

# Sociolinguistics of Style and Social Class in Contemporary Athens

IRENE THEODOROPOULOU

DISCOURSE APPROACHES TO  
POLITICS, SOCIETY AND CULTURE 57



JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

# Sociolinguistics of Style and Social Class in Contemporary Athens

Irene Theodoropoulou  
Qatar University

John Benjamins Publishing Company  
Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Theodoropoulou, Irene, author.

Sociolinguistics of Style and Social Class in Contemporary Athens / Irene

Theodoropoulou.

p. cm. (Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture, ISSN 1569-9463 ; v. 57)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Greek language, Modern--Variation. 2. Greek language, Modern--Social aspects.

3. Popular culture--Greece--Athens. 4. Sociolinguistics--Greece--Athens.

I. Title.

PA1050.T44

2014

306.44--dc23

2014020749

ISBN 978 90 272 0648 0 (Hb ; alk. paper)

ISBN 978 90 272 6970 6 (Eb)

© 2014 – John Benjamins B.V.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission from the publisher.

John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands

John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

## Sociolinguistics of Style and Social Class in Contemporary Athens

# *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture (DAPSAC)*

The editors invite contributions that investigate political, social and cultural processes from a linguistic/discourse-analytic point of view. The aim is to publish monographs and edited volumes which combine language-based approaches with disciplines concerned essentially with human interaction – disciplines such as political science, international relations, social psychology, social anthropology, sociology, economics, and gender studies.

For an overview of all books published in this series, please see  
<http://benjamins.com/catalog/dapsac>

## **General Editors**

Ruth Wodak, Andreas Musolff and Johann Unger

Lancaster University / University of East Anglia / Lancaster University  
r.wodak@lancaster.ac.uk; A.Musolff@uea.ac.uk and j.unger@lancaster.ac.uk

## **Advisory Board**

Christine Anthonissen  
Stellenbosch University

Michael Billig  
Loughborough University

Piotr Cap  
University of Łódź

Paul Chilton  
Lancaster University

Teun A. van Dijk  
Universitat Pompeu Fabra,  
Barcelona

Konrad Ehlich  
Free University, Berlin

J.R. Martin  
University of Sydney

Jacob L. Mey  
University of Southern Denmark

Greg Myers  
Lancaster University

John Richardson  
Loughborough University

Luisa Martín Rojo  
Universidad Autonoma de Madrid

Christina Schäffner  
Aston University

Louis de Saussure  
University of Neuchâtel

Hailong Tian  
Tianjin Foreign Studies  
University

Joanna Thornborrow  
Cardiff University

Sue Wright  
University of Portsmouth

## **Volume 57**

Sociolinguistics of Style and Social Class in Contemporary Athens  
by Irene Theodoropoulou

## Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to the people, who enthusiastically accepted to participate in this study and they shared trivial aspects of their lives with me. The help of my friends Manolis Polychronides, Karolos Gavriiloglou, Evgenia Papaioannou, Nota Pantzou and Dimitris Adamopoulos with the daunting task of recruitment has been immense. Special thanks go to Maria Giannaki, Myrto Malamou and Elia Kostopoulou, who have also helped me in the design of the study in their own peculiar way.

My gratitude goes also to the institutions that have funded various stages of my research: the Foundation for Education and European Culture (Ιδρυμα Παιδείας και Ευρωπαϊκού Πολιτισµού) and its President, Mr. Nikolaos Trihas, the Greek State Scholarships Foundation (IKY), the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, and the King's College Graduate School for sponsoring my trip to Stanford to attend the LSA Summer Institute 2007, where lots of the ideas found in the book were conceived.

The excerpts from popular literature books that are found in Chapters 3 and 5 are used here with the kind permission of the following publishers, whom I would like to acknowledge: Ekdoseis Melani, Ekdotikos Organismos Livani, Ekdoseis Kedros, and Ekdoseis Topos.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of interacting with various scholars, whose ideas have helped me shape my arguments found in this book: Devyani Sharma, Ben Rampton, Roxy Harris, Jannis Androutopoulos, Marina Terkourafi, Jo Angouri, Reem Bassiouney and Emma Moore.

