*) on sub-sites belonging to certain department units, not to mention the presence of *Greeklish* in different places on the site³¹.

■ Abbreviations: a specific type of *Greeklish*, which on the one side borrows some features characteristic from the basic types of this phenomena, on the other, directly links to popular English-language abbreviations used mostly in online communication (e.g. LOL, ROLF, IMHO), *txt-speak* (e.g. CU, 4U, 4get, thnq or the so-called *leet-speak* (e.g. |V|, |Λ|, |<, [)³².

²⁷ I. Ανδρουτσόπουλος, *Από τα φραγκοχιώτικα...*

²⁸ Cf. Λ. Σταμάτης, *Sou stelno...*

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ E.i. dieuthunsh, dief0insi, dief8ynsh, dieu0ynsi, diey9insn, dieu9unci, dieythynsh, diey0insi, dieu9inci, dieuthunsn etc.

³¹ Cf. *Greeklish: ελληνικά με λατινικό αλφάβητο...*

³² Examples (in order): laughing out loud, rolling over floor laughing, in my humble opinion; see you, for you, forget, thank you; the letters “M”, “W”, “K”, “C”.

Table 2. *Greeklis*h – examples of most often used abbreviations in SMSes and online communication

Symbol	Entire Greek word in its <i>Greeklis</i> h equivalent	Entire Greek word	English meaning
m	mou, me	μου, με	me, mine
s	sou, se	σου, σε	you, yours
k	kai	και	and
g	gia	για	for
t	ti, to, tou	τι, το, του	what, it, him, his
n	na	να	<i>copula introducing many grammatical constructions</i>
p	pou	που	which, where
8, 0, 9	8a, 0a, 9a	θα	<i>particle indicating future tense</i>
1os, 1h, 1o	protos, proti, proto	πρώτος, πρώτη, πρώτο	first
kn1	kanena	κανένα	not one, none
tpt	tipota	τίποτα	nothing
dn	den	δεν	no
tespa	telos pandon	τέλος πάντων	anyway
tr	tora	τόρα	now
smr	simera	σήμερα	today
klxxt	kalinixta	καληνύχτα	goodnight
kl	kala	καλά	good
hs	ths	της	her, hers
tlm	ta leme	τα λέμε	see you
dld	diladi	δηλαδή	namely
pl	poli	πολύ	a lot/much/very
vrm	variemai	βαριέμαι	I'm bored
xa0xa0, xax	xa xa	χα, χα	<i>haha – onomatopoeic expression resembling laughter</i>
o0o0o0	ou ou ou	ου ου ου	<i>expresses joy, enthusiasm</i>

Source: Own research. All examples are taken from “everyday” language of Greek social network services and Internet forums.

From the very nature of the discussed abbreviations and their origin, it could be assumed, that their use is actually restricted to informal Internet communication and short text messages, such as SMSes³³. The author's observations also allow the claim, that *Greeklis*h on the one side, constantly generates new lexical units, on the other, they are the least prone to a certain type of standardization, proof of which can be the above placed vocabulary-table. What is interesting, although users of Greek portals and Internet forums transcribe Greek to

³³ On the presence of *Greeklis*h in different types of media later in the article.

Greeklish in a very diverse way (this was already mentioned), using abbreviations, they prove to be exceptionally disciplined – a clear majority uses the custom, most common variations of the given abbreviation.

Contemporary *Greeklish*

Long-term qualitative and quantitative research does not leave doubt that the current aspect of *Greeklish* is directly connected with the development of contemporary forms of communicating, using the World Wide Web as a medium (different computers connected to it and software, e.g. search engines, instant messengers) and mobile networks (mobile phones first enabled only using SMSes, gradually offering more and more sophisticated communication possibilities, connected with wireless access to the Internet, developed by operators up to the era of smartphones and tablets, which blurred the line of digitalized communication between “stationary” computer networks and “mobiles”).

In the mid 1990s, *Greeklish* became visible in emails, online chats (based on IRC) and the initial, very simple messaging programs (ICQ). The idea reached full bloom alongside the rapidly growing popularity of text messages³⁴. As Greek sociologists underline, at the time, using *Greeklish* was not treated as a “necessary evil”, based on imperfect computer technology. Some groups, especially young people, followed the American fashion of shortening words and other spelling “experiments”, which Greek youth saw in e.i. television programmes of the then very popular music channel MTV³⁵. This fashion, initiated still on the brink of the Internet era, prevailed in the following years, when computers and telephones enabled using the Greek alphabet. What is more, limitations in the length of a single SMS to 160 characters upheld the idea of the usefulness (also that economic) of the spelling revolution. Teenage fashion went hand-in-hand with technological determinism³⁶.

The first comprehensive research on *Greeklish* was conducted by the quoted professor Androtsopoulos, who in 1990 sent Greek email users a questionnaire, containing a number of questions referring to the presence of Latinized Greek online, the extent to which it is used,

³⁴ Interestingly, SMSes were primarily believe by mobile operators to be, from the revenue point of view, insignificant bonus to telephone calls in GSM technology. It quickly turned out though, that in the entire world, mobile phone holders use SMSes on as an equal communication channel.

³⁵ Cf. A. Καραγεώργου, *Πρόβλημα... orthografias*, “Ta Nea” 21.04.2010. Article in the electronic version at: www.tanea.gr/ellada/article/?aid=4570879 [accessed: 3.12.2011].

