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# Combating linguistic myths and stereotypes: The contribution of the *Practical Dictionary of Modern Greek* of the Academy of Athens

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to highlight the innovations introduced by the *Practical Dictionary of Modern Greek* that significantly differentiate it from comparable modern printed dictionaries. The main focus is on language myths and stereotypes that are reproduced in various dictionaries. The view that Modern Greek is declining, as shown by the poor vocabulary of young people and the invasion of foreign words, is refuted by the simple browsing of the Practical Dictionary. Modern Greek adapts with great flexibility to modern challenges by enriching its vocabulary with a variety of alternatives. Translation loans perform well, as they mask foreign influences. Anglicisms are found in most European languages, which relativizes the criticism that native speakers of Modern Greek do not mind the present status and the future of their language. The myths of the single correct spelling and etymology of each word are refuted with indisputable evidence. Ethnocentrism and sexism have been eliminated from the *Practical Dictionary of Modern Greek*. The necessity of electronic dictionaries, which constitute the future of lexicography, and the establishment of a 'Language Observatory', the findings of which will be used in real time mainly for the needs of teaching Greek as a second/ foreign language, are stressed.

**Keywords:** Modern Greek, lexicography, linguistic myths, stereotypes, anglicisms, etymology, ethnocentrism, sexism

## 1. Introduction

The *Practical Dictionary of Modern Greek* of the Academy of Athens (hereinafter PDAA), of which I had the general responsibility of planning, drafting, and editing, was treated with disbelief from the moment its drafting and publication was announced. The superficial reason was that at that time (2003), two recent dictionaries of Modern Greek (DB, DTR) were in circulation, and there was no need to compile a third one. However, the Academy of Athens took the opposite view. Its 42 regular members unanimously ruled that the existing Modern Greek dictionaries did not satisfactorily meet the modern communication needs of native speakers. On the other hand, the Constitutional Decision 'On the Organization of the Academy of Athens' of March 18, 1926, explicitly states that the obligation of the Academy is "to study and regulate the issues related to our national language, to prepare and compile and publish its Grammar, Syntax and Dictionaries."

Almost all entries were drafted in their first form, with certain specifications and instructions, by two different compilers. Based on these data, I reconstructed and revised all lemmata, comparing them with the well-known Modern Greek dictionaries and selectively with the most valid dictionaries of English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. It is obvious that the responsibility for the whole project, and for the errors that are left, lies solely with me.

Lexicographic works, such as the PDAA, cannot fully meet the objectives they set from the beginning. Almost all professional lexicographers feel like they are walking on quicksand and are in danger of sinking at any time. The writing of a dictionary is never actually completed, because the language is constantly evolving and enriched with new elements. The Academy of Athens does not regulate the language, but systematically and responsibly monitors and records the linguistic reality in an extensive database from which other individual dictionaries can emerge. It proposes solutions based primarily on usage at a purely synchronous level.

The main objective of PDAA is, on the one part, to highlight the richness and expressive completeness of today's language, without ignoring the diachronic aspect, and on the other, to provide all the necessary lexicographic information for its acquisition by native speakers and its learning by foreigners so that they are able to fully understand and produce with the necessary quality written and oral texts, which cover a variety of communication needs.

The optimistic message that follows from the systematic lexicographic surveys of the Academy of Athens is that Modern Greek displays astonishing lexical richness and impressive flexibility and creativity, as shown by the plethora of neologisms and new meanings recorded in this Dictionary, which will be published in electronic form as well.

The Preface of the Secretary General of the Academy of Athens (p. 7) reflects the Academy's positions on Modern Greek. Vasilios Ch. Petrakos, among others, states the following:

"Young people, scholars needed a dictionary that was easy to use, of everyday speech, modern and valid, the preparation of which the Academy had been examining and discussing for years. Fortunately, the finding in 2003 by the then President of the Academy Grigorios Skalkeas of a significant amount of money made possible the realization of the old goal of the Academy, the compilation of the Practical Dictionary of Modern Greek Language. There were already remarkable dictionaries of Modern Greek, but the Academy aimed with its dictionary at achieving a dual result: the

publication of a modern Dictionary and the continuous enrichment of its electronic database. At any time, the scholar will be able to use the lexical richness and the expressive vitality and completeness of our language to all their extent known in science.

