MODERN GREEK LANGUAGE AND THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM
Language and Identity

- “Future conflicts will be sparked by cultural factors rather than economics or ideology”
- Jacques Delors  president of the European Community
- According to Alivizatos, the Greek Orthodox religion and the Greek language have together formed 'the fundamental pillars of its modern identity'—which is a fundamentally ethnic national identity.
- This perception is supported by Makrides, who takes the near correspondence between percentages of Greek-speaking people and of Orthodox people in Greece to indicate that ‘the notions of “being Greek” and “being Orthodox” are inextricably intertwined among modern Greeks
Modern Greek Identity

- **Religion** defines Greek identity
- According to the first Constitution of the War of Independence (Art. 2):
  - “Those indigenous inhabitants of the realm of Greece who believe in Christ are Greeks.”
- Were the Catholic Greeks of the Aegean islands as Greek as the Orthodox Greeks?
  - In **political terms** the answer is yes.
  - In **ideological terms** the answer is again yes, but only with grave misgivings.
Modern Greek Identity

- The Second Revolutionary Constitution introduces **language** as another important determining factor of Greek identity.
- “Those coming from abroad who have **Greek as their mother tongue** and **believe in Christ.**”
- A major step in the desired **Western** orientation of the new nation-state.
- It was silently dropped in the next revolutionary constitution
Modern Greek Identity

- Language became a powerful instrument in the hands of the Greeks nation-state in the drive to hellenize the multilingual lands it gradually wrenched from the Ottoman Empire in the course of a century.
The territorial expansion of Greece (1832-1947)

- **Kingdom of Greece, 1832**
- **The Ionian islands ceded by United Kingdom, 1863**
- **The congress of Berlin (1878) and the Conference of Constantinople (1881)**
- **The treaty of Bucharest (1913) after the Balkan wars**
- **East Thrace ceded by Bulgaria (1923)**
- **Territories acquired by the treaty of Sevres (1920) and ceded by the treaty of Lausanne (1923)**
- **Dodecanese ceded by Italy (1947)**
Modern Greek Identity

- *Heteroglossoi* and *Heterophonoi* (heterolinguals)
- Albanians and Vlachs (wlachs)
- After many centuries of cohabitation, both the Albanians and the Vlachs had been thoroughly hellenised
- No discrimination but incorporation
THE VLACHS IN BYZANTINE TIMES

Modern boundaries
Approximate boundary of Bulgarian rule around 900 AD
Approximate areas of Vlach speech today

[Map showing geographical locations and boundaries related to the Vlachs in Byzantine times]
Modern Greek Identity

- “Bulgarians” or “Thracian-Macedonians” were the descendants of the Slavs of Macedonia.
- They too identified with the Greek nation-state no less than the Greek-speaking Greeks of the time.
- The Greek-dominated Orthodox hierarchy and the dominance of Greek education and the Greek language had in the commerce of the Ottoman empire played an important role for the integration of those “others”.
Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment

- Under Turkish rule, Greek literature ceased to exist. Crete represents the only exception.
- Greek scholars and intellectuals flee to the west.
- Greek wealthy merchants immigrate to Europe where they form flourishing communities.
- The routes of trade facilitated the traffic of ideas.
Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment

- At about the second half of the eighteenth century, Greek scholars living abroad engaged in a process of reinventing the Greek people's past in order to determine their future.
- Phillelenism
- The circle's main concern was the liberation of Greece from Ottoman rule. Most of them envisaged a centralized nation-state oriented both politically and culturally to the West.
Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment

- For Greek scholars who regarded Europe as the modern-day inheritor of Greek classical culture, such an orientation amounted to a re-establishment of ties with the nation's ancient heritage.
- Ancient Greece-Western Europe-Modern Greece
Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833)

- The leading figure of the Greek Enlightenment
- Born in Smyrna
- In 1771 he went to Amsterdam in order to start a career in business.
Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833)

- In Amsterdam Koraes took lessons in foreign languages, and devoted his time to the study of scientific and philosophic books.
- He returned to Smyrna and in 1782 he departed again for Montpellier of France in order to study medicine.
- He stayed in France till the end of his life.
Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833)

- His accomplishments
  - **Medical**: original studies and translations of medical documents
  - **Philosophical**: publications of the works written by the ancient Greeks along with his critique and commendations
  - **Ethical**: many small pamphlets with compositions that aimed to enlighten the enslaved Greeks or to brief in detail foreigners on Greek issues. His mission caused a great reaction not only in Greek society but in all Europe and the United States (Thomas Jefferson)
Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833)

