CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

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Few of those interested in Greek antiquity, and certainly no one whose interest in ancient Greece is professional and academic, will deny that familiarity with the language, and knowledge about it, is indispensable for any study at any level of critical engagement with Greek antiquity. Those who approach the world of the ancient Greeks without such knowledge will have to rely on a translator's reading skills. For without texts, linguistic evidence, our knowledge of antiquity would not exceed that of other lost civilizations whose ruins and artefacts merely increase the enigma, raising questions that only language can answer.

Yet in spite of such unanimous acknowledgment of the central importance of language, there are widely different attitudes to it within the Classics profession, often coinciding with international fault lines. Whereas in some national traditions the Greek language is seen as an important area of research in its own right – although the angle under which the research is done is not homogeneous – in others the study of Greek as a language is relegated to the pedagogical context of the freshmen classroom, where instructors are typically graduate students whose own research interests have often nothing to do with the Greek language. In such a context, the Greek language becomes an object of reflection mainly as a pedagogical challenge: learning the language as first step toward, and necessary condition for, access to the ancient world.

The grammars used for reference in this context (in English, e.g., Smyth 1956) are based on nineteenth-century German scholarship that considers deep knowledge of the language as the most powerful – and necessary – hermeneutic tool in the philologist's arsenal. The Greek language is seen as a highly refined (and evolved) means of expressing an author's thought, so that knowing the language's syntax in all its nuances can give the philologist access to this thought and to the world that shaped it. Such a conception of language as indissolubly interconnected with the task of interpretation leads to a natural end point. Critical research into the language comes to a halt when the point has been reached at which the language's refined syntax has been described in such detail that all linguistic obstacles between the critical reader and the author's thought have been removed. Such an end point can be found in the monumental reference grammars of Raphael Kühner and Eduard Schwyzer (K-G and S-D, respectively).

Insofar as the Greek language in itself has traditionally been an object of scholarly, linguistic, interest, the sector studied is not syntax, but morphology and phonology. The perspective is historical-comparative, in that Greek (and Latin) is studied against the background of the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European, with an eye toward structural similarities between the two ancient languages as well as toward either language's contribution to the reconstruction of the proto-language. Greek was found to be a valuable branch in the Indo-European tree, providing important evidence for what the stem or the root was like. The historical-comparative method has also yielded benefits for the Greek language itself, in the form of deep insight into how linguistic prehistory has shaped the language's morphology and phonology as it can be observed in our texts.

Historical-comparative linguistics is an established subdiscipline of Greek philology and it is practiced in all national traditions. But it is no longer the only way to do critical research on the Greek language. The genetic outlook of historical linguistics, which places Greek in time, the time of the diversification of the Indo-European proto-language, has come to be complemented with a more functional perspective, in which Greek is placed in the geographical space in which it was spoken. The language, we have come to realize, is not only shaped by the regularity of Indo-European sound laws, but also by the interference with the languages, whether genetically related or not, of the peoples encountered by the speakers of Greek. This perspective complements the conception of Ancient Greek as an amalgam of inherited features and involves a variety of language contact phenomena, such as linguistic borrowing, bilingualism on the part of Greek speakers, or the use of Greek by non-Greek speakers.

In another development, the study of the language "itself" has now moved past the pedagogical-hermeneutical positions of the reference grammars. "Greek linguistics" is for some the systematic study of the actual use of the Greek language as we see it deployed in our texts, with reference not only to the understanding of the texts themselves but also to research into the syntax, semantics, even pragmatics, of modern living languages.

The general de-emphasis of "norms" and "default cases" in recent thought in the humanities, furthermore, has stimulated interest in language use other than "standard" or "good" Greek. The "marginal" aspects of the use of the Greek language coming to the fore in this way include spoken language, the "low registers" of the language, the speech of marginal groups such as women, slaves, or foreigners. The margin remains in full focus when we consider the expansion of Greek eastward under Alexander the Great and the profound influence of the resulting "periphery" on what was traditionally the "center." The story of the Greek language is not finished, in more than one way, with the morphology of Homer or the syntax of Demosthenes.

The present volume brings together the traditional perspectives and the newer approaches in what is hoped is a comprehensive overview of the language in its various manifestations (literary texts, papyri, inscriptions) and viewed under a variety of angles: historical, functional, syntactic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic, to name a few.

