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London's Greek Cypriot community  
Karatsareas, P.**

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# **Attitudes towards Cypriot Greek and Standard Modern Greek in London's Greek Cypriot community**

## **Abstract**

### **Aim**

To investigate whether the positive attitudes towards Standard Modern Greek and the mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek that have been documented in Cyprus are also present in London's Greek Cypriot community.

### **Approach**

Unlike previous quantitative works, the study reported in this article was qualitative and aimed at capturing the ways in which attitudes and attitude-driven practices are experienced by members of London's diasporic community.

### **Data and Analysis**

Data were collected by means of semi-structured, sociolinguistic interviews with 28 members of the community. All participants were second-generation heritage speakers, successive bilinguals in Cypriot Greek and English, and successive bidialectal

speakers in Cypriot Greek and Standard Modern Greek. The data were analysed qualitatively (thematic analysis).

### **Findings**

- Positive perceptions of Standard Modern Greek and mixed perceptions, both positive and negative, of Cypriot Greek are found in the context of London.
- As in Cyprus, Standard Modern Greek is perceived as a prestigious, proper and 'correct' variety of Greek. Cypriot Greek, in contrast, is described as a villagey, heavy and even broken variety.
- Greek complementary schools play a key role in engendering these attitudes.
- Unlike in Cyprus, in the London community, the use of Cypriot Greek is also discouraged in informal settings such as the home.

### **Originality**

Papapavlou & Pavlou contended that "there are no signs of negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek [in London]" (2001, p. 104). This research shows this claim to be false.

### **Significance/Implications**

- Negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek lead to a community-wide preference for the use of Standard Modern Greek in communication with other members of

the Greek Cypriot community, which poses a great threat to the intergenerational transmission and maintenance of Cypriot Greek as a heritage language in London.

### **Keywords**

Cypriot Greek, Standard Modern Greek, diglossia, attitudes, London, heritage languages

### **Introduction**

In this article, I report preliminary results of a qualitative study investigating the attitudes of a bidialectal diasporic community towards its heritage languages or, rather, its related heritage varieties. I focus on Cypriot Greek (henceforth CyGr), which I use as to refer collectively to closely related and mutually intelligible Modern Greek varieties that are spoken on the island of Cyprus, and Standard Modern Greek (henceforth SModGr), the standard form of the language spoken in urban centres and in many rural areas throughout Greece. In its codified form, SModGr is also the official language of the Hellenic Republic and one of the official languages the Republic of Cyprus, the other one being Turkish. Both CyGr and SModGr are also spoken by Greek and Greek Cypriot diasporic communities predominantly in the United States of America and

Canada, in the United Kingdom, in Australia, in South Africa, in Germany, and in many Eastern European countries. Here, I focus on London's Greek Cypriot community.

In Cyprus, SModGr and CyGr stand in a diglossic relation: SModGr is the prestigious variety used in education, administration, the media, and in writing whereas CyGr is the non-prestigious variety that is only accepted in informal, oral communication. This state of affairs has engendered positive attitudes towards SModGr and a mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards CyGr, with the educational system of Cyprus playing a key role in sustaining and reinforcing these attitudes. In what follows, I present some initial observations on whether this attitudinal system and the attitude-driven practices that have been documented for Cyprus are also found in London's Greek Cypriot community. The motivation for the study was provided by Papapavlou and Pavlou's (2001) assertion that, in London, "there are no signs of negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek, which [UK Cypriots] seem to master at higher levels than Modern Standard Greek" (p. 104). The fact that previous works on attitudes towards CyGr in London (Gardner-Chloros, McEntee-Atalianis & Finnis, 2005; Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2001) had adopted a quantitative methodology provided additional motivation for the study. While the quantitative findings of these scholars document the community-wide trends regarding the use of and attitudes towards CyGr, SModGr and English in the community, they do not capture the ways these attitudes are experienced by its members and the everyday attitude-driven practices that engender

these attitudes. One notable exception in this respect is the recent study by Hadjidemetriou (2015).

Against this backdrop, I adopted a qualitative methodology for the present study. The data presented here were collected through sociolinguistic interviews with 28 members of London's Greek Cypriot community (10 male, 18 female; average age: 43 years). All participants were second-generation heritage speakers, successive bilinguals in CyGr and English, and successive bidialectal speakers in CyGr and SModGr: they were born in Greater London to parents who were born in Cyprus and migrated to the UK as adults; they acquired CyGr natively from birth and used it exclusively to communicate with their parents and other members of their family until approximately the age of 5 when they started attending school and acquiring English; they are dominant in English and self-report an average 76.6% of daily usage of English and 23.4% usage of CyGr; they have knowledge of both CyGr, which they acquired through natural exposure to it in everyday oral communication in the community, and SModGr, which they acquired through attending Greek complementary schools in London starting at the age of 5 and for an average of 8 years. Note, though, that attendance in these schools is not daily. Rather, pupils attend the school for a maximum of four hours on Saturdays and possibly also a few additional hours on a weekday evening. The interviews were conducted by the author and by Alexandra Georgiou, who worked as a research assistant for this study.

