

Power and Solidarity in Modern Greek Conversation: Disagreeing to Agree

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Abstract

In Modern Greek conversation, disagreement, which can express power, can also be used to create solidarity among participants. Analysis of a segment of tape-recorded, naturally occurring conversation demonstrates that the three primary speakers are pursuing different frames—that is, they have different purposes in the conversation—and that they have different styles of disagreeing. The Greek man disagrees directly; the Greek woman briefly agrees before going on to disagree; the American woman disagrees indirectly. Analysis of other, briefer excerpts of casual conversation reveals that linguistic markers of solidarity occur at points of disagreement. These markers are (1) first name or figurative kinship term, often in diminutive form, and (2) personal analogy. Finally, two linguistic markers frequently occur at points of disagreement: (1) the particle «πε» and (2) what we call “adversative imperatives.” This discussion furthers our understanding of the relationship between power and solidarity in conversation in general, and in Modern Greek conversation in particular.

1. Introduction

The dimensions of power and solidarity have been fundamental to sociolinguistic theory since Brown and Gilman (1960) introduced the concept in relation to the pronoun system. Tannen (1984, 1986, 1990) has explored the paradoxical nature of these two dynamics and the implications for conversational discourse. The present paper extends this investigation to Modern Greek discourse by examining the negotiation of agreement and disagreement in naturally occurring conversations tape-recorded in Greece.

In a sense, agreement is an expression of solidarity, disagreement an expression of power. We find, however, in the Greek conversations examined, that overt disagreement is marked by expressions of soli-

ilarity. The present study begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework of power and solidarity. Then we examine an extended example of a disagreement in which two Greek speakers vie to give travel advice to an American. We show that the disagreement is a conflict of frames—that is, what participants think they are doing in the conversation. We examine the participants' differing styles of disagreement and we discuss the sense in which the disagreement itself is a sign of solidarity. Moving on to other, briefer examples, we show that disagreement is often accompanied by two types of linguistic markers of solidarity: (1) first name or figurative kinship term, or a diminutive form of one of these; and (2) personal analogy. Finally, we identify two linguistic markers of disagreement: (1) the particle *pe*, and (2) what we call adversative imperatives.

2. Power and solidarity

Brown and Gilman (1960) introduced the framework of power and solidarity by reference to the linguistic choices that must be made in languages that have “polite” and “familiar” forms of the second person pronoun. The “polite” pronoun, referred to as “V” from the French *vous*, corresponds to the modern Greek *εσείς* “you”. The “familiar” pronoun, referred to as “T” from French *tu*, corresponds to modern Greek *εσύ* “you”. In English, which does not have two second person pronouns to choose from, address terms are roughly parallel: title-last-name corresponds to the V pronoun, while use of first name corresponds to T.

The power dynamic is in play when one party addresses the other with T but is addressed by V: adult to child, boss to secretary, teacher to student, master to servant, doctor to patient. The solidarity dynamic reigns when speakers address each other in the same way; both use T (for example, children or close friends with each other) or both use V (for example, professors or doctors who do not know each other well or who are in a formal meeting). Thus it is whether or not the forms of address are reciprocal, not the forms themselves, that determines whether power or solidarity is primary. Reciprocal forms of address, whether familiar or formal, place speakers on an equal footing;¹ nonreciprocal forms of address position those who receive V as one-up and those who receive T as one-down.

The importance of symmetry, rather than formality, is illustrated by the following example. Tannen was once scheduled to give a talk entitled “The Paradox of Power and Solidarity.” The professor scheduled to be respondent to her talk arrived dressed in a three-piece suit, with a knapsack on his back. The suit was intended to represent power, the knapsack solidarity. These symbols sparked immediate recognition

among audience members. For example, if students were staging a demonstration, a professor who appeared in their midst dressed casually and wearing a knapsack might be seen as demonstrating solidarity with them. In contrast, if he appeared wearing a three-piece suit, he would be perceived as reminding them of his position of superior power. But these modes of dress do not necessarily have the same associations with power and solidarity in all situations. For a man at a corporate board meeting, wearing a three-piece suit would mark solidarity with the other board members similarly dressed, and wearing a knapsack would set him apart from the other participants.

Tannen (1984, 1986, 1990) demonstrates the paradoxical relationship between power and solidarity as it emerges in conversational discourse. Far from being mutually exclusive, power and solidarity entail each other. Any show of solidarity necessarily entails power, in that claiming similarity and intimacy has an element of control; intimates, for example, are expected to do things for each other, and obligations to family and close friends often result in significant limitations on an individual's autonomy. Similarly, any show of power entails solidarity, in that controlling others necessarily involves them in a relationship. It is only with someone with whom one has no relationship at all that one is entirely uninvolved.