Part I deals with the materiality of the Greek language. In order for us to be able to know the language and read its literature, Greek had to be transcoded to written signs in such a way that its sounds and syntax can be recognized; moreover, the objects on which the signs were written physically had to survive the centuries, even the millennia. During its long history the Greek language came to be written down a number of times in a script that was originally designed for another language. The first time was the adaptation, around the middle of the second millennium BCE, of a Cretan syllabary for the purposes of record-keeping in the Mycenaean palatial economy. As *Silvia Ferrara* shows in a survey of the resulting new script (Linear B) and its linguistic and archeological context, much was lost in translation in the way of adequately representing the language's sounds – and due to the nature of the texts not much syntax was committed to writing; but the Linear B texts do provide us with an invaluable window on a stage of the language some 500 years before the earliest surviving archaic inscriptions. *Roger D. Woodard* discusses in detail the second transcoding, the Greek adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet, which in its turn, as recent archeological discoveries have established, was the descendent of an adaptation of Egyptian logograms to stand for the consonants of a West Semitic language. In the adaptation of the resulting consonantal Semitic alphabet, Woodard, argues, Cypriot scribes must have played a key role, and Cyprus must have been the springboard for the expansion of the new invention over the Greek world.

Rudolf Wachter and *Arthur Verhoogt* provide introductions to the study of the main types of documents and their materials that have come down to us from antiquity: inscriptions and papyri. They discuss the types of text that have survived in these documents, which include laws, decrees, transactions, contracts, etc., but also poetry and literature, in the form of funereal or dedicatory epigrams and copies of literary works from Roman Egypt. The great majority of literary texts, however, come to us through Byzantium, heir to the Greek-speaking eastern half of the Roman Empire. *Niels Gaul* discusses – in addition to such material issues as the birth of the codex and of cursive writing – the sometimes violent cultural debates to which the copying of the Classics was subjected through the centuries, reminding us that much of what we take for granted might well not have survived if events had taken a different turn.

Part II presents the Greek language from the perspectives of the traditional linguistic subdisciplines. The type of Greek discussed is mostly the "standard" Classical Attic usage, though diachronic perspectives are also offered. *Philomen Probert* discusses the standard pronunciation of Classical Attic from the point of view of modern phonology, taking into account not only the evidence from inscriptions (the Attic alphabet is discussed), but also from the representation of Greek words in Latin. *Michael Weiss* presents morphology, the "form" of the words of the language and the ways in which they are derived from other words in the language as well as from Proto-Indo-European. *Michael Clarke*, in a new discussion of the meaning of words (lexical semantics), addresses the pedagogically conditioned ways in which classical philology does lexicography. Instead of an organization of lexical entries in terms of "senses" that are – or are not – related by way of metaphorical extensions, he offers a cognitive approach which places not the lexicographer in the center, but the actual speakers of the language, who utter their words with an eye toward their assessment of what their interlocutors take to be the word's basic meaning.

The two final chapters in Part II move from the sound, form, and meaning of words to larger linguistic units. *Evert van Emde Boas* and *Luuk Huitink* present the syntax of Classical Greek, the way in which words combine to form clauses and clauses combine to form larger structures. Among the many topics succinctly presented are the functionally motivated structure of sentences as arguments surrounding a verbal core, the tense, aspect, and mood of the verb, and the order of words in the sentence. In the last chapter, *Egbert J. Bakker* turns to pragmatics, the ways in which language is uttered (and shaped) in conversational discourse contexts. His two case studies are the system of deictics in the language and a cognitively motivated approach to the Greek verb. He shows that the "prototype" of these linguistic features as they are used in interactive conversation in "real life" remains intact also when they are used in formal written texts, arguing that the structure of those texts always remains, to a greater or lesser extent, a matter of interactive communication.

Part III presents the Greek language as subjected to forces deriving from the dimensions of time and space, from its formative period in the second millennium BCE to the end of the Roman Empire and from the traditional Greek heartland to the far-flung regions of the Hellenistic and Roman world. The first two chapters concentrate on the temporal dimension by offering historical-comparative perspectives. *Jeremy Rau* demonstrates the importance of Ancient Greek for the reconstruction of the Indo-European proto-language and, conversely, shows how deeply the inherited features of that language shape Greek as we know it. *Rupert Thompson* then discusses the oldest actually attested Greek. The language of the Linear B tablets, he shows, may be highly archaic in some respects, but it is not to be equated with Proto-Greek: some of its features are shared with only a subset of the dialects we know from the Archaic and Classical ages. Those dialects are the subject of *Stephen Colvin*'s chapter, which shifts the focus from time to space, the space of the Greek language. In his discussion of the geographical variants of Greek, Colvin resists the earlier paradigm of diversity developing out of an original unity in some kind of "autonomous" development. Such a reductive, purely linguistic, model, he argues, obscures such complicating factors as ethnic identity and language contact.