Many thanks also go to the participants of RWLL and Modern Greek seminar at King's College London (especially to my friends Dimitris Kitis, Valentina Christodoulou, Stavri Ioannidou, Nikolas Kakkoufa, Nayia Kamenou and Sarah Ernst), to whom initial analyses of some of the data found here were presented. In addition, thanks are due to the audiences in the following conferences: Revisiting the 'Urban' and the 'Rural': Spatial Representations and Practices, the 9th and the 10th ICGI, ICLaVE 5, Sociolinguisticsfest 2008, the Arizona Linguistics & Anthropology Symposium, the Sociolinguistics Symposia 17 and 18, and NWAV 39.

My interest in linguistics was given birth at the Philology Department of the University of Athens, and it was consolidated into sociolinguistics at the University of Vienna and at the LSA Summer Institutes 2005 and 2007. I would like to express

my sincere appreciation to Professors Christophoros Charalambakis, Dimitra Theophanopoulou – Kontou, Maria Voutsinou – Kikilia and Amphiloichios Papathomas for their support. Above all, my eternal gratitude goes to Professor Georgios Babiniotis for all his support, encouragement, help and, mainly, for awarding me the Herder Scholarship, which gave me the opportunity to discover the amazing world of Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis in a model Department of General and Applied Linguistics, the one in Vienna. There, I had the opportunity to be introduced to sociolinguistics and discourse analysis by some great scholars, including Professors Wolfgang Dressler, Elisabeth Leinfellner, Elisabeth Gülich and Martin Reisigl. By the same token, in the States I had the opportunity to attend courses in sociolinguistics by people, like Penny Eckert, Norma Mendoza Denton, Mary Bucholtz, Kira Hall, John Rickford and Ed Finegan, among others, who have also contributed significantly towards my take on style and identity.

Many thanks go to Greg Myers and the two anonymous reviewers at Benjamins for poring over the manuscript and for offering very useful comments, which helped me in improving the content of the book, as well as to Isja Conen, Susan Hendriks and the editorial team for their patience and a smooth cooperation.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Michael Kourtoubelides, Richard Mullane and Jason Leech for their significant help with improving my English text and my translations. It goes without saying that any errors remaining are my own.

A big thanks to all my friends in Athens, London and Doha, especially to Marianna, Ioanna, Elina, Michael, Nick, Antonis, Apostolos, Erin, and Julieta for all their support.

I am grateful to my colleagues at Qatar University, especially to Rizwan Ahmad and Tariq Khwaileh, as well as the College of Arts and Sciences Research Committee and its Head, Mohammed Ahmedna, for offering me a teaching load reduction, which allowed me to finish the book. Likewise, many thanks go to my beloved students in sociolinguistics, language and society and discourse analysis courses in QU: I would never imagine that Modern Greek data would trigger such interesting discussions among a primarily Arabic-speaking audience!

Last but not least, my family have always been there for me and I owe them everything: my aunt, Niki Karanikou, for all her love and our exhilarating discussions, my brother, Thanos, for his significant help with recruiting people for my research, for all the fun, and mainly, for not letting me forget that the greatest joy in this life stems not from academic achievements but from simpler things, like making music together. Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my parents, Haralambos and Marianna, for their unfailing love and trust, ceaseless support, continuous encouragement and endless patience. The book is dedicated to them with all my love.

