

# VOCAL SOUND PRODUCTION AND SPEECH ACTIVITY EXPRESSIONS IN GERMAN AND GREEK

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## Περίληψη

Το κείμενο παρουσιάζει μερικές πτυχές μιας μελέτης των γλωσσικών εκφράσεων στα Γερμανικά και στα Ελληνικά που αναφέρονται στην παραγωγή ήχου και λόγου. Ξεκινώντας από κοινωνιογλωσσολογικές παρατηρήσεις για τη συνομιλία μέσω κινητής τηλεφωνίας και ηλεκτρονικού υπολογιστή (καθώς και για τη διαφορετική ένταξη δανεισμών όπως chat και talk στα Γερμανικά και στα Ελληνικά) προχωράει στην ανάλυση των ρημάτων που χρησιμοποιούνται στα πλαίσια της παρουσίασης του προφορικού λόγου σε δημοσιογραφικά κείμενα και καταλήγει στη σημασιολογική ανάλυση μιας ομάδας ρημάτων η οποία ακολουθεί νεότερες προσεγγίσεις στα πλαίσια της θεωρίας του λεξικού πεδίου.

1. At the outset it was not the lexical expressions per se but the phenomenon of vocal sound production in speech activity which had attracted my interest, mainly in connection with the emergence of mobile telephony and the popularity of its use in public places including the means of public transportation. As a regular user of local buses I began to notice a change in the 'soundtrack' one was exposed to as a passenger: one would hear the sounds of ring tones and voices from all sides, and more importantly, unintentionally or not overhear a multitude of private telephone conversations all the way long. The exposure to often rather high volume and high pitched utterances in combination with the fact that only the turns of one partner of each dyad could be (partly) followed made the overhearing an intense experience of prosodic/ paralinguistic as well as cohesion/ coherence features in talk. Discussing such observations and impressions with two sociology students, who had approached me with an interest in studying expressions of emotions, we eventually looked at mediated communication not only by use of mobile phones but also by e-mail and IRC facilities. Though carried out in written, private talk via PC shares a number of characteristics with varieties of oral discourse such as casual conversation and chat, which can be assigned along the respective continua to the range of lower degrees of verbal planning and the range of higher degrees of speaker involvement, expressivity and emotionality (or, in terms of Koch/ Oesterreicher 1985, to the range of higher degrees of 'social closeness'). On the basis of a sample of Greek e-chat protocols we found that a variety of graphic symbols, including 'smilies' created for typed chat purposes, serve as indications of prosodic and paralinguistic features crucial especially for the expression of affective meaning. The degree to which they are used varies as well as the estimation of their functional value. Both under-use and over-use can be accompanied by users' comments on the expressive inadequacy of these symbols. With respect to the expression of interpersonal attitudes it is the speed of talking/ typing which plays a crucial role: Turns produced at fast speed are generally favoured as indicators of positive attitude. Slow turn production tends to provoke irritation and queries, gradual decrease of interest and occasionally also an abrupt termination of the chat by the recipient of the delayed turns. As in the case of group chats in

public chatrooms, the dyadic e-chats analyzed here often show an 'unorderly' pattern of turn-taking with frequent overlaps due to speedy turn production by both sides. This not only reflects a high tolerance acquired through group chats, but also a high appreciation of overlapping as an index of mutual interest and emotional involvement.

2. The following step was a study of German and Greek infotainment print media (i.e. colour magazine supplements to newspapers, women's magazines, life style journals) which, much as chat and watching of TV, are popular pastime at home or in public places when waiting at the hairdresser's, the doctor's office, the airport, etc.. Due to their high circulation they can be expected to both shape and reflect their readership's language use ( mainly urban, middle-class, young to middle age ), also with regard to topics concerning new telecommunication media. Presenting advertising of the respective products and reportage articles on telecommunication they allow an insight into current and incipient non-technical talk about these topics, including the use of topic-related native and foreign language vocabulary/ terminology. Scanning and skimming the corpus of print media for the two languages one can observe a much greater range and frequency of loans from English in the German than in the Greek corpus. The nouns 'chat', 'talk' and the corresponding verbs have entered German for good, with gender assignment for the nouns and full integration of the verbs ('der Chat', 'der Talk', 'chatten/ chattete/ geschattet', 'talken/ talkte/ getalkt'). They are listed in most of the more recent monolingual dictionaries of German. So far they are used only with reference to mediated communication, i.e. PC-based typed chat on the one hand and TV talkshow talk on the other hand. Occasionally one can find a derived noun such as '(der)Talker' or a compound noun such as '(der)Viel-Talker' which is used with reference to a person fond of mobile phone talk, with a slightly mocking evaluative meaning. The latter seems to function in a similar way as 'Quasselstrippe' ('chatterbox', literally 'a chattering phone cable') at an earlier period, decades ago when it was coined with the advent of telephony. By now 'Quasselstrippe' has become a derogatory label for persons who are extremely talkative, irrespective of whether on phone or not.