These factors come directly to the fore in the remaining chapters in this section, which deal with the rich set of phenomena, linguistic and social, resulting from the encounter between speakers of Greek with the languages surrounding it, or – and no less important – between the speakers of those languages and Greek. *Shane Hawkins* gives an overview of the evidence we have, directly linguistic or indirectly literary, for the contacts between Greek and its speakers and a variety of languages in the Near East. The picture that emerges is one of a wide variety of contacts over the centuries, from high-level diplomatic exchange in the second millennium to exchanges between Greek and Carian mercenaries in sixth-century Egypt.

With the creation of the Hellenistic world, and continuing under the Roman Empire, Greek comes to be spoken and written by large numbers of non-Greek speakers. *Claude Brixhe* discusses the consequences of this dramatic expansion. He argues that the concept of "*Koine*" commonly used for postdialectal Greek in a world of political and cultural globalization is underspecified and cannot do justice to the complex linguistic reality of the Greco-Roman East. Only the uniform high-register language that artificially preserves Attic grammar can be called "common," whereas the lower, demotic registers display wide variety, even dialects. Brixhe's survey of the epigraphical record in Greco-Roman Asia Minor allows us a glimpse into the real-life laboratory in which the contours of future Modern Greek are taking visible shape. A region where the Greek impact on the local culture, and of the local speakers on the Greek language, was particularly strong and, due to the availability of the papyrological record, particularly visible, was Egypt. *Sofia Torallas Tovar* gives an overview of Greco-Egyptian bilingualism, teasing out the specific Egyptian interferences taking place in addition to the larger patterns in the wider evolution of the *Koine*. Such questions also come to the fore in *Coulter H. George*'s chapter, but here the "interfering" languages are Hebrew and Aramaic and the bilingual context is not everyday interaction, but the translation of the biblical scriptures. George shows that the syntax of the Greek Old and New Testament reflects the patterns of the original text and language, over and above the features that it derives from the evolution of the language itself in the development of *Koine*.

The contact between Greek and Latin, finally, is discussed by *Bruno Rochette*. The interactions between the two languages are intimately connected with Roman identity and the Roman Empire and are apparent in the complex bilingual habits of cultured Romans. Rochette shows that after a period in which the two languages were equivalent (though not without problems or discussion) under the Republic and the early Empire, Greek gradually had to yield, eventually disappearing from the western half of the Empire.

Language is not, as some linguists suppose, a simple algorithm or a value-free "code" for the expression of thoughts. Language is a matter of social empowerment or lack thereof, of speakers' identity or the assignment of identity to them by their listeners, and of social or professional groups either being characterized by it or consciously singling themselves out with it. Part IV offers a selection of the possibilities opened up by such sociolinguistic approaches. *Andreas Willi* discusses register, which he defines as the set of linguistic features reflecting a given "genre" of discourse, a way of speaking conditioned by the framework (social, situational, subject matter, etc.) shared by the speakers in a given situation. Willi's linguistic analysis of register variation in Greek literature also involves a look at parody in literature as well as at the prescriptive discussions of register (*lexis*) in rhetorical theory in terms of "appropriateness" and "decorum." Sometimes a "way of speaking" is not shared or deliberately adopted but attributed to groups of, typically marginal, speakers. Out of the various possibilities here *Thorsten Fögen* selects the speech of women; he discusses the evidence for female speech in Greek and Roman literature, which unsurprisingly reveals more about the male norm with respect to which female speech is "other" than about women's speech itself. The perceived differences between groups of speakers that differ from the male adult norm is "coded" in the form of a language's system of address, which *Eleanor Dickey* presents in the next chapter. Her analysis shows a marked contrast between an egalitarian Classical use of address terms and directives (utterances ordering someone to do something) and increasing social stratification in later ages, complicated by strong influence from the address system in Latin. *Francesca Schironi* finishes the section with a presentation on the language of Greek science (medicine and mathematics). She shows how not only language is conditioned by the special body of knowledge of a given group, but also that the one *Fachsprache* can differ radically from the other. Thus medicine creates its special discourse by lexical means, whereas mathematics employs a specialized formulaic syntax. She also addresses the different communicative needs and goals with which each discipline is faced.

Ancient Greek would not be known to us in the detailed evidence available, if it had not been the language of a literature that has through the millennia been deemed valuable and worthy of transmission. The transmitted literary works thus provide rich evidence for the language, but it would be a mistake to keep language and literature so separate from each other as "form" from "content." As the chapters in Part V show in their different ways, many of the literary genres, even individual works, are a language in their own right. This is a complex phenomenon with many aspects (linguistic, esthetic, social, religious, political) that grew in importance over the centuries as literary works and genres gained an increasingly canonical status. Homeric epic, to begin, is heir to an Indo-European *Dichtersprache*. *Joshua T. Katz* starts the series by considering what this means. The field of comparative-historical poetics he presents is cognate with historical-comparative linguistics as presented earlier by Weiss and Rau, but instead of inherited morphological and phonological patterns it studies inherited phraseology. Katz discusses some well-known Homeric formulae that stand a fair chance of being inherited. In addition to actual phrases he also pays attention to the Homeric evidence for Indo-European stylistic practice as well as to the ever-controversial question of inherited meter. Meter is, of course, one of the most important ways in which poetry as special language reserved for special performance occasions can be set apart from ordinary speech. It is studied by *Gregory Nagy*, who presents his discussion against the background of Plato's critique in *Laws* of contemporary *mousikē* as a state of disintegration of a former integral whole: the contemporary poets have isolated words from rhythm and melody. As Nagy argues, however, meter, taken in the wider sense of "measure," crucially contains rhythm and melody in the form of the double accentuation system of the language, involving both stress and pitch. Meter is thus characterized as a regulation – embedded in the language – of the measures of melody and rhythm, showing both in the rhythmical profile and in the melodic contour of the verse.

Another typifying feature of literature is dialect. *Olga Tribulato* discusses this feature, showing that far from restricting a work's circulation to a limited area, dialect can contribute to a work's, and genre's, panhellenic distribution. Dialects, she states, are consciously adopted literary languages that have often nothing to do with a given poet's native dialect. Moreover, they are conventional stylizations, rather than faithful representations of any local dialect. An important issue Tribulato raises is the question of the transmission of dialect features by Hellenistic and later editors. The question of dialect applies, sometimes controversially, to Homeric poetry with its "multidialectal" character. *Olav Hackstein* addresses the dialectal underpinnings of the epic *Kunstsprache* and offers a comprehensive survey of the diachronic dimension of epic diction, in which archaic features easily combine with recent language in a dynamic interplay of modernization and archaization. He also reviews the extensive evidence for the ways in which Homeric language is conditioned by meter. The chapter ends with a view of the impact of Homeric Greek, as the culture's central poetic language, on contemporary inscriptional poetry and later literary traditions.

Michael Silk continues with a discussion of Greek lyric, in which he includes the language of the choral songs in tragedy and in Aristophanes. The language of Greek song, Silk shows, is throughout indebted to the epic tradition, which sets it apart, along with dialect coloring (never the poet's own native dialect), from ordinary speech, although lyric poets are keen to combine the epic flavor of their compositions with contemporary language. To this dimension of stylistic elevation (which can be seen in terms of register) Silk adds the dimension of heightening, the intensification of meaning on an ad hoc basis, e.g., through metaphor. The language of tragedy is further analyzed by *Richard Rutherford*, who sheds more light on both the "elevation" and the metaphorical complexity of tragic language. Rutherford offers a close reading of three sample passages which each exemplify the style of each of the three tragedians.

Prose comes to the fore in the two remaining chapters of Part V. *Victor Bers* discusses the ways in which "prose" (whether as written communication or as enhanced speech) can be turned into an artistic medium. The esthetic concept of *Kunstprosa* sets up poetry as at the same time a source on which to draw and as example to be avoided, and it is not always easy to gauge the artistic impact – or intention – of such phenomena as prose rhythm or poetic coloration in the absence of more comparative material. The Attic texts studied by Bers were destined to become *Kunstprosa* in the second degree in the intellectual and cultural milieu of the Second Sophistic, discussed by *Lawrence Kim* in the final chapter. Kim's discussion of Atticism shows how language came to play a key role in the fashioning of elite Hellenic identity under the Empire, with the attested usage of canonical Attic writers becoming a language in its own right. Tracing the various attitudes toward Classical or Attic language back to Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Roman *Attici*, Kim warns against simplification and overgeneralization: Atticism is a varied phenomenon, ranging from an uncompromising prohibition on language *not* attested in the Attic models to the loose adoption of an Attic-sounding style. But however one conceived of language and the past among those with access to the highest linguistic registers (from "pure" Atticism to educated *Koine*), the period sees the beginning of a state of diglossia that was to continue till the resolution of the Language Controversy in the modern Greek nation-state.

Part VI offers three essays in reflection on the Greek language within antiquity. There is some overlap between the three chapters, dealing with philosophy, grammar, and rhetoric, respectively, but that overlap is a natural consequence of the fact that the boundaries between these three disciplines were much less clearly drawn in antiquity than they are now. *Casper C. de Jonge* and *Johannes M. van Ophuijsen* provide an overview of the reflection on language in the philosophical tradition from the Presocratics to Plotinus. Their account highlights throughout the wider concerns of Greek philosophers in their dealings with language, such as the Presocratics' questioning of the capacity of nouns and names to grasp the deeper structure of the world, or the Stoics' use of logic, and *logos*, to attain the enlightened philosophical life. While the philosophical tradition is interested in "words," their properties, and classification, mainly insofar as these are indispensable for the correct treatment of *logos* (i.e., the meaningful, declarative sentence), the tradition of *grammatikē*, as it gradually emancipates from philosophy, comes to be interested in the "elements of language" for their own sake. *Andreas U. Schmidhauser*, revisiting some of the philosophical territory and considering it from the viewpoint of the prehistory of linguistics, traces the "birth" of grammar to the Stoics; their hierarchy of constitutive elements of language (writable sound, syllable, word, sentence) as well as their distinction of "parts of speech" will prove very influential. Schmidhauser shows how the great grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus as well as the subsequent grammatical tradition are indebted to it in spite of some important semantic modifications. *James Porter* then offers a further account of what he calls the Greeks' "metadiscursive grasp" of language. Expanding the fundamental idea that language can be broken down various levels into component parts, he speaks of a "componential analysis" of language, of which the *stoicheion* is the atomic building-block – indeed, he traces the concept to fifth-century BCE atomic physics. Porter's discussion of *stoicheion* brings together such diverse topics as esthetics in stylistic theory, "nonsense" inscriptions on early Classical vases, and a new reading of the *Helen* of Gorgias.

Part VII in closing takes the Greek language out of antiquity and brings it to the modern age. *Staffan Wahlgren* in a sequel to Kim's chapter discusses literary language under the Byzantine Empire and writers' attitude toward the classical past. His overview is a useful correction of the common view of Byzantine literature as operating in a one-dimensional space with the classical models at one extreme and contemporary vernacular at the other. Byzantine literature will construe the "high-end" register in different ways in different periods and will sometimes consciously adopt vernacular elements. Emancipation from the ancient language is naturally even stronger in the medieval and early modern vernacular, but the normative bias, sometimes even from within the contemporary Greek-speaking world, is just as strong. *David Holton* and *Io Manolessou* argue that "medieval Greek" is a language in its own right that is not done justice when the ancient language remains the frame of reference. Medieval Greek philology, they argue, can be more fruitfully brought into line with the study of the medieval vernaculars of the Western European languages. Their detailed survey of the changes taking place in the medieval period, many of which originate in the *Koine*, can be profitably read in conjunction with Brixhe's survey of the linguistic changes taking place in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor.

Many of those changes are naturally at the basis of the official language of the modern Greek nation-state, but as *Peter Mackridge* shows in the last chapter of the volume, Standard Modern Greek is by no means the direct result of the natural developments in the language (demotic). Conscious choices were made in the wider context of the Language Controversy that sprang into being with Greek independence and that pitted vernacularists (of various "degrees") against purists. The result, as Mackridge shows, is an elaborate compromise in which words from the learned tradition are adopted and subjected to rules of morphology deriving from the popular tradition, if available; if not, ancient morphology is invoked. Modern Standard Greek, of which a detailed overview is offered, thus provides living evidence for the continuous presence of the ancient language.