## List of tables

Table 1.1	Typology of sociolinguistic authenticities	18
Table 1.2	Orders of indexicality and genres	28
Table 1.3	Structure of the book	33
Table 2.1	Groups, moderators and total time of recording	45
Table 2.2	Description of the data stemming from the TV series	48
Table 2.3	Description of the data stemming from the fictional texts	52
Table 3.1	Number of examples and excerpts from popular culture pertaining to VP and DP discourses	60
Table 3.2	VP and DP stylistic resources represented in the media	96
Table 4.1	Quantification of participants' performed utterances in semi-structured conversations	106
Table 5.1	Numbers of use of the labels "new-poor" and "nouveau-riche" in literary texts	150
Table 5.2	Peristeri participants and key notions for DP	182
Table A.A	Similarities within the groups	210
Table A.B	Similarities across the groups	211



## List of figures

Figure 1.1	Resources and contextualization model	9
Figure 1.2	Pairs of identity	21
Figure 1.3	Types of framing	24
Figure 1.4	Interior and exterior indexicality	27
Figure 4.1	Types of “other”	124
Figure 5.1	Factors and social class oppositions	142
Figure 5.2	An overview of the orders of indexicality	190

## List of diagrams

Diagram 1.1 An overview of the style as identity contextualization model

32

## Transcription conventions

CAPITALS	mark very emphatic stress
word'	apostrophe used when the last vowel of a word has been omitted (oral speech)
(.)	pause less than 0.5 sec
(..)	pause between 0.5–1 sec
(...)	pause longer than 1 sec
<u>α</u> , <u>ε</u> , <u>η</u> , etc.	stretched vowel in the Greek text (the stretchings are indicated through:: in the English translations)
utterance	
overlapping	
=	
=	second utterance latched onto first
@@	transcription impossible
()	transcriber's comments
,	low pitch on word
~	high pitch on phrase, continuing until punctuation
—	low pitch on phrase, continuing until punctuation
.	sentence final-falling intonation
;	sentence final-rising intonation (question)
	raising intonation
	falling intonation
<i>p</i>	piano (spoken softly)
<i>pp</i>	pianissimo (spoken very softly)
<i>f</i>	forte (spoken loudly)
<i>ff</i>	fortissimo (spoken very loudly)
<i>acc</i>	(spoken quickly)
<i>dec</i>	(spoken slowly)
***	muted names of people, places or institutions
«»	Stylized Greek utterances
“”	English translation of stylized utterances

# Table of contents

Acknowledgements	IX
List of tables	XI
List of figures	XII
List of diagrams	XIII
Transcription conventions	XIV
Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1	
Contextualizing style and identity in socio-cultural linguistics	7
1.1 Style, genre, and identity	7
1.2 "Style resources and contextualization" model	8
1.3 "Identities in interaction" model	12
1.4 Style as identity-contextualization mechanism	13
1.4.1 Why does style construct identity?	15
1.4.2 When and where does style construct identity?	22
1.4.3 How does style construct identity?	25
CHAPTER 2	
Investigating style and identity in contemporary urban society	35
2.1 Methodology	35
2.1.1 Linguistic ethnography	35
2.1.2 Digital ethnography	36
2.1.3 Popular culture ethnography	37
2.1.4 Key issues in triangulating methods in socio-cultural linguistics	38
2.2 Data	38
2.2.1 Data from participants	38
2.2.2 Data from popular culture	46
2.3 Concluding remarks	53

CHAPTER 3

**Athenian suburban speech and stylistic representations  
in Greek popular culture**

55

- 3.1 Introduction 55
- 3.2 Discourse as a system of style representation 56
- 3.3 Formation of genres of Greek popular culture 57
- 3.4 Northern and western suburban speech style  
and social class representations 59
  - 3.4.1 Sociolinguistic resources 60
  - 3.4.2 Communicative competence 79
  - 3.4.3 Performativity 85
- 3.5 Style, social class and indexicality in popular culture 95
- 3.6 Concluding remarks 98

CHAPTER 4

**Athenian suburbanites' double-voiced performances as identity work**

99

- 4.1 Introduction 99
- 4.2 Stylization 101
- 4.3 Parody 102
- 4.4 Identifying instances of double-voiced speech 103
- 4.5 Social action 104
- 4.6 Stylized social actions 107
  - 4.6.1 Denaturalization 107
  - 4.6.2 Irony 113
  - 4.6.3 Alazony 121
- 4.7 Parody as mocking 127
- 4.8 Double voicing identity and indexicality 135
- 4.9 Concluding remarks 139