³⁶ An additional important factor in the discussed issue is the initially accepted 7-bit encoding system for text messages, which was based on the “pure” Latin alphabet, *de facto* not permitting the use of the Greek alphabet, but also e.g. Polish diacritic characters. Using this type of “non-standard” characters drastically shortened the total number of characters possible to send in one SMS.

and their change of opinion, based on the demographic feature of those questioned³⁷. The outcome showed that the domination of *Greeklish* in the sphere of electronic communication was already then quite clear: 69 per cent of Greeks inhabiting the country and 80 per cent of Greek emigrants wrote most of their electronic correspondence in Latin-alphabet Greek. 82 per cent of those interviewed described the Latinization of their language as a “useful tool” that makes communication easier and slightly less – 67 per cent, used it as a “necessary evil”. Interestingly, the critical thought on *Greeklish* was distinctly more often voiced by older users: the younger the group, the less often did the concept of “necessary evil” appear. The aesthetic side of the issue was also evaluated: 53 per cent of respondents perceived it as “ugly”, while 47 per cent did not agree with this opinion, not voicing any objections to the look of the Latinized abbreviations. In this area of the research, the same demographic tendency as previously was visible: younger users of *Greeklish* liked it (56 per cent of those up to 24 years of age), older users rated it negatively (86 per cent of those between 45–54). Moreover, it turned out, that being away from one's homeland and mother tongue influenced a positive perception of Latinization: in the group of emigrants, it had 14 per cent more positive votes than the overall average in the research. An interesting input came from the question concerning the ease of using *Greeklish* in everyday communication practices. 46 per cent of respondents claimed that reading texts in Latin-alphabet Greek is “difficult and tiring”. At the same time, only 28 per cent of those questioned admitted that writing this way proved difficult. It can be assumed that the results are a natural consequence of the above discussed lack of commonly accepted transcription standards of Greek to Latin: it is relatively easy for people to write “in dialect”, which basically has no spelling rules, while it is much more difficult to read a text prepared in this way by someone else. Worth mentioning here is that the ability to “decipher” *Greeklish* clearly grew with the number of SMSes sent by a person in a unit of time, which was of course connected with frequent contact with Latin-alphabet Greek, and what follows – quick mastering of numerous spelling variations of certain words and abbreviations. One commentator summarized Androtsopoulos's research results claiming what follows: “quite recently, it was technical conditions that did not allow Greeks to communicate with each other online and in SMSes in their own alphabet; now it is a linguistic custom that has made *Greeklish* the official language of the Greek Internet”³⁸.

³⁷ It is worth reminding that in 1999, machines and the available computer software enabled using the Greek alphabet in electronic communication.

³⁸ Λ. Σταμάτης, *Sou stelno...* This is the source of all data in this paragraph.

Research clearly showed that the group most prone to the process of Latinization are young people – they too are most in favour of it. In later years, the tendency has not changed. Stamatis Beis from the Research Centre for Modern Greek Dialects of the Academy of Athens claims even, that the Latinization of the Greek alphabet became a permanent element of youth language and goes beyond the sphere of communicating in the electronic one³⁹.

The accuracy of the above statement can be supported by the results of research conducted in the school year 2008/2009 in Kozani, among the pupils of all school levels and their teachers⁴⁰. It showed that 77.4 per cent of pupils declared regularly using *Greeklisch*, the proportion increasing with the age-level (in high school, it was at 88.5 per cent). Half of the pupils have been using it for at least two years, and 63 per cent made transcriptions of their mother tongue everyday or many times during the day. The most common causes were: habit (83.9), time saving (75.8 per cent), finding *Greeklisch* a useful communication tool (71.4 per cent), and avoiding errors in traditional spelling (38.7 per cent) and fashion (33.9). The position of Latin-alphabet Greek was especially strong among young people using electronic devices and services providing long-distance communication: frequent users of chat-rooms Latinized Greek in 84.7 per cent of the cases, email users in 78.2 per cent, SMS users in 52.8 per cent and smart phone users in 16.1 per cent of the situations. Research revealed moreover that nearly 16 per cent of pupils questioned admitted to using selected types of *Greeklisch* in handwriting, which amounts to a substantial qualitative change in relation to the late 1990s, when the phenomena was restricted to the electronic environment. The consequence of this state was among others, an increase in the number of different type of spelling errors made by youth, observed by more than half of the teachers in question (53.6 per cent). These concerned placing both Greek and Latin letters in words or sentences, omitting accents or using punctuation signs from Latin, spelling instead of the traditional Greek ones⁴¹. It can be concluded that the Latinization of Greek and the everyday use of its different variations in many communication situations, in an increasing range beyond the Internet and text messages, has had a distinctly negative influence on pupils' knowledge of correct spelling of their mother tongue.

***Greeklisch* in the media and public space**

³⁹ Cf. A. Καραγεώργου, *Πρόβλημα...*

⁴⁰ The institution supervising the research was the Faculty of Education of the University of Western Macedonia.

⁴¹ All the data in the paragraph after: *Η αυξανόμενη χρήση των greeklisch από μαθητές επηρεάζει την ορθογραφική τους ικανότητα*, “Το Βήμα” 7.09.2009. Article in the electronic version: www.tovima.gr/society/article/?aid=287108 [accessed: 21.11.2011].

The role of the media in the process of shaping *Greeklish* in its 21st century dimension is of two kinds. From the one side, they are the main debate forum on the benefits and threats of Latinizing Greek, while on the other, they themselves take on certain attitudes in allowing some types of *Greeklish* in print or broadcasts. It turns out that indications of *Greeklish* can be found not only on the Internet, where everybody can publish their texts, statements, comments in whatever way in terms of spelling⁴², a medium which from its debut in Greece, has become an extraordinary field of linguistic experiment, but also in the more “traditional” press and television.