Furthermore, as Tannen (1986) puts it, “power and solidarity are bought with the same currency.” That is, the same linguistic means are used to express both. This has just been seen with regard to forms of address: being addressed by T reflects power if its use is asymmetrical, as, for instance, when a doctor addresses a patient by first name, but the patient must use “Doctor” in response; on the other hand, being addressed by T expresses solidarity when its use is symmetrical—as when friends address each other by first names.

This ambiguity gives rise to potential misjudgments. Tannen (1986) gives the example reported by a man who visited his grandmother in a nursing home.² The grandmother boasted that she was really “in” with the nurses because they called her “Millie.” The grandson sadly suspected that she was (fortunately) misinterpreting as a gift of solidarity what was really a violation of power: the nurses' insufficient respect for his grandmother's status and age. Similarly, women are addressed by their first names more frequently than men. One may ask (as does Tannen 1986, 1990) whether this results from solidarity (people perceive women to be friendlier and feel more comfortable with them) or power (people have less respect for women and see them as less important than men). It is possible for a speaker to intend the latter and be perceived as revealing the former, or vice versa.

¹In a study by Paulson (1999) of father-son conversations, the

Modern Greek, it emerges that women, more frequently than men, use the subjunctive construction as a grammatically indirect way to make a request, e.g.: *Ná nw kárta*; “Can I say something?” Yet Pavlidou also claims that the subjunctive shows “immediacy and involvement.” Is using this relatively indirect means of making requests a way in which women display their relatively powerless role in society, or is it an attempt to show solidarity and perhaps politeness, which may be mistaken as a show of powerlessness or insecurity?

Tannen (1986, 1990) describes a pattern by which women are more inclined to focus on solidarity in any interaction, men more on power. As a result, it is common for a woman to intend a linguistic strategy in the spirit of solidarity but be interpreted by a man as exhibiting powerlessness. Evidence for this comes from the Greek context with respect to attitudes toward gossip.

In discussing gossip in rural Greece, Kennedy (1986) shows that women value friendships with other women because friendships provide them the opportunity to open their hearts; if they can tell their secrets to someone, they feel less isolated and lonely. Although they know that this opens them to the dangers of gossip, many women take the risk because the gain in solidarity is more important to them than the loss in power. Dubisch (1986), however, shows that men regard the telling of personal and family secrets to those outside the family as a dangerous yielding of power to those who can use the information against the family. For them, the dimension of power is primary.

Crucially, the interpretation of a linguistic device in interaction may not match the speaker’s intention. Intentions and effects may well be at odds. In addressing someone with the T form, one may intend to show friendliness but inadvertently offend by seeming to show lack of respect. One may address someone with V or title-last-name to show respect and be perceived as aloof or distant. This happened to Tannen, who, unused to a language with formal and familiar pronouns, continued for years to address the writer Lilíka Nákou, with whom she had become very close, with *εσείς* “you”, in an effort to show respect for her status as a famous writer as well as her age. One day Nákou corrected her: “Stop calling me *εσείς*, it sounds cold (*ψυχρό*).”

Moreover, the linguistic markers of power and solidarity are not only ambiguous—potentially signifying either power or solidarity—but also polysemous, that is, simultaneously signifying both. Any sign of affection is inherently condescending because it precludes the unequal footing of differential status. Similarly, any sign of respect is inherently distancing because it places the speakers on relative footings that reflect different levels of status.

The preceding is a brief summary of the dynamics of power and solidarity. (For more discussion of power and solidarity, see Friedrich 1972; Brown and Levinson 1987; Tannen 1986, Chapter Six; Brown and Gilman 1989; and Fasold 1990, Chapter One.) The remainder of this paper examines excerpts of naturally occurring conversations between women and men in Modern Greek, in order to discover the linguistic means by which the speakers negotiate power and solidarity in agreement and disagreement.

3. *Power and solidarity in conversation*

The first example shows the ambiguity and polysemy of power and solidarity in giving advice. At the same time, it shows that disagreement can result from conflicts in frames—that is, differing assumptions about what is being done by talk³—and it illustrates the differing styles of agreement and disagreement displayed by three speakers.

The example is taken from a conversation recorded by Tannen in 1978 when she was in Greece for a summer visit to the novelist Lilíka Nákou, about whom she was in the process of writing a book (Tannen 1983). The conversation took place at Nákou’s home in Halándri, a suburb of Athens, among four speakers: Tannen, Nákou, Níki (a young woman who lived with Nákou and worked for her), and Yórgos, a young man who lived in the home of one of Nákou’s good friends. At the time of the conversation, Tannen was about to embark on a short trip to Crete, to visit other Greek friends. Nákou herself was about to go to the island of Aegina for the rest of the summer. Nákou suggests that Tannen visit her on Aegina when she returns from Crete. Yórgos, however, suggests an alternative trip: a visit to Sounion. The conversation was transcribed by Kakavá. The following transcription conventions apply:

- a. Punctuation reflects intonation, not grammar.
- b.

