



Digital Museum of Greek Oral History: how Dialectal Speech Corpora Remain Vivid in Class

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Abstract

Dialectal variants are complete linguistic systems just like standard languages (cf. Kontosopoulos 1997, Ntinias & Zarkogianni 2009). The teaching of different linguistic varieties of a standard language gives pupils the possibility a) to be acquainted with the treasures of the expressive means of their mother language, b) to embody the mother language in a broader cultural and historical context and c) to discover the grammatical adjacency of the dialects and the standard language. We believe that the above can be maximally achieved if there is active interaction between pupils and language teachers/educators during the process of language teaching.

Aim of the project presented here is the design, construction and organization of the Digital Museum of Greek Oral History (DiMuGOHi) as a research and educational tool available to pupils and language teachers/educators. Goals of the project are a) the training of primary and high school pupils in methods of language data collection and processing and, b) the collection, processing, filing and preservation of dialectal linguistic data, and, c) the design of authentic didactic/ pedagogical material to be used for the teaching of dialectal varieties in combination with the standard language. The DiMuGOHi will have the form of a digital platform in which all the materials described above will be available.

We illustrate, on the one hand, the major axes on the bases of which the platform is designed, and, on the other hand, the CLIL principles underlying the suggested pedagogical/ didactic activities. The DiMuGOHi is expected to contribute to the educational procedure in direct and indirect ways. A first direct outcome is the pupils' sensitization regarding dialects, their linguistic properties and structural adjacency with standard Greek as well as the role of the dialects in the preservation and diffusion of local and national cultural heritage. In addition, the DiMuGOHi will accentuate issues of environmental education, social sciences, geography, local history (cf. Thompson 1998, 2000). Some indirect outcomes are that, first, it will facilitate the improvement of metalinguistic awareness regarding the Cretan dialect, second, it will enhance knowledge that dialects have complete linguistic systems, just like the standard language, third, it will improve pupils' stylistic and sociolinguistic awareness, namely the conscious knowledge of the linguistic contexts in which dialectal material is used, and, fourth, it will preserve the linguistic treasures of different linguistic varieties of the standard language.

1. Introduction

Modern Greek dialects are typologically adjacent to the standard language. The Greek Analytic Curriculum ([32], [33]) for primary and secondary education promotes the communicative use of language although dialectal teaching abstains from the Greek school (cf. [26]). However, the teaching of various varieties of Modern Greek (hereafter MG) gives pupils the possibility, on the one hand, to get acquainted with the dynamics of their native language and to place the latter in a broader cultural and historical setting and, on the other hand, to discover the grammatical adjacency of the standard language and its dialects at all levels of grammatical analysis (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) (cf. [29], for relevant discussion). We assume that pupils' metalinguistic capacity is realized only by means of an active participation of pupils and students in the educational process.

In this paper we describe, first, the goals of the Digital Museum of Greek Oral History (hereafter DiMuGOHi) which intends to cover the need for the involvement of pupils in the educational procedure, and, second, the ways the goals of the DiMuGOHi are materialized. We will present the steps of the design, the construction and the organization of a museum of oral history which will be used for scientific as well educational purposes. The DiMuGOHi will be directed to pupils, language instructors and anyone interested in dialectology, education and, more specifically, language teaching. The DiMoGOHi will take the shape of a digital platform where audio data will be available. These data will be collected by primary



and high school pupils who will be trained in methods of data collection, indexation and processing. The audio material will consist primarily of dialectal data from areas of Western Crete, however, the museum will be designed in such a way so it will have the capacity to host dialectal materials from various areas of Greece. In addition, the audio data together with language teaching activities whose design will be based on the data will be used for the (combinatorial) teaching of standard Greek and its dialectal variants.

The suggested pedagogical/ didactic activities are based on CLIL principles. The DiMuGOHi is expected to contribute to the educational procedure in direct and indirect ways. A first direct outcome is the pupils' sensitization regarding dialects, the linguistic properties and structural adjacency of the latter with standard Greek as well as the role of the dialects in the preservation and diffusion of local and national cultural heritage. In addition, the DiMuGOHi will accentuate issues of environmental education, social sciences, geography, local history (cf. [26], [27]). Some indirect outcomes are that, first, it will facilitate the improvement of metalinguistic awareness regarding the Cretan dialect, second, it will enhance knowledge that dialects have complete linguistic systems, just like the standard language, third, it will improve stylistic and sociolinguistic awareness, namely the conscious knowledge of the linguistic contexts in which dialectal material is used, and, fourth, it will preserve the linguistic treasures of different linguistic varieties.

2. Oral history and museums of oral history

According to Thompson ([26]: 23) (see also [1], [3], [4], [6], [20], [21], [22]) oral history is created around people and it generally broadens the view of history. Oral history is determined by its social character, that is, the direct impact of historical events on social life. Oral history draws its topics mainly from family and social life as well as local and political history (cf. [26], [27], [17], [18], [24]). The fundamental source of oral history is interviews. The latter consist in principle to a discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. The main advantage of interviews as method of data collection is that they provide interviewees with the possibility to freely express their beliefs and views of life. An additional advantage is that interviews demand the cooperation of the members of the research team. This entails that knowledge is not the sole or principal skill required for the access to the investigation of the historical sources. The need to preserve oral history and tradition has led to the institution of museums of oral history in Greece and other countries.¹

3. Digital museum of Greek oral history: innovations, methodology and objectives

The need for the inclusion of Modern Greek dialects (hereafter MGDs) in language teaching has inspired the creation of the DiMuGOHi whose main goal is to fill in the gap regarding the combinatorial teaching of MGDs and other linguistic varieties of Greek.² The DiMuGOHi aims not only to accommodate the need for saving audio and/ or visual files but to be used in education. An innovative characteristic of the DiMuGOHi is that pupils are actively involved in the process of designing and creating the DiMuGOHi. More specifically, the DiMuGOHi takes the shape of a digital platform where audio files with dialectal speech will be available. These dialectal data have been collected, processed, filed by Primary and High School pupils of Fourfouras, a mountain village in the prefecture of Rethymno, in Crete, Greece. The pupils –researchers have been trained in methods of data collection, processing and filing.

