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Greeklsh and Greekness: Trends and Discourses of "Glocalness"

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Abstract

Within the context of the new communication ecosystem, attitudes towards computer-mediated discourse (CMD) practices have not been extensively investigated. This study explores social attitudes towards "Greeklsh," a specific discursive phenomenon of CMD, which involves the use of the Latin alphabet in Greek online communication. It approaches Greeklsh as a glocal social practice, and investigates attitudes towards Greeklsh as they are represented in the Greek press. Three main trends are identified in the corpus. The first, a

retrospective trend, views Greeklish as a serious threat to the Greek language; the second, prospective trend, approaches Greeklish as a transitory phenomenon which will soon become negligible due to technological advances; the third, resistive trend, points to the negative effects of globalization and relates Greeklish to other communication and sociocultural practices. Adopting a critical discourse-analytic perspective, this study attempts to map the discourses which permeate each one of these trends in order to reveal different, often heterogeneous and conflicting representations of Greeklish in Greek society at a specific historical moment.

Introduction

The turn from page to screen has positioned the computer and the Internet at the center of the new postmodern communication ecosystem, and has brought changes to the communication landscape and to language and communication-related fields of study. Several studies have already attempted to outline the new communicative order (Street, 2000) and to analyze its consequences (Crystal, 2001; Herring, 2001). However, although much discussion has focused on computer-mediated discourse (CMD) and globalization, most theoretical analyses and empirical investigation have exclusively focused on the English language. Except for a wider "phobic" approach which views the Internet as a threat to less widely spoken languages (Crystal, 2001, pp. 1-2), there has been very little research on social attitudes towards CMD, on specific discursive practices of CMD and on the effects of the Internet on other languages.

Among these few studies, Paolillo (1996) found that the use of South Asian languages is rather restricted in CMD among native speakers. He notes, however, that the situation may change due to technological advances and the change from colonial heritage within the home culture. Yoon (2001) suggests that the symbolic power of technology in combination with the commercialization of the mass media lead to an uncritical acceptance of the dominance of English on the Internet. Hawisher and Selfe (2000) challenge the view of the Web as a culturally neutral literacy environment, in which, liberated from geographical, linguistic, cultural and technical constraints, people are able to enjoy the advantages of unimpeded contact and communication. Using Castells' (1996, 1997) and Street's (1995) work, they propose an alternative version of the global village narrative, and note the emergence of a postmodern identity, whose literacy practices are characterized by dynamic hybridity.

Acknowledging that there has been very little attention to culture and communication in relation to computer-mediated communication (CMC), Ess & Sudweeks (2003) show that cultural values and communication preferences have played a significant role in the design and implementation of CMC. Using the example of Arab-speaking countries, they argue:

CMC technologies operate less as the vehicles for intractable homogenization and more as catalysts for significant processes for hybridization, as individuals are able to consciously choose for themselves what elements of "the west" and their own local cultural identities and traditions they wish to hold to. This would suggest that the powers of globalization and new technologies are not absolute; rather, they can be refracted and diffused through the specific values and preferences of diverse individuals and local cultures. (Ess & Sudweeks, 2003, p. 3)

Warschauer, Said & Zohry (2002) examined the interaction of the English and Arabic languages in on-line practices, and found that parallel to the English language, a Romanized version of colloquial Egyptian Arabic is used extensively in informal e-mail messages and on-line chats. This tendency is analyzed as an attempt by users to participate in the global, taking into account their local identity. A similar explanation is offered for the extensive use of Singlish (the highly colloquial dialect of English spoken in Singapore) in literacy practices on the Internet, despite systematic efforts by education policy makers and government officials to promote the use of a standard variety of English (Warschauer, 2002). The phenomenal growth of the Internet has also raised concerns regarding the future of local identities in several Asian countries. Arguing that the globalizing trend of the Internet is tempered by local sensitivities and concerns, Hongladarom (2000) suggests that local cultures are finding ways to cope with the impact of the Internet, and are absorbing it without losing their identity. Hongladarom analyzed a Thai cybercommunity, showing that its participants do not wish to shut themselves off completely from the world, yet they do not want to become "mere blank faces in the globalized world."

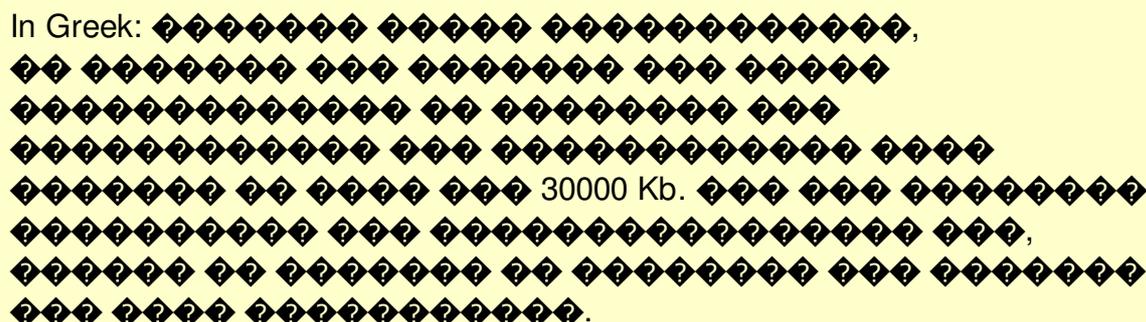
As this brief review indicates, explanations for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic literacy practices on the Internet and social attitudes towards CMC practices often reference a contradiction noted in postindustrial societies between global networks and local identities, leading to the construction of hybrid postmodern identities. The concept of "glocal" has recently been employed in fields such as economics, sociology and architecture as a refinement of the concept of "global" and as a more descriptive term for what is happening in the world today. According to proponents of the concept, global culture should not be treated monolithically as "unified" or as a "socializing institution" into which local cultures integrate, but as a contradictory phenomenon, which entails a dialectical relationship between the global and the local. To describe this process, Robertson (1995) coined the term "glocalization," which he describes as "the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal." The view of glocalization as employed in the present paper assumes a dynamic negotiation between the global and the local, with the local appropriating elements of the global which it finds useful, at the same time employing strategies to retain its identity.

