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ACHILLES TZARTZANOS AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE GREEK LANGUAGE QUESTION

Although in the twenties the Greek language question had already shifted from the streets to the university halls, Greek society was still dealing with the never ending language story. Achilles Tzartzanos, a significant philologist and well-known educator, has remained somewhat left out in the history of the Greek language dispute. This paper describes the solitary struggle in which he was caught while trying to push through his own vision of the Greek language.

Key words: Achilles Tzartzanos; Greek language question; *dimotiki*; *katharevousa*

Tzartzanos and his time

In Greece, the 1930's was culturally considered a period of educational demoticism. It was a movement that aimed to apply the elements of cultivated demotic (further in text as *dimotiki*), a popular variant of the Greek language, to education and to do it in a (if possible) realistic and, above all, conciliatory way.¹

Achilles Tzartzanos was actively involved in the field of philology and linguistics at just this time when Greek intellectual society was not divided solely into adherents of the conservative *katharevousa* and followers of the opposing *dimotiki*. The period was actually finely divided with differences of opinion even within groups of supporters of the one or the other language variant. Fortunately, the dispute was no longer taking place in the crowds on the streets, but rather in university halls. Tzartzanos, as a teacher, also became involved in the project promoting a restrained establishment of an

¹ Φραγκουδάκη (2001: pp. 45f.).

appropriate form of Greek beyond the school curriculum. Despite his refined views on the whole (in his eyes) unnecessarily escalated controversy, he has remained partially misunderstood in the literature dealing with the Greek language question or even completely neglected by some scholars.

Work on the Modern Greek syntax

While the efforts to publish a Modern Greek grammar used to be quite common,² Tzartanos was a pioneer in the domain of Greek syntax. The first edition of his most crucial book – the Modern Greek Syntax – was published in 1946.³ Thanks to his simple writing style, the book gained great popularity among many readers. Yet, some scholars perceived his Syntax with ambiguity. This was most probably caused by the fact that Tzartanos, a scholar considered to be a proponent of *katharevousa*, wrote the syntax of *dimotiki*. What also largely contributed to this assumption was his dedication of the book to his teacher, Georgios Chatzidakis, the first professor of linguistics at the University of Athens, for whom he had open admiration, especially at the beginning of his career. Although Chatzidakis was known for his highly controversial opinions on the language question; his pride in Classical Greek caused him to be considered one of the supporters of *katharevousa*, something which cannot be said about Tzartanos.⁴

Although Tzartanos has remained well-known in the history of Greek linguistics thanks mainly to his Syntax, he also expressed his opinions about the language question, the topic of this paper, in two articles from the thirties, *To γλωσσικό μας πρόβλημα* (Our language question) and *Δημοτική και νεοδημοτική* (Demotic and new demotic).⁵ These two texts can be considered his own manifestos of the new demoticism, which to him represented the only possible solution to the language question.⁶

² Taking no account to the handbooks of Korais and Psycharis, among the first grammars written purely in Greek and written by Greeks, describing scientifically Greek grammar may be mentioned, for example: Φιλήντας (1907–1910), Βλαστός (1914), or Βουτσερίδης (1932).

³ Τζάρτζανος (1946). More popular is the second edition from the year 1963, which was released in Athens, published by Οργανισμός εκδόσεως σχολικών βιβλίων and it was reprinted in 1989 in Thessaloniki, published by Κυριακίδης.

⁴ Φραγκουδάκη (2001: p. 66).

⁵ Τζάρτζανος (1934); Τζάρτζανος (1935).

⁶ Νάκας (2011: pp. 510–514).

Shape of the “new” form of language

Tzartzanos' attitude to the Greek language question developed naturally, as the great influence of his teacher, the conservative scholar Chatzidakis, gradually lessened. When he was invited to collaborate in the Modern Greek grammar by the Educational Association headed by Manolis Triandafyllidis, he saw his opportunity especially in the successively fading influence of the followers of Jannis Psycharis. Opposing their theory, Tzartzanos came up with his own vision of a new demoticism. His idea consisted of the promotion of the new written language, modernized *dimotiki*, in the form of *κοινή γραφομένη* (common written language) based on *κοινή ομιλουμένη* (common speaking language), a natural speech of the educated people of Athens and other big cities, from where it would be possible to easily spread the language across Greece.⁷ When specifying the definition of Tzartzanos' desired language, he emphasized three major aspects:

1. The basis of the *new dimotiki* will be the language of Athens

The reason why Tzartzanos and his colleagues chose the speech of Athens and other urban centers was obvious. Athens, as the cultural center of the independent Greek state, became the seat of many institutions, the site of important meetings, and a shelter for people from all over Greece. These people would, subsequently, bring their experiences back to the places from where they came, and, importantly, bring forms of expression along with their experiences, extending what would become a highly universal form of Greek.⁸

2. It will be the language of intellectuals

Tzartzanos promoted his *dimotiki* as the language of people who achieved a certain level of education.⁹ People lacking education often imitate others anyway, not only in language but also in other areas of life. Although he was often misunderstood in this point – that there should be, a kind of speech of the aristocracy – Tzartzanos opposed the argument by saying that there was no blue blood in his veins, and that his vision of urban language did not stand in the opposition to the speech of the common people.¹⁰

⁷ Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 34).

⁸ Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 21–23).

⁹ Among those intellectuals, Tzartzanos does not include exclusively the university professors or other scholars, but a broad range of people, which gained some education, get in their lifetime across the borders of their own village and they are active readers of the daily press.

¹⁰ Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 35).

3. It will be a modern language

The last attribute frequently repeated by Tzartanos was that the desired form of language should be a modern language. The linguistic research of that time had already allowed the possibility of a natural development of language, and so Tzartanos realized that the language of the older generation is of course different from the language of children. Yet, it was certainly unrealistic to achieve a completely present-day form of language. Nevertheless, Tzartanos emphasized that modern forms of language should be considered.¹¹

With the third point, summarizing the idea of what kind of language standard should be achieved, Tzartanos perhaps consciously tried to end the whole language controversy which had been accompanied by sharp clashes between supporters of conservative *katharevousa* and opponents of vernacular *dimotiki* Psycharis advocated.

Which language was appropriate for schools?

Although the language question in the 1930's shifted "from the streets to the paper" and it was no longer accompanied by the former, often escalated fanaticism, Tzartanos still considered this problem one of the biggest social issues of his time.¹² He wished for a final solution to the language question through a compromise devoid of the competing extreme solutions.

The original intention of the Educational Association, in which Tzartanos participated, was the enforcement of the ideology of the new demoticism among the general public. Very soon, however, the association adopted a somewhat more radical approach, which aimed at the earliest possible introduction of the concept of linguistic forms in schools, as well as the prompt preparation of textbooks adapted to this idea. Both parties involved agreed with the members of the association that the language question must be resolved as soon as possible, and not just in the sphere of education.

Tzartanos also wanted to promote a new *dimotiki* in schools, but according to him, the adaptation of teaching materials should not be rushed. He suggested the adaptation of textbooks to a modern version of spoken Greek, omitting obsolete forms, should be done very carefully and in a non-violent manner.¹³

¹¹ Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 54).

¹² Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 9).

¹³ Τζάρτζανος (1935: pp. 30f.).

Tzartzanos also advocated that modern language should be easily comprehended by everyone. *Katharevousa*, a difficult language for uneducated people, naturally failed to meet this requirement.¹⁴ For Tzartzanos, *katharevousa* was a foreign language whose vocabulary did not come from Ancient Greek, and as such should not serve as the official language of the Greek state anymore. On the other hand, he said there was no need to completely despise or ignore it. Although *katharevousa* partly managed to bring about the Greek diglossia, Tzartzanos saw that, to some extent, his generation needed it as would future generations. As a language of science, the press, and politics, *katharevousa* had, according to Tzartzanos, its undeniable function in society. At the same time, however, he believed it should not be forgotten that *katharevousa* introduced into the Greek language many forms which were often used incorrectly and were not often suitable for everyday conversation.¹⁵ He thought that perhaps only several decades of strict enforcement could exclude *katharevousa* from the everyday life of the Greek people. He suggested, though, that the consequences of its removal may be intellectual impoverishment of Greek speakers in many areas of life. Its continued use in schools was, according to Tzartzanos, necessary for these reasons. Its removal would deprive the young generation of a critical form of expression in many everyday situations. For Tzartzanos, it was therefore no longer questionable whether to teach *katharevousa* or not, but when to introduce it and, in what phase of study to include it in the curriculum: [... Άλλο τώρα τὸ ζήτημα, ποῦ καὶ πῶς καὶ πόσο θὰ διδάσκεται ἡ γλῶσσα αὐτῆ, τῆς ὁποίας ἡ διδασκαλία εἶναι ζήτημα ἀνάγκης μόνο. Ἄν θὰ ἀρχίζη ἡ διδασκαλία τῆς ἀπ' τὸ δημοτικὸ σχολεῖο ἢ θὰ διδάσκεται μόνο στὸ γυμνάσιο καὶ στὰ ἀνώτερα σχολεῖα.].¹⁶

Here it should be noted that Tzartzanos also published a Modern Greek Grammar (grammar of simple *katharevousa*) – *Γραμματικὴ τῆς Νέας Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης (τῆς ἀπλῆς καθαρευούσης)* without any official support.¹⁷ In the introduction, he emphasized that he had no intention of supporting *katharevousa*, but since all Greeks would have to understand it without knowledge of Classical Greek, familiarity with it was indispensable.¹⁸

At the same time, Tzartzanos did not want to completely condemn the extreme form of *dimotiki*, which was advocated by the followers

¹⁴ Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 19).

¹⁵ Τζάρτζανος (1934: p. 25).

¹⁶ Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 4f.).

¹⁷ Τζάρτζανος (1930).

¹⁸ Tzartzanos was criticizing strictly the substitution of *katharevousa* with the Ancient Greek. Cf.: Mackridge (2009: pp. 296f.).

of Psycharis. Its qualities can be demonstrated in poetry, which is always ready to embrace any dialectical elements or amended intonation. However, Tzartanos strictly criticized the naming of the ideal version of Greek as the only one and real “mother” tongue of all Greeks promoted by the supporters of Psycharis’ *dimotiki*. Tzartanos saw in this appellation some kind of undisguised verbal manipulation of the terms to which Greek speakers were sensitive.¹⁹

Argumentation against Psycharis’ followers

Tzartanos found the support for his argumentation against proponents of classical *dimotiki* in the works of several eminent European researchers. In particular, in his linguistic texts he frequently cited one of the most renowned linguists of his time, Antoine Meillet, and no less frequently he alluded to the linguistic situation in Germany or France. German and French are featured in his articles primarily in two contexts, and at the same time, they are his two counterarguments against Triandafyllidis.²⁰

The first topic has already been mentioned. The Demotacist’ concept of a “mother” tongue is, according to Tzartanos, mistakenly applied to the dwarf variant of *dimotiki* in an effort to emphasize emotional ties to the language. Tzartanos understood the mother tongue to be the language a child learns from his or her mother and which is spoken in the family at home in the village. It is not a stable language form capable of encompassing the multiple Greek dialects and of succeeding as a national language. In this context, Tzartanos exemplified an interesting comparison with the German terminology which allegedly used the expression *Muttersprache* since the time when the German language managed to subdue Latin. Even standard German, however, is based on *Hochdeutsch*, and this is the point at which Tzartanos completely diverges from Psycharis’ followers.²¹

The second issue to be compared with the developed European languages is the problem of Greek’s disunity. Spoken French, for instance, completely lacks some of the tenses, which are, at the same time, indispensable in the language of French literature. This serves as a perfect example that no natural language can achieve a complete compactness in all its spheres: [*Kai*

¹⁹ Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 6f.).

²⁰ Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 48f.).

²¹ Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 7–10).

στη Γαλλία και στη Γερμανία, ποῦ ἔχουν αἰώνων τώρα ἐλεύθερη ζωὴ καὶ τόσο προηγμένο πολιτισμό, δὲν ὑπάρχει ἡ περιπόθητη μονογλωσσία, ...].²²

Greek in particular, with its thousand-year-old history cannot be entirely uniform. Certain exceptions and anomalies are inevitable features characterizing every language. Furthermore, these irregularities are relatively easy to be tracked down in the texts of Demoticists as well as in Psycharis' texts. Tzartzanos shows the inconsistency e.g. in the use of distinct accent: [...ὁ Ψυχάρης γράφει π.χ. «οἱ ἀνθρώποι, οἱ προγόνοι, οἱ βαρβάροι, οἱ φιλοσόφοι» ... ἀκολουθῶντας τὸ λαϊκὸ τονισμὸ ... γράφει ὅμως ἀπ' τᾶλλο μέρος ... «οἱ κάτοικοι μάλωναν ἀναμεταξύ τους» ...].²³ Thus, while striving to create his utopian version of the Greek language with “no additives”, some kind of *καθαρή* or *αμιγύς δημοτική* (pure demotic),²⁴ by mixing of various forms, Psycharis created many unnatural interventions into morphology, lexicon, phonetics and into the syntactic sphere of language.²⁵ The form of the language Tzartzanos was seeking was slightly heterogeneous, but it should not be a mix of Classical Greek with Psycharis' variation in its most vernacular form or to be a language too anomalous for adoption of the necessary rules.²⁶