### **CyGr and SModGr: the linguistic context**

Early studies (Kontosopoulos, 1969/1970; Newton, 1972; Vagiakakos, 1973) identified 18 distinct regional varieties of CyGr, which Newton (1972: 19) described as forming a dialect continuum. CyGr is markedly different from SModGr on all levels of linguistic analysis; see Table 1 for some distinctive phonological differences. Arvaniti considers the two varieties to be “too dissimilar to be mutually intelligible” (2006/2010, p. 18) although she accepts that unintelligibility is not bidirectional as CyGr speakers are generally more familiar with SModGr than SModGr speakers are with CyGr.

**Table 1. Differences between CyGr and SModGr.**

	CyGr	SModGr
1.	Palatalisation of the type $k x \rightarrow tʃ / \_ \{i e\}$	Palatalisation of the type $k x \rightarrow c \zeta / \_ \{i e\}$
2.	Distinction between singleton and geminate consonants	No distinction between singleton and geminate consonants

3.	Glide hardening of the type	Glide hardening of the type
	$jV \rightarrow kV / r\_$	$jV \rightarrow \text{ɟ}V / C_{[+voiced]}\_$
	$jV \rightarrow cV / C\_$	$jV \rightarrow \text{ç}V / C_{[-voiced]}\_$

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The relationship between CyGr and SModGr in Cyprus has been traditionally described in terms of Ferguson's (1959) notion of diglossia with SModGr being the High variety and CyGr the Low variety (Arvaniti, 2006/2010; Moschonas, 1996, 2002; Terkourafi, 2005; see also Tsiplakou, 2003, 2009a, b, 2014). Early accounts viewed the domains of usage of the two varieties as largely complementary: the use of SModGr is accepted in all formal aspects of communication such as in administration and, importantly, education. It is the only codified and standardised variety and the only one that is recognised as an official language in Cyprus. CyGr, on the other hand, lacks official recognition and any kind of institutional support. Despite being naturally acquired as a first language by the Greek-speaking population of the island, it is only accepted in informal, everyday instances of communication between Greek-speaking Cypriots. In addition, CyGr has been historically excluded from writing and is essentially seen as an oral variety. The use of CyGr in writing has traditionally only been acceptable in folk literature. That said, the use of CyGr in writing has increased in recent decades thanks to computer-mediated communication, which has allowed for the writing of the dialect using mainly Roman but also Greek characters in new



communicative contexts that fall outside the remit of the traditional diglossic straitjacket (Themistocleous, 2009, 2010).

More recent proposals have challenged the view that the sociolinguistic situation in Cyprus can be adequately described in terms of the binary opposition High–Low imposed by Ferguson’s model. Scholars have highlighted the fact that CyGr is regularly used in domains in which the Low variety should normally be excluded. Tsipalou et al. (2006) mention, for example, that CyGr is used between students and lecturers in seminars and lectures in Greek Cypriot universities, where the use of SModGr is not only expected but to a certain extent imposed for all communicative purposes. Similarly, SModGr is also sometimes used in domains in which the use of the High variety would normally seem unexpected or unjustified, especially in informal instances of communication between CyGr speakers. It therefore seems that, especially when communicating orally, CyGr speakers use both CyGr and SModGr in a wide array of contexts. In many of these cases, structural features from the two varieties are used side by side in the same utterance resulting in mixed productions with the degree to which a given speaker will draw from SModGr and CyGr depending on stylistic factors, the degree of familiarity and solidarity between speakers, the topic of the conversation (Papapavlou, 2010; Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2004; Pavlou, 2004; Tsipalou, 2014).

On the basis of these observations, Tsipalou, Papapavlou, Pavlou and Katsoyannou (2006) have identified the following hierarchy of registers that differ with respect to the

degree of convergence with CyGr and SModGr as they are perceived by CyGr speakers (see also Katsoyannou, Papapavlou, Pavlou & Tsiplakou, 2006; Papapavlou & Sophocleous, 2009; Sophocleous, 2006). The terms basilectal, mesolectal, and acrolectal are drawn from the study of post-creole continua following their introduction by Stewart (1965) and further use by Bickerton (1975) and many subsequent researchers.

1. *varetá cipriaká* ‘heavy Cypriot’ or *téla/pollá xorkátika* ‘totally/very villagey, peasantry’: a basilectal register that incorporates the highest number of lexical and grammatical features from the regional varieties of Cyprus.
2. *sostá cipriaká* ‘correct Cypriot’ or *sistarisména cipriaká* ‘tidied-up Cypriot’: a mesolectal register that converges highly with the basilectal register but at the same time incorporates some SModGr features.
3. *evjeniká cipriaká* ‘polite Cypriot’: a mesolectal register that, while being recognisably CyGr, incorporates a high number of SModGr features.
4. *kalamarístika* ‘pen pusher’: an acrolectal register that many CyGr speakers equate with SModGr or with a Cypriot version or perception of which lexical and grammatical features are associated with SModGr.