Recent research has also paid little attention to electronic literacy environments as "cultural maps" which represent the culture and the ideology of their origins (Selfe & Selfe, 1994). It is well known, for example, that the choice of the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII), as the character set for the first PCs and communication on the Internet, has created less serious problems for languages whose writing system is based on the Latin alphabet, such as German, French and English, but greater problems for non-Latin based languages, such as Greek and Chinese (Yates, 1996). This long-standing difficulty goes beyond technical constraints and is related to ideological factors having to do with the use of English on the Internet (Koutsogiannis, forthcoming).

An example of a discursive phenomenon which developed in a non-Latin based language is the use of "Greeklsh" among Greeks in CMC contexts. Despite advances to overcome the technical constraints of the ASCII code, and despite the fact that Unicode has been designed to support the Greek writing system, problems persist with the use of the Greek alphabet in on-line communication.

To avoid this problem, Greek Internet users began to make extensive use of the Latin alphabet in their writing of Greek, transliterating Greek with Latin characters and producing what is commonly known as "Greeklish" (Greek + English). Greeklish is characterized by spelling variation in which Greek alphabet characters may be transliterated with more than one Latin equivalent. These transliterations can be of two different types (Androutsopoulos, 1999, 2000). Some are phonetic, attempting to represent the Greek sounds/phonemes with Latin characters (e.g. the writing of 'ι', 'η', 'ει' as 'i'), whereas some other are orthographic, attempting to maintain Greek orthographic conventions and representing Greek characters with visually equivalent Latin characters or, in case of absence, with numbers (e.g. the writing of 'η' as 'h', 'ω' as 'w', but 'δ' as '8' since there is no equivalent Latin character).

Greeklish is quite extensively used in e-mails and chat groups, so much so that it tends to become a script register among young people. Although it is used more in social than professional communication, Greeklish is also found in formal electronic communication (in government departments and universities, for example), where both writing systems —Greek and Greeklish— are often employed to avoid communication problems due to technical constraints (e.g., varied technological platforms, or international communication in Greek). For instance, the following extract from a message from the Network Operation Center of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was sent in both Greek and Greeklish:

In Greek: 

In Greeklish: Agapite kurie Koutsogianni To mege8os tou arxeiou sto opoio apo8ikeuontai ta minumata tou ilektronikou sas taxudromeiou exei perasei to orio twn 30000 Kb. Gia tin kaluteri leitourgia tou grammatokibwtiou sas, prepei na sbisete ta minumata tis 8uridas sas ston e3upiretiti.

(=Dear Mister Koutsogiannis, Your mail box size has exceeded the 30000 Kb limit. For the best operation of your mail box, please delete some messages from the mail server).

Greeklish has become the focus of linguistic and sociolinguistic research (Georgakopoulou, 1997; Androutsopoulos, 1999, 2000; Tseliga, 2002). However, Greeklish is not merely a new variety of writing but a wider socio-cultural and ideological phenomenon which causes heated debates in the media, and divides intellectuals, academics and the public in general. This is understandable considering that writing is not simply a means of recording the spoken word, but is also a cultural symbol, one which, in the case of Greece, has been in use since ancient times.

The issue of language has long been a minefield of confrontations and conflict

in Greek social and political life. As we argue further below, the duration and intensity of this conflict are not due to issues of language as such, but to ideological, social and political questions which were at stake in critical periods of Greek history. Moreover, although in the past the debate was primarily at the level of language planning, in recent years discussions concerning the Greek language have focused on the effects of Greece joining the European Union and on the effects of extensive use of English. Since the end of the last century, like a number of other countries on the (European) periphery, Greece has been in a critical transitional stage regarding full membership in the EU and the more general economic and socio-political changes which globalization entails. This new reality means new challenges and an overall re-examination of what has hitherto been regarded as given. We argue that, just as in critical historical periods in the past, issues of the country's increasingly global orientation have found expression in language debates, the same process can also be traced in the present debate about Greekliness.

The Greek Language and Alphabet as Ideological Signs

The Language Issue

Positioning Greekliness within its wider sociocultural context entails an understanding of age-old confrontations about the Greek language, known as the "Language Issue" - confrontations with broader ideological, social and political content (Christidis, 1999). The history of these confrontations provides the context for our discussion of Greekliness. It is our contention that attitudes and positions concerning Greekliness today have the same origin as positions in past debates concerning the Greek language.

Already in the first century BC, a linguistic "schism" was evident between spoken and written Greek. The written language, used by the intellectuals of the age, ignored the spoken language, regarding it as the result of a process of corruption and thus inferior to its ancestor, and sought to imitate classic Attic language. This continued in the following centuries and during the Byzantine period.

In modern times, conflict over language made its appearance for the first time in the early 19th century, within the context of efforts of intellectuals to discover an appropriate vehicle for the dissemination of ideas of the Enlightenment (Delveroudi, 2000), and to establish a national language for the modern Greek state. It was then that "Katharevousa"¹ was adopted as the official language. The choice was not random, but expressed specific ideological and political tendencies (Fragoudaki, 2001, pp. 120-124) which aimed to prune out foreign influences and to link modern to ancient Greek. This option was also a declaration of Greece's European orientation, given the high regard for the ancient Greek heritage in Europe. This resulted in diglossia (Ferguson, 1972), a linguistic split between Katharevousa, which was closer to Ancient Greek, and which was used in administration and education, and the everyday language spoken by the majority of the population, called "Demotic Greek."

After 1870, when an attempt at broader modernization of the Greek state began (Terzis, 1998, pp. 59-63), diglossia began to fuel acute confrontations

between the supporters of the two differing approaches to the country's official language: supporters of Katharevousa versus those of Demotic Greek. With the passage of time, these two poles came to be the expression not simply of two different approaches, but of two different worlds which upheld entirely different views on education and on the general orientation of the country (Stavridi-Patrikiou, 1999). Although the debate officially ended in 1976, in favor of the spoken language, fierce confrontations over issues of language - conflicts which are in essence about the broader orientation of education and of the country - continue today, to such an extent that some people talk about the creation of "a new Language Issue" (Fragoudaki, 2001).

The Greek Alphabet

It is estimated that the alphabet as a system of writing was first used by the Greeks in the eighth century BC,² and was an adaptation of the Phoenician system of writing (Woodard, 1997, pp. 133-139). In spite of the changes which took place in the meantime in the pronunciation of Greek, the alphabet had already acquired its own authority, since it was in this that ancient Greek thought had been set down, and remained to a significant degree unchanged down to the ninth century AD (Byzantium). Then, together with the introduction of lower-case script, diacritics,³ which had already been used since the second century BC by the grammarians of Alexandria, came to be employed more extensively.