As it has already been mentioned above, the printed press has more than once been an active participant in the decades-long discussion on the “language issue”, supporting either *Katharevousa* or *Demotic*, which sometimes reflected the language of publications in certain titles. Contemporary linguistic issues have not raised as strong political emotions as in the case of past disputes⁴³. However *Greeklish*, since the 1960s, has been linked strictly with technological (and to some degree cultural) processes, and has found its own way to expand onto printed media. One could even claim that detaching the Latinization of Greek from current political processes simplified its penetration of every press editorial, despite its ideological orientation.

For the purpose of this article, the author looked closely into five press titles belonging to the top Greek dailies in terms of sales, but also into Cyprus press⁴⁴. Conclusions from the observation (editions from the years 2009–2011) are obvious and can be displayed in the following points:

- *Greeklish* is present in all the analysed titles, with the same intensity;
- Latinization appeared only in the visual form (spelling);
- letters of the Greek alphabet which on average are Latinized most often and those which have so far been printed in their traditional form can be distinguished (details in Table 3);
- a partially Latinized cut of the font is most often present in shorter texts, meant for a quick read; the traditional font is more often left for longer articles and journalism (yet this cannot be considered a rule)⁴⁵;

⁴² See also below.

⁴³ Even in this case, insinuations of a political nature appear in public debate (one of these cases will be discussed further on), although the press is rather a forum for exchanging opinions, and not an involved participant.

⁴⁴ These dailies are: “Eleftheros Tipos”, “Rizospastis”, “Kathimerini”, “Eleftherotipija”, “Wima”. This last one appears only in the electronic version – up to 2010, it was the second, in terms of sales, morning daily.

⁴⁵ One of the basic reasons for the popularity of the visual type of *Greeklish* within a certain group of letters in printed press was assuming that a slightly Latinized font (especially sans-serif) speeds-up the reading of a text and is more dynamic, modern etc.

- sometimes there also appear distortions in placing the accent: instead of the lean accent (ό), there is a vertical sign or full stop;
- the tendency to give English titles to inserts in the main dailies is visible.

Table 3. Greek letters prone to Latinization in print

Common visual Latinization		Rather common visual Latinization	
Greek letter	Latin letter	Greek letter	Latin letter
ζ	z	χ	x
η	n	ς	s
ν	v	ι	i*
The remaining letters are in principle printed according to the traditional font			

* In Greek texts, this letter is printed without a full stop.

Source: Own research

It is worth mentioning that all the analysed press titles are inconsistent when it comes to the use of certain types of fonts. Thus, in one edition of the daily both a traditional font, and a partially latinized one are present, depending on the section, column etc. What is more, inconsistency is visible even throughout one article, as publishers quite often use a certain dual model: Latinized title and lead – core text in traditional Greek (rarely the other way around). Using different spelling in fonts surely influences the reader and his later behaviour as an author of different types of texts, especially prepared digitally.

Οι ανακατατάξεις στα μικρότερα κόμματα

■ Το ΚΚΕ αντέχει και με 8,32% διατηρεί τις δυνάμεις του ■ Τέταρτο κόμμα ο ΛΑΟΣ που εκτινάσσεται στο 7,12% ■ Καθίζηση του ΣΥΡΙΖΑ στο 4,68% ■ Είσοδος στην πολιτική σκηνή των Οικολόγων με 3,47%

Μεγάλοι κερδισμένοι ο ΛΑΟΣ, που με ποσοστό 7,12% αναδεικνύεται δεύτερος πόλος στη Δεξιά, και οι Οικολόγοι Πράσινοι, που με 3,47% εισέρχονται στην Ευρωβουλή και θέτουν υποψηφιότητα και για το ελληνικό Κοινοβούλιο. Το ΚΚΕ με

8,32% διατηρεί τις δυνάμεις του, ενώ ο ΣΥΡΙΖΑ με 4,68% εισέρχεται σε εσωκομματικές περιπέτειες. Το αξιοσημείωτο 7,34% που σημειώνουν τα εκτός Βουλής κόμματα αποτελεί μια νέα μεταβλητή για τις εθνικές εκλογές. ΣΕΛΙΔΕΣ Α6-9

Κέρδη για τη Δεξιά στην υπόλοιπη Ευρώπη

Κυριάρχησε η αδιαφορία των ψηφοφόρων – Δεινές ήττες των Σοσιαλιστών

Η Δεξιά ενισχύθηκε και η αδιαφορία των ψηφοφόρων κυριάρχησε στις χθεσινές ευρωεκλογές. Η αποχή εξακοντίστηκε σε ποσοστό ρεκόρ (57%). Οι Συντηρητικοί νίκησαν, μεταξύ άλλων, στη Γερμανία, στη Γαλλία, στην Ιταλία, στο Βέλγιο και στην Ολλανδία, ενώ κατέγραψαν υψηλά κέρδη ακόμη και σε χώρες με σοσιαλιστικές κυβερνήσεις όπως στη Βρετανία, στην Ισπανία, στην Πορτογαλία, στην Ουγγαρία και στη Βουλγαρία. ΣΕΛΙΔΕΣ Α26-28



“To Wima”, 8 June 2009, p. 1.



Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ

Ημερήσια Πολιτική και Οικονομική Εφημερίδα



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Οκτώ υπουργοί εισηγούνται

Μιλούν για τις πρωτοβουλίες που πρέπει να αναληφθούν – Ο πρωθυπουργός κρατά κλειστά τα καρτιά του

Η «σιωπή» του πρωθυπουργού κ. Κόστα Καραμανλή αναφορικά με τις προθέσεις του για ενδεχόμενες αλλαγές σε κυβέρνηση και κόμμα και οι αποκλίνουσες εισηγήσεις των κορυφαίων στελεχών για τις κινήσεις ανάταξης του δυσμενούς για την κυβέρνηση κλίματος συνθέτουν το

οκρινικό της «επόμενης ημέρας» των ευρωεκλογών στη Νέα Δημοκρατία. Η «Κ» φιλοξενεί σήμερα τις απόψεις οκτώ υπουργών πρώτης γραμμής για τα αίτια της εκλογικής ήττας, και κυρίως για τις πρωτοβουλίες που απαιτούνται, προκειμένου το κυβερνών κόμμα να ανακάμψει.