As Arvaniti (2006/2010) and Karyolemou (2007) note, though, the diglossia approach and the stylistic register continuum approach are not mutually exclusive. Drawing on Haeri (2000) and Caton (1991), Arvaniti stresses that Ferguson's model does not seek to predict the form of utterances that speakers will produce in a given instance of communication but, rather, accounts for the perceptions and expectations that they have as to which of the two varieties is appropriate in which contexts. For Arvaniti, specific linguistic practices show that the CyGr speech community does perceive the two varieties in terms of a binary opposition. Karyolemou (1992, 2007) has therefore described the sociolinguistic situation in Cyprus as a kind of perceptual diglossia to account for the fact that it is the linguistic attitudes of the CyGr community that are diglossic whereas their practices are better described in terms of a stylistic register continuum.

### **Attitudes towards CyGr and SModGr in Cyprus**

CyGr speakers exhibit positive attitudes towards SModGr, which carries overt prestige, and a mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards CyGr, which carries covert prestige. Papapavlou's (1998) matched guise study showed that speakers of SModGr are perceived as more attractive, more ambitious, more intelligent, more interesting, more modern, more dependable, more pleasant and more educated than speakers of

CyGr. Speakers of SModGr are, however, not perceived to be more sincere, friendlier, kinder or more humorous than CyGr speakers. In a subsequent study, Papapavlou (2001) further suggested that the postalveolar fricative /ʃ/ and—to a lesser extent—the postalveolar affricate /tʃ/ (Table 1) are generally identified by CyGr speakers as markers of CyGr speech and are perceived as rural and indicative of a lower educational level. Papapavlou and Sophocleous's (2009) investigation also showed that basilectal registers of CyGr are socially marked, stigmatised and associated with a lack of education whereas SModGr is associated with politeness, education, professionalism and modernity. Papapavlou and Sophocleous additionally highlighted that some CyGr speakers experience feelings of inferiority towards speakers of SModGr. The speakers themselves attributed these feelings directly to the idea that “[CyGr] is not a *correct* language” (2009, p. 187; emphasis in the original), which is cultivated in Cypriot schools. See also Evripidou (2012), Kyriakou (2015), and Satraki (2015).

Scholars have identified the central role that the educational system of Cyprus plays in engendering positive attitudes towards SModGr and negative attitudes towards CyGr (Ioannidou, 2009, 2012; Ioannidou & Sophocleous, 2010; Papapavlou, 2010; Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2004, 2005; Sophocleous, 2011; Sophocleous & Wilks, 2010; Yiakoumetti, 2006, 2007). The Ministry of Education and Culture accepts SModGr as the only variety to be used for instruction at all levels both by teachers and by students. While indirectly recognising that CyGr is the students' native variety, the Ministry

urges that they should strive to master SModGr as it is the variety that is shared by all Greeks. CyGr is only admissible in Cypriot classrooms when studying folk poetry, in theatrical plays and in cases where students have not yet developed their oral fluency in SModGr. Even these concessions, however, are allowed “within logical boundaries and not at the expense of the development of [SModGr], which constitutes our national language” (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus, *The Greek Cypriot Dialect and Standard Modern Greek*; cited in Sophocleous & Wilks, 2010, p. 55). Teachers in Greek Cypriot schools have therefore unsurprisingly been documented to actively discourage students from using CyGr in the classroom, to explicitly ‘correct’ them when they do, and to use SModGr to assert authority (Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2004).

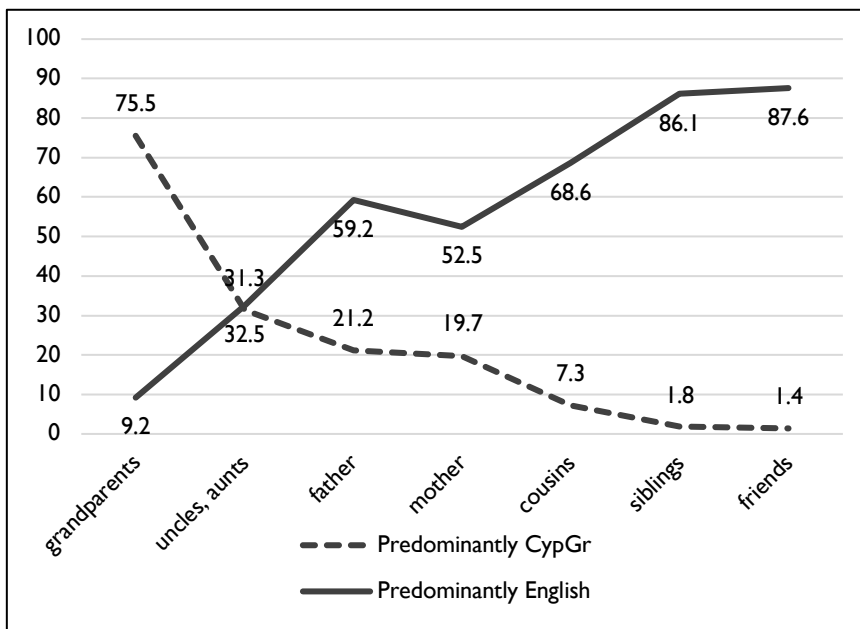
### **London’s Greek Cypriot community, its members and their languages**

The UK is home to a sizeable Greek Cypriot community. The exact population of the community is difficult to determine. Unofficial estimates range between 160,000 and 300,000 people (Anthias, 1990; Christodoulou-Pipis, 1991; Constantinides, 1990; National Federation of Cypriots in the UK; Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2001). The majority of UK Greek Cypriots live in London, concentrated mainly in the northern boroughs of Enfield, Barnet, Haringey, Islington, and Camden.

