

Essay Reviews

George D. Babiniotis. Γεώργιος Δ. Μπαμπινιώτης, *Λεξικό της νέας ελληνικής γλώσσας*. Athens: Center for Lexicography. 1998. Pp. 2064. 23000 drachmas.

Greek lexicography is coming of age. The furor that accompanied the publication of Babiniotis's dictionary reflects precisely the growth of the discipline in the same way that the pangs of adolescence relate to oncoming maturity. What has been disappointing in the dictionary's reception, however, is the reluctance of those involved to raise any pertinent linguistic questions in a debate that included lengthy litigation and transformed a dictionary into a best-seller. In order to restore the balance, this review essay will touch upon issues of the dictionary's organization, lemma selection and arrangement, the use of definitions, style labels and examples, as well as broader linguistic and lexicographic issues.

It is difficult to do justice to a book of more than two thousand pages in the limited space of a review. One of the complications of dealing with such a prodigious work is the temptation to lose sight of the forest for the trees. In view of this, it must clearly be stated at the outset that Professor Babiniotis's *Λεξικό της νέας ελληνικής γλώσσας* is a landmark in Greek linguistics and lexicography. It provides the largest scale picture of the Greek language after the demise of diglossia, offering a plethora of invaluable information about the multiple resources of Greek. Its breadth and scope render it a useful tool for teachers of Greek, for learners, translators, creative writers, and—generally—anyone who uses the language with some frequency. However, it is not only its size that makes Babiniotis's dictionary an outstanding work. Its distinctive character is that, with the exception of Kriaras's smaller and less-broadly focused work (1995), it is the only dictionary of the contemporary Greek language compiled by a professional linguist on the basis of expert rather than amateurish standards and principles. This major oeuvre by the doyen of modern Greek linguistics is bound to constitute one of the standard reference works for years to come, alongside Stamatakos's and Dimitrakos's earlier accomplishments. This said, we should not infer that the dictionary lacks mistakes, inadequacies, or shortcomings. Only those who have not been involved in a lexicographic project could make such a naïve assumption.

To start with the dictionary's size, the figures given on the cover are: 150,000 "words and phrases" and 500,000 "definitions and uses." Although comparisons may be deceptive, let us note that most modern dictionaries of English include fewer than 100,000 headwords (Longman's 1984 edition has

90,000, the Penguin 1969 edition has 40,000, the second edition of Cobuild has 75,000 references and 100,000 examples), whereas the third edition of *Collins English Dictionary* reaches 180,000 lemmas and the 1987 edition of Random House has 260,000 headwords (Crystal 1987:108). Nevertheless, as Babiniotis rightly points out in his introduction (p. 27), the attempt to include as many words as possible is responsible for the distorted view of the language given by most Greek dictionaries. Babiniotis's dictionary should be praised for following criteria of use for the inclusion of a word rather than slavishly imitating earlier works. The range of lemmas includes proper names and abbreviations (incorporated in the main body of the dictionary rather than in appendices) as well as "frozen phrases" such as *katharevousa* sayings and Latin expressions. The useful division into main lemmas, sub-lemmas (for related compounds and derivations), internal lemmas or phrases, and detached lemmas (for transparent compounds and derivations such as those of privative α - and $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron$ -) facilitates an economic description. It must be noted here that all phrases are included in the lemma of the main headword (p. 32) rather than appearing as separate lemmas.