Brackets show overlap: Two voices at once.

- c.

Brackets with reversed top flap show latching	}	Second voice
begins without perceptible pause.		
- d. → Arrows highlight lines relevant to analysis.
- e. Underline indicates emphatic stress.
- f. The Greek particle ε (the vowel “e” as in “ten,” preceded and followed by a glottal stop) has no English equivalent, so in most cases we have not translated it.

The Greek transcription is accompanied by word-by-word glosses for the benefit of linguists. The entire excerpt is followed by a free translation into English.

- 1 Νάκου: Η Αίγινα θα σ' άρεσε.
the Aegina will you like
- 2 Κρίμα που δεν έχεις καιρό.
pity that not (you) have time
- 3 Η Αίγινα
the Aegina
- 4 Deborah: Στην Αίγινα θα είναι ωραία.
to the Aegina will be nice
- 5 Νίκι: Μ' αρέσει πολύ.
me like a lot
- 6 Θα είναι ωραία.
will be nice
- 7 Υόργος: Αλλά είναι ωραία στο Σούνιο
but is nice at the Sounion
- 8 γιατί έχει πισίνα το ξενοδοχείο από κάτω,
because has pool the hotel from below
- 9 η θάλασσα κοντά.
the sea close
- 10 Deborah: Ποιό ξενοδοχείο;
which hotel
- 11 Υόργος: Cape Sunio
Cape Sounion
- 12 Deborah: α Πηγαίνουν πλούσιοι;
oh (they) go rich
- 13 Υόργος: Κοντά στις κολώνες, ναι.
close to the columns yes
- 14 Deborah: Ξένοι;
foreigners
- 15 Υόργος: Ξένοι, ναι.
foreigners yes
- 16 Νάκου: Ωραία είναι αλλά να σου πω
nice (it) is but to you (I) tell

- 17 Deborah: Ξένοι και πηγαίνουν εκεί
foreigners and (they) go there
- 18 και μένουν μέρες εκεί;
and (they) stay days there
- 19 Υόργος: Ναι.
yes
- 20 Deborah: Εκεί;
there
- 21 Υόργος: Έχει μπανγκαλόους εκεί πέρα.
has bungalows there beyond
- 22 Νάκου: Η ωραιότερη ση— για μένα
the nicer spo— for me
- 23 αλλά και για τους ξένους απ' ότι διάβαζα,
but and for the foreigners from what (I) read
- 24 το ωραιότερο σημείο είναι ο— στη θέα της Αίγινας,
the nicer spot is the— at the view of the Aegina
- 25 γι αυτό κάνανε και το ναό του Απόλλωνος εκεί.
for this made and the temple of the Apollo there
- 26 Νίκι: Δεν έχεις πάει ποτέ εκεί πέρα;
not (you) have gone never there beyond
- 27 Deborah: Μμμ
mmm
- 28 Νίκι: Δεν έχεις πάει;
not (you) have gone
- 29 Deborah: Έχω πάει δύο φο— δύο- τρεις φορές.
(I) have gone two ti— two- three times
- 30 Νάκου: Αλλά όχι
but not
- 31 έτοι— βιάστικα—
thus hastily
- 31 Να πάει κανείς για δύο-τρεις μέρες
to go someone for two-three days

- 32 Yórgos: Στο Σούνιο είναι ωραία,
at the Sounion is nice
- 33 να μείνεις εκεί πάνω στον Ναό του Ποσειδώνα.
to stay there up at the temple of the Poseidon
- 34 Ποιό είναι εκεί;
which is there
- 35 Νάκου: Ναι.
yes
- 36 Yórgos: Εκεί είναι ωραία.
there is nice
- 37 Ξέρεις τι κόσμος πάει εκεί πέρα;
(you) know what people go there beyond
- 38 Νάκου: Έχω πάει.
(I) have gone
- 39 Yórgos: Ξέρεις πάνε πάνω και κάθονται,
(you) know (they) go up and (they) sit
- 40 πάνε εκδρομή με τα πούλμαν
go excursion with the buses
- 41 και κατεβαίνουν από κάτω στο Αιγαίο,
and (they) go down from down at the Aegean
- 42 έχει ένα— κάπι ταβέρνες,
has one some tavernas
- 43 και είναι κοντά στη θάλασσα,
and are close to the sea
- 44 πάνε και τρώνε και κάνουν και μπάνιο.
(they) go and eat and do and swim
- 45 Νάκου: Ναι το ξέρω
yes it (I) know
- 46 αλλά δεν είναι τίποτα μπροστά.
but not is nothing in front
- 47 Νίκι: Δεν έχω πάει εγώ ποτέ.
not (I) have gone I never