Three languages are present in London's community: CyGr, SModGr and English. CyGr and English are spoken within the community on an everyday basis. CyGr is used among family members and friends both in and outside the home, in various community establishments such as community centres, churches, cafés, restaurants, shops and other businesses. English is naturally used in all interactions with speakers, institutions and groups with a non-Greek background and, crucially, also among members of the community, especially second- and third-generation speakers. SModGr is the language of all official occasions and purposes. It is exclusively used in all formal aspects of community administration and activity including in the relations of the community with Cyprus through the High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus, in all written materials published by Greek Orthodox churches, and in the media, both printed and non-printed. It is also exclusively used in the education provided by the community's complementary schools. Overseen by the Cyprus Educational Mission, which was founded in 1977 by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, these schools offer classes in language, history, geography and folk tradition to young members of the community from the age of 5 up to the age of 18. Teaching is offered by Greek and Greek Cypriot teachers, who also prepare pupils to sit the Greek GCSE and A-Level examinations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, community scholars began expressing fears that the use of CyGr was rapidly declining among second- and third-generation members, who

reportedly preferred to use English even when interacting with other Greek Cypriots (Aloneftis, 1990; Anaxagorou, 1990; Constantinides, 1990; Ioannidis, 1990). These early concerns were later confirmed by further studies. In 2001, Papapavlou and Pavlou reported that the participants of their study predominantly spoke CyGr only with their grandparents, who most probably spoke very little or even no English. They reported speaking more English than Greek with other older family members (parents, uncles, aunts) and using English almost exclusively with relatives of the same age group (siblings, cousins) and with their friends; see Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The use of CyGr and English by 12–18-year-old second- and third-generation heritage speakers of CyGr with respect to different family members and friends in London. Data from Papapavlou and Pavlou (2001, p. 102).

Similar findings were reported by Gardner-Chloros et al. (2005), who found English to be predominantly used instead of Greek across a wide range of contexts and for number of different purposes: for cognitive abilities such as doing calculations and thinking about abstract problems; in emotive or personal contexts such as telling a story and expressing feelings; with friends, colleagues and clients. They also found that the older generation (over 56 years of age) used CyGr significantly more than younger generations. Younger speakers and speakers of a high socioeconomic status were also found to use English more than older speakers and speakers of a low socioeconomic status.

Both earlier and more recent studies see English as posing the most significant threat to the vitality of CyGr in London. Anaxagorou (1990) and Ioannidis (1990) especially consider the use of English in the home environment to be a decisive factor driving the loss of the heritage language as English will unavoidably become the first-acquired language for third-generation speakers. Anaxagorou specifically mentions non-reciprocal interactions between CyGr-speaking parents and English-speaking children as strongly indicative of the restricted, passive knowledge that some second-generation speakers have of their heritage language. The change in dominance that takes place in the transition from the first to the second generation of speakers was therefore identified



early as the key turning point in the break of the intergenerational transmission of CyGr in London.

Gardner-Chloros et al. (2005) highlight the privileged status of English, which affords those competent in both CyGr and English a “greatest market share, enabling them to exploit, and profit from, all facets of cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital” (p. 77). Gardner-Chloros et al. anticipate that these “capital forces” will eventually drive London’s community towards a complete shift to English, echoing Anaxagorou’s earlier prediction that “the process of abandonment which is in underway among the second generation leaves no space for optimism about the maintenance of the Cypriot dialect in the third or fourth generations” (1990, p. 62; my translation); see also Papapavlou & Pavlou (2001, p. 104).

### **Attitudes in the community**

Most extant studies undertaken support the idea that members of London’s community have positive attitudes towards their heritage language. They are generally reported to assign a great deal of importance to CyGr, which they view as a symbol of their ethnic identity, a symbol of their history as immigrants, and a point of reference to and identification with their distinct culture (Anaxagorou, 1990; Gardner-Chloros et al., 2005; Hadjidemetriou, 2015; Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2001). The participants of Gardner-

Chloros et al.'s (2005) study, especially younger ones, did not think that English had a negative impact on their ethnic identity or, indeed, on their heritage language. Rather, they considered English and Greek as fulfilling different communicational needs: CyGr and SModGr are important for domestic and community life, whereas English is valuable for social, professional and financial purposes.

Across all studies, the notion that CyGr needs to be maintained is strongly expressed with Papapavlou and Pavlou even going as far as to state that, in London, “there are no signs of negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek, which [UK Cypriots] seem to master at higher levels than Modern Standard Greek” (2001, p. 104). There is evidence, however, that CyGr or, to be more precise, the type of CyGr that is spoken in London is not universally viewed in a positive light. Aloneftis (1990) describes how Cyprus-born Cypriots deride the way UK-born Cypriots speak when they visit Cyprus for summer holidays. Derision is targeted at the whole range of the linguistic repertoire of UK-born Cypriots: if they speak English because they do not feel confident about their competence in speaking CyGr, they are accused of pretentiousness and snobbery; when they do try to speak CyGr, they are mocked and considered to be uncouth because of the many basilectal features that they use as a result of having acquired the dialect based solely on the input from older generations and without much exposure to the current linguistic trends of Cyprus or to the Cypriot educational system. Maria Roussou (1980–1992) observed that UK-born Greek Cypriots feel a need to avoid CyGr features and to

(attempt to) speak SModGr when engaged in conversation with speakers from Greece or other speakers from Cyprus whom they consider more educated or more urban in order to sound polite.