The accent system of Greek was simplified in 1982, retaining only one accent and abolishing the two breathings (see endnote 3). This reform also provoked resistance and has not been adopted universally even today (Hatzisavvidis, 1986). Generally, the introduction of the single-accent system was seen as a transitional stage which could lead to the abandonment of the Greek alphabet, and for this reason was regarded by many as an "anti-national" act.

A symbolically and ideologically charged attitude towards the alphabet is not exclusive to Greeks. It is well known that the choice of writing systems by various communities is often an ideological sign of national orientation and identity,⁴ and that attempts at spelling reforms in various languages have encountered major opposition, deriving from a view that the historicity of the languages is being lost (Karantzola, 1999). Consequently the emergence of Greeklish could not have remained merely that of a new writing variety for electronic environments, but sooner or later would turn into a new ideological and political issue. This is precisely the stance of the Academy of Athens, which deplores the phenomenon and warns of the wide-ranging dangers with which it is fraught.

Moreover, from the brief review presented above, it becomes clear that the question of the language and of its alphabet is not an exclusively linguistic issue. It has provided a fertile field in which serious confrontations of ideas and behaviors have been cultivated in crucial phases of the development of Greek society. These confrontations expressed the ideological conflicts of society as a whole, and have crystallized into two clearly distinguishable trends: one devoted above all to the greatness of the past, and the other open to new explorations.

As Bakhtin (1986) has pointed out, the words and symbols with which we grow

up and which we inherit shape us as specific historical and socio-cultural subjects. On this reasoning, the views which have been argued on the "language issue" during its long history have played and continue to play a determining role in the shaping of modern Greek identity. Thus, discussions about the authenticity of the language have been at a deeper level discussions about the authenticity of Greek identity (Fragoudaki, 2001), on the basis of which the "linguistic mythology of the nation" (Christidis, 1999, p. 156) has been created.

The "language issue" did not merely tie up thinking for a long period of time in sterile metalinguistic quests, but bequeathed to Greek society ready-made patterns of interpretation of linguistic phenomena, a repertoire or "toolkit" of habits and beliefs from which people construct "strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986). These ready-made patterns of interpretation are the key to understanding any new attitude to questions of language from that point on (e.g., simplification of the Greek accent system, threats from the dominance of English, Latinization of the Greek alphabet, etc.)

Description of the Study

In January 2001, the Academy of Athens, a prestigious Greek social body known for its conservative orientation, issued a statement concerning the rise of Greekliness and the possible substitution of the Greek by the Latin alphabet, as a result of increased use of Greekliness on the Internet. This statement, which was signed by 40 distinguished members of the Academy of Athens, was released to the press and gave rise to a heated debate in the media. TV time was devoted to discussions between those supporting and those against the views expressed in the Academy's text. Extensive coverage of the topic appeared in the press for a period of two months.

The corpus used in this study consists of 58 newspaper texts which appeared between January and March 2001 in the Greek press, and which were all written as a reaction to the Academy's text on Greekliness. It makes available a condensed expression of a variety of views, put forward in the heat of the moment in a very short period. In order to ensure that the corpus is representative of the different types of texts which appeared in the Greek press, we used the archive of the Greek Language Center (GLC), a research institute of the National Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, which is located in Thessaloniki. The GLC uses a press clipping service which searches in the Greek daily and Sunday press nationwide on a daily basis, and locates all publications concerning the Greek language.

The texts in the corpus are drawn from 23 different newspapers. 12 texts come from morning newspapers (*Avgi*, *Vima*, *Kathimerini*, *Makedonia*, *Ellinikos Vorras*), 25 from evening papers (*Vradini*, *Eleftheri Ora*, *Eleftheros*, *Eleftherotipia*, *Estia*, *Thessaloniki*, *Nea*), two from the daily financial press (*Express*, *Naftemporiki*), 14 from Sunday papers (*Apogevmatini tis Kiriakis*, *Avgi tis Kiriakis*, *Ethnos tis Kiriakis*, *Prin*, *To Paron*, *Tipos tis Kiriakis*), one from a weekly newspaper (*Nei Anthropi*) and two from provincial papers (*Eleftheria Larissas*, *Tipos Chalkidikis*). These texts cover a variety of newspaper genres such as articles, editorials, interviews, readers' letters, statements by professional organizations, and vary in length. They were written by linguists,

philologists, journalists, professors from various fields, computer experts, as well as a few lay people. It should be noted at this point that in this debate, all newspapers - regardless of their political alignment - present only the views of particular members of society whose voice is commonly considered legitimate in social issues involving language and culture (regardless of whether they are computer literate or not, which in this case would make a difference).

This study is a Critical Discourse Analysis of views of Greeklish in the texts. Adopting a critical discourse-analytic perspective from Fairclough (1992, 2003), the study views discourse both as action, a form of social practice, and as a social construction of reality, a way of representing social practice. Viewing discourse as interaction relates discourse to other social practices, thus establishing a relationship between the discursive event and the social practice. In addition, it promotes an understanding of discourse as always social and cultural, thus excluding a view of language as a purely individual activity. Viewing discourse also as constructing social reality allows an understanding of discourse as representing forms of knowledge and aspects of social reality. The analysis of the corpus in this study subsumes both uses of the term in an attempt to bring them together. It has as a starting-point the analysis of "discourses" defined here as the language used in representing social practice from a particular point of view. This analysis reveals the various heterogeneous and conflicting representations of Greeklish online.

In the analysis of the newspaper texts, three main trends can be identified. In agreement with the view adopted by the Academy of Athens, the first trend considers Greeklish to be a serious threat to the Greek language. The second trend considers the issue one of negligible significance, a transitory phenomenon which will disappear as technology advances. The third trend keeps its distance from the views developed in the original text, yet it appears to take into account its concerns. It deals primarily with issues such as globalization and the role of English, the future of the so-called "weaker" languages, and communication on the Internet. In the next section, we analyze each of these trends separately, in order to examine the various elements of their stances and attitudes. At the same time, we investigate the degree to which these views reflect deeper upheavals and aspirations which are the result of new situations and quests world-wide. We are also concerned with the following questions: To what extent do attitudes toward Greeklish highlight the phenomenon of "glocalness," which recent literature has pinpointed as predominant in the age of globalization? To what extent is this phenomenon truly recent? What are its main features in the case of Greeklish?