Another noun compound, '(die) Talkshow' (cf. Am.E. talk show vs. Br.E. chat show), probably was the first in this series of loans from English, which seem to gradually acquire a less restricted meaning and also foster semantic change of their lexical field neighbours. Mass media such as television and more recently also radio with their high proportion of talk shows and phone-in programs as elements of a more interactive and participatory program design have been important agents of the 'conversationalization' of public discourse (cf. Fairclough 1995). As a reflex of this shift to increased informality we can observe lexical pairs such as German '(miteinander) reden/ sich unterhalten' (to talk) and '(miteinander) quatschen' (to chat) gradually getting closer in meaning, esp. when used as reciprocal verbs, with '(miteinander) quatschen' continually losing its former pejorative meaning. Regional variants such as 'schwätzen', 'klonen' and 'schnacken' keep entering standard German, thus increasing the variety of synonyms and partial synonyms in the field of speech activity verbs.

Though English words such as 'talk' and 'chat' play a considerable role in Greek advertising of mobile phones and personal computers, they so far seem not to have had a major impact on Greek talk about telecommunication practices. 'Μιλώ', 'κουβεντιάζω' and occasionally also 'φλυαρώ' function as verbs with reference to talk both face-to-face and mediated via technological devices. 'Στέλνω ένα (γραπτό) μήνυμα' is the equivalent for English 'to text (a message)' and German 'eine Message schicken/ eine SMS schicken/ simsens' (with the latter based on the initials of 'Short Message Service'). 'Στέλνω ένα φαξ/ ένα e-mail' corresponds more closely with English 'send a fax/ an e-mail', with 'e-mail' not yet transliterated. German again makes use of integrated loans with verbs such as 'faxen' and 'mailen', in alternation with 'ein Fax/ eine E-Mail schicken'. Greek 'μπιάνω στο chat' and 'κάνω chat' make use of the noun 'chat' for both 'chatroom' and 'chat'. Verb formations such as τσατάρω as well as φαξάρω and μείλάρω are highly improbable. As the case of the loanwords σπικερ and σπικάρω shows, it is only the noun, though formally less integrated than the verb, which gained wider usage over the years. Ντιμπεϊτ, as the only other loanword from English in the field of speech activity/ speech genre expressions, has not been joined by a verb such as ντιμπεϊτάρω. Furthermore, it is worth noting that neither of the nouns 'σπικερ' and 'ντιμπεϊτ' have undergone semantic expansion. Their use is restricted to the television domain.

With the exception of 'κουβέντα/ κουβεντιάζω' and 'παρλάρω' as loans from Italian resp. backloan from Latin, Greek has no tradition in borrowing foreign verba dicendi. German, in contrast, has adopted a considerable number of such verbs over the centuries. It is worth noting that all these verbs used to refer and still refer to the more formal and/ or institutional types of speech activity in society: debattieren, konferieren, diskutieren, etc. The two loanwords we can find in Greek, in contrast, refer to more informal and/ or private types of speech activity. Whether English 'gossip', which occasionally appears as column title in Greek life style magazines, in the long run will become a candidate for adoption and integration needs closer observation. Its present function as a euphemistic expression might foster a parallel intensification of the negative evaluative meaning of 'κουτσομπολιό'.

3. A further analysis of the print media corpus reveals phenomena which document the high degree of conversationalization of discourse. With interviewing playing an increasingly important role in both Greek and German press journalism, logocentricity and varied textual use of interviews is a dominant feature. In the German infotainment magazines we notice a trend, observable also in their English and American counterparts, which is partly different from the line adopted by most of the respective Greek magazines.