The interviews that we conducted echo previous findings regarding the high importance that CyGr has for members of the London community and their strong desire to maintain it as an integral part of their ethnolinguistic identity. Marios refers to Greek as ‘my language’ (*i ylós:a mu*, with a CyGr geminate /s:/). He likes speaking it and expresses his concern that, if he loses it, he will not consider himself to be a Cypriot, at least not a fully-defined one:

Marios: ‘I like to speak my language. I would not like to lose the Greek language ... because I think that ... I will not be Cypriot anymore, I will not feel that I am one hundred percent Cypriot.’

The interviews also corroborate the concerns of previous scholars about the crucial break in intergenerational transmission that takes place between the first and second generation of heritage speakers. Stella states that their children must (*prépi*) learn CyGr. She presents this necessity as a given, providing no reasons why she thinks it is important. She, however, admits that she does not speak it to them and recognises that this is not right. She describes how she has passed on the responsibility of transmission

to her parents, who are first-generation and therefore dominant in CyGr. On the contrary, she explains in a somewhat apologetic way why she mainly speaks English to her children: she wants them to develop their vocabulary.

Interviewer: ‘Do your parents speak CyGr to the children?’

Stella: ‘They try. I ask them to speak Greek to them because they must learn. At our home, we [my husband and I] do not speak Greek to them. ... I know this is wrong but I want them to know English well because they are young, I want them to know many words.’

When asked about the CyGr variety that is spoken in London, heritage speakers overwhelmingly describe it in negative terms. They describe it as ‘heavy’ (*varetá*, a false friend between CyGr and SModGr; SModGr *varetós* ‘boring’) and ‘villagey, peasantry’ (*xorkátika*, with CyGr glide hardening [rk]), which are well-known labels that Cyprus-born speakers attach to the basilectal register of the dialect. Kyriacos makes a very straightforward association: the natural habitat of CyGr is the village whereas the natural habitat of SModGr is the city. Speakers see this as a direct consequence of the socioeconomic background of the first-generation who transplanted CyGr into the UK, most of whom came from rural areas of Cyprus. Skevi uses the superlative adjective ‘heaviest’ (*varítates*) to describe the words that her mother taught her and which she

had, in her turn, learned from her in-laws who had acquired CyGr in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Kyriacos: ‘For me, CyGr is like it is from the village and the mainland Greeks are, you know, from the city.’

Skevi: ‘My mother learned those really heavy words because, when she came to England ... she stayed with my grandmother and my grandfather, her in-laws here, and they spoke a type of CyGr from before 1940.’

London speakers also describe their variety of CyGr as ‘broken’ (*spazména*). This term has not been documented in Cyprus or among Cyprus-born speakers. It is a semantic loan from English *broken* in its use to describe an imperfectly spoken form of language. Prima facie, it would seem that *spazména* may refer to transfer effects that are found in the speech of English-dominant second- and third-generation speakers such as codeswitching, phonologically morphologically unadapted loanwords, or grammatical interference phenomena. Upon closer examination, however, it is revealed that *spazména* is another negative term that applies to basilectal features of CyGr that are found in the speech of monolinguals and Cyprus-born speakers, as well. Postalveolar fricatives and affricates as well as basilectal lexical items are most typically marked

negatively as broken or villagey CyGr by heritage speakers. Adamos considers the Greek spoken in London to be broken because it features *tʃe*, the CyGr variant for /ke/ ‘and’ in which /k/ has a postalveolar affricate realisation [tʃ]. The SModGr variant has a palatal stop [c], *ce*. Despoina reports that she learned ‘villagey Cypriot’ (*xorjátika cipriaká*, with *xorjátika* pronounced with acrolectal glide hardening [rj] instead of a CyGr [rk], cf. *xorkátika*) from her grandmother and lists a few lexical items that she considers to be markers of villagey CyGr. The list includes the familiar *tʃe*, *tʃain* ‘tea’ (another word that begins with a postalveolar affricate) and *máiris:a* ‘pressure cooker’, which is not typically perceived as basilectal in Cyprus. In response to the interviewer’s request for clarification as to her conceptualisation of villagey CyGr, Despoina describes her grandmother’s CyGr as broken, emphasising that it is different from SModGr.

Adamos: ‘Greek here in London is broken. The very broken type has *tʃe*.’

Interviewer: ‘What kind of Greek did your grandmother speak to you?’

Despoina: ‘Villagey CyGr.’

Interviewer: ‘What does that mean? Can you remember a few words to tell me?’

Despoina: ‘*Tʃe* [‘and’] instead of *ce*. *Tʃain* [‘tea’] and *máiris:a* [‘pressure cooker’].’

Interviewer: ‘*Máiris:a*? What do you mean by villagey? What is it for you?’