The Academy with the Practical Dictionary does not aim to regulate the language, which is proven to be unrealistic, at least since the years of Korais. It presents in a systematic way and scientifically verified the real form of Modern Greek, its linguistic richness and its wonderful expressive possibilities; at the same time, the Dictionary provides the necessary lexicographical information for its understanding by Greeks and its learning by foreigners. With the clarity and completeness of the data provided in the Dictionary, the acquisition of the language becomes possible. By using it, Greeks who express their thoughts and ideas in all kinds of texts, orally and in writing, will be able to benefit from the high point that Modern Greek has reached, with efforts and spiritual struggles of centuries and with prose and the poetry that the craftsmen of the word cultivated and created.

Moreover, with the Academy's many years of systematic linguistic and lexicographic research, the amazing richness of Modern Greek and its truly impressive flexibility and plasticity has become apparent, and is at our disposal. The great multitude of neologisms and new meanings contained in the Practical Dictionary is the undeniable testimony of this fact, which shows the creative power of Greeks in the language and disproves those who mourn its decay".

### 1.1 The Innovations of the Practical Dictionary

The theoretical background on which the PDAA was based corresponds with modern meta-lexicographic research, the findings of which have been used on the basis of the practical benefits that will be gained by the respective dictionary users. The necessary balance between theory and practice was thus maintained. On the other hand, the weaknesses of the circulating Modern Greek dictionaries were identified, and an effort was made to eliminate such weaknesses in the dictionary to be published. Five years before the start of my retirement, two important dictionaries were published simultaneously, of which comparisons and evaluations were expected to be made. The following planned innovations of the PDAA were presented at a linguistic conference to obtain the necessary feedback:<sup>1</sup>

1. Compilation of the entries from extensive printed and electronic databases, starting from scratch.
2. Establishing a double spelling for certain words. These are equivalent (*εταιρεία-εταιρία*) or equally acceptable (*χρεοκοπία & χρεωκοπία*) spellings.
3. Deviation from the traditional practice of many centuries of constant termination of verbs in the first-person definitive present and of nouns in the nominal singular: *ρέει* and not *ρέω*; *μακαρόνια* and not *μακαρόνι*.
4. Automatic syllabification of all main entries.
5. Short and substantive definitions.
6. Indication of the scientific names of animals and plants. Most chemical types of compounds and formulas are also recorded.
7. Unification of meanings (*ρεπορτάζ* shows one meaning and not four).
8. Recording of genuine, authentic examples.
9. Detailed presentation of collocations.
10. Precise stylistic definitions of words and expressions.
11. Presentation of stereotypical expressions, collocations, and fixed vocabulary on a new basis at the end of each entry.
12. Quoting the date of the first appearance of many English and French words and stereotypical expressions as a contribution to the history of culture and science.
13. Recording of many words and meanings known mainly from Cyprus, such as *αθλητοπρέπεια* 'behavior and morals appropriate to an athlete', *αιτητής* 'applicant', and *μάππα* 'football'.
14. Presentation of lemmata in three columns for more comfortable reading. Entries, collocations, and phrases are recorded in clear blue letters.
15. Most of the large-scale entries were written and compiled by two different authors, without their own knowledge, to take their final form from the scientific coordinator who proceeded to successive, often radical redrafting at different intervals.

<sup>1</sup> See Charalambakis (2007, cf. 2010). The findings of this preliminary investigation were discussed at length during the conference. In the end, I revised some of my original views, in particular those relating to stylistic-pragmatic indicators, which were further specified and fully applied in the PDAA. From 2020, this study can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3f514OQ>.

## 2. Myths about the Role of Dictionaries

Boulanger (1986, 95-101) mentions the following five lexicographic myths (*mythes lexicographiques*) that apply to all languages, as people, more or less, think in the same way and reproduce the same linguistic stereotypes:

- The myth of permanence (*La mythe de la permanence*). When one buys a dictionary, one does not feel the need to replace it with a newer one.
- The myth of uniqueness (*La mythe de la unicité*). The official or established dictionaries act as a regulatory authority.
- The myth of duration (*La mythe de la durabilité*). Vocabulary remains stable despite social changes. The dictionary records the official language without deviations.
- The myth of objectivity (*La mythe de la objectivité*). All dictionaries describe language in the same way. In fact, lexicographers reveal their linguistic beliefs in the entries they compose.
- The myth of the norm (*La mythe de la norme*). Dictionaries standardize the truth. Although their authors claim to describe the language, in many cases they in fact regulate it.