The dialectal material included in the platform will in principle comes from dialectal varieties spoken in Western Crete; however, the museum will be designed in such a way so as to accommodate data from all major dialectal areas of Greece. The dialectal data will be able to be used in language teaching of MG and its dialectal varieties. The DiMuGOHi will be organized in such a way so pupils and language instructors will be able to choose the (language) topics planned to be taught. At a purely linguistic level, the contribution of the DiMuGOHi is that, one the one hand, it will sensitize pupils on dialectal topics and will accentuate the fact that dialects are complete linguistic systems, and, one the other hand, it will contribute to the investigation of local history.

The visitor of the platform will be able to make three (3) choices in the initial page of the platform which will take the form of distinct links. The first link will be addressed to pupils, language teachers and

¹ Some representative oral history museums are those in [33], [34], [35], [36], [37], [38], [39].

² The DiMuGOHi is being materialized under the auspices of the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation.



researchers and it will provide the visitor with access to the audio dialectal data. The second link will be addressed to pupils and language teachers and it will offer language teaching proposals accompanied by representative language activities. Finally, the third link will be addressed to researchers and language teachers; the interested visitor will have the chance to have access to bibliographical and vocabulary lists as well as a list of grammatical phenomena of the Greek dialect, mostly at the morphophonological level.

The topics addressed in the dialectal data are related to a) life in school, b) stories from everyday life, c) the second world war and the German occupation, d) travelling and means of transportation, e) marriage and family, f) customs and social ties, g) vesture, h) children's toys, i) politics.

3.1. Stages in the construction of DiMuGOHi

The design of the DiMuGOHi takes place within two major phases. During the first phase, the first action consists to the first training of the pupils-interviewers in the form and properties of the sound as well as research methodology. More specifically, a distinction has been made between qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis placing emphasis on the value of free speech samples for linguistics and anthropology. Moreover, interviews ethics and data collection methods have also been discussed. Our pupils-interviewers have been trained in setting the context of the interviews, the preparation of the recording equipment, the saving, administrating and processing of dialectal data (cf. [2], [19]). Finally, we made a display of the equipment use. During the training session we used yet-i-pro microphones and the audacity program of sound processing. The interviewers adopted the technique of semi-structured interviews.³ The selection of this interview type serves the qualitative and quantitative data analysis (for relevant detailed discussion as well as the advantages of the free and structured interview methods see [9], [11], [13], [24]). In the second action of the first phase, the pupils-interviewers collected ~80% of the data expected to be collected according to the project planning.

During the second phase of the project, the first action consists to a second training of the pupils-interviewers. This time, interviewers were trained in phonetic annotation at various levels of phonological analysis (phonological phrase, phonological word, phoneme)⁴. At the same time, data collection is intensified. The second action of the second phase also includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of the interviews, design of the language teaching activities and the final set up of the museum platform.

The suggested language teaching activities are driven by the principles underlying Content and Language Integrated Learning (hereafter CLIL). We adopt CLIL because it is considered to be the main representative of the so called 'educational linguistics' (for detailed discussion see [25]). The fundamental virtue of CLIL is that it unifies the methods and strategies used to teach first/ mother and second languages as well as embeds the local and regional language context in language learning and teaching. In other words, within a CLIL approach teachers develop and apply a more content –based approach to a theme (cf. [5], [6], [14]). Therefore, the language activities designed for the DiMuGOHi, a) will be interactive in nature, and b) will make use of the vocabulary of the Cretan dialect in order to accomplish, first, true content and language integrated learning, second, effectively teach various grammatical structures, such as the placement of clitics in postverbal position or consonant anaptyxis in Vowel-Vowel environments, and, third, broaden pupils' knowledge regarding the expressive 'solutions' their mother tongue and its varieties may offer. The activities will be both open and closed in order to get qualitative and quantitative analyses of the pupils' scores so as to evaluate the activities' teaching effectiveness.

4. Why a museum of oral history?

A plausible question stemming from the above discussion is what a museum of oral history can offer to education. A first and fundamental answer, as already mentioned, is that a museum of oral history can contribute to the sensitization of pupils regarding dialectal knowledge, the structural traits of the latter, the structural adjacency of dialects and the standard language and the special role dialects can play in the preservation and diffusion of the local, national and cultural heritage. At another level, the didactic

³ For more information regarding the mixed research methods cf. [7].

⁴ Harrington ([10]:25) defines phonetic annotation as a type of symbolic information which is related to the signs of a data corpus. In a phonetic speech analysis, an annotation symbol can be connected/ related to multiple signs.



use of dialectal data may improve the metalinguistic capacity of dialect speaking pupils regarding the grammar of the Cretan dialect – or any other dialect – and contribute to the development and enrichment of the vocabulary of pupils speaking either a dialect or the standard language. Moreover, the teaching of dialectal varieties of Greek will reinforce the conscious knowledge that a(ny) dialect is characterized by a complete grammatical system, just like standard Greek. At the same time, it will improve pupils' stylistic awareness, i.e. the conscious knowledge and use of the language contexts in which a dialect is used. The participation of the pupils in the selection of the teaching material, the design and application of language activities and the selection of the content sections/ units taught in class will render a language lesson more interesting resulting in positive learning outcomes. Finally, at a macro-level, the teaching of dialects contributes to the preservation of the dialectal treasures and raises issues of environmental education, social sciences, geography and local history.

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