Τις θέσεις τους καταθέτουν, συγκεκριμένα, οι κ.κ. Γιώργος Σουφλίδης, Ντόρα Μπακογιάννη, Προκόπης Παυλιδού, Ευάγγελος Μέιμαράκης, Δημήτρης Αβραμόπουλος, Αντώνης Σαμαράς, Άρης Σπηλιωτόπουλος και Κωστής Χατζηδάκης. Εν αναμονή των τελικών αποφάσεων του

πρωθυπουργού Κόστα Καραμανλή, οι σχολές σκέψης που έχουν διαμορφωθεί στο εσωτερικό της κυβέρνησης είναι δύο: Η πρώτη προκρίνει αλλαγές στο υπουργικό συμβούλιο, τη Ρηγίλλης και στο επικοινωνιακό επίπεδο του Μεγάρου Μαξίμου, ώστε να μεταδοθεί η αίσθηση ότι η

κυβέρνηση έλαβε το μήνυμα των ευρωεκλογών. Η άλλη χαρακτηρίζει εσφαλμένες τις «ανθρωποποιήσεις», υποστηρίζοντας πως έμφαση πρέπει να δοθεί στον συντονισμό της κυβέρνησης και στην αποτελεσματική ανάδειξη των πολιτικών που αυτή προωθεί. Σελ. 4, 6 και 8

Λαθρομετανάστες με το όνειρο φυγής από την Ελλάδα : Ε.Ε.: Να αλλάξετε

“Kathimerini”, 14 June 2009, p. 1.



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Η ΘΕΣΗ ΜΑΣ

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΙΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΣΥ

Οι εξωσυμβατικές προμήθειες από τα δημόσια νοσοκομεία αποτελούν, δίχως άλλο, «καρκίνωμα» -μαζί με τα σωρευμένα χρέη- για τον Προϋπολογισμό και «θερμικήήπιο» πιθανής κακοδιαχείρισης και σκανδάλων. Ο υπουργός Υγείας έχει δεσμευτεί ότι με την εφαρμογή του νέου κεντρικού συστήματος προμηθειών θα αποκατασταθούν η τάξη και η διαφάνεια. Θα κριθεί γι' αυτό. Όμως, και αυτό το μείζον θέμα που αφορά τη δημόσια υγεία εμπλέκεται στη διεκυστινίδα της κομματικής αντιπαράθεσης.

συνέχεια στη σελ. 2

«Σόου» Παυλίδη ενώ αυξάνονται οι φωνές για παραίτηση

Κάθοδος στο... λαό πραγματοποιεί σήμερα στη Ρόδο και τη Σύμη ο πρώην υπουργός. Απορρίφθηκε χωρίς ψηφοφορία το αίτημα για τη δεύτερη Προανακριτική σελ. 7

Εκρηκτικό έλλειμμα στο ΙΚΑ
με «μαύρη τράπεζα» 4,4 δις

» ΕΝΑΣ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΟΚΤΩ ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ ΘΑ ΜΕΙΝΕΙ... ΣΠΙΤΙ

Ονειρο... θερινής νυκτός οι διακοπές

Σε επτά έως δέκα ημέρες το πολύ θα περιοριστούν φέτος τα «μπάνια του λαού» λόγω της κρίσης και των υπέρογκων τιμών στα ξενοδοχεία

Εως «600 είναι διατεθειμένοι να δαπανήσουν οι περισσότεροι Έλληνες για την καλοκαιρινή τους απόδραση, σύμφωνα με έρευνα για τις φετινές τάσεις στον τουρισμό. **Εξί στους δέκα** ζητούν από τους ξενοδόχους να μειώσουν δραστικά τις τιμές. Αναμένεται **μεγάλη πτώση** της τουριστικής κίνησης προς τα νησιά λόγω των ακριβών εισιτηρίων στην ακτοπλοία σελ. 24

“Eleftheros Tipos”, 8 May 2009, p. 1.

ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΑΜΑΡΤΩΛΟ ΔΙΑΓΩΝΙΣΜΟ ΤΟΥ 2002

Κόκκινη κάρτα από το 2004 για σύμβαση MAN με ΗΛΠΑΠ

Για παραβίαση της αρχής διαφάνειας εγκαλείται η Ελλάδα

Η «Ε» αποκαλύπτει ότι από το καλοκαίρι του 2004 κυβέρνηση και υπουργείο Μεταφορών ήξεραν για τον αμαρτωλό διαγωνισμό. Η Εισαγγελία του Μονάχου διερευνά το μούρο χρήμα της MAN και της θυγατρικής της ΝΕΟPLAN, η οποία εξασφάλισε την προμήθεια με τις ευλογίες της διακομματικής. ΣΕΛ. 3



ΒΑΤΟΠΕΔΙΟ ΥΠΟΜΝΗΜΑ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΕΦΕΤΕΣ

«Οι υπουργοί έδιναν εντολές, αλλά εγώ κατηγορούμαι...»