Regarding lemma selection, the author emphasizes that the main criterion is that of use, quite aside from origin (p. 27). The principle of "idiosynchrony" (p. 28) is also followed, in order to exclude dialectal or slang words that have not been assimilated in standard modern Greek. Special emphasis is given to scientific terms, especially "those that are used in linguistic communication by many people" (p. 28). One of the dictionary's most invaluable features is the comprehensive tables of linguistic categories such as military ranks, types of law courts, the religious hierarchy, currencies, physical elements, etc. With an eye kept on younger speakers, since they may not be familiar with the earlier phases of the language, the author provides detailed information about older orthography, standard Church texts, etc. Place names are also included, although there seems to be no principle governing why *Αμαλιάδα*, *Κάρντιφ* or *Λωζάνη* should be in but *Κυπαρισσία* or *Βαρκελώνη* out. The same is true of team names (*ΑΕΚ*, *ΟΦΗ*, *Πανελλήνιος* and others are missing) and some abbreviations (*ΔΗΣΥ*, *ΔΗΚΟ*, *ΠΥΣΠΕ* are not included, whereas *ΑΚΕΛ* and the older forms *ΠΥΣΔΕ*, *ΠΥΣΜΕ* are). Altogether, one would need to search extensively to find scores of useful or current words missing from the dictionary; *αποδόμηση*, *Ίντερνετ*, *κλωνοποίηση*, *λιποαναρρόφηση* and *λίφτινγκ*, *μεταμοντέρνος*, *σιντί* and *σιντιρόμ* are all there. I managed to detect the absence only of *εργατώρα* (but *ανθρωπόωρα* is in), *ευρωεπιταγή*, *ημιαπασχόληση*, *ιστοσελίδα*, *ματιέρα*, *μηχανική υποστήριξη*, *πολύνεκρος*, *πιτσιλαδόρος* or *πιτσιλιστής*, *σεμέν*, *τροχοδρομώ*, *τσοκ*, *φωτοτυπείο*, *χιλιόκυκλος*. It is easier to suggest lemmas that ought to have been excluded—*ξενηλασία* and *ευρωλιγούρης*, for example, which have really not caught on in everyday usage, and *θεογεννήτορας*, *θεοδρομώ*, *θεοφόρος*, etc., which are found only in the very specialized register of religion. Synonyms and antonyms are most usefully included in most lemmas. Finally, one of the most important contributions of the dictionary is the exhaustive and meticulous tracing of etymology for all lemmas, including neologisms, proper names, foreign words, and ancient words. The authoritative work of Babiniotis in this area, bearing ample witness to the "long, rich and

adventurous history of the Greek language” (p. 2064), fills another major gap in Greek reference works.

The vast majority of lemma forms are indisputable, although there are a few inconsistencies. For instance, in *θεαθήναι* the phrase given in the lemma is *προς / δια το θεαθήναι*, whereas in the example that follows we are given the most common form, namely *για το θεαθήναι*. One could also argue for *αντάτζιο* instead of *αντάτζο* and certainly against *κάμεραμαν*, *λάιτμοτιβ* and *Λίχτενσταϊν*, in which the antepenultimate rule of Greek is violated. Most usefully, spelling and pronunciation variants are included, although again not always consistently (e.g., in *ξηρός* we are given *ξηρός*, but not *ξερός* in *ξηρός*—also, *νύμφη του Θερμαϊκού* appears in contrast to *νύφη* in the lemma *Θερμαϊκός*). Furthermore, additional emphasis could be placed on cross-referencing, where the criterion of use is not always followed. For instance, some common forms of proper names—examples are *Γιώργος* and *Μανόλης*—are not found as separate lemmas, nor are they cross-referenced to the main lemma (*Γεώργιος*, *Εμμανουήλ*), although this is done in the case of a few female nicknames (e.g., *Γιώτα*). The criterion of use is obviously not followed in such cases as *τένις*, which is cross-referenced to *αντισφαίριση*, *χαίρετε*, which is only found in *χαίρω*, *φυλάω*, which is given as a variant of *φυλάσσω* rather than the other way round (see also my comment below on second conjugation verbs), etc. In the case of the simple *φαξ*, one is cross-referenced to *τέλεφαξ*, only to find out that this is really *τηλεομοιοτυπία*, to which one is sent to discover the full meaning. Finally, it would be useful if all main forms of most irregular verbs had been included, cross-referenced to the main lemma for the sake of the foreign learner, for whom this knowledge should not be presupposed. This happens only for *πάω* (cross-referenced to *πηγαίνω*) and *έλα* (to *έρχομαι*) but not for *βάλω*, *δω*, *είδα*, *βρήκα*, *βρω*, *δώσω*, *είχα*, *κάψω*, *πω*, *είπα*, *πιω*, etc.

The arrangement of the lemma follows careful principles. The word's ordinary form is given first; secondary forms follow. Then comes grammatical information together with alternative forms. According to the dictionary's principles, it is the prototypical or “core” meaning that is given first and not the most frequent meaning. This is followed by examples and phrases, to which much space is devoted. In the introduction (p. 32), a careful distinction is made between collocations (*λεξιλογικές συνάψεις*), lexical phrases (*περι-φραστικές λέξεις*), proverbs (*παροιμίες*) and idioms (*ιδιωτισμοί*). This is not always reflected in the format of the lemma in that, for instance, collocations cannot be distinguished from examples. Also, many useful collocations seem to be missing—e.g., *βιοποριστικοί λόγοι*, *διεκδικώ δικαιώματα*, *εθιμοτυπική επίσκεψη*, *εκπληρώνω στόχους*, *ιλιγγιώδες ποσό*, *καταχρηστικός όρος*—, nor is there any syntactic information on rather frequent but complex items like *μακάρι* and *χαλάλι*. Furthermore, quite a few improvements could be made in the treatment of parts of speech. For example, the dictionary is not enlightening on the messy area of particles: *και*, *αν*, *μην*, *μήγαρις* are all characterized as particles whereas the first two can also be used as subordinating conjunctions introducing adverbial clauses. In addition, the behavior of conjunctions is not always accurately depicted: in the lemma for *όσο*, duration is given as the last meaning,