Analysis

First Trend: A Retrospective View

This seems a rather strong and solid view which is developed in 38 of the total of 58 texts in the corpus. It is "retrospective" in the sense that it is shaped by national, religious and cultural narratives (Bernstein, 1996) which are recontextualized to ensure the stability of the past into the future. What primarily characterizes this trend is the use of the glorious past as a reference point to provide answers for the future.

The texts following this trend come from 15 different, mainly conservative, newspapers, clearly support the Academy's view, and provide further argumentation in its favor. They praise the Academy for the specific initiative which they often view as an act of resistance to the threat of globalization. The Academy is represented as the "guardian of our language" (*Vradini* 18.1⁵). Two metaphorical discourses hold a prominent position in this trend. The first is a metaphorical discourse of resistance whose traces are frequently found in formulations such as "we should extol the vigorous resistance of the Supreme Intellectual Institution of our country" (*Vradini* 18.1), "forty Academics express their intention to resist" (*Kathimerini* 7.1), "angry reaction" (*Tipos Chalkidikis* 7.1), "to fend off the threat and ward off the dangers" (*Vradini* 15.1), "immediate and unyielding reaction and resistance to the unholy plans to replace the Greek alphabet with the Latin" (*Ellinikos Vorras* 14.1).

This discourse of resistance is embedded within a metaphorical discourse of military attack. Greeklsh is construed in these texts as a threat against the Greek language which needs to be protected from "foreign" invasion: "standing guard over the Greek language," "we are called upon to defend it with vigor" (*Ellinikos Vorras* 21.1), "they [Academics] draw attention to the major danger of a very heavy blow" (*Estia* 31.1), "others too will wake up to this national danger" (*Vradini* 18.1), "in the battle for Greek" (*Tipos tis Kiriakis* 6.1), "the dangers which our language is facing today" (*Eleftheri Ora* 23.3). The Academy's statement was primarily about the danger of substituting the Latin for the Greek alphabet. However, in texts of this trend, discussion about the Greek alphabet soon moves on to discussion about defending the Greek language and consequently Greek culture and the country. As stated in one of the articles: "throwing off the national system of writing is a betrayal of the national ethos" (*Tipos tis Kiriakis* 6.1):

The Academy of Athens ... sounds the warning bell and calls upon the people in a reveille sounded against this unholy and senseless movement ... [The language] is the breakwater for every foreign influence and propaganda. "If you want a people to lose its national consciousness, make it lose its language," Lenin used to say. The nation is living through critical times. What is needed is watchfulness, alertness, planning, A

REPLY.

We have nothing "save Liberty and Language." Solomos. Let us do it !!! (Nea 16.1g)
(emphasis and bold original)

Formulations such as "[The language] is the breakwater for every foreign influence and propaganda," "[the Academy] sounds the warning bell and calls upon the people in a reveille," "The nation is living through critical times," "What is needed is watchfulness, alertness, planning," together with the reference to Lenin and to the national poet Dionysios Solomos strongly evoke a national discourse. The language needs to be defended in the same way that a country needs to be defended from an external threat. According to this view, Greeklsh constitutes a threat to the language and to the country. We must protect the Greek language, the argument goes, from any "external" invasion which threatens it. This metaphorical discourse of national threat is also found in the titles of articles, as lexical items such as "danger signal," "attack," "guard" and "protection" indicate: "Warning signal from 40 Academics" (*Kathimerini* 7.1), "The attack upon our language" (*Estia* 7.3), "For the protection of the Greek Language" (*Eleftheri Ora* 23.3).

Other prominent discourses in this trend which views Greeklsh as a threat are historical discourses. In many newspaper texts, the theme of ancient Greek

history is very prominent: "Our language ... has for 3,000 years enlightened the whole world" (*Apogevmatini tis Kiriakis 14.1g*), "Our language, the most ancient, but always contemporary and alive, this language may not suffer degradation by the abolition [of the alphabet] at our own hands" (*Ellinikos Vorras 21.1*). The ethnocentric view developed here is based upon the importance of Ancient Greek culture. "The Greek language has deep historical roots which it has maintained throughout its age-old history and development, and it is neither conceivable nor permissible for us to adulterate our pronunciation by the introduction of Latin characters. ... This language of ours has preserved our culture and history in the multifarious vicissitudes of the nation, and, moreover, under harsh Ottoman tyranny" (*Vradini 18.1*).

Within the ethnocentric historical discourse, a number of comparisons are made which are important for their ideological underpinnings. For instance, in an implied comparison with other languages, the Greek language is praised for its aesthetics: "The Greek alphabet takes precedence over the Latin because it comes from the Phoenician and the Phoenicians were among the first civilized peoples upon earth. Consequently, there is also chronological precedence" (*Eleftheros 15.1*). Moreover, the Latin alphabet was not only the second to appear, but is also a "sub-product" of the Greek alphabet: "Now, in the very nature of things we are obliged also to use the Latin alphabet, which is, of course - as everybody knows - a sub-product of the Greek alphabet; and this too is Greek, it is the Chalcidian alphabet of Aeolian Cyme" (*Apogevmatini tis Kiriakis 14.1g*). Interestingly, the importance of the Latin alphabet is reduced and represented as a "sub-product." Moreover, the alphabet in general is commodified since it is represented as a product to be exchanged.