Η εκ των εμπλεκομένων μη πολιτικών προσώπων, πρώην διευθύντρια Διεύθυνσης Πολιτικής Γης, Σταματούλα Μαντέλη, αιτήθηκε από την Ολομέλεια Εφετών να ξαναπαίει η δικογραφία στη Βουλή αμελλητί. Η Ολομέλεια όμως διόρισε εφέτη ανακριτή, για περαιτέρω διερεύνηση του σκανδάλου. ΣΕΛ. 7

“Eleftherotipija”, 8 May 2009, p. 1.

Illus. 1–4. Clippings from Greek press, in which Latinization is clearly visible (see also table 3)



Illus. 5. Examples of English language titles of inserts in Greek language press on Cyprus. From the left, the business insert to the daily “Simerini” (11 March 2012), from the right – the sports insert to the paper “Fileleftheros” (14 March 2012)

Looking at the presence of *Greeklish* in television, the nature of this medium should be recalled, in which the spoken word has privilege over the written. Therefore, only a partial analysis of certain elements of the visual design in journalistic materials broadcast on television is possible. It is worth beginning from the most characteristic element of each broadcaster, which is their logotype. Out of the six nationwide television stations with logotypes containing verbal accents, only two (ERT public television and the commercial SKAI) have used the Greek alphabet. The remaining four commercial broadcasters (Mega, Ant1, Alpha, Alter) entirely Latinized their logo, using the phonetic transcription. The second type of visual design especially prone to the presence of *Greeklish*, are diverse info-graphics, captions, tickers etc. in which case, the common use of the visual transcription in some Greek letters is more often visible.



Illus. 6. Logotypes of Greek television stations



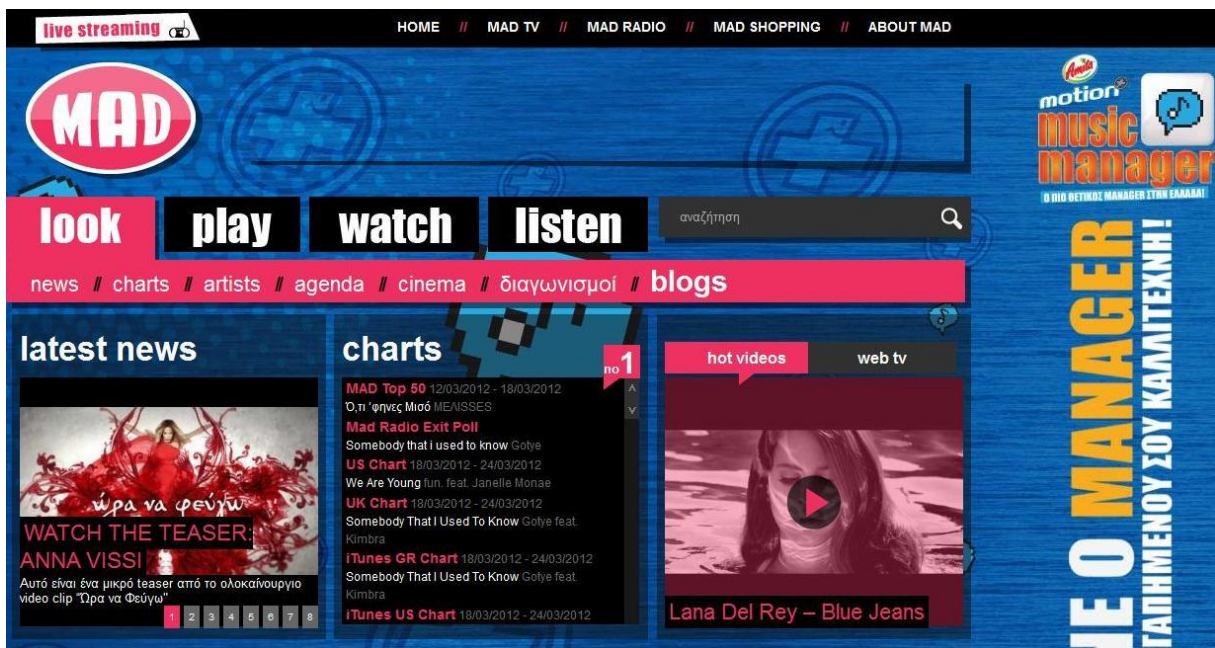
Illus. 7. Examples of logotypes of information programmes of the station Ant1 and Alter. Only the second one kept the Greek word meaning “news” in the name of the service

The television deserving a separate discussion is the satellite music station MAD TV, very popular among school and university youth (their target group ranges from 15–24 years old), and what follows, having significant influence on their attitudes, also those linguistic⁴⁶. The station specializes in broadcasting contemporary foreign, mostly American youth music (taking up half of the airtime) and new national releases. All the names of the bands, song titles, a number of phrases alongside the visual design (*smash hit, mad music lists, news, radio, charts, top 50, video, play* etc.) and titles of most of their own programmes (e.g. *Absolut Beat, Flesh Mixer, Lunch Box*) are in a Latin font in English. Moreover, the broadcaster is also a mobile virtual network operator (a so-called MVNO, in cooperation with the mobile operator WIND), whose users are mostly the young viewers of the television channel⁴⁷. According to the accepted business model, assuming synergy between both branches of business, viewers are encouraged to send SMSes during certain programmes, the

⁴⁶ MAD TV is the most recognizable brand among music broadcasters in Greece, and its website monthly has 300 000 unique users.

⁴⁷ More on MAD TV and its multimedia projects: T. Fraszczyk, *Recepcja środków masowego przekazu w śródziemnomorskim modelu medialnym na przykładzie Grecji*, “Studia Medioznawcze” 2010, No. 4, p. 118.

“bait” being the possibility to see their message on the television screen⁴⁸. In terms of linguistics, the aired messages are very diverse, having both all three types of *Greeklish*, but also abbreviations – it appears that the language characteristic of text messages, with its spelling “burden”, has been transferred to television⁴⁹. MAD TV is also active on social network sites, based on interactions with users of the service. Their posts appear with SMSes during the broadcast, hence presenting the language of chats, messengers and discussion forums to television.