while in the lemma for ενώ it is given as the first, whereas the opposite might be closer to the truth. The discourse properties of these elements could also be more fully appreciated. For instance, most examples in όμως sound unnatural, although the most frequent use of the item in second place appears in other lemmas (e.g., θυσιάζω). Clearly, much more work in the direction of Goutsos, King, and Hatzidaki (1994) and Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1998) is needed before we will be able to ask for more accurate descriptions.

The dictionary's 500,000 definitions are largely accurate and comprehensive. As the introduction notes, they offer "in a simple and intelligible way all necessary information" (p. 31). Apart from the odd mistake, the definitions tend to be wordy, which is perhaps the price one pays for intelligibility. Their discursiveness (e.g., μουσουλμανισμός: η μονοθεϊστική θρησκεία του Ισλάμ, αυτή που δέχεται . . . οι δε διδασκαλίες της είναι . . .) contributes to this tendency. In many definitions, considerable redundant information could have been left out without any loss—e.g., αποσυντεθειμένου και πεθαμένου σώματος (in the lemma for θανατίλα), ο μικρός και προστατευτικά κλεισμένος χώρος (in the lemma for θερμοκήπιο), από μουσαμά, λάστιχο, φελλό ή συνθετικό υλικό (in the lemma for ξιφασκία). This is especially true in cases in which an illustration works best, as with animal names, everyday objects, etc. Compare, for instance, Babiniotis's 57-word definition for κόμπρα with the 22 words in *Cobuild*, the 12 words in Kriaras, and the 19 words accompanied by a picture in *Longman's English Dictionary of Language and Culture*. Even the huge third edition of *Collins English Dictionary* manages to convey two meanings of the word in only 39 words. Furthermore, the principle of not giving synonyms as definitions (p. 31) is not always followed (see, for example, ξεφουσκώνω, ξεδιαλύνω, ξεθεώνω), and not infrequently a simple word is explained by more difficult ones (e.g., ξεχαρβαλώνω: επιφέρω πρόσθετες ανωμαλίες).

The examples are drawn primarily from everyday spoken and written language and secondarily, as noted in the introduction, "from proverbs, song lyrics, quotes from literary works, etc." (p. 32). This latter emphasis, even if secondary, is one of the least successful features of the dictionary, which in this respect has unfortunately followed the traditional Greek lexicographic deference to the Greek literary canon. It is misguided to explain αηδόνι and ξαστοχώ by quoting Seferis, ξαναγίνομαι by quoting Elytis, πένης by quoting Cavafy, and so on, when no helpful information about the use of the word can be gathered from the literary context. At the same time, this is a dubious practice also for literary reasons. For instance, is ξοδιάζω an everyday word or a *hapax legomenon* in Cavafy? Is the meaning of βάρβαρος in Cavafy's well-known poem really απολίτιστος άνθρωπος? As is rightly pointed out in the introduction (p. 32), it is the common, conventional use and not the deviant or creative turn of phrase that a dictionary should aim to illustrate in its examples.

The employment of labels indicating style and usage constitutes a considerable improvement over previous dictionaries. Their meticulous accuracy reveals the fine nuances that may be achieved in Greek by recourse to the wide range of stylistic repertoires available in the language. It also underlines the complexity that characterizes many of these choices and the systematic nature of