Embedded in the historical discourses is a religious discourse which connects the Greek Orthodox tradition with Greek history: "The Greek communities with a holy zeal maintained Greek schools to preserve our language, with the Church as protagonist, under the aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate" (*Eleftherotipia 22.1*). The Church is construed as the "protagonist," the main institution which at difficult times in Greek history served as a connecting link of Hellenism. The diachronic element is often stressed, and the connection between the ancient Greek spirit and Christian tradition is represented as strong: "From the works of Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Socrates, Thucydides and the other classical authors, but also from texts of the Fathers of our Christian religion, the Gospels, the Byzantine hymnographers and of all the other written texts of our Church, the Greek language took on a universal character, of diachronic importance" (*Ellinikos Vorras 21.1*). Moreover, the role of the Greek language - the language in which most books of the New Testament were written - in the spread of Christianity is stressed: "The Greek language was the world of the Gospel and the means of preserving Christian ideas" (*Vradini 18.1*). The use of Greekliness constitutes an "unholy" (*Ellinikos Vorras 14.1*), "impious and senseless attempt" (*Tipos Chalkidikis 7.1, Nea 16.1g*) to replace the Greek alphabet, whereas the Academy's efforts are represented as aiming at "the salvation" (*Kathimerini 12.1*) of the Greek alphabet to which we should all contribute "as the share of us humble servants" (*Nei Anthropi 12.1*). Agreement with the Academy's statement is expressed in some texts through specific linguistic choices, specifically through use of Katharevousa expressions, not typical of the Modern Greek variety (*Kathimerini 12.1, Nei Anthropi 12.1, Tipos tis Kiriakis 6-7.1, Kathimerini 17.1, Estia 7.3, Estia 31.1*).

New technologies are represented as threatening the extinction of the Greek alphabet and consequently of the Greek language: "Our language ... is being displaced by the new technology," "Computers have now forced us in our everyday life to use the Latin alphabet" (*Apogevmatini tis Kiriakis 14.1g*). A distinguished member of the Academy of Letters, when asked by a journalist: "Is what you are saying above all that the main danger comes from computers?" replied: "Yes. I'm not going into these mechanical means, I'm going into the issue itself, which is precisely what is being cultivated. And what is being cultivated is not only the replacement of the alphabet, but even of our spelling" (*Apogevmatini tis Kiriakis 14.1b*). In an interview with another member of the Academy we read: "The Latin alphabet is used by addressees who have computers and receive Greek texts written in the Latin alphabet" (*Apogevmatini tis Kiriakis 14.1e*).

Of particular interest are conflicting representations of globalization in this trend. In the Academy's text and in the newspaper texts which support the Academy's view, globalization is construed negatively in the case of Greekliness and the spread of new technologies. On the other hand, globalization is construed somewhat positively in the case of ancient Greek as the global language of its time: "The universality of the Greek language is demonstrated by the conception, the originality, the profundity and the wealth of ideas and by its globalization through Alexander the Great" (*Vradini 18.1*), "The Greek language has been for thousands of years the instrument of the intellectual cultivation and development of the whole of humanity" (*Ellinikos Vorras 21.1*). The role of the Greek language in the foundation of important fields of study such as philosophy and mathematics is praised, and so is its contribution to world literature: "Greek literature - ancient and modern - is the richest and most noteworthy literature of humanity, an inexhaustible fount of lofty teachings and rare aesthetic pleasure. At its very first historical steps it produced the two immortal Epics the Iliad and the Odyssey" (*Ellinikos Vorras 21.1*). In fact, the Greek language is claimed to be "source and mother of the other languages" (*Nea 16.1g*). It is of considerable interest that whereas the importance of the Greek language at a global level is praised, and Greek culture is construed as the main element of global culture, the current globalization phase is construed negatively as a threat to the Greek language.

Second Trend: A Prospective View

Texts in this trend position themselves against the Academy's statement and attack its arguments that Greekliness as a threat to the Greek language. They generally adopt a positive stance towards technology, as opposed to texts of the retrospective view. They minimize the importance of arguments presented in the Academy's statement by criticizing the rhetoric of the Academy's text, the language features selected, the exaggeration embedded in the arguments and the technophobia which seems to penetrate the text. Interestingly, there is frequent reproduction of the arguments of the first trend. This reproduction, however, serves as a starting point in the process of refuting these arguments as wrong or lacking in importance. The Academy's text is called a "panic-stricken" statement and "a monument of language-defensive frenzy" (*Vima 21.1*).

It is often suggested in the texts in this trend that the Academy's text involves traditional rhetoric concerning the Greek language, which represents it as ancient, as having "enriched Latin and all main European languages" and

"transmitted culture all over the world". This rhetoric, also supported by historical and religious discourses as mentioned in the previous section, is not new. It views Greeklsh as a threat and has been present in other discussions concerning the Greek language which have taken place in the past (for instance, discussions concerning Demotic and Katharevousa). As pointed out in one of the texts: "[The Academy text] contains yet another verbose glorification of the Greek alphabet, like that used to defend the circumflex both in the 19th century and some 25 years ago" (*Nea 20.1*). The language used in the Academy's text is also a target of criticism. The use of Katharevousa expressions and vocabulary not used today is mentioned in a number of different texts in this trend: "Moreover, [the Academy's text] employs a spelling of other times (not the official spelling taught in schools today) and a vocabulary which arbitrarily lapses into Katharevousa" (*Nea 20.1*).

At this point, it is worth drawing attention to some differences concerning the language features selected in the texts of the first two trends. Whereas texts in the first trend to a great extent draw upon vocabulary which has its origins in Katharevousa, texts in the second trend are characterized by a tendency towards conversationalization and informalization of discourse (Fairclough 1992), as the following formulations indicate: "I'll explain that right away", "Nobody has explained to us that somebody can easily be born, live, die, be happy, prosper, and be unlucky without questions and answers. No. We are the country of problems" (*Thessaloniki 15.1*), "let's say this once and for all" (*Vima 28.1b*), "I hope the ladies and gentlemen of the Academy will forgive me, but I think..." (*Nea 20.1*).

Moreover, it is characteristic of texts in the first trend to refer to 'κωμικό' [i kombjúter] and 'ίντερνετ' [to ínternet], the English words for computer and the Internet written with characters of the Greek alphabet. On the contrary, it is quite common in texts of the second trend to find the equivalent Greek words 'ηλεκτρονικός υπολογιστής' [ilektronicí ipolójistés], 'λογισμικό' [to lojizmikó ton ilektronikón ipolójistón], 'διακίτιο' [to dia?iktio], 'ηλεκτρονικό ταχυδρομίο' [ilektronikó taçi?romío], 'ικονικός χώρος' [ikonikús ?alámus sinomilión], which are the Greek words used for computers, computer software, the Internet, e-mail and chat rooms, respectively. Texts in the first trend construe technology as something strange to them. By referring to the computer and the Internet by their foreign names, instead of the Greek equivalents, these texts introduce distance between themselves and the new technologies. Conversely, adoption of the Greek equivalent terms, so frequent in texts of the second trend, contributes to the creation of closeness and an increased understanding of technology.