Illus. 8. Internet site of Mad TV – it is very difficult to find traditional Greek language

The last medium which should be noted in the following analysis is the Internet – the protagonist on the dynamically growing *Greeklish* environment. Although much has already been written here about the role of the World Wide Web in the multi-directional process of Latinizing Greek, it is worth looking into the linguistic tendencies on websites and the place of the Internet in consuming media content by an average Greek user. According to data from ITU from March 2011, the level of penetration of Internet access in Greece is 46.2 per cent, which is an average result in the scale of Europe⁵⁰. On the other hand, 68.5 per cent of all uses in the country have an active account on the social network site Facebook, which proves Greeks are active members of “online life”, not restricting only to using ready-made

⁴⁸ Messages from other providers are also accepted. The system is based on SMS premium.

⁴⁹ On other stations, with a general profile, there also exist programmes with SMS or Internet participation of viewers, yet their contribution in the broadcast is minor.

⁵⁰ Cf. www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm#graphics [accessed: 18.12.2011].

material⁵¹. Youtube.com is also very popular: the term “Greece” and “Greek” give 1 782 000 results, while the words “Poland” and “Polish” only 1 077 000. According to research from 2007, 48 per cent of all Greeks regularly read blogs, 34 per cent listen to the radio, 32 per cent read press and 13 per cent watch television, all online⁵². It can surely be assumed that these numbers have grown during the last four years.

Without doubt, *Greeklisch* is currently the dominating language of the Greek Internet. This substantial user activity translates into the growing number of texts placed on social network services, forums or blogs. They are characterized by a common presence of Latinization in all three described types (containing whole phrases or selected signs) and abbreviations, used especially in short, dynamic posts typical for online discussions⁵³. The expansion of *Greeklisch* is not divided evenly between Greek Internet sites. Services directed to mature users or different types of professional sites demonstrate more care for the maintenance of traditional spelling in their posts than users of entertainment sites, created for the mass user.

⁵¹ See: Ibidem. By comparison, in Poland 28 per cent of Internet users had a Facebook account, in Germany 30 per cent, in Spain 49 per cent, in France 50 per cent, in Great Britain 58 per cent, and in Italy 66 per cent. Of course, it should be remembered that in some countries, there are equally popular local social network sites.

⁵² Cf. *Εθνική Έρευνα για τα Μέσα Μαζικής Ενημέρωσης στην Ελλάδα το 2007*, Αθήνα 2008.

⁵³ Now, even on forums of serious press titles, complete spelling arbitrariness is allowed in terms of writing comments, which is confirmed by visiting Internet sites of certain dailies. In other words – using *Greeklisch* is no longer moderated there.



Illus. 9. An example of discussion on the portal youtube.com. Greek “mixed” with *Greeklish*

Erwteutika-Elli Kokkinou (New Song 2011) HQ

OfficialPromos Subskrybuj 10 filmów

SUBSCRIBE HERE

1:29 / 5:37

Fajne + Dodaj do Udostępnij 2297431

Przesłane przez OfficialPromos dnia 21 lut 2011

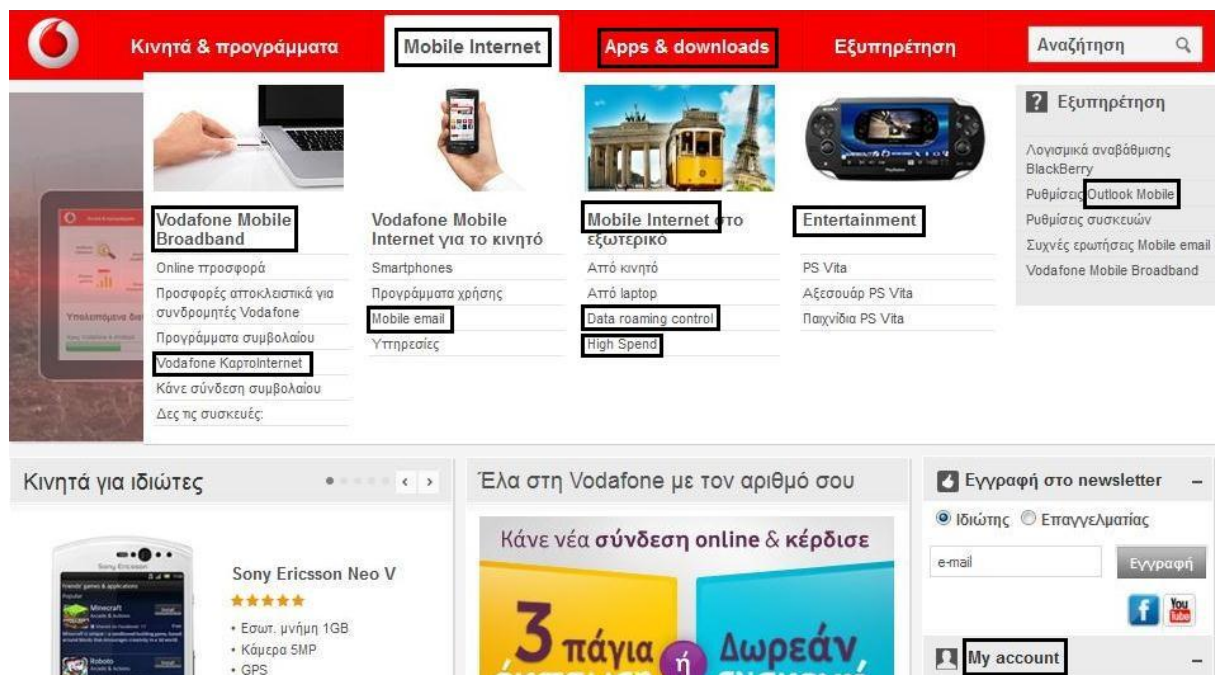
Ερωτεύτηκα - Έλλη Κοκκίνου (New Song 2011) HQ
 Erwteutika-Elli Kokkinou (New Promo 2011) (CD Rip 2011) HQ | HD
 Ελλη Κοκκίνου Ερωτεύτηκα (Νέο τραγούδι 2011) HQ
 Ellh Kokkinou-Eroteutika (Official Song Release 2011) HQ
 Elli Kokkinou-Eroteytika (Official Promo) HQ