These lexicon myths are essentially linguistic myths that influence users' attitudes toward the general dictionaries they use. Myths about language exist in all peoples and cultures (Bauer, 1998. For the Greek language, see Sarantakos, 2019). Deep down, there is only one lexicon myth: The average dictionary user takes for granted and indisputable the information contained in each article. When, very seldom, one compares the same entry in two or three similar dictionaries and notices the differences they present, one realizes that there are no identical 'photographs' of the entries, and it would be unnatural for there to be, just as photos taken at a given time, and much more those taken many years ago, are never uniform.

## 3. Stereotypes

The term stereotype is used in various disciplines, such as sociology, linguistics, philosophy of language, etc., but also in everyday language, to indicate the established perceptions that have prevailed in groups of individuals or in the wider community, without there being objectively verifiable evidence to substantiate these attitudes.

Stereotypes are generally negative in nature and could be equated with social prejudices, most of which refer to racial relations (dislike, hatred, or hostility toward other people or racial groups) and sexism (discrimination against women as a rule; and less of men). The sense of social solidarity created by stereotypes, some of which are not entirely arbitrary, contributes to their perpetuation. Even if one presents evidence that dispels these prejudices, there are people who never get rid of preconceived ideas.

### 3.1 Linguistic Decline

Some consider the decline of Modern Greek to be a given fact, without realizing that this stereotype remains arbitrary, because the verbal diarrhea for linguistic decline is as old as the language itself and is not just a Modern Greek phenomenon. The arguments put forward in support of this view are generally unhistorical and misleading. In essence, it is a covert "linguistic ideology" that reproduces the stereotype of alarmism, thus legitimizing its self-proclaimed patrons. Many do not want to believe that language follows its own independent course, which no native speaker can accurately predict or prescribe. Protecting language from decay and decline presupposes that the language is an "accomplished cultural entity" that we must pass on unscathed to future generations.

#### 3.1.1 'Lexical Poverty'

The allegation that young people have a poor vocabulary is a consistent obsession. Pupils are an easy target, remaining defenseless. Adults in proportion use limited vocabulary, and most importantly, they experience "semantic poverty." The quality of speech depends not solely on the number of words that belong to an individual's active and receptive vocabulary but primarily on knowledge of a multiplicity of words and their combinatorial possibilities. Modern Greek has an impressive vocabulary of about 500,000 words, of which few members of the linguistic community have the privilege of knowing one in ten. Awareness of this should make us all more careful. We think we know our language, but we know only a certain percentage of its vocabulary, with many gaps and weaknesses. Language is not an abstract idealization but the specific linguistic stock of each individual, only part of which remains constant.

#### 3.1.2 Foreign Words

The most important source of language decay is the entrance of foreign words, which "infect" or contaminate the body of Modern Greek. Anyone who systematically studies the mechanisms of operation and contact of languages will understand that the phenomenon of borrowing is much more complex than one could imagine. The Greek language, during its long

evolutionary course, borrowed thousands of words from all people and nations with which it came into contact. Since the end of the Second World War, the main source of the influx of foreignisms in Modern Greek, as well as in most languages of the world, has been English, especially American English. (Charalambakis, 2010, 279-284).

### 3.1.2.1 The Influence of Anglo-American on European Languages

The influx of anglicisms concerns most of the world's languages and should not be seen in the narrow context of common Modern Greek. The average cultured citizen, as well as some scholars, attribute the frequent use of English words to 'linguistic carelessness', 'negligence', 'indifference', 'complacency', etc. of native speakers. They also blame the State and call for various measures to limit the evil. However, things are not that simple. The strong influence of Anglo-American in other languages is an international phenomenon with the same causes everywhere: the dominance of the United States of America in economy, high technology and military equipment, politics, science, and culture in general. Another important reason is the positive attitude of many native speakers, especially young people, toward the American way of life.

Linguists, on the other hand, began to emphasize the positive aspects of foreign words, their contribution to facilitate international communication, and their functionality compared with the uncomfortable or unrealistic translation equivalences in the mother tongue. Failed attempts to limit anglicisms in the recent past, combined with the need to describe rather than regulate language, led researchers to believe that one should let language follow its own path, thus showing in practice not just tolerance but an understanding of linguistic pluralism and multiculturalism. The German philosopher, sociologist, and musicologist Theodor Adorno (1959) undertook the defense of foreign words with a remarkable article.