Despoina: ‘It is broken. ... CyGr is not exactly like SModGr.’

Some speakers consider the use of linguistic features and lexical items marked as CyGr improper and incorrect. When asked about her daughter’s Greek, Domnitsa replied that she wanted her to speak “properly” using “proper” words, making it very clear that CyGr is not proper. Among some speakers, this notion is so strong that they will go as far as to deny that they even know basilectal words or use basilectal linguistic features. Stella is uncertain as to whether she can speak “heavy” (*varetá*) CyGr and says she only knows some basilectal words. Skevi considers some of the basilectal words her mother used to say to be incorrect. As an example, she brings the third person singular present form *katalái* ‘understands’, in which an intervocalic /v/ has been deleted (*katalávi* → *katalái*), and compares it with the forms that she and her husband produce and in which the intervocalic fricative is present and which she perceives as being standard. *Katalái*, however, is not a SModGr form. The SModGr equivalent is *katalavéni*.

Domnitsa: ‘I want my daughter to speak properly. For her to have the proper word that she must use. I do not want her to speak the way I speak because I speak CyGr.’

Stella: ‘What is heavy CyGr like? To be honest, I don’t even know if I can talk like that. I know some words such as *pu<sup>n</sup>ga* [‘pocket’] or *mavlúka* [‘pillow’].’

Skevi: ‘There are some words that my mother used to say which are not correct. For example, my mother might say *katalái* [‘understands’] whereas we will say *katalávumen* [‘we understand’], *katalávi* [‘understands’].’

Anna denies that she would ever be caught producing the CyGr phrase *tf’ ejó* ‘me, too’ in the strongest of terms. *Tfe* is the CyGr variant for ‘and’ that we have already encountered. *ejó* is a basilectal form of the first person pronoun ‘I’, the acrolectal form being *eyó*. What is especially interesting is that Anna’s denial has a completely irrelevant trigger, which is my attempt to speak CyGr to her in order to facilitate the production of CyGr utterances. In the utterance that precedes her strong statement about *tf’ ejó*, I ask for some time to get used to speaking CyGr in the same way that she needs some time before she can feel comfortable speaking Greek for the purposes of the interview. When asked why she never uses it, Anna replies that *tf’ ejó* is not correct, a position that she reiterates when challenged that it is not a grammatical error. When asked if her mother, a first-generation speaker, would ever pronounce *tf’ ejó*, she provides another negative answer. Things get interesting when Anna is presented with a



mixed phrase containing the basilectal variant for ‘and’ *tʃe* but the acrolectal variant for ‘I’ *eyó*. She replies that her mother would say this, acknowledging that what is not proper is *ejó*. She does not consider *tʃe* to be improper, even though it, too, is a recognisable CyGr variant. Another basilectal variant, *ejóni*, is also rejected as wrong and its production is labelled lazy despite the fact that, as one reviewer correctly remarks, the CyGr word is longer than the SModGr equivalent and its articulation would require additional effort.

Interviewer: ‘Like you need some time to speak SModGr to me, I, too, (*tʃ*’ *ejó*) need some time to speak CyGr.’

Anna: ‘Well, I don’t say *tʃ*’ *ejó*. Let’s put it that way.’

Interviewer: ‘Why?’

Anna: ‘Because that’s not correct.’

Interviewer: ‘Yes, but it’s not an error.’

Anna: ‘*Tʃ*’ *ejó*? No, I’m a believer in speaking correctly.’

Interviewer: ‘Would your mother say *tʃ*’ *ejó*?’

Anna: ‘No.’

Interviewer: ‘*Tʃ*’ *eyó*?’

Anna: ‘*Tʃ*’ *eyó*? Yes, certainly.’

Interviewer: ‘So, is the problem *ejó* or *tʃe*?’

- Anna: 'Ejó is, not *ce*.'
- Interviewer: 'How about *ejóni*?'
- Anna: 'Wrong.'
- Interviewer: 'And why do people say it?'
- Anna: 'It's laziness.'

The use of SModGr, on the contrary, is considered proper. Its use is especially called for when interacting with speakers from mainland Greece. Elia, like many other speakers, singles out *ce* instead of *tfe* as one of the variants that she must (*prépi*) make the effort to produce when speaking with mainlanders to sound polite. She explains that this behaviour is not unlike what is found in Cyprus and corroborates this with the example of her niece, who lives in Cyprus and who considers anyone speaking in a standard accent to be speaking politely. According to her, "heavy" CyGr is generally considered impolite.

- Elia: 'If someone is from Greece, I feel that I must make the effort, too, to be polite and say *ce* instead of *tfe*. It is the same in Cyprus. For example, my niece might say to me, "He speaks politely", if someone's accent is different. Yes, if CyGr is heavy, people do not consider it polite.'

The interviews further reveal that positive perceptions of SModGr and negative perceptions of CyGr are deeply rooted in the complementary school system of London's community. Anna and Panicos view the role of complementary schools as promoting and developing literacy in SModGr, the only variety that has official status and a written form and the language that is shared by all Greek speakers regardless of their dialectal background. The fact that SModGr is the variety that is used in education is interpreted as evidence that it is a better (*kalit<sup>h</sup>:era*, with CyGr geminate [t<sup>h</sup>:]) and superior. In complementary schools, teachers from Greece are viewed as models of proper and correct Greek, especially with respect to pronunciation. Anna speaks very fondly of her school teacher who was from Greece and helped her to pronounce the language in a "softer" way, the assumption being that before she was taught by him her native CyGr pronunciation was harder or in any case less soft.