CHAPTER 5

**Metapragmatic accounts of Athenian suburbanite social classes**

141

- 5.1 Introduction 141
- 5.2 Sociolinguistic meta-language on social class 143
- 5.3 Social classes and genres 147
- 5.4 New-poor and nouveau-riche 149
- 5.5 Middle class and wage-earners 167
- 5.6 G700 183
- 5.7 Indexicalities in the VP-DP discourse 190
- 5.8 Concluding remarks 193

## CHAPTER 6

Towards a holistic approach to style	195
Postscript: Social class and style in a financial crisis context	201
Appendixes	203
Glossary of the main theoretical notions used in the book	217
References	221
Index	235

## Introduction

Speech style, as a pivotal theoretical construct in sociolinguistics (Rickford and Eckert, 2001, p. 1), has been at the forefront of research for nearly fifty years. It is seen as the core notion in variationist sociolinguistics, namely the subfield dealing with the mapping of linguistic patterns onto social ones, which uses surveys and quantitative methods to examine the correlation between linguistic variability and major predetermined demographic categories, such as age, class, sex and ethnicity (see, for example, the by-now classic studies by Labov, 1966 and 1972, in the U.S. context and Trudgill, 1974, in the UK context). The results of these initial “first wave” studies have been brought together to develop the larger picture of the social spread of sound change, in which the socioeconomic hierarchy figures as a map of social space, and change spreads outward from the locally based upper working class (Eckert, 2005, pp. 1–2).

Nonetheless, socioeconomic hierarchy was deemed too abstract a notion, because it could not capture what variation meant for the people belonging to a particular group. In order to answer this question, the second (e.g. Eckert, 1989, 2000; chapters in Eckert & Rickford, 2001), and mainly the third wave of variation studies (e.g. Zhang, 2005; Podesva, 2007) employed ethnographic methods in order to study the relationship between variation and local, participant-designed categories and configurations. These together gave local meaning to the aforementioned more abstract demographic categories.

Along the same lines of emphasizing locality, the focus of sociolinguistic research on style currently concerns the social meaning of styles (e.g., Eckert, 2001, 2003; Levon, 2009; Moore & Podesva, 2009; Coupland, 2013), which in turn are associated with social categories. Apart from social meanings, in current sociolinguistic research social life is also viewed as a continual process of constructing these same categories and identities (Schilling-Estes, 2004, pp. 394–6; De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006, pp. 1–17), and style also becomes a vital resource for the process of construction. Hence, the view of variation is expanding from viewing variation as just marking categories to constituting a more fluid landscape of meaning, and from a view of language as *reflecting* the social to a view of language as *creating* the social (Rickford & Eckert, 2001, p. 6, emphasis in original).

In light of these developments in sociolinguistic research on speech style, this book seeks to contribute to the under-researched social (as opposed to

geographical) dialectology in Greece (Sifianou, 2003, p. 269) by investigating Athenian Greek speech style(s), and the ways it is employed by Athenians in order to construct their social class identities. In line with the current focus of sociolinguistic stylistic studies on locality but wishing to do justice to the complicated dimensions of style, this book seeks to expand the study of style by analyzing data from popular and digital culture as opposed to only mundane or actual people's culture. In this way, one of the aims of this book is to elucidate interaction of styles in general rather than just analyze style and social class identity in fragmented contexts, such as an ethnographic interview or a recorded conversation between locals. Here, interaction is seen both as an umbrella term encompassing various interactional genres, including semi-structured conversations (Alim, 2004), Facebook discussions, conversations from TV series, excerpts from popular fiction, hip-hop lyrics, and ethnographic interviews, as well as the interaction of data within these distinctive genres. Interaction of data here means that the interest is in the ways the styl(iz)ed social meanings attached to social class are correlated with each other, i.e. in what makes them operate systematically in an indexical order encompassing various genres of speech all of which make references to Athenian suburban speech style and social class.