#### 3.1.2.1.1 Anglicisms in Modern Greek

With the globalization of the economy and knowledge and the development of modern electronic services and telematics (interactive electronic images, electronic access to information, e-mail), as shown by the many new compounds with the morpheme *τηλ(ε)- tel(e)-* (*-αγορές, -εργασία, -ιατρική, -κατάρτιση -markets, -work, -medicine, -training*, etc.), the spread of English has been further strengthened, the validity of which is now indisputable. In the field of scientific terminology, the dominance of English has marginalized almost all other languages (Katsogiannou & Stefanidou 2020). A large number of anglicisms are today widespread internationalisms: AIDS, basketball, cake, dressing, happy end, jackpot.

Loan translations show to what extent and depth the influence of English has penetrated, not only in Modern Greek but also in all European languages. Phrase names, which mask foreign influence and are therefore not in the purview of purists, are today the greatest source of modern language renewal. Some indicative cases that had not been considered until now are *ανοιχτό πανεπιστήμιο* < open university, *αποβιομηχανοποίηση* < deindustrialization, *αυτοεκπλήρωση* (exists as an entry only in the PDAA) < self-fulfillment, *αυτοεκτίμηση* < self-esteem, *αυτόματος πιλότος* < automatic pilot, *γραμμή: γραμμή του κόμματος (και κομματική γραμμή)* < party line, *δημοκρατικοποίηση: διεθνισμός* < democratization, *διαψευσιμότητα* < falsifiability, *εγχείρηση ανοιχτής καρδιάς* < open-heart operation, and *πολιτικός γάμος* < civil wedding. In several combinations, the adjective *τεχνητός* is a translation of English artificial: *αναπνοή, γλώσσα, γονιμοποίηση: respiration, language, insemination*. Internationalisms are uncountable: *απομυθοποίηση* < demythologization, French *démythification*, German *Entmythologierung*, *κράτος πρόνοιας* < welfare state, German *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, *ρηματική διακοίνωση* < French *note verbal*, English *verbal note*.

The following collocations come from French: *σε αδρές γραμμές* < *dans le grandes lignes*, *ελαφρύς ύπνος* < *sommeil léger*, *μια ελαφρά γυναίκα* < *une femme légère*, *η κατηγορία ελαφρών βαρών* < *La catégorie des pods légers*, *η μερίδα του λέοντος* < *la part du lion*, *χαρούμενη νότα* < *une note gaie*.

In PDAA, many English words and numerous loan translations were lemmatized precisely because they are in widespread use. This describes the current linguistic reality. In many cases, the chronology of a word's appearance or the fixed lexical collocation is recorded for the first time, which illuminates aspects of the history of words and the evolution of science, art, economy, and culture in general. The phrase name *ποιότητα ζωής* denotes the English quality of life, a concept first created in the United States in 1943. In this case, of interest is not only the general meaning 'overall enjoyment of life', but also the specific meaning 'the degree to which a person or group is healthy, comfortable, and able to enjoy the activities of daily living' (Merriam-Webster).

Modern Greek is not at risk from English and Anglo-American loans, for two reasons: They have a low statistical frequency and have not brought about a structural change in the language system.

## 3.2 The Contempt of Dialects and Other Regional Varieties

The precise definition of the term *official language* presents several difficulties. It denotes at the same time both an established variety and an independent language, a set of linguistic varieties, including dialects. It is necessary for many people to realize that the so-called common Modern Greek cannot be precisely defined, because it consists of many dynamic individual systems and subsystems that are constantly creating new norms. The term 'language of the people' is vague as well, because what one means by the word 'people' must be defined consistently and precisely. The modern

language community is not a homogeneous group of people using the same language. It essentially consists of multilingual and multicultural groups united by a complex network of social and professional relationships.

The contribution of Modern Greek dialects and other local and social varieties to the formation of the Modern Greek literary language is also invaluable. Almost all renowned poets and novelists used a multitude of words that were in the mouths of ordinary rural people and in this way enriched common Modern Greek. Particularly, the two Nobel-winning poets Giorgos Seferis and Odysseus Elytis made the best use of unknown or half-forgotten words from Izmir, Cyprus, Crete, and the Aegean islands, thus renewing the poetic discourse.