Another point of criticism of the original text refers to the use of exaggeration. The argument which is developed in a number of texts in the second trend is that the Academy's text deals with a non-existent problem: "Do we, perhaps, like worrying? Do we, perhaps, feel better when we are in danger?" (*Vima 28.1a*), "the concern is unjustified" (*Kathimerini 1.2*), "the Academy of Athens has invested the issue with its authority and elevated it into a serious matter which is in essence non-existent" (*Vima 28.1b*), "The contest with supposed dark forces which consciously and in an organized fashion are contriving the

introduction of the Latin alphabet is, in the circumstances of today, exaggerated and unjustified" (*Vima 28.1b*).

Moreover, it is repeatedly stressed that the Academy's text is imbued with a kind of technophobia: "some kind of phobia has afflicted these distinguished intellectuals" (*Kathimerini 1.2*), "the careful reader can detect certain misunderstandings or imperfect knowledge of the actual facts - even a veil of technophobia" (*Kathimerini 14.1*). It is suggested that this technophobia is the result of a kind of misunderstanding or inadequate knowledge of technological advances. It is also pointed out that the Academy's text came late, when the problem with Greek fonts no longer existed: "Instead of proposing solutions, they denounce... computers and world-wide communication, instead of helping to deal with a technical problem" (*Nea 20.1*).

Two types of discourses are mainly employed in this trend. The first is an instrumental technical discourse which identifies the source of the problem: "The reason why this form of Greek is widely used has to do with computer software, which initially did not make it possible to use the Greek alphabet" (*Makedonia 14.1*) and offers solutions: "Today, in all the software commonly in use on the Internet you can use the complete alphabet, in accordance with ISO-8889-7 standards. Also, very soon, when the international Unicode standard is in general use, the Greek alphabet (and the polytonic system) will be inherently supported - this is of tremendous importance - by all the software produced" (*Kathimerini 14.1*).

Moreover, unlike the texts in the first trend, which approach the global from the point of view of the glorious (global) past which provides (or should provide) the basis for the local today, the texts in this trend develop a view of glocalization which relates primarily to the localization of technology. The issue of localization of the software interface is predominant in these texts. As is pointed out in one of the texts: "This is a purely technical problem. In order to communicate in Greek on the Internet, our interlocutor's computer must have uploaded the appropriate software, which is of Greek manufacture ... Even in Greece, compatibility is lacking between the systems of the different companies" (*Elefteria Larissas 18.1*). It is interesting to note that this technical discourse employs a view of technology as value-neutral and ideology-free. The underlying assumption is that technology is here to provide solutions to problems like this.

Secondly, there are traces of sociolinguistic discourses in the second trend. A descriptive sociolinguistic discourse identifies elements of what is referred to as a "technological idiolect": "E.g., 'q' is written not with 'th' but with '8'. 'X' not with 'x' but with '3', and so on.... Even English on the Internet has undergone similar syntactical and grammatical changes. E.g., the prepositions 'to' and 'for' are rendered by the arithmetical symbols '2' and '4'. The purpose of these alterations is to ensure speed." (*Vima 28.1a*). On another occasion, Greeklish is defined as a kind of "glossary": "This is no more than one of the glossaries which the young use among themselves ... And if young people choose to communicate among themselves in Greeklish, this does not mean, as many fear, that this hybrid script is tending to be adopted as an alternative script and thus to threaten Greek script" (*Nea 16.1f*). In the following extract, Greeklish is a "jargon" which distinguishes insiders and outsiders: "it operates as a jargon in which the initiated are differentiated from the uninitiated who enter the Internet." (*Vima 28.1a*). Elements of this new "language variety" are described:

"Electronic script is halfway between written and oral conversation. Consequently, time is compressed" (*Vima 28.1a*), "Greeklish does not have rules... It is a spontaneous script and everybody formulates it in his own way... For example, the Greek letter 'beta': some write it as 'b' and others as 'v'" (*Makedonia 13.1*).

Third Trend: A Resistive View

Texts in this trend differentiate themselves from the Academy's text, yet they take the opportunity to raise a number of critical issues concerning the challenges the Greek language faces today within the context of global change. Although they share some views with texts in the second trend, their main difference lies in the fact that they do not merely attempt an explanation of Greeklish. They also raise issues such as the pressure of the dominant English language on the Internet on the so-called "small languages" and the role of English on the Internet, and they generally develop a resistive view of the effects of globalization. The catalytic changes brought about by globalization, the changing European dynamic and the advances in information and communication technologies are seen to have led to a restructuring of social identities and to concerns about the role the "weaker" languages are expected to play in the future. Proposals are also put forward concerning initiatives to be taken in the new situation which has emerged.

As with texts in the first trend, here too there is a metaphorical discourse of resistance, which is, however, differently realized. Specifically, this discourse of resistance is not based on a retrospective discourse which has its origins in the greatness of history, nor in ethnocentric views concerning the importance of the Greek language. Moreover, it is not inspired by "a fear of every change, every discovery ... and a nostalgia for the past" (*Nea 3.3*) which is always considered to be better than the present and the future. On the contrary, the discourse of resistance in this trend originates from an interest in the "weaker" languages, an interest in preserving "small" languages such as Greek, and the need to struggle for linguistic equality, since "[j]ust as technology does not really give equal opportunities, so the hybrid Greeklish is imposed on the middle strata - by force or like Circe - putting the educationally privileged to flight towards foreign languages" (*Nea 16.1a*).

Moreover, as is stated in one of the texts: "resistance is legitimated by a principle similar to that which is supported in the natural environment. A need to preserve bio-diversity. Just as for balance in nature, the variety of biological species must be maintained, so in culture, differences need to be maintained by positive measures" (*Vima 28.1a*). According to this view, it is a matter of "linguistic ecology": in the same way that we preserve the various living species around us, we should also protect languages from extinction. The same text also comments on the Academy's statement, notes its contradictory arguments and suggests that any distinction between more important and less important languages leads towards homogenization and the dominance of English, which the Academy strongly opposes: "The Greek language, it is stated in the text 'has enriched not only Latin, but the principle European languages.'" It fails to mention, however, that the Greek language has also been enriched by other languages... Anyway, what is this argument suggesting? That the small languages which have not enriched others are worth less protection?" (*Vima 28.1a*).