Głosy na tak: 2506 Głosy na nie: 123
 Linkuje: iKarditsa : info για ...

Illus. 10. Song of the popular Greek vocalist Elli Kokkinou in the service youtube.com. The frame contains the description of the song – two variations of official Greek (with and without accents) and some variations of *Greeklisch*

A slightly different situation occurs on official sites of state and territorial administration, and most of the media and companies. Latinized Greek appears only in the visual kind, on terms similar as in printed press texts. A significant difference is in the common penetration, even online, of words originating from English that replace their Greek equivalents. A good example is the site of one of the three largest mobile phone operators in

Greece (www.vodafone.gr), on which one can count numerous English words and phrases, despite there existing their Greek equivalents⁵⁴.



Illus. 11. Internet site of the company Vodafone.gr*

* Noted were those English words with Greek equivalents, which were resigned from while building the service

It is also worth examining the presence of *Greeklis* in public space. It is visible especially in the commercial sphere e.g. in corporate logotypes or advertising. The Latinization of brands belonging to the largest televisions in Greece has already been mentioned, however this phenomena concerns all branches of the economy, especially those focused on servicing the mass client. These are, among others:

- mobile operators – three of the largest infrastructure operators (Cosmote, Wind, Vodafone) have Latinized logotypes, although only the last two mentioned have a global brand, enforced by their Italian and British owners. Nonetheless, the local brand Cosmote has been using the Latin alphabet from the very beginning;
- banks – out of the eight largest institutions of this kind in Greece, only one identifies itself as a brand using the Greek alphabet, although none of the banks took on a global name, which

⁵⁴ Examples of Anglicisation on the site: Internet, apps&downloads, my account, data roaming control, mobile broadband, wallpapers, welcome tones, games, mobile email, site, ringtones, people etc. It is worth mentioning that the examples come from just the home page of the operator (and these are not all of them). Many more can be found on further pages of the service.

would “enforce” the change of transcription to Latin (examples: Alpha Bank, Emporiki Bank, Attica Bank, Geniki Bank, Eurobank EFG);

- department stores – the largest company of this kind in Greece (Attica) has a Latinized brand, although it functions only on the local market⁵⁵.



Illus. 12. Logotypes of selected Greek banks

A similar situation can be observed in commercial announcements, which use, to a smaller or larger degree, English expressions and Latin-alphabet Greek. The quoted Stamatis Beis from the Academy of Athens believes that the saturation of public space with diverse elements, sometimes very distant from Greek linguistic tradition, is frankly a “specific feature” of Greece, not found anywhere in Europe, creating a real threat for the common knowledge of spelling rules of one's own language⁵⁶.

Main topics in the discussion on *Greeklish*

The beginnings of modern debate on the phenomena of Latinizing Greek can be dated to the mid 1990s, when the transcript of Greek to the Latin alphabet was becoming increasingly common in the daily communication of Greeks, due to imperfect equipment and computer

⁵⁵ The dominating type of Latinization in the discussed cases is the phonetic type.

⁵⁶ Cf. A. Καραγεώργου, *Πρόβλημα...* The case of 19th century inhabitants of Smyrna can be recalled, who spoke perfect Greek, but could not properly write in it, due to the lack of permanent contact with Greek texts.

software. Reassuring voices dominated, claiming that the observed Latinization has a purely “technical” nature and the process will die down with the adaptation of modern technology to service the Greek alphabet. It was moreover indicated that Greeks do not have trouble with distinguishing communication situations taking place in the electronic environment from those in the real world, in which official Greek should be used. Finally, there were opinions that language is above all, the word and the idea, and in this view, writing is perceived as secondary. Alongside were observations resembling former histories of Latinizing Greek, such as during the Renaissance and blossoming Crete theatre, and the contribution of works created then in Latin alphabet to the overall development of Greek culture.

Reserved statements concerning the expansion of *Greeklisch* in the world of new technologies were at that point barely audible, although it could have been the result of euphoria with the new possibilities of interpersonal communication, which appeared with the spread of Internet and mobile phones. The year 2001 was a turning point, when forty members of the Academy of Athens published an open letter calling to defend the traditional Greek alphabet⁵⁷. Signatories of the letter pointed to the domination of different forms of Latinized Greek in the electronic environment and appealed to undertake action protecting the nearly 3000 year old alphabet from being replaced, in public space, with Latin script. As an example of efficient campaigns supporting native tongues, they pointed to French and Spanish initiatives. At first, the statements of the academics was received critically, especially by the liberal circles⁵⁸, yet it shortly found supporters among other participants of the debate, who more eagerly confronted the optimistic claims of liberals with the results of recent research. With time, other conclusions refuting the prior assumptions were made and now it can be that:

- along with the popularization of access to computers and software servicing the Greek alphabet, the frequency and range of using *Greeklisch* has not only not decreased, but has systematically grown;
- the assumption on the stable ability to fluently differentiate communication situations in the electronic environment and in the real world turned out to be false. With time, the Latinization of Greek penetrated written texts outside the Internet, and now 16 per cent of pupils admit to

⁵⁷Full contents of the letter: [http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_civ_7_7/01/01_I7064980=I7064980=|01&01-0101!cod70101\\$40675.html](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_civ_7_7/01/01_I7064980=I7064980=|01&01-0101!cod70101$40675.html) [accessed: 1.12.2011].