A representative sample of dialectic words is recorded in PDAA to make the dictionary user aware that the common language has wider dimensions than suspected. From the three great dialects, words that are nationally known were introduced as regular lemmata. Some illustrative examples are as follows: Cretan dialect: *καλτσούνι* 'sweet cheese pastry', *κοπέλι* 'boy, young man', *πεντοζάλης* 'kind of dance', *στιβάνια* 'tall leather men's boots'. Cypriot dialect: *αγρινό* 'endemic kind of wild sheep', *αναρή* 'kind of soft cheese', *κουμανταρία* 'very sweet wine', *σεφταλιές* 'meatballs'. Pontian dialect: *κεμεντζές* 'traditional lyre', *κοτσάκι* 'opposite mating dance', *περέκ* 'pie type', *ωτία* 'fried ear-shaped sweet'.

### 3.3 The Myth of a Single Correct Spelling

One of most important innovations of the PDAA is that it debunks spelling in the sense that it negates the stereotype that there is only one correct spelling. When different spellings of a word are widespread, all are recorded: *ζήλια* & *ζήλεια* 'jealousy', *κτίριο* & *κτήριο* 'building', *ορθοπαιδικός* & *ορθοπεδικός* 'orthopa(e)dic'. It is worth noting that the Academy of Athens takes a very clear position on this issue. It suggests the spelling that is first in the entry, is even written in a distinct blue colour. The famous dictionaries Duden and Le Petit Robert have served as a model. In the end, the controversial spellings number less than 500 of a total of 75,000 entries. Statistically, this is a negligible percentage. In other words, there is a lot of noise about nothing. The tendency is the predominance of the simplest spelling, while the etymological criterion, which used to be applied in the past with great rigor, does not apply today in many cases.

### 3.4 The Myth of a Single Correct Etymology

All recent etymological dictionaries, both Greek and foreign ones, overlap, which is to some extent expected when it comes to established etymologies. The search for new etymologies is painful gestation that rarely leads to a happy ending. No serious etymologist believes that he has found the definitive solution to an etymological problem, as there is always the possibility of overturning even the most convincing etymology.

On another occasion, I stressed, many years ago, that the great wronged in teaching Modern Greek is semantics. Since then, things have not changed much in terms of teachers' perceptions. In the past, language teaching was identified with phonology and morphology, always focusing on spelling, which was and continues to be purely symbolic in nature, in the sense that any spelling simplification is considered by some, at best, a lack of respect for tradition and, at worst, a betrayal of language.

Often, semantic changes are not explained by the history of the Greek language, nor by the evolutionary course of the words themselves. For example, the word *λαγός* 'hare' has acquired a second, sports-related meaning: 'runner who gives fast pace on an endurance race, to help achieve a record by another athlete'. This seemingly inexplicable meaning has its interpretation: it is a loan translation from the French *lièvre* 'hare', which acquired this meaning in 1899. *Απασχόληση* 'employment' comes from the ancient word *ἀπασχόλησις* 'distraction'. The modern meaning of 'paid work for livelihood' has a different etymological origin. It is a loan translation from the French *emploi* 'occupation' and the English *employment*.

To show the difference in the way meanings are treated in relation to etymology, I quote the lemma "gazelle" from three comparable Modern Greek dictionaries:

DTR:

**γαζέλα** η [γαζέλα] [O25](#): είδος μικρής αφρικανικής και ασιατικής αντιλόπης, που είναι περίφημη για τη χάρη των κινήσεών της. || *Γυναίκα σαν ~*, λεπτή, ψηλή και χαριτωμένη. [λόγ. < γαλλ. gazell(e) -α, από τα αραβ. (ορθογρ. δαν.)]

DB:

**γαζέλα** (η) [γαζελών] αντιλόπη τής Αφρικής και τής Ασίας, γνωστή για την ταχύτητα και τη χάρη της. [ETYM. Μεταφορά του γαλλ. gazelle, αραβ. ghazāl].

PDAA:

**γαζέλα** & (σπάν.) γκαζέλα **1.** ΖΩΟΛ. είδος μικρής αντιλόπης της ασιατικής και της αφρικανικής ηπείρου (γένη *Gazella* και *Procapra*), με πυρόξανθο χρώμα, λευκή κοιλιά και μεγάλα κέρατα, το οποίο φημίζεται για τη χάρη, την ταχύτητα και τα μεγάλα άλματά του. **2.** (μτφ.) όμορφη και λυγρόκορμη κοπέλα, συνήθ. μοντέλο, που διακρίνεται για τη χάρη και την κομψότητά της: μαύρη (= Αφροαμερικανίδα)/μελαχρινή ~ του μόντελιγκ/της πασαρέλας. **3.** ΟΙΚΟΝ. (σπανιότ.-μτφ.) ταχέως αναπτυσσόμενη μικρομεσαία επιχείρηση. [< 1, 2: γαλλ. gazelle 3: αμερικ. gazelle (company)].