Interviewer: 'Which type of Greek do you think should be taught at schools?'

Anna: 'The correct type of Greek, the way it is written.'

Panicos: 'SModGr is better because that is the language that everybody knows.'

Panicos: 'If you go to school, you will be taught in SModGr.'

Interviewer: 'Do you believe that that makes it better?'

Panicos: 'Yes, I think so.'

Anna: 'The teacher that I had for the Greek O Level in 1985 ... was from Greece. He helped me a lot, and I think he also helped me in terms of my pronunciation.'

Interviewer: 'What problems do you have with the pronunciation?'

Anna: 'No, I don't have a problem with the pronunciation. He just helped me to speak Greek softer.'

In contrast, CyGr has no place in formal education. The only way in which it can be acquired is from the older to the younger generations. Pambos describes this generally expected way for acquiring CyGr in the community.

Pambos: 'At school, ... we learned SModGr, we did not learn CyGr. But you will learn the Cypriot dialect from your grandfather and your grandmother and afterwards from your mother, from your parents.'

The speakers that we interviewed reported very negative experiences when they used CyGr in complementary schools. They recall being scolded and treated disrespectfully by teachers in front of their fellow pupils because they spoke CyGr in class. Skevi

reports using CyGr to formulate a simple request to her teacher: asking for a chair to sit. The teacher, however, criticised her, mocking the use of the CyGr basilectal word *tsaéra* ‘chair’ and pretending not to understand. Faced with this feigned confusion and in her attempt to solve the apparent communicational impasse, Skevi resorted to the use of the English word *chair* and not to that of the acrolectal word *karékla*, which is what the teacher had expected. In reflecting on this experience, she concludes that the type of Greek that she had acquired and used was not correct, it was “heavy Cypriot” (*varetá cipriaká*) and a mistaken way of speaking (*laxos*, a basilectal word for ‘mistake’, the more meso- and acrolectal form being *láθος*).

Skevi: ‘I remember, when I was in the first grade, one day I was late and there was no chair for me to sit. And I said to the teacher, “I don’t have a *tsaéra*”. And the teacher gave me a nasty look. She said, “What is that?”, “Chair”, I said to her, “chair, in English”. And she said, “It’s not *tsaéra*, it’s *karékla*”. And afterwards I realised that the CyGr that I knew, that I had learned, was heavy CyGr. So afterwards I realised that I did not speak correctly, I spoke in a mistaken way.’

Speakers also reported that, in London, negative perceptions of CyGr become manifest not only in formal settings such as complementary schools but also in informal

ones such as the home environment. Stella recounts how she and her sister would speak basilectal CyGr as children at home. However, every time guests would come to visit, their mother would single out basilectal words in their speech and instruct them not to use them because they were “villagey” (*xorjáticos*, with acrolectal [rj]) and not “correct” (*sostí*). Instead, she would provide the acrolectal alternatives that the two girls ought (*prépi*) to use in the presence of the family guests in order not to embarrass them with their villagey talk.

Stella: ‘When we were young, when someone would come to visit, we would speak to our parents, you know, with a villagey sort of accent. So my mother would say, “That word is not correct”, if we tried to use it. “... You must use this word, not that one because that one is villagey”.’

Stella’s family is an interesting case not only because it evidences that negative attitudes towards CyGr have infiltrated London homes but also because it highlights that positive attitudes are also found among the London community and that these attitudes are sometimes expressed in the same social environments as negative attitudes. In stark contrast to Stella’s mother, her father tried to instill the idea to his daughters that there is nothing wrong with speaking CyGr. He presented the dialect as a part of their identity and as a legitimate variety of Greek that is on an equal footing with

SModGr, the only difference between the two being that CyGr happens to be spoken in villages. He inspired confidence in his daughters and attempted to remove feelings of embarrassment caused by negative perceptions of the dialect. However, his actual linguistic behaviour directly undermined his overtly expressed views as, when talking to other people in the public sphere, he would switch to SModGr.

Stella: ‘My father ... would say to us, “This type of Greek is not any better than that type of Greek. Both are Greek, it’s just that this type is villagey. There’s nothing to be embarrassed about and it’s where we come from.” [...] But my dad may have said, you know, not to be embarrassed about it but he, too, when he goes out and talks to other people, he speaks Greek from Greece.’

As a result of the overt expression of negative attitudes towards CyGr and of positive attitudes towards SModGr, of the predominance of SModGr in the complementary school system and in other formal settings, and of the diglossic behaviours that are observable within the community, some heritage speakers express a preference for using SModGr in communicating not only with Greek speakers from mainland Greece but also with other speakers with a Greek Cypriot background. Despoina states that she strives to speak “the Greek way rather than the Cypriot way” even though her social

network comprises almost exclusively of fellow members of the London community because that is what she was taught at the Greek school she attended. Chrystalla even admits that she does not want her children to pick up CyGr from her because she does not consider it to be a perfect model. Instead, she wants to expose them to SModGr.