the implied distinctions and variation. The well-known dichotomy of Greek, which was formerly assigned in an undifferentiated manner to demotic and *katharevousa*, can now be carefully placed along the axes of style, genre, and tone, as underlined in the introduction (p. 32). What is missing here, however, is a more explicit discussion of the principles involved. It is not clear, for example, whether the set of labels mentioned on page 32 of the introduction is finite or whether other *ad hoc* terminology is meant to be used in the dictionary, as seems to be the case. The employment of *εκφραστικό* for expressive uses is not straightforward in many cases (e.g., *ολοστόλιστος*, *παθιάρης*, *παιδούλα*) despite the term's explicit discussion in the comment on *εκφραστικές λέξεις*. Similarly, there is no explanation of the difference between *λαϊκό* and *καθημερινό* for everyday, colloquial uses or between *καθημερινό* and *άτυπο* for informal uses (the comment on *ανά-* seems to equate these two, whereas the comment on *γιατί* speaks of *απλούστερο ύφος*). The difference between *αρχαιοπρεπές*, *παλαιότερο*, and *λόγιο* is not explained, nor is it obvious from the respective use of the labels in various lemmas (e.g., *ευπατρίδης*, *ημείς*, *όρχηση* are *αρχαιοπρ.*, whereas *κοκόνα*, *παιδονόμος*, *κουνενές* are *παλαιότ.*, and *καθέδρας*, *κυτταρογόνος*, *πολυγράφος* are *λόγ.*). On this basis, it is not clear why some words (e.g., *κλεφτρόνι*, *πενηντάρης*) are marked as *λαϊκές* or even *λαϊκότερες*—but in respect to what?—(e.g., *ξεμαλλιάρης*, *παραδώθε*), while others are marked as *σπάνιες*—always in *λόγ.-σπαν.*—(e.g., *ορισμένως*, *Πανάχραντος*), or *καθημερινές* (*λουλούδι*, *πατατιά*), *οικείες* (*ξινούτσικος*), *επίσημες* (*κονικλοτροφείο*) or not marked as *λόγιες* when presumably they should be (e.g., *ευφρόσυνος*, *εύχαρις*).

Certainly one of the most original features of Babiniotis's dictionary is the inclusion of "comment" boxes whose content ranges from prescriptive remarks on usage to discussion of words of special interest (see pp. 36 ff. in the introduction). Many of these comments are informative mini-essays on various aspects of Greek that could easily stand in any reference book about the language. Many of them also present, and incorporate most cleverly, observations from the experience of previous dictionary makers. All of them, even if not equally interesting, are very enjoyable to read. Especially useful is the wide and accurate coverage of linguistic terminology, including comments on delexical verbs, slang or argot, generative-transformational grammar, gender, pidgin, discourse adverbs, conjunctives, etc. My only qualm has to do with the style, which includes many attitudinal markers (e.g., exclamation points, or *προφανώς*), personal comments (e.g., *έχουν και οι λέξεις τη μοίρα τους . . .*), and too frequent evaluation (e.g., *ο περιφημος φιλόλογος Κόντος*, *ο μέγας*, *ο πολύς*, etc.). This is not only unusual for a dictionary that claims to be "detached"; it also seems to take for granted a uniform point of view shared by writer and addressee, as in phrases like *εμείς δε οι Έλληνες*, *όταν οι ξένοι χρησιμοποιούν στην ορθογραφία τους το «ελληνικό» γ . . .*, *δεν επιτρέπεται να το εγκαταλείψουμε εμείς*. This inclusive *εμείς* alienates the reader who does not share the same presuppositions.

The dictionary's most significant prescriptive suggestions concern the vexed problem of Greek spelling. There are specific comments in individual

lemmas as well as special tables on orthographic problems. Some of these are rather self-consciously fashioned after the injunctions of the Atticist grammarians. One can almost hear echoes from Phrynichus' dictionary: *ακμήν αντί του έτι. Συ δε φυλάττου χρήσθαι, λέγε δε έτι!* Here one wonders whether all of Babiniotis's suggestions, although well-founded, are practicable or liable to survive, especially against the grain of current school practice, as for example the suggested orthography of *ρωδάκινο, μάννα, ήσκιος, παππάς, τέσσερεις, κόκκαλο, μητριά, γυιος, πατριός, φτειάχλω*. In other respects, a rather balanced approach is followed, as one can see, for instance, in the comments on *αφορά*, on the pronunciation of *γγ* and *ντ*, on the use of both *μονοτονικό* and *πολυτονικό* where appropriate, or in the sensible suggestion to change the indeclinable *ευρώ* to *ευρό*.

The main body of the dictionary is enclosed between an essay on the Greek language (reprinted from an encyclopedia) and a supplement on Greek lexicography. Both of these additions are exceptionally informative and well-argued, although they necessarily gloss over many interesting details. The lexicographic supplement, offering a wealth of information and a standard historical description for future lexicographers, historians, and linguists, is probably the best paper written to date on the Greek lexicographic tradition. Babiniotis rightly emphasizes the contribution of erudite scholars such as Byzantios, Koumanoudis, and Stamatakos, as well as industrious amateurs like Vostantzoglou. However, in his attempt to restore the fame of these philologists and linguists of the past, he may be overlooking the negative effects of the shadow they cast upon modern Greek linguistics and lexicography. For instance, there is no doubt that earlier prejudices about the literary canon, found even in scholars as perceptive as Tzartanos, are largely responsible for the neglect of spoken data in modern Greek linguistic analysis (see Goutsos, Hatzidaki, and King 1993).