The third meaning is completely new. None of the English dictionaries (see Onelook.com) record it. There is also a fourth meaning, which is not widely known in Greek: *Τα κέρατα της γαζέλας* ‘The horns of gazelle’ traditional Moroccan flutes filled with almond paste, almonds, and orange syrup. To the second meaning should be added the expression *μάτια της γαζέλας* (for a woman) < French yeux de gazelle (= big, sweet, and shiny), Italian occhi di gazzella (= big and melancholic).

Most Modern Greek dictionaries, as well as foreign ones, record the word with only one meaning ‘a graceful animal’. The relevant entry in PDAA presents three distinct meanings with corresponding etymologies.

In relation to the term semantic polygenesis, I use the term etymological polygenesis to document the legitimacy of double etymologies. According to the theory of semantic polygenesis, a lexical item can appear several times in the history of a language. Each appearance is genetically independent of the others. Multiple etymologies can be interpreted in a similar way, as I suggest, e.g. for the word *γκόμενα* ‘chick’ (Charalambakis, 2017, 278-279). Until now, the prevailing perception was that there is only one correct etymology of each word.

Perhaps for the first time in the history of etymological research, we have irrefutable evidence that a word can have two etymologies that are equally correct, one older and another newer. The evidence is regarding the adjective *παραολυμπιακός* ‘paralympic’ mainly in the combination of *Παραολυμπιακοί αγώνες* ‘Paralympic Games’ with synonym *Παραολυμπιάδα* ‘Paralympics’. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) states the following: ‘Paralympics: blend of paraplegic and Olympics’. The same etymology repeats Merriam-Webster’s, with the date of first appearance in 1953. Petit Robert (see *paralympique*, first appearance of the word approximately in the year 1960) associates it with *paraplégique*. On the contrary, Collins etymologizes “parallel + Olympics”. Zingarelli’s dictionary (see *paralimpic & paraolimpico*, neologism of 1992), refers to the entry *Paralimpiade & Paraolimpiade* (neologism of 1988) providing the etymology: “comp. di para- e di (o)limpiade”.

The most accurate etymology of the adjective *παραολυμπιακός* is as follows: < English. Paralympics < para(plegic) + (O)lympics, 1953, French *paralympique*, approx. 1960 & English para(llel) + (O)lympics, 1976.

It should be stressed, however, that contrary to popular belief, etymology does not contribute to the effective use of language, nor does it play a role in communication strategy. It is a highly challenging branch of linguistics that is currently practiced by very few scientists worldwide who experience failure more often than do any other researchers. Toward the end of their careers, they see that very little of their work will survive in the future. The PDAA necessarily succumbed to the etymological stereotype and provides concise etymologies. In fact, it unexpectedly proposes many new etymologies (Charalambakis, 2017), although it is by no means an etymological dictionary.

#### 4. The Stereotype of Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism appears in two forms; as a social stereotype, it refers to individuals’ or groups’ criticism of another culture based on the value system of their own national community, the belief in the uniqueness and/or superiority of the nation to which they belong. This topic is dealt extensively and in a genius way by Fleischer (2020), drawing on examples from DB.

As a linguistic stereotype, ethnocentrism is evident in several etymologies. I would call this phenomenon etymological ethnocentrism. It is well known that in the 18th and especially 19th centuries, some scientists and scholars, in their attempt to prove the unbroken continuity of the Greek language, once reached the limits of hyperbole/exaggeration, insisting on Greek etymologies. Even today, there are some non-specialists who want to eliminate the ‘stigma’ of foreign words. These ‘Greek lovers’ could be more careful in expressing their views and less unilateral and absolute if they wanted to deal deeply with the life of words. Almost none of them can imagine that beautiful and well-sounding words, such as *ευκάλυπτος* ‘eucalyptus’ and *νοσταλγία* ‘nostalgia’, were not coined by Greeks but passed into Modern Greek through neo-Latin.