- Freedom loving and democratic, he watched carefully the political currents of his time and did not hesitate to stigmatize negatively every tendency that was despotic, authoritarian and outmoded.
- Koraes believed the Greeks would never attain true freedom from the backwardness of Ottoman bondage unless they became versed in the scholarly works of their ancient heritage.
Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833)

- Koraes first met Thomas Jefferson in France in 1785 when Jefferson served as an ambassador.
- Exchange of correspondence in 1823 between Adamantios Koraes, and Thomas Jefferson, in which Koraes sought advice on the best constitution for Greece, and Thomas Jefferson responded.
- Development of a formal language for scholars and the state
Language Conflicts

- In Greece a language controversy prevailed for decades, whether Greek literature should be written in *katharevousa*, a "high" literary language, the heritage of the ancients in modern form -- or in *demotike*, the spoken language, and, if in spoken language, then which spoken language in a country that had strong regional dialects and had suffered disunity under 450 years of Turkish rule.
For a person who does not speak Greek and whose mother tongue (e.g. English) exhibits no comparable form of **diglossia**, it is hard to understand the motivation of the Greek language question, as it concerns the coexistence of two - in extreme cases - completely different forms of Greek that greatly exceeds the usual stylistic difference between written and spoken language.
The same text in three variations

- **Katharevousa:**

  Τὸ υποβληθὲν τῇ Ἑρᾶ Συνόδῳ ἐν χειρογράφῳ πόνημα ῆ μῶν ὑπὸ τὸν τίτλον «Βίος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ» παρέπεμψεν αὐτὴ τῷ προεδρεύοντι αὐτῆς Σεβ. Ἀρχιεπισκόπῳ Σύρου, Τήνου καὶ Ἀνδροῦ κ. Μεθοδίῳ, ὡς ἔκθεσις αὐτοῦ ἀναφέρη αὐτῇ, ἣν τὸ περιεχόμενον τοῦ πονήματος τούτου εἶναι σύμφωνον πρὸς τὰς παραδόσεις τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας.

- **Dimotiki:**

  Το πόνημά σας που υποβλήθηκε σε χειρόγραφο στην Ιερὰ Σύνοδο με τον τίτλο «Βίος Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ», παραπέμφθηκε στον πρόεδρό της Σεβ. Αρχιεπίσκοπο Σύρου, Τήνου καὶ Ἀνδροῦ κ. Μεθοδίο, έκθεσία του να της αναφέρει αν το περιεχόμενο του πονήματος αυτού είναι σύμφωνο με τις παραδόσεις της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας.

- **Modern English:**

  Your work which was submitted in manuscript to the Holy Synod under the title "Life of Jesus Christ", was sent by it [the Holy Synod] to its president Archbishop of Syros, Tinos and Andros, so that he may report on whether the content of this work accords with the traditions of the Orthodox Church.
Phanariots

- Katharevousa was made the official language of the Greek state, since the "unpolished" language of the people was not thought of as able to fit the needs of a modern state. Instrumental in the early developments in the greek state were the phanariots, a group of conservative and educated nobles who supported the archaic language and were the most important critics of the language of the people.
The conflict continues

- By 1900, the discussion had become a matter of public interest.
- Proponents of Katharevousa denounced proponents of Dimotiki as "μαλλιαροί" (hairy, furry), "αγελαίοι" (gregarious, social, vulgar) and "χυδαίσταί" (speakers of slang, plebeians, vulgarians), while the proponents of Dimotiki called their enemies "γλωσσαμύντορες" (defenders of language, purists), "σκοταδιστές" (darkies, dark people, or more or less: the ones living in spiritual darkness), "αρχαιόπληκτοι" (archaics, ancient-manics), "μακαρονισταί" (imitators of archaic languages, spaghetti people) or "συντηρητικοί" (conservatives)
The educational system was in an alarming state and completely ineffective: The children were completely unable to express themselves in the unfamiliar formal language, which severely harmed their speech acquisition instead of educating them.
Language Conflicts

- Demotike finally prevailed, but not until the 20th century, and demotike did not replace katharevousa in the official press until 1970.
- To illustrate the emotions that the language controversy raised, the publication of a vernacular translation of the New Testament led to a riot in Athens in 1901.
The Final Solution

- In 1917, the Dimotiki had been successfully introduced into primary schools; but even there it was repeatedly replaced again with Katharevousa. Only on April 30, 1976 was the era of linguistic purism ended in Greece when Constantine Karamanlis' government banned Katharevousa from use in schools and, only a few months later, passed a law concerning the use of the Dimotiki in official texts and documents, which effectively terminated the diglossia. Ironically, the law in question was formulated in Katharevousa.