A salient feature of Greek articles that are based on interviews is the presentation of full-size interviews as such or the embedding of long excerpts in an article, including not only the utterances of the interviewee but also the interviewer's questions, replies and queries. In such formats features such as voice quality, manner of speaking and non-verbal behaviour are not presented, except by occasional short comments in brackets. Furthermore, and more importantly, we find no or only very limited use of reporting verbs (mainly general speech act verbs such as 'say', 'remark'). The reader, thus, is in the position to follow full stretches of

verbal interaction and to interpret the turns without the reporter's 'guidance' via his/ her choice of speech act verbs.

A salient feature of German articles is the interspersion of numerous and mainly short quotations from interviews at various points from the title down to the final line of the text, often functioning as textual pivots. It is the utterances of the interviewee and only very rarely the utterances of the interviewer which are presented. The interviewer appears as the author who tries to achieve a high quality of authenticity and vividness in his/ her report. The interesting point in this respect is the choice of verbs accompanying the quotations. Besides a number of basic speech act verbs ('sagen, bemerken, aussern', 'say, remark, utter') and mental activity verbs ('denken, meinen, s.erinnern, etc.', 'think, believe, remember, etc.') we find a variety of verbs specifying the quoted utterances with respect to the sound quality or the manner of speaking ('flustern, brummen, klagen, stöhnen, brullen, stammeln, etc.', 'whisper, mumble, grumble, moan, shout, stammer, etc.') or also with respect to the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewee ('lacheln, lachen, strahlen', 'smile, laugh, beam'). Such a spectrum of verbs would traditionally be expected in fictional rather than in non-fictional texts (cf. Gulich 1978:97). Furthermore, there is frequent use of specific speech act verbs (e.g. 'zugeben, bestatigen, bestreiten', 'confess, admit, deny') which traditionally are used with indirect speech, where a specification of the utterance's purported illocutionary force is desirable or necessary. In connection with direct quotations the presence of a specifying speech act verb may not only be superfluous but also manipulative.

The frequent occurrence of manner verbs is of special interest since it indicates a shift with respect to their distribution in fictional and non-fictional texts and furthermore points to a difference in the use of manner verbs in German and Greek. Not only with regard to expressions of sound and speech production but also those of bodily motion we can notice a preference of manner verbs in German and a preference of manner specification by adjectival adverbs/ adverbial phrases in Greek. Whether semantically incorporated ('encapsulated', cf. Lyons 1977/ 2002, Cruse 1986/ 2002, 'conflated', cf. Talmy 1985) in the verb or in company with a basic verb, the manner specifier often carries both descriptive and evaluative meaning. The latter, however, can be emphasized or de-emphasized by the choice of a manner verb on the one hand and an adverbially specified basic verb on the other hand (e.g. schreien – laut reden, φωνάζω – μιλώ δυνατά).

**4.** Finally we looked at onomasiological and semasiological dictionaries and their treatment of sets of conceptionally/ semantically interrelated lexemes. Specialized dictionaries such as Buck 1949, Wierzbicka 1987 and Schumacher 1986 were also consulted as important attempts to combine onomasiological and semasiological principles in lexicography.

Adopting Lutzeier's lexical field theory approach (Lutzeier 1981/ 1995, cf. also Coseriu 1970, Hartmann 1998) we proceeded to analyze German and Greek verbs of vocal sound production and speech activity. On the basis of native speakers' judgments, before and after consultations of the respective thesaurus dictionaries for Greek and German (Βοσταντζόγλου 1962, Dornseiff 1965), we arrived at a restricted number of verbs estimated as the more frequent

ones in current usage. Conceiving of lexical fields as sets of co-hyponyms to an overarching concept/ semantic aspect, expressed either by a hyperonym or by a paraphrase, we applied Lutzeier's heuristic method of paradigm construction: A verbal context is created which contains a slot defined by a semantic aspect and a syntactic category. Lexical substitution yields a paradigm of semantically related lexical units which then are analyzed as to their semantic dimensions.