Resistance in the texts in this trend is motivated by the need to promote linguistic diversity through a "multilingual, heteroglossic and polyphonic ethos" (cf. Dendrinos, 2001). Although the use of the Latin alphabet in electronic communication is not a real threat since "nobody has ever suggested the adoption of the Latin alphabet" (*Nea 16.1e, Nea 16.1f*), it is acknowledged that "This does not mean that the absolute dominance of English and, as a consequence, of the Latin alphabet should not be faced up to. Many countries promote specific measures for the presence of their languages in cyberspace" (*Nea 16.1d*). Resistance becomes a result of pressure that the weaker languages undergo today, primarily as "a result of globalization" (*Prin 14.1*): "in recent years, the Greek language has undergone 'pressures' at a multiplicity of levels, both in the spoken and the written word" (*Avgi 21.1*). Most importantly, the discourse of resistance which is proclaimed here is not a retrospective but a prospective one, which looks into the future using the past as a base, and which attempts to "create appropriate attitudes concerning current change" (Bernstein, 1996, p.77). As stated in one text:

If, then, there is this strong trend towards English-speaking, and, even more so, towards techno-English which will steam-roller national languages, and in fact there is, there is just as much an equally strong trend on the part of cultures and languages not to submit, to resist, to preserve themselves, not as romantic nostalgia, but an active value towards their present and their future. (Avgi tis Kiriakis 14.1)

There is a strong urge to resist the homogeneity brought about by globalization and its promoted monolingual, monoglossic and uniphonic ethos. After all, it is argued, "Culture... is the result of relations. Communication relations, but also conflict relations in which opposing tendencies, opposed values, different ways of life, social relations and interests which do not come out of the mold of a uniformity dictated from above are expressed" (*Avgi tis Kiriakis 14.1*). We cannot, therefore, remain "passive witnesses of a world cultural re-ordering which tends to strike a blow especially at Greek, mainly because of the particularity, the rarity, but also the prestige of its alphabet" (*Nea 16.1a*). However, this resistance cannot be restricted to the Greek language since "if, then, our language is in danger, are not all the languages of the world in danger, and with them local cultures, from the whirlwind of globalization and cultural homogenization?" (*Elefteria Larissas 18.1*).

At a surface level, it might seem that the texts in this trend adopt a rather negative stance toward globalization and its avant-garde instrument, the Internet. Formulations such as "steam-rolling" and "setting aside history, culture" evoke a pessimistic discourse of globalization and express a negative stance towards it: "The steam-rolling brought by globalization, a levelling which sets aside history, culture, traditions, manners and customs, the identity, that is, of each state, disturbs many Greek citizens as to the 'day after' of our country" (*Paron 21.1*). Several texts in this trend note the concern that the Greek language might become a victim of globalization. It is even suggested that "national languages, particularly those of small nations, like the Greek nation, are condemned to deterioration and final annihilation in the melting-pot of globalization" (*Avgi tis Kiriakis 14.1*). On the other hand, an optimistic discourse of globalization is evoked through formulations which recognize existing linguistic imperialism, but which also argue that "other ages have experienced similar forms of linguistic imperialism which have wiped out linguistic particularities within the sphere of their influence. And Greek, like Latin, was once in the position now occupied by English. Printing and nation-states annihilated hundreds of dialects, and a good deal more effectively than

the Internet" (*Vima* 28.1a). Moving away from the deterministic position of the first trend, which does not offer any solutions, "The only solution which is suggested seems to be 'no to globalization,' 'no to technology,' as though the end of the language is deterministically taken for granted" (*Elefteria Larissas* 18.1) and from the restricted view of the second trend, which approaches English as a technical problem, the texts in the third trend place Greeklsh within its socio-historical context, attempt an analysis of its ideological underpinnings and provide suggestions for the future by looking into possibilities offered by the electronic communications media.

Most importantly, texts in this trend do not revert to grand narratives of the past, but turn to history in order to develop "a social, historical understanding of current reality" (*Nea* 16.1d). In this context, languages are viewed as "open communications systems" and language users as active social agents who "often borrow, appropriate, assess and re-assess, or even reject various linguistic sources" (*Avgi* 21.1), and new technologies and the Internet are seen as "working tools" ("????????????????????????????????") (*Nea* 16.1e).

Against the "ideology of linguistic (and more general) conservatism which has marked Greek history" (*Nea* 16.1d) and the "ahistorical, ethnocentric, conservative, and, in the end, misleading footing on which the issue is placed" (*Nea* 16.1f) in texts in the first trend, skepticism is expressed as to the "replacement of the Greek alphabet by the Latin and the production of this *sui generis* linguistic idiom" (*Avgi* 21.1) of Greeklsh and its ideology. "The preservation of particularity - including national particularity" (*Nea* 16.1d) is considered important. However, the position here is not one against globalization "but against Americanization and their value of money and consumption. Against the culture of Macdonald's French fries and of Coca Cola" (*Elefteria Larissas* 18.1). Technology is not here to destroy us (*Nea* 16.1f). On the contrary, "The use of the Latin alphabet to write Greek in communication on the Internet is not only not a bad thing, but, rather, a good one, since even when we cannot write in Greek, because of technical difficulties, we find a way of doing it. We insist by every means upon our language" (*Elefteria Larissas* 18.1). Turning the Academy's argument the other way round, a text argues: "we know, however, from history that the only way of surviving for a culture at such critical periods is creative assimilation of the new challenges to its benefit, and not its obstinate isolation on the pretext of non-existent dangers" (*Nea* 16.1e). It is, therefore, important to explore how "technology can be used as a tool for the dissemination and spread of our language to the ends of the earth" (*Elefteria Larissas* 18.1).

In fact, texts in this trend are the only ones which consider this "creative assimilation of new challenges" and move a step forward to propose specific initiatives that must be taken in this direction. Some of the suggestions are that "the whole of ancient literature, for example, should be digitized and made available in cyberspace, so that anyone can have direct access to any text," "the world-wide electronic library should be supplemented with Greek texts of all periods" (*Nea* 3.3), "[the Academy] should put the whole of Greek poetry, the whole of ancient Greek literature on a site on the Internet" (*Elefteria Larissas* 18.1). Other suggestions concern the financing of programs which will teach the Greek language through the Internet, and the financial support of a program which will provide for the software, necessary for communicating in Greek, free of charge.