I shall confine myself to two typical examples. The exclamation *άντε* is not derived from *άγετε*, imperative (second person plural) of the verb *άγω*, as accepted by DB, following the etymology of G. Hatzidakis. DTR could not unhook itself from this outdated etymology, but it cites as a second possibility the correct etymology from Turkish haydi. For *τσόφλι*, the connection to the hypothetical form *εζώ-φλοιον* (< *έζω* + *φλοιός*) is obviously wrong. This is an etymology of G. Hatzidakis, who suggested a spelling that seems completely strange today, *τσώφλοι(ο)*. More research is needed on the medieval *ceflin*, which is associated with the Arabic *djeffl*.

#### 5. The Social Stereotype of Sexism

The international literature on sexism and the way in which the relevant problems are dealt with in dictionaries is overwhelming. For the Greek language, there is not yet an extensive monograph that would cover this major issue. In the past, dictionaries of almost all languages tended to reproduce opinions against women in a completely disparaging way by focusing on the moral side of their personality. For men, on the other hand, there were generally only positive descriptions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Charalambakis, 2012, 121-142. Perhaps the relationship between language and sex is examined extensively for the first time in this article.

Three years before I took charge of writing the PDAA, I had read the paper of Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio (2000), which impressed me for her penetrating observations on such a sensitive subject in a dictionary that is a milestone in the history of lexicography. The conclusion reached (p.228) also applies *mutatis mutandis* to the PDAA: 'Therefore, I conclude that this dictionary seems to be an example of what is actually happening in English. Society has developed some stereotypes which language usage itself reinforces; language changes, on the other hand, convey new perspectives in society at the same time, and this dictionary reflects these tendencies sometimes. Whilst it is not committed to eliminating any religious, social, racial, or sexual discrimination, as many could have expected, it aims to introduce new lexical items which no longer allow that distinctiveness to remain'.

Regarding the question of how to put a definitive end to sexist language in the 21st century, there is no clear answer. What is certain is that it is not the language that is to blame for social discrimination, sexism, racism, xenophobia, and so many other prejudices that exist in every society. In the PDAA, an attempt was made to maintain the delicate balance between the actual use of language and the regulatory intervention of the lexicographer, which sometimes reaches the limits of distorting reality. If ordinary words of erotic vocabulary are silenced, as well as swear words and insults that shock much of society, this means that the truth is hidden.<sup>3</sup>

One dictionary, for the entry *ξανθός* 'blond' cites as an explanatory example the verse from a folk song 'some time ago I had an affair with a blonde little girl' and the expressions: *ανέκδοτα για ξανθές* 'jokes about blondes', *οι άντρες προτιμούν τις ξανθές* 'men prefer blondes'. In the same dictionary, in the entry *μελαχρινός*, we read: *του αρέσουν οι μελαχρινές* 'he likes brunettes'. Another modern dictionary believes it restores gender equality by quoting the example: *Προτιμά τους μελαχρινούς άντρες* 'She prefers dark-haired men'. An excellent Modern Greek dictionary records in the entry *κορίτσι* 'girl' the example: *Είναι ντροπαλός σαν κορίτσι* 'He is shy like a girl'. The same example is given in the entry *ντροπαλός*. The meaning of *παρθένα* 'virgin' is obsolete and should no longer be mentioned in modern dictionaries, in two of which the following examples are given: *Δεν ήταν κορίτσι όταν παντρεύτηκε* 'She was not a virgin when she married' and *Είναι ακόμα κορίτσι* 'She is still a virgin'. For the expression *είναι κορίτσι από σπίτι* 'she is a girl from home' in a very good dictionary the explanation is given: 'for a moral girl, in good manners, with a good upbringing'. The PDAA uses different wording: 'with principles, with a good upbringing'. That is, morality, which is unfortunately for many the Achilles' heel of women, is not mentioned.

In the PDAA, to declare that the adjectives *ξανθός* 'blonde' and *μελαχρινός* 'brunette' function as nouns, the neutral example is given: *οι ξανθές, οι μελαχρινές*. Of course, it is not right for a dictionary to project the perspective of a man who often sees the woman as a 'vessel of pleasure'. On the other hand, this phrasal name should not be excluded from a modern dictionary. Its lemmatization could raise awareness of the need for a change of mentality in sensitive social matters. Without seeking the comparison, which would be misplaced anyway, I would say that no one likes environmental pollution, but its recording in dictionaries could raise people's awareness of ecological issues.