#### A. Lexical field: Verbs of vocal sound production

- Semantic aspect: to produce/to emit human vocal sounds - intrans.V
- Verbal context: Ich hore die Nachbarn nebenan auf dem Balkon.....  
Ακούω τους γείτονες στο μπαλκόνι δίπλα να.....
- Verb paradigm: (see below)
- Semantic dimensions: a) volume b) pitch c) manner of articulation  
d) rate of articulation  
e) stereotypical link with animal sounds  
f) stereotypical link with emotional state of speaker

#### German verbs

#### Greek verbs

##### a) Volume

above normal level: brullen, schreien, kreischen	φωνάζω, ουρλιάζω, στριγκλίζω
below normal level: flustern, wispern, murmeln	ψιθυρίζω, μουρμουρίζω

##### b) Pitch

above normal range: kreischen, schnattern, gackern	στριγκλίζω, κακαρίζω
below normal range: brullen, quaken	μουγκρίζω

##### c) Manner of Articulation

above normal: #	#
below norm: lallen, stammeln, stottern, nuscheln, naseln, lispeln	ψελλιζω, ψευδιζω, τραυλιζω

##### d) Rate of articulation

above normal level: schnattern, gackern	κακαρίζω
below normal level: lallen, stammeln, stottern	ψελλιζω, τραυλιζω

e) Stereotypical links with animal sounds	
wild animals/cattle: brullen	#
wolf : #	ουρλιάζω
wild birds: kreischen	#
goose/duck: schnattern	#
hen: gackern	κακαρίζω
frog: quaken	#

f) Stereotypical links with emotional state	
cheerfulness: schnattern, gackern	κακαρίζω
excitement: kreischen	στριγκλίζω
anger: brullen	ουρλιάζω

The semantic dimensions found point to the importance of acoustic perception with respect to deviations from norms of human phonation and articulation set by physiological parameters as well as social norms related to face-to-face communication. Acoustic images of animal-specific sounds also play a role. Certain verbs can be used for animals as well as human beings. Their use for human beings, however, seems to be much more restricted in Greek than in German, due to the fact that they tend to be considered derogatory and offensive by Greek speakers and only faintly negative by German speakers. In order to derogatorily use a verb such as e.g. 'brullen' in German it has to be specified by an adjectival adverb or by a reference to the animal it is stereotypically linked with ('laut brullen', 'wie ein (wildgewordener) Stier brullen'). Even then its use only rarely implies 'behave' or 'be' like an animal.

#### B. Lexical field: Verbs of speech activity

- Semantic aspect: to produce/emit speech in conversational contexts – intrans.V.
- Verbal context: Ich hore die Nachbarn nebenan auf dem Balkon.....  
Ακούω τους γείτονες στο μπαλκόνι δίπλα να.....
- Verb paradigm: (see below)
- Semantic dimensions: a) degree of formality b) degree of verbosity c) degree of focus on one topic d) degree of discretion

	German verbs	Greek verbs
a) degree of formality		
high:	diskutieren	συνομιλώ, συζητώ
medium:	reden, s.unterhalten	μιλώ, κουβεντιάζω
low:	quatschen, schwatzen,	παρλάρω

## klonen

### b) degree of verbosity

high:	quasseln, labern	φλυαρώ
low:	#	#

### c) degree of focus on one topic

high:	diskutieren	μιλώ, συζητώ
medium:	reden, s.unterhalten	κουβεντιάζω
low:	quatschen, schwatzen, klonen	φλυαρώ

### d) degree of discretion

high:	diskutieren	μιλώ, συζητώ
low:	klatschen, tratschen	κουτσομπολεύω

For this field the semantic dimensions found relate to the quantity and organisation of speech in verbal interaction, with parameters of acoustic perception and mental processing of utterances as well as sociocultural factors playing a central role. Specifications of degree can be made only tentatively even when a finely graded continuum is assumed.

Except for 'μιλώ' and 'klatschen' there are no polysemic words in the above list. It is important to note that within a field approach the subsenses of polysemic words are treated as separate lexical units. Depending on the semantic relationship between the subsenses of a word, they can be members of related but also unrelated fields.

Claims made by Trier 1931 as to a strictly field-composed structure of a language's vocabulary certainly cannot be supported. However, in certain content areas we do find clusters of semantically related lexical units. Their internal structure shows a variety of vertical and horizontal semantic constellations. Cross-linguistic lexical studies will be of special help to further investigate which content areas have been more prone than others for the development of clusters and eventually also throw light on the factors which promote the conflation of propositional with expressive meaning in certain clusters or cluster members. Verbs of emotion, analyzed by Wegener 1999 for German, English and French (in a synchronical and diachronical perspective), suggest themselves for further studies of emotional and evaluative meaning. But other less obvious content areas may turn out to be similarly or even more promising in this respect.

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