Conclusions

From the above analysis it can be seen that attitudes towards the use of Greeklish are deeply embedded in the Greek sociocultural context where, from its beginning as a nation state in the 19th century, questions about the official language and the graphic system have been central to long and heated social and political debates. Responses to Greeklish are linked to a view of the Greek graphemic system as inseparable from the Greek language and intertwined with Greek national identity. Among the three main trends which have been identified, the *retrospective* view is numerically the strongest. Its arguments do not differ substantially from those used in the past in support of Katharevousa and, to a large degree, in support of other meta-linguistic views after 1980. Its roots deep in the past make it a clear-cut point of view, to which a solid shape has already been given. Analysis of the corpus suggests that it serves as a powerful pole which attracts supporters from the full range of Greek society: intellectuals, university teachers, journalists, those engaged in politics, and lay people. It views the issue of Greeklish as one of exceptional importance, as the "thin end of the wedge" for further dangers to the Greek language and the Greek identity, which are under direct threat. The elegiac tone is marked, as is the note of protest and indignation which imbues most of the texts. References to history are frequent, not only to bring out the magnitude of the "good" which is at risk, but also to demonstrate the resilience of the Greek alphabet, which, in spite of the dangers, has survived. To the urgent question of the re-orientation of the country's role in this critical period the answers are ready to hand - answers drawn from the well-stocked quiver of the past (Swidler, 1986).

The *prospective* view minimizes the importance and extent of the issue by approaching it either in terms of technology (it is a technical weakness which will be overcome), or in terms of sociolinguistic factors (a new variety of script). This stance may also be seen as a reflex reaction to the Academy of Athens itself, an institution tinged with specific conservative linguistic and political options in the past. This is the second important viewpoint in quantitative terms. There can be no doubt that it expresses part of the ideas which were expressed by Demoticism in the past, particularly that part which had to do with the rebuttal of retrospective arguments. Moreover, supporters of this view - particularly the older generations - take care to point out, directly or indirectly, the close link with this tradition (democratic principles, linguistic options). This is an outward-looking trend, prospective and future oriented, which, in no circumstances, however, denies the importance of the Greek alphabet. In light of the observations in the literature reviewed earlier, it is perhaps the most authentic trend of glocalness.

The *resistive* view dissociates itself from the observations of the Academy, but takes the opportunity to raise issues which touch on the crucial problems which Greek is facing in this critical transitional period. Views held by the second trend are frequently found in its argumentation. The difference is that the third view does not confine itself to a description of Greeklish. Subjects debated include pressure on "small languages" because of the dominance of English on the Internet, and in some cases proposals for options, plans, the undertaking of initiatives in the new world situation are put forward. This is a combative viewpoint which does not ignore particularity, but regards it as a starting-point for an outward-looking stance. In place of an American-dominated globalization, texts in this trend propose a more critical, multicultural

and multilingual world. We would say that this view is related to that part of the Demotic movement which was associated with innovative options in educational matters.

The two differing approaches, which came into intense conflict over the country's political orientation in the past, again with language issues as the point of departure, are condensed in these three viewpoints. The extent to which arguments of the first view, and in part those of the second, are a re-formulation of similar arguments from the past is particularly striking. The phenomenon of Greeklish seems to serve, like similar phenomena in the past, as a stimulus for highlighting sharp differences over the country's orientation and the shaping of modern Greek identity at a critical moment.

However, despite the disagreements which are recorded, no one in these texts has, for example, raised any question about the introduction of the Latin alphabet to write Greek routinely. It is interesting that sporadic voices raised in the past to urge the adoption of the Latin or the phonetic alphabet in the writing of Greek have not found a single echo in this debate. In this respect, there is a closing of ranks despite disagreements as to the absolute acceptance of the use of the Greek alphabet both in conventional and in electronic environments of literacy practices. Both in this example and in the discussions as a whole, the dimension of localness is apparent. However, the content of localness is not unified; it differs significantly in the three views.

Matters seem to be equally complex in the case of globalness. In the retrospective trend, it can be observed that the "international" is passed over in total silence, while there is absolute dedication to the "local" - as this approach apprehends it. Nevertheless, more research is needed to discover to what degree this viewpoint is a form of self-absorption and denial of the international, as it would seem from many of the texts in the present analysis, or a trend which looks for the international only in the specific terms of the local. But in the case of the third view also, there could be no question of speaking of a simple trend towards globalness, but rather of a trend toward a re-appraisal of its content.

One conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing analysis is that the pattern of glocalness which, according to recent literature, characterizes many practices of contemporary societies - particularly in relation to CMD practices - seems a good deal more complex than it is usually represented. Another conclusion is that the tug-of-war between local and global is not just a contemporary but an ongoing phenomenon which has *always* been related to the political and ideological orientations of various countries, and which manifests itself most forcibly in critical periods of transition. At the same time, we do not underestimate the changes that are taking place today, or their effects on countries, cultures and social groups. A historically contextualized, diachronic approach may make a significant contribution toward a more comprehensive, deeper understanding of the significance of the changes of our age and of CMC practices in the context of a multilingual Internet.⁶

Footnotes

1. Three proposals were suggested in that period (Christidis, 1999, pp. 37-38): the adoption of

Ancient Greek, as the only form of "pure" and "uncorrupted" Greek; the adoption of Demotic, the spoken language, as first-born daughter of Ancient Greek (Skopetea, 1988, p. 103); and the adoption of Katharevousa, a midway solution, which, though recognizing the importance of the spoken language, held that it had undergone "corruption" and aimed at "purifying" and "correcting" it.

2. The oldest system of writing used for Greek, the syllabic Linear B script, had already been abandoned by the twelfth century BC.

3. These included mainly three accents (which indicated the raising and lowering of the voice) and two breathings (which showed the presence or absence of the aspirate [h]). They were used in order to show changes in pronunciation, and were addressed mainly to fellow grammarians rather than to the general public. Their use in the writing of Greek was widely adopted in Western Europe after the invention of printing (Petrounias, 1984, p. 569).

4. The examples of Romania, Albania, Turkey, and the countries which resulted from the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia are typical.

5. The numbers which follow the name of the newspaper indicate the date of publication of each text. Since all texts were published in 2001, the year has been omitted. In cases where there is more than one text in the same newspaper and the same day, the letters a, b, c, etc. are used to identify each text.

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