
The book is a collection of 26 papers, selected from among those originally presented at the 9th International Colloquium on Ancient Greek Linguistics (ICAGL9), held in Helsinki in 2018. In accordance with the guidelines of the ICAGL series of colloquia, the book—despite the selection made from the wider conference program—offers a comprehensive overview of the main current trends within Ancient Greek linguistics at different levels of analysis and covering a wide chronological range, from the archaic to the post-classical period. Besides these general directions, ICAGL9 also gave special prominence to contact studies, as well as offering a privileged perspective on linguistic issues arising from the analysis of original texts, thus promoting two lines of research to which the Helsinki school has largely contributed. Contact studies are thus included as chapters in the opening section (“Greek in contact”), followed by the other contributions, which are grouped into three separate sections according to the linguistic domain focused on (Section II—“Discourse analysis”, Section III—“Morphology and syntax”, Section IV—“Modality, semantics, and pragmatics”).

Section I, “Greek in contact”, discusses some significant contexts in which Ancient Greek came into contact with other languages in the course of its history: from the complex reconstruction of the interactions with the Anatolian branch (cf. the chapters by Dardano and Dedé) to the relationship with local languages after its spread as the imperial language (cf. Evans and Fendel on epistolary corpora from Egypt, and Merisio on funerary epigrams from Phrygia). This section also explores the role of Ancient Greek in the composition and diffusion of Biblical texts (cf. Tronci on Hebrew models for New Testament Greek, Kölligan and Katsikadeli & Slepoy on Greek loanwords respec-
tively in the Armenian Bible and in post-Biblical Hebrew/Aramaic). Apart from the intriguing contribution by Ginevra on the etymology of ποταμός, where the theme of contact remains marginal, the section provides a basic inventory of different responses to language contact, such as lexical loans (cf. Kölligan, and Katsikadeli & Slepyo), structural borrowing (cf. Fedel, Tronci, Dardano, and Dedé), language convergence (cf. Dardano, and Dedé), and code switching (cf. Merisio). Discussion concerns cases in which Ancient Greek appears both as source language (as in the explorations by Kölligan, and Katsikadeli & Slepyo) and receiving language (cf. Dardano, Dedé, Evans, Fendel, and Tronci). The chapters deal with diverse linguistic domains, from the lexicon (cf. Kölligan, and Katsikadeli & Slepyo) to phonology (cf., for instance, the discussion by Kölligan of the vowel treatment of Armenian loanwords, for which a possible Iranian and Syriac intermediation is argued), with a pervasive interest in the transfer of morpho-syntactic features, addressed by nearly half of the studies in the section. For instance, focusing on the wider context of the so-called Greek-Anatolian area, Dardano and Dedé trace back to Anatolian models two Greek features, apparently “recessive” (Dardano, p. 20) in the Greek system, i.e., respectively, the accusative of respect (cf. Dardano with a contrastive analysis of Homeric with Luwian and Hittite data) and the puzzling ἄνδα “ludonyms” (which Dedé associates with the Lydian -da- adjectives). Moving then to post-classical Greek, Tronci and Fendel evaluate the compatibility of new emerging patterns in comparison with Greek diachronic tendencies: Tronci deals with some unclassical aspects of the syntax of γίνομαι verb forms in New Testament Greek, which are usually taken as a Hebrew calque, while Fendel considers possible instances of phrasal verbs in the later language, evaluating the Coptic influence in the bilingual epistolary archives from Egypt.

Recurring issues within the field of contact linguistics run through the papers of this section, such as the relevance of linguistic factors in linguistic interference—with particular reference to the degree of integration of the foreign feature into the receiving system—and hence, ultimately, the interaction between external contact and internal language drifts in language change. Against the controversial debate on possible constraints on interference such as the highly discussed notion of “borrowability” (cf. Thomason 2001 for a survey), in the papers at issue, the induced features tend to display an underlying consistency with the structures of the receiving language. Accordingly, Fendel discusses late post-classical phrasal verb types in comparison to other “multi-word” verb combinations of the Greek system (also evoking Homeric tmesis), and Tronci relates the New Testament γίνομαι calques of Biblical Hebrew to existing uses of γίνομαι as a “setting-focusing verb” (Tronci, p. 198) that are similar to the Hebrew source. Here, external contact sets potential
changes in motion, also determining their direction. This is also the case when
the induced pattern is apparently recessive in the receiving system, as in the
Homeric accusative of respect treated by Dardano, which in accordance with
Benedetti (2020, 173)—who suggests a unified account of a subset of Ancient
Greek double object constructions (including the “whole and part schema“ to
which the accusative of respect is strictly related)—may align itself to a pro-
ductive Ancient Greek morpho-syntactic pattern.

Given the interplay between social and linguistic factors in any contact-
induced changes, other leitmotifs of historical sociolinguistics research emerge
from these papers, such as the building of a representative corpus as a method-
ological requirement (cf. the accurate discussion in Fendel’s chapter) for the
definition of the speech community where contact occurs, as well as the degree
of bilingualism involved (cf. Evans on the Greek command of Egyptian writers,
and Merisio on the switch from Phrygian to Greek in Neo-Phrygian funerary
epigrams).

The relationship between diversity and standard—another binomial of his-
torical socio-linguistic research—is explored in Evans’ chapter, where the
author works with three mid-third century BCE letters in an Egyptian environ-
ment from the Zenon archive, to achieve a better understanding of the Greek
koiné of the period. As elsewhere (cf. Evans 2010 and 2012), the author argues
for a concept of standard that is grounded in the social context where the texts
were produced, and that corresponds to the usage of a set of control writers
within the archive, i.e., Apollonios, the finance minister, and the members of
his circle. Evans thus opts for a “gradient” approach to the notion of standard
(cf. Georgakopoulou 2009, xv) with different degrees depending on both the
context of use (i.e., epistolary exchanges in Ptolemaic Egypt) and the user pro-
file (e.g., members of the Greek Ptolemaic establishment). Again, notions such
as “power” and “education”—as for more recent linguistic stages (cf. Ammon
2003)—crucially figure in the assessment of the standard variety: Egyptian doc-
uments are compared to the language use of the “educated élite” within the
same context (i.e., the Zenon archive) rather than to literary texts, where the
anachronistic Classical model was still relevant. What emerges is then a certain
consistency between the language of the Egyptian producers and the control
group. The variation encountered in the letters at issue is therefore ultimately
related to widespread trends within the archive language, such as uncertain-
ties in case marking and in the distribution of non-finite complements. One
such instance is the use of the ἵνα-sentence with the καλῶς plus ποιέω polite
formula instead of the expected participle complement encountered in the first
of the documents discussed (Evans, pp. 46–48); as suggested by the author, this
development may be understood either as a ἵνα independent (directive) sen-
tence after a fixed “lexicalized” polite phrase (cf. also Leiwo 2010, on similar cases from the later Mons Claudianus ostraca, where the imperative follows the same formula), or as the spread of finite complements to new contexts, since infinitives are also occasionally attested as complements of this polite formula (cf. Bruno 2020, 235) and ἵνα sentences are among the major competitors of infinitival complements (cf., e.g., Bruno forthcoming).

Moving to the other sections of the book, despite the variety of topics addressed, several thematic threads emerge across all the papers, creating close interrelations among them. Thus, the language contact theme echoes through morphosyntactic matters (cf. Section III—“Morpho-syntax”), where Agliardi relates the decreasing use of the dual in the Hesiod Erga to a diglossic dimension (“eines Prozesses von Sprachmischung einer älteren Mundart mit der gebildeten und moderneren Schriftsprache”, Agliardi, p. 312).

Discoursive matters as well as pragmatics and information structure issues are particularly foregrounded in these sections. This is shown not only by the chapters included in the dedicated parts (i.e. Section II—“Discourse analysis” and Section IV—“Modality, semantics, and pragmatics”), but also by the numerous contributions referring to these levels to account for phenomena of different orders. This is the case of morpho-syntactic studies (cf. Section II) such as Yamuza’s paper on the emergence of independent ὡστε sentences, which is traced back to dialogic discourse units, and particularly to “dyadic structures” (Yamuza, p. 395), as well as Bucci’s survey on nominatives in place of vocatives, where the concept of “conative function” is proposed as a heuristic device to account for the distribution of these forms. The interactional dynamics between interlocutors are in particular explored from different angles, either as addressed by specific research questions (cf. Lambert on linguistic markers of assent between interlocutors, and Piedrabuena and Zinzi on the expression of directive speech act sub-types, i.e., respectively supplications and prayers, also evaluated in terms of politeness), or because they are ultimately shown to be relevant within the authors’ arguments (cf. Taylor on counterfactual optatives in Homer, or Allan on the particle δῆ, which in Thucydides’ prose results in “an explicit sign of the narrator, directly addressing the reader”, pp. 214, 231).

There are also other recurring issues in the different papers of the collection that provide the book with a certain thematic consistency, highlighting a convergence of interests within recent Ancient Greek linguistics. Particles are not only explored within the discourse chapters, where their use is traced back to alternating units of discourse (cf. Allan on δῆ, and Martínez on γάρ), but also within the interactions with other levels (cf. Bartolotta & Kölligan on their role in the encoding of counterfactual value in the hypothetical period). Numer-
ous papers concern the Ancient Greek verbal system: some draw attention to categories not yet systematically studied in Ancient Greek, such as evidentiality (cf. Lillo on oblique optatives), while others handle long-standing issues, such as the function of reduplication (cf. Melazzo on reduplicated Homeric imperatives) and the recruitment of the verbal augment in the history of the Greek language (cf. Bartolotta & Kölligan on the spread of indicative forms, Rodeghiero, who tests a traditional temporal approach on the augment, and De Decker, who exploits a semantic-pragmatic approach to the same issue).

The interface between different domains is also addressed by several of the morpho-syntactic studies: the relationship between morphology and syntax is explored by de la Villa, who deals with -τις/-σις deverbal nouns, considering their relation with the lexico-syntactic properties of their verb base, as well as Revuelta, who handles the impact of μετα-prefixation on the argument structure of the simple verb. Prosody meets syntax in the chapter by Pardal Padin, where the cohesion between verb predicates and their second argument is under scrutiny, and morpho-syntactic conditions governing word order are ultimately singled out.

In conclusion, the volume meets the tradition of ICAGL proceedings, providing through the 26 papers selected a comprehensive outline of the state of the art of Ancient Greek linguistics, where sophisticated theoretical frameworks and digital research tools integrate with philological analyses and accurate reconstructions. Chronologically, although it mainly insists on archaic and classical language (with a special focus on the ever-challenging Homeric language), the collection, in accordance with the editors’ intents, attests the increasing interest in post-classical language, especially for documents beyond the bounds of the literary canon. Although the analyses range over all areas of research, the volume offers a special focus on contact studies (significantly, the first section in the book), and reflects the overall increasing impact of pragmatic- and discourse-oriented explanations in traditional morpho-syntactic matters, offering new perspectives on old themes.

*Carla Bruno* | ORCID: 0000-0002-9082-0955
University for Foreigners of Siena, Siena, Italy
bruno@unistrasi.it
References