## 6. The Challenge of Neologisms

The neologisms created each year are innumerable. The PDAA highlights, more than any other dictionary, the great number of neologisms that enrich Modern Greek. (Charalambakis, 2017a). A good dictionary that respects its social, educational, and cultural mission, as well as its users, must regularly revise its lemmata, removing those that have fallen into disuse and adding new ones that have been widely spread. A word or a phrasal name with a new meaning often comes back to the fore. For example, the term *φείκ νιους* (fake news) must also find its place in Modern Greek dictionaries because it does not identify with *ψευδείς ειδήσεις* 'false news'. It is about false but often sensational information rapidly disseminated mostly through social media. This connotation is evident only in the foreign term. The expression *fake news* might have been witnessed since the late 19th century, but it was described as word of the year by Collins dictionary only in 2017.

Words as meaning bearers carry important messages on their own. By ignoring them, one does not know or realize the upheavals they bring to people's lives. The following words, the examples are indicative, do not exist in any Modern Greek dictionary and should be added to their new editions: *αποπαγκοσμιοποίηση*, English deglobalization, 2018, French *démondialisation*, points to the failure of globalization. The word *βίραλ* 'viral' refers to the power of social media. There is an "International Day of Non-Violence" (October 2<sup>nd</sup>), English nonviolence, 1831, French non-violence, 1921; the term cannot be ignored in Modern Greek dictionaries, even if it is easily understood. Words like *κρυπτονόμισμα* (cryptocurrency, 2009) and *μιπκόιν* (bitcoin, 2008) came into our lives, and we cannot forget our *μεταμνημονιακές δεσμεύσεις* 'post-memorandum commitments'. *Μικροϊστορία* 'microhistory' opens up new horizons in understanding historical events. *Μικροπλαστικά* (tiny pieces of plastic, less than five millimeters long, that pollute the environment; microplastics, 1990) could awaken ecological consciousness. *Overtourism* (*υπερτουρισμός*) is beginning to show its negative consequences.

On the occasion of the coronavirus pandemic (*κορονοϊός* < coronavirus, 1969), COVID-19, with its first record in 2020, a series of neologisms emerged (Katsoyannou- Stefanidou, 2020), such as *ασθενής μηδέν* < patient zero, 1987, *ανοσία αγέλης* < herd immunity, 1917, *λοκντάουν* < lockdown. The words *ακίδα* 'spike' and *φάκελος* 'viral/virus envelope' have acquired new meanings that cannot be ignored.

<sup>3</sup> Lily Thwaites, How do we put an end to sexist language in the 21st century?, [theboar.org/2019/10/end-sexist-language-21st-century/](https://theboar.org/2019/10/end-sexist-language-21st-century/)

## 7. Conclusion

The role of dictionaries is crucial for the production and understanding of the language. Having good dictionaries does not automatically make it easier to learn a language. Using dictionaries in teaching is of key importance. At school, students do not practice how to critically evaluate lexicographic information. Two or, even better, three dictionaries are seldom consulted for the same entry. In that case, students will see in practice what lexicographic pluralism means, how each lexicographer illuminates different aspects of the 'life' of words. Dictionaries, like text corpora, are not a panacea. They simply offer useful information, encoded within them, which paves the way for further investigation of words, mainly in terms of their meanings, their stylistic level, and their combinatorial possibilities.

Printed dictionaries must be updated at least every five years. Otherwise, they lose credibility. Words should be not only added but also removed because this is the only way to capture the actual use of language at a given time. The future of lexicography is based on electronic dictionaries. They are updated in real time and widely accessible. Institutional bodies should have the first say because they will guarantee the continuity and consistency of this important work. The Academy of Athens, with the publication of the PDAA, has shown excellent results and can, with State aid, continue its promising lexicographic activities. The Historical Dictionary of the Athens Academy is of paramount importance for Modern Greek dialects. Thus, its scope is de facto limited. Manolis Triandafyllidis Foundation and the Centre for the Greek Language are doing excellent work. However, a 'Language Observatory' is needed to monitor language evolution, especially at the lexical level. It will responsibly inform the general public about language use and facilitate the work of those who teach Modern Greek as a mother tongue and second/foreign language. I wonder why these necessary activities and infrastructure projects, such as updated dictionaries, are not being reinforced for the Greek language, which is simply invoked by some with a rhetorical pomposity to express its greatness as a carrier of national identity and of a brilliant Greek culture.

## 8. References

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