- 48 Yórgos: Καλά θα βρεθεί κι άλλο
well will be found and another
- 49 Νάκου: Πάμε μια μέρα.
(we) go one day
- 50 Deborah: Θα ήθελα να πάω.
would wanted to (I) go
- 51 Νάκου: Αλλά είναι μακριά, δύο ώρες από εδώ.
but is far two hours from here
- 52 Yórgos: Ναι, δύο ώρες. Ε— όχι και δύο ώρες.
yes two hours no and two hours
- 53 Νάκου: Ε δεν αξίζει τον κόπο.
not worth the effort
- 54 Deborah: Μέχρι πότε . . .
until when
- 55 Νάκου: Ενώ μια ώρα πας στην Αίγινα
While one hour (you) go to the Aegina
- 56 και αλλάζεις.
and (you) change

Translation

- 1 Νάκου: You'd like Aegina.
- 2 It's a pity that you don't have time.
- 3 Aegina
- 4 Deborah: It must be lovely on Aegina.
- 5 Νίκι: I like it a lot.
- 6 It'll be lovely.
- 7 Yórgos: But it's lovely at Sounion
because the hotel has a pool down below.
The sea is close by.
- 8 Which hotel?
- 9 Deborah: Cape Sounion.
- 10 Deborah: Oh. Do rich people go there?
- 11 Yórgos: Near the columns, yes.
- 12 Deborah: Foreigners?
- 13 Yórgos: Foreigners, yes.
- 14 Deborah: It is lovely but I would say
Foreigners, and they go there
and stay there for days?
- 15 Yórgos: Foreigners, yes.
- 16 Νάκου: It is lovely but I would say
- 17 Deborah: Foreigners, and they go there
- 18 and stay there for days?

- 19 Yórgos: Yes.
- 20 Deborah: There
- 21 Yórgos: There are bungalows there.
- 22 Nákou: The most beautiful sp— for me
- 23 but also for foreigners from what I've read,
- 24 the most beautiful spot is the— the view of Aegina
- 25 and that's why they built Apollo's temple there.
- 26 Níki: Haven't you ever been there?
- 27 Deborah: mm
- 28 Níki: You haven't been?
- 29 Deborah: I've gone two ti— two or three times.
- 30 Nákou: But not like
that, in a rush.
- 31 One should go for two or three days.
- 32 Yórgos: It's lovely at Sounion
- 33 to stay up there at Poseidon's temple.
- 34 Which one is there?
- 35 Nákou: Yes.
- 36 Yórgos: It's lovely there.
- 37 Do you know how many people go there?
- 38 Nákou: I've gone.
- 39 Yórgos: You know they go up there and they stay,
40 they go on excursions by bus
41 and they go down to the Aegean sea,
42 there is a— some tavernas,
43 and it's close to the sea,
44 they go and they eat and they go swimming, too.
- 45 Nákou: Yes, I know
- 46 but it's nothing compared to—
- 47 Níki: I've never been.
- 48 Yórgos: Well there'll be another
- 49 Nákou: Let's go one day.
- 50 Deborah: I'd like to go.
- 51 Nákou: But it's far away, two hours from here.
- 52 Yórgos: Yes, two hours. No, not even two hours.
- 53 Nákou: Well, it's not worth the effort.
- 54 Deborah: Until when
- 55 Nákou: While in an hour you can go to Aegina
- 56 and change scenery.

3.1 *Disagreement as a conflict in frames.* A global aspect of this interaction is a conflict in frames—that is, what participants think they are doing in the conversation. For Tannen and Nákou, who became deeply attached to each other during the time that Tannen lived in Greece to research and begin writing the book about Nákou, the impending separation is a threat to solidarity. The suggestion that Tannen visit

Nákou on Aegina before she leaves Greece for another undetermined number of years is an attempt to repair that threat.⁴ Yórgos, however, is operating within a different “frame,” that is, a different understanding of what the conversation is about. He talks as though “a visit to Aegina” is “a way for an American visitor to enjoy Greece” rather than “a way for Tannen and Nákou to enjoy one last meeting.” This difference in frames is one of several forces driving the conversation.

3.2 *Power and solidarity in giving advice.* This example shows, furthermore, the ambiguity and polysemy of giving advice. When Yórgos offers an alternative suggestion for Tannen's vacation, is he trