

First Postclassical Greek conference Cologne (PGCC 1)

March 24–26 2021, University of Cologne
online conference

Greek is one of the few languages in the world with an uninterrupted literary tradition that spans more than three thousand years. Nearly all the periods of Greek are well-documented by large amounts of texts. Not surprisingly, there are some major problems inherent in studying Ancient Greek.

First, there is a disproportion in the amount of scholarly research which depends on the dating of the material. While the pre-classical and classical periods have been receiving scholarly attention for centuries (for a synoptic overview see Giannakis, ed., 2014; Bakker, ed., 2010), the study of post-classical Greek, from Hellenistic Greek until the Byzantine period, is a much more recent phenomenon, albeit with a large body of research (cf., *inter alia*, Browning 1983; Horrocks 2010). Furthermore, an overview of the overall development of Greek, or some of its features, is a still a desideratum. For a detailed study of medieval and early modern Greek cf. now Holton et al. (2019). Second, the division of the language development into larger periods, such as Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, Early, Middle and Late Byzantine, is not unproblematic, and the cover term “postclassical” probably does not do justice to the various stages of a continuously changing language. There is no well-defined set of linguistic criteria for chronological periodization (e.g. Browning 1983: 12) and there are no commonly accepted periodization metrics. Periodization that relies on extra-linguistic criteria, such as historically significant events, is the standard solution used so far, but may be methodologically problematic for linguistic studies.

A further problem is posed by the dating of the texts and by the influence of standardization. The strong urge towards imitating the previous literary tradition which was perceived as a model is a serious confounding factor for linguistic research. Another area of research is the impact that the physical appearance and the social context of the manuscripts have for the analysis of the texts they contain. Different kinds of graphical properties of manuscripts such as layout, marginalia, handwriting or text decorations are crucial for their paleographic and philological analysis. These properties help to locate the manuscript in time and space, as well as enhance the philological analysis of the text.

No less important than the language material itself is the question of methodology in the linguistic, philological and other research of Ancient Greek. Studies of Greek usually deal with edited texts, hence editorial practices are a crucial point to reflect upon, as editing means interpreting and modifying variants attested in manuscripts. While creating critical editions is an important and sophisticated tool that allows restoring the original text or a version coming close to it, its machinery is not entirely free of subjectivity, which is why linguistic research must be informed of the ideas and principles that underlie critical editions. Thus, the question might be raised

to what extent texts used as the empirical basis by linguists indeed mirror the language use of their time, and to what extent they are consciously normalized according to specific rules and norms appropriate in critical editions (such as the correction of itacisms, corrections of punctuation, etc.). Another question is the practice of text conflation customary in Classical and Byzantine philology.

The digital turn has a profound impact on traditional disciplines such as Greek philology and linguistics: textual corpora and tools provided by digital scholarship provide new means for the analysis of the language material and have, *inter alia*, the potential to provide more data and insights in both linguistics and philology as well as to contribute to falsifiability of hypotheses. Since linguistic experiments or grammaticality judgments are not available to linguists working on Ancient Greek research on it has to be corpus-driven and based on language use (and, e.g., not on constructed examples). The workshop aims to integrate the methods and tools from Digital Humanities, in addition to and not to the exclusion of, the traditional philological and linguistic methods. The goal is also to discuss the methodological problems related to the new methods.

Research areas that will be addressed during the conference are:

1 Methodology:

- Which theoretical frameworks should guide a linguistics analysis of the sources of the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods?
- Which are the main methodological problems dealing with these texts?
- What motivates the chronological division of the language tradition into Classical, Hellenistic, Imperial, Byzantine and Modern Greek - which influenced the study of Greek since the Renaissance? Are there criteria that allow to subdivide the language of the Byzantine period into stages? Is it still meaningful to use the label "Post-Classical" to define a specific stage of Greek?
- Which methods and metrics have to be considered for dating texts on the basis of linguistic phenomena?

2 Text transmission and edition:

- Which major changes does the transmission of texts (through manuscripts and editions) imply or effect?
- What can be gained or lost in studying the manuscripts directly? To what extent do manuscripts mirror the linguistic "reality" of the time?
- What is the role of Byzantium in the preservation of the texts of the previous periods? How much intervention on the part of the Byzantine scribes/excerptors/compilers is there to expect?
- What can be inferred by a direct analysis of the text layout in the manuscript?
- What are the texts written for? Is the layout connected to the type of text and to its purpose?
- To what extent do editions mirror the linguistic "reality" of the time? How significant are the effects of historical-critical editing (e.g. normalization or emendation; text segmentation) on our linguistic analysis? Should our analysis of texts reconsider punctuation and widely acknowledged text segmentation?

3 Language standardization and register:

- Which linguistic features are indicators of language standardization phenomena? Is there any diachronic trend in the standardization?
- Are some specific colloquial elements in the written texts more significant than others for investigating the register of a text or the coexistence of different registers in the same document?
- Which function and relevance do literary and biblical motifs in documentary texts have?

4 Analysis of specific linguistic phenomena:

- What kind of phenomena are specifically related to language contact and register interferences?
- What can we observe analyzing specific linguistic phenomena from texts of this period (e.g. the emergence of new grammatical categories, the disappearance of grammatical categories)?

5 Digital Humanities:

- How may DH contribute to the questions addressed in the workshop?
- Which corpora do we have? What kind of data and tools are available?
- What kind of analysis do annotated corpora allow? And which methodological problems are related to them?
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References

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- Giannakis, G, K., V. Bubenik, E. Crespo, C. Golston, A. Lianeri, S. Luraghi & S. Matthaios (eds.). 2014. *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek language and linguistics*. Leiden: Brill online.
- Holton, David, Geoffrey Horrocks, Marjolijne Janssen, Tina Lendari, Io Manolesou, and Notes Tüphexes (eds.). 2019. *The Cambridge Grammar of Medieval and Early Modern Greek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horrocks, Geoffrey. 2010 [1997]. *Greek. A history of the language and its speakers*. 2nd rev. edn. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Invited speakers

- Anna Bonifazi (Universitat zu Koln)
- Albio C. Cassio (Università La Sapienza - Rome)
- Gregory Crane (Tufts University - Medford)
- Eleanor Dickey (University of Reading)
- José Luis Garsia Ramón (Center for Hellenic Studies - Washington)
- Giorgios Giannakis (University of Thessaloniki)
- Chiara Gianollo (Università di Bologna)
- Mark Janse (Ghent University)
- Brian Joseph (Ohio State University - Columbus)

Organizing committee

- Giuseppina di Bartolo
- Daniel Kölligan