In fact, according to Tzartzanos, the desirable form of the written language based on *κοινή ομιλουμένη* would contain elements from both language traditions, but the relics from the intellectual language register would prevail.²⁷ There was no need for enriching the language only with expressions from the vernacular tradition. As an example, we can use the collocation *εκδοτικός οἶκος*. If we try to transform this formulation into the expression *εκδοτικὸ σπίτι*,²⁸ it will be an unnatural intervention because it is an already established and commonly used term.²⁹ Although Tzartzanos did not dismiss selection of the vocabulary from the vernacular language register, it would not be desirable to deprive the language of it just because there is some more appropriate word from *katharevousa*.³⁰

22 Τζάρτζανος (1934: p. 16).

23 Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 30–36).

24 Within this argumentation, Tzartzanos offered one thousand drachmas to anyone, who will show him a text completely in *καθαρή δημοτική*.

25 Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 46f.).

26 Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 14).

27 Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 62).

28 In English both variants has to be translated as *publishing house*.

29 Τζάρτζανος (1935: p. 42).

30 Φραγκουδάκη (2001: p. 70).

Where to “pigeonhole” Tzartzanos?

Tzartzanos, as a member of the Educational Association, inherently belonged to the number of intellectuals involved in the educational demoticism program. Its proponents advocated the establishment of *dimotiki* in education and subsequently its extension to other areas of Greek society. Despite his fragile appearance and his gentle nature, Tzartzanos struggled greatly to push through his own ideas, which differed from the full range of the obsolete opinions of Demoticists (and especially from the followers of Psycharis). Actually, that is why he introduced his project of new demoticism, although he himself was focused primarily on syntax.

The name of his theory itself was meant to evoke a diversion from the original version of Psycharis' *dimotiki*, which, according to Tzartzanos, remained associated with the notion of a language of the uneducated common people.³¹ At the same time, Tzartzanos deliberately preferred this term³² to the two-word terms *κοινή ομιλουμένη* or *κοινή γραφομένη* that were also used by Chatzidakis for his ideal version of Greek language.³³ In any case, after the publishing of another, this time officially released Grammar,³⁴ by his Athenian followers,³⁵ they did not have much chance of success with this project. This was caused mainly by Triandafyllidis' criticism focused on their unfriendly attitude to the vernacular language and to the real culture of the entire Greek nation.³⁶

Nevertheless, Tzartzanos shared with Chatzidakis and also with Triandafyllidis at least the purely linguistic perception of the Greek language question on two different points. There was, on the one hand, an historical diglossia (*ιστορική διγλωσσία*), which was created by *katharevousa*. In this kind of situation, some initially written language expressions are never used naturally in conversation, not even by educated people. On the other hand, there is a second case of diglossia, the 'simultaneous one' (*ομόχρονη διγλωσσία*), which is, to some extent natural and inevitable. It is the differentiation between the common written language and the language spoken by scholars, and at the same time an even greater difference between the written language and the language spoken by uneducated

³¹ Τζάρτζανος (1934: p. 27).

³² This term had appeared by some scholars even before (in the year 1901 and 1910). Cf.: Mackridge (2009: p. 297).

³³ Νάκας (2011: p. 511).

³⁴ *Γραμματική* (1931).

³⁵ Also members of the Assotiation.