It should be obvious that such a grand-scale work raises a multiplicity of linguistic and non-linguistic issues. How surprising, therefore, that its reception has focused myopically so far on some of its most marginal aspects. The fact that criticism has been leveled mainly against the work's supposedly anti-national character reveals the low level of current debate in Greece. There has been no discussion of the dictionary's representation of other social or personal relations. For instance, it includes detailed discussions of the feminist linguistic movement and of male-dominated linguistic structures (comments in the lemmas *γυναίκα* and *άνδρας*, respectively), both of which, to me at least, seem informative and well-balanced, although one could argue that they would have been more poignant if written by a woman. It would be interesting to look more closely at lemmas such as these for sexual preference words or for religious expressions where the Orthodox perspective is taken for granted.

In sum, although many lemmas could be improved, in particular regarding overall consistency, the general picture is that of a painstakingly sound description of the contemporary Greek language as spoken and written in a variety of domains. Apart from this, Babiniotis's dictionary is designed with the user in mind. It clearly offers the best entry-layout of all existing dictionaries; it

is printed on paper of durable quality, and is attractively bound. Furthermore, it is marred by only a handful of typographical errors (some of these are: Jupiter in δωδεκάθεο, tabu word in εσώρουχο, λέξη tabou in αήρ, εκτιμη- in θαυμασμός, ξελαμπυκάρω in θολώνω, έμβηλιμα in ισχύς, εγκέφαλος instead of εγκέλαδος in ξαναχτυπώ, ξενύχτισε in ξενυχτώ, σόρτς, τσίφτισσα in τσίφτης, the phonetics in γιος ή γυιος, φωνητική and αγκύλη, Dictionary on p. 2049). This handful is no small feat, if we compare it with the situation in most Greek dictionaries.

There is no doubt that Babiniotis's work paves the way for a new generation of Greek dictionaries. These new works will necessarily have to address the issues that this dictionary has left unresolved. One such issue is the standardization of second conjugation verbs that have a variant ending (-άω /-ώ) in the lemma form. The dictionary includes lemmas without an -άω variant (διψώ, ξαμολώ, ξαναχτυπώ, ξεμεθώ, κουνώ, πηδώ, περνώ, etc.), others without an -ώ variant (κοπανάω, κωλοβαράω, αμολάω) and some that include a cross-reference of one variant to the other (e.g., κοτάω to κοτώ). This choice of lemma forms does not seem to be based on anything more than randomness, since no explicit principles or data considerations are presented. Another issue is the under-representation of major geographical (and not dialectal) variants of Greek, as in the case of words that have different meanings, frequencies, and uses in Cyprus as opposed to the rest of the Greek-speaking world (e.g., σκύβαλα, περπατητός, βαρετός, πιάνω, προσοντούχος, ψες, φώτα).

Finally, any future work will need to take full advantage of the advances in corpus lexicography and thus consider to what degree dictionary data are representative and natural. The systematic study of corpus evidence is nowadays an indispensable tool in the lexicographer's hands, one that answers many of the questions that the Babiniotis dictionary raises—for example, the distinction between “use” and “meanings” (p. 31)—and that clarifies the guiding principles of dictionary compilation—for example, what is meant by κοινό γλωσσικό αίσθημα στην αβίαστη εκφορά του λόγου (p. 32). Among other things, recourse to electronic corpora would allow us to establish the most frequent and thus most useful lemma form (e.g., εχθές, χτές or χτες) in a simple and straightforward way. It would also contribute to avoiding unnatural and artificial examples (e.g., με πόσους έχεις ξαπλώσει; in ξαπλώνω) and to underlining the pragmatic functions of words and phrases. Most importantly, the use of electronic corpora would help us specify more accurately the various uses of a word according to register or medium (e.g., whether αναπνοή and ανάσα really correspond to a spoken-written distinction, as claimed) and, above all, would help us bring out the collocational patterns of the Greek language, thus emphasizing the most crucial aspect of word meaning (see Goutsos, King, and Hatzidaki 1994). Now that the Greek language has a major reference work, we have no excuse for not entering this new era of lexicography. Babiniotis's dictionary is invaluable precisely because it reveals this horizon of possibility and specifies the linguistically relevant questions.

It can only be hoped that the publication of this dictionary will stimulate further lexicographic work on Greek, especially because of the absence of

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much-needed tools for the learner (e.g., abridged dictionaries, thesauri, etc.). If, according to a favorite lexicographic metaphor, a dictionary is a snapshot of the language as spoken and written at a certain moment, then Babiniotis's dictionary is surely a professional family picture, showing warts and all. We are eagerly awaiting the rest of the album.

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