The rationale behind incorporating all of these seemingly heterogeneous genres in the study of the relationship between speech style and social class identity is not only because of their relevance to the areas of interest which are presented below, but also due to their pervasiveness in everyday life, whereby people craft and styl(iz)e their personal images that they then offer to the people with whom they interact on a daily basis. In light of this coexistence and importance of the genres in everyday communication, I stake a claim for the analytical need to overcome the fragmentation in the treatment of data sets by including all of these genres in a triangulated stylistic analysis of identity construction in the sociolinguistic paradigm. Such a choice can lead to a holistic approach, a multidimensional treatment of style and identity, that tries to correlate, combine, and eventually integrate mundane culture with digital and popular culture (cf. chapters in Litosseliti, 2010; chapters in Mallinson, Childs & Van Herk, 2013).

Despite the fact that there are edited volumes suggesting taking steps towards a holistic approach to style drawing of multilingual datasets stemming from different sociocultural backgrounds, to my knowledge there is no single monograph-length study that illustrates how style and stylization are employed by people across different genres of mundane, digital and popular culture within the same society in order to construct the multiple layers of social class. I argue that it is useful to have such a type of study focusing on the complex sociolinguistic practices of different segments of the same society, i.e. contemporary Athenian suburban society in Greece, because in this way we can gain a coherent and hence potentially deeper and better



understanding of the members of the society under scrutiny and their sociocultural linguistic practices. In other words, both the “social” and the “linguistic” aspects of these people’s practices are dealt with in a balanced way in a study that deals with the relationship between style and social class in the context of one society.

The motivation for this study is the established and widely circulating but under-researched traditional rivalry between northern and western suburban Athens (Voreia Proastia = northern suburbs and Dytika Proastia = western suburbs are the labels used to refer to these two areas; henceforth, they will be referred to as VP and DP, respectively). This rivalry is rooted in the stereotypes (Pickering, 2001; Apte, 2001) surrounding these two areas: VP is associated with wealthy, educated and cultivated people, while DP is considered full of working class, uneducated and uncultivated people (see also Theodoropoulou, 2010b, 2013). Concerning variation in spoken Athenian Greek, with the exception of Mikros’ (1997) large scale variationist study on the nasalization of the b, d, and g, some smaller scale studies pertaining to the same phenomenon (e.g. Arvaniti, 1995; Arvaniti & Joseph, 2000; Pagoni, 1989; and Haralabopoulos, Arapopoulou, Kokolakis & Kyratzis, 1992), and Theodoropoulou’s (2013) study on the use of the syntactic variable Verbal Phrase +/- Prepositional Phrase, all of which, however, take a quantitative approach, to my knowledge, there is no large-scale qualitative description or analytical account of speech style used by people in the northern and western suburbs of Athens.

This book therefore aims to fill this gap in the existing Greek sociolinguistic literature. More specifically, my aim is to provide a description and interpretation of this socio-cultural phenomenon from a socio-cultural linguistic perspective. The two foci of this research are the respective descriptions of the VP and DP speech styles as they are used across different genres. The study includes data from actual people in their offline and online communication, as well as data from popular culture; more specifically, actual people’s data include semi-structured conversations and performances (Bakhtin, 1981; Coupland, 2007a) in the realm of the participants’ conversations, ethnographic interviews and Facebook Wall discussions. Popular culture data include excerpts from TV series, popular fiction texts, and lyrics from hip-hop songs.

Such an expansion of stylistic research into other genres, such as popular culture and online culture, has been indirectly alluded to for scholarship pertaining to style, since to understand styling as a sociolinguistic process, we need to entertain a notion of social organization that couples situational with cultural contexts and larger metapragmatic stereotypes (Bucholtz, 2009, p. 165; Coupland, 2007a, p. 16; Tannen, 2005). To this end I would also add the fact that people, at least in western societies, including Greece, are popular-culture-saturated (Georgakopoulou, 2000; Androutsopoulos, 2005; Danesi, 2008, pp. 16–22) and heavily engaged with digital culture, especially with social networking sites (e.g. chapters in Papacharissi, 2011).