³⁶ Mackridge (2009: p. 297).

speakers. Nevertheless, these people can habitually and unknowingly use terms in their everyday conversations that are not exclusively from the vernacular tradition of language. The language of scholars can therefore be, naturally enriched³⁷ on the street in everyday informal situations.³⁸

Tzartzanos was able to oppose the supporters of the one or the other variant, but he was aware of how much time it took him to find his own right way during his work on the national language project. Although the dispute between the conservative *katharevousa* and Psycharis' demoticism was over by then, one can observe a constant urge to find arguments in his articles which would distinguish his version of *dimotiki* from the classical one. Perhaps it was caused by his great admiration and gratitude to his teacher Chatzidakis, and not by the constant effort to defeat Psycharis, even though he constantly did so between the lines in both editions of his Syntax.³⁹ Yet, his sincere efforts to unite written Greek on the basis of a natural spoken language, *κοινή ομιλουμένη*, albeit with a few exceptions or irregularities, but without prejudice or blind following of only one possible way (here we mean the way of Psycharis) were undeniable.⁴⁰

To illustrate the situation, Tzartzanos was irked, for instance, by incorrect usage of adverbs ending on *-ως* or *-α*. According to him, many people deliberately avoid ending *-ως*, which, according to their misconceptions, come from *katharevousa*. In sentence: *Πρέπει να επέμβει άμεσα η δικαιοσύνη* is erroneously used adverb with *-α* ending, which is antonym to the adverb *έμμεσα*, and which is not synonymous to the expression *χωρίς αναβολή*, which would represent the form *αμέσως*.⁴¹ Every single variant of that kind of adverbs should be used in accordance with their right meanings.⁴²

Tzartzanos admitted that even his preferable middle way was actually somewhat dangerous and, at the same time, he said that he was not the only one whose efforts in this direction remained without consequences. He probably just wanted to highlight that the petty disputes between supporters of either side still remained.⁴³ Since he often emphasized that he did not write

³⁷ It should be noted that Tzartzanos in particular disliked errors in expressions of proponents of *katharevousa* caused by the influence of *dimotiki*. Cf.: Γκλαβάς (2008: p. 89).

³⁸ Τζάρτζανος (1934: pp. 17f.).

³⁹ Ανδριώτης (1946: p. 921).

⁴⁰ Τζάρτζανος, Α. (1934: p. 41).

⁴¹ In Greek there is a more clear difference between the expressions *immediately* and without *hesitation*.

⁴² Γκλαβάς (2008: p. 96); Cf. Νάκας (2011: p. 514).

⁴³ Τζάρτζανος (1934: p. 3).

about this topic to increase the already large number of articles addressing this issue, there is no dispute that he wanted to see the definitive cessation of the language question, which continued to negatively influence the whole of Greek society.⁴⁴ The truth is that the question of the appropriate language for Greek schools was one of the major themes for a number of politicians and current governing parties of the Modern Greek state.

Conclusion

Achilles Tzartzanos, in his new demoticism project, differed from the Demoticists basically only in details. According to some scholars, if he had lived longer, he would have embraced their uncompromising solution, over time. According to others, however, he exceeded his contemporaries with his opinions in the field of traditional linguistics.⁴⁵

Specifically, according to the well-known educator Alexandros Delmouzos, Tzartzanos' theory is impracticable because it implements to the language his own individual priorities.⁴⁶ On the contrary, other educationalists, Christos Tsolakis and later Sotiris Glavas, they consider Tzartzanos' vision right and in the upshot applicable. After all, it has been proved in the educational practice that the complete overlooking of the erudite tradition in language is not required.⁴⁷

In an effort to describe the unique vision of the Greek language question of one solitary scholar, we came across the tiny distinctions in opinions which could cause relatively big disagreements in the viewpoints of involved experts. Obviously, in some particular cases, also the non-linguistic criteria as well as the attempt for the coveted ending of the whole discord could play an important part in the whole long-lasting dispute.

In retrospect, we can point to examples such as Tzartzanos' interesting thoughts on the later established sociolinguistics. Although, as a member of the Educational Association, he advocated the need for a language reform of Greek schools and educational institutions, as an experienced educator, he was not afraid of drawing attention to the points that would have been rather confusing for the young generation, and he was also aware of the perhaps somewhat more sidelined factors affecting the language of children,

⁴⁴ Ανδριώτης (1946: p. 921).

⁴⁵ Νάκας (2011: p. 515).

⁴⁶ Νάκας (2011: p. 512).

⁴⁷ Τσολάκης (2001: p. 183); Cf.: Γκλαβάς (2008: p. 95).

as well as the language of adults. Language which we receive in classrooms should serve primarily as a supplement and enrichment to the manner of speech we have primarily thanks to our home upbringing, reading and social life.⁴⁸

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⁴⁸ Τζάρτζανος (1934: p. 38).