Despoina: ‘I understand both CyGr and SModGr now because I learnt them at the Greek school but, when I speak, I try to speak the SModGr way rather than the CyGr way.’

Interviewer: ‘Why? Since you hang out with Cypriots, why do you try to speak SModGr?’

Despoina: ‘That’s what they taught us at the Greek school.’

Chrystalla: ‘I do not want my children to learn the type of Greek that I speak because it is not a perfect model. I prefer for them to hear SModGr.’

## **Conclusions**

Positive perceptions of SModGr and mixed perceptions, both positive and negative, of CyGr are found in the context of London. As in Cyprus, SModGr is perceived as a prestigious, proper and ‘correct’ variety of Greek. CyGr, in contrast, is described as a



villagey, heavy and even broken variety. In another similarity with Cyprus, negative attitudes in London target phonological features and lexical variants that belong or are perceived as belonging to the basilectal registers of the dialect. The most frequently mentioned phonological feature in that connection is the postalveolar affricate realisation [tʃ] of the /k/ phoneme, which surfaces before the front vowels /i e/ as in /ke/ → [tʃe] ‘and’. In terms of the lexicon, speakers show awareness of and frequently mention CyGr–SModGr doublets such as *mavlúka–maksilári* ‘pillow’ or *piú<sup>h</sup>ga–tʃépi* ‘pocket’ when talking about how villagey CyGr is.

Attitudes in London are preserved and reinforced by the same social institutions as in the original context of Cyprus with the community educational system playing a key role in engendering positive attitudes towards SModGr and negative attitudes towards CyGr. The attitude-driven practices that we find in London’s Greek complementary schools show high degrees of similarity to the ones that have been documented for Cypriot schools: teaching and learning are exclusively conducted in SModGr, which is promoted as the national variety that is shared by all Greeks. CyGr has no official place in complementary education, and its presence in the classroom is overtly discouraged with teachers correcting heritage speakers when they use CyGr features in their speech. Unlike in Cyprus, however, in the London community, the use of CyGr features is also discouraged in informal settings such as the home environment where some speakers encourage the use of SModGr. These practices lead to a community-wide preference for

the use of SModGr in communication with other members of the Greek Cypriot community, which poses a great threat to the intergenerational transmission and maintenance of CyGr as a heritage language in London.

The results of the study presented here differ from those presented in earlier works, most notably Papapavlou and Pavlou (2001) but also Gardner-Chloros et al. (2005), which do not report any negative attitudes towards CyGr among the London community. The discrepancy can be explained in terms of the specific methodology used by the two earlier studies, none of which seems to have contrasted SModGr and CyGr in the questions they asked their participants. An examination of Papapavlou and Pavlou's questionnaire (2001, p. 108–113) shows that the overwhelming majority of their questions sought to collect comparative information about the use and functions of either English as opposed to CyGr or English as opposed to Greek as a collective label. The only question that specifically contrasts SModGr and CyGr was *How do you rate your knowledge of Standard Modern Greek and the Greek Cypriot Dialect?* This naturally raises questions about the empirical basis of their conclusion that “there are no signs of negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek” (2001, p. 104). Similarly, Gardner-Chloros et al. focused on the distinction between English and SModGr and CyGr collectively (2005, p. 59). They adapted the questionnaire used in McEntee-Atalianis and Pouloukas (2001) by deconstructing their original statements, which referred to Greek only, into two separate new statements referring to SModGr and CyGr. For

example, the original statement *Greek is part of our cultural heritage* was deconstructed to *GCD [Greek Cypriot dialect] is part of our cultural heritage* and *SMG [Standard Modern Greek] is part of our cultural heritage*, crucially without specifically asking respondents to express their opinions about the two varieties in comparison. This methodological choice on the part of both groups of researchers obscured the mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards CyGr and the perception that it holds an inferior status compared to SModGr, which the present study was able to expose through sociolinguistic interviews.

### **Future research trajectories**

As is common in studies of the qualitative type, the sociolinguistic interviews threw up a rich variety of issues and perspectives about how members of London's Greek Cypriot community view and experience the languages making up their linguistic repertoire on an individual as well as on a collective level. It was impossible to thoughtfully include and properly address all these issues in this article, whose main aim was to highlight the fact that negative perceptions of CyGr are indeed found in the context of London contrary to previous claims. Further research is needed to explore, among others, when, how and why the perceptions of CyGr and SModGr were transplanted from Cyprus to the UK context by the first generation of speakers; what the role of Greek

complementary schools was/is in engendering these perceptions in terms of specific teaching and learning practices in the classroom and also in terms of curriculum design and implementation; which social factors, processes and practices favour the spread of negative perceptions towards CyGr in informal contexts and, consequently, its abandonment in favour of SModGr as the preferred heritage language for all communicative purposes; the reasons why negative attitudes are directed primarily towards phonological and lexical features of CyGr whereas morphological and syntactic features tend to go unnoticed by CyGr speakers even though their speech abounds with them and they are immediately identifiable by SModGr speakers as being dialectal.

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