⁵⁸In the leftist-liberal press, there appeared many articles perceiving the attitude of academics as overzealous and repeating the above arguments on the harmlessness of *Greeklisch*. A very interesting voice reproached the Academy of Athens for having turned against the political reforms pursued by the government of Georgios Papandreu in the 1960s, which – according to this author – allowed seizing power by the military junta. This is how, in a discussion on the language of the contemporary Internet, striking, emotionally strong events from 40 years ago were recalled to discredit an opponent: See: Δ. Μαρωνίτης, *Χάσαμε τη θεία στοπ*, “Το Βήμα” 21.01.2001. Article in the electronic version: www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=129968 [accessed: 5.11.2011].

using *Greeklish* in handwriting (this should include a group of people, who are not aware of the mistakes they make);

– the number of spelling mistakes made by school youth is growing, which without doubt, is connected with the favourable approach to the Latinization of their native language.

Apart from the argumentation clearly against the position of the liberals, more voices were revealed, strongly emphasizing the influence of the Greek language (in its traditional spelling) on shaping culture and national identity, including the symbolic sphere. The fundamentals of spelling go hand in hand with the continuity of community going back to ancient times⁵⁹. The utilitarian approach to language, treating it as plasticine, moulded according to the needs of the current generation of users – say supporters of the academics – not only does not see the culture-shaping feature, but also renders unjustified egoism, ignoring the interests of the community.

The next area of *Greeklish* criticism was its negative influence on the perception of the world and all its complexity. One Athenian sociologist noticed that alleged simplification of the communication process, resulting from the common use of Latinization and abbreviations, is superficial and illusory: “By simplifying words, shortening them, using partial, mangled sentences, we significantly limit the field of perception of the reality surrounding us, because it is language that limits the borders of the perceivable world”⁶⁰. The previously quoted professor George Babiniotis concludes these thoughts: “Language is not an easy tool. It is our culture, history, way of thinking, identity. It is a value in itself”⁶¹.

Conclusion

The complicated Latinization process of the Greek language owes its impressive expansion to the rapid development of electronic means of communication, among them the Internet and mobile telephones. It was in a way reinforced by certain cultural and linguistic trends from the United States⁶² and the absolute domination of English in the sphere of advertising.

The broadly understood social media, from those local to international, which exist because of the expansion of Internet access, have long ago stopped being only entertainment projects, and have become political communication platforms, organizing large crowds of

⁵⁹ Cf. I. Ανδρουτσόπουλος, *Από τα φραγκοχιώτικα...*

⁶⁰ Α. Καραγεώργου, *Πρόβλημα...*

⁶¹ *Μπαμπινιώτης: Οι νέοι θα πληρώσουν ακριβά τα Greeklish*, “Τα Νέα” 12.06.2011. Article in the electronic version: www.tanea.gr/ellada/article/?aid=4635393 [accessed: 30.11.2011].

⁶² On contemporary habits (among them language ones) of American Internet users in their teens, see the extensive report by Pew Internet & American Life Project: *Writing, Technology and Teens*, Washington 2008.

people, and also a source of inspiration for journalists of “traditional” media⁶³. Indeed, there are opinions that all large Internet and technological companies: search engines (among them Google), social media services (like Facebook), or implementation companies (e.g. Apple) have taken the lead from the current media institutions in the field of creating and distributing content⁶⁴. What are therefore the perspectives drawing before Greek, and also other “local” national languages in view of the current state of affairs? At first glance, they are not that optimistic. Looking at the evolution of Greek during the last 20 years, the tendency to “blur” certain individual features due to the pressure of technology and “global speech” is perfectly visible. As one of the Greek authors underlines, there remains a last resort: schools and such a construction of their program, so that young people gain a conviction that knowledge of spelling will simply pay off in the future career path, an argument which could reach young users much more efficiently than e.g. the culture-shaping function of language⁶⁵. Is it at all possible?⁶⁶

⁶³ See e.g.: *Raport: Dziennikarze i social media 2011*, Warszawa 2011.

⁶⁴ Cf. M. Fura, *Michael Wolff: Facebook, Google i Apple rządzą światem mediów*, http://forsal.pl/artykuly/444421,michael_wolff_facebook_google_i_apple_rzadza_swiatem_mediow.html [accessed: 29.10.2011].

⁶⁵ Cf. X. Λιάτσου, *Kindinevei i elliniki glossa apo ta γκρίκλις?*, “Συχνότητες” 2010, No. 10, p. 40.

⁶⁶ The reader may find an interesting follow-up to the discussed topic in the 19th century case of writing Polish in the Russian alphabet. For more see: A. Tycner, *Cyrylica nad Wisłą*, www.rp.pl/artykul/61991,806286-Cyrylica-nad-Wisla.html [accessed: 4.05.2012]. There are interesting illustrations of religious works, ABC’s and handbooks in Polish, but written in Russian alphabet, in an article in Russian by Stanisław Siess-Krzyszowski. See: С. Сиесс-Кжишковский, *Гражданский шрифт для польского языка. Эпизод из истории просвещения Королевстве Польском*, www.aboutbooks.ru/files/journal_maintenance/200807/140201321f917b6e9adf4de364365003.pdf [accessed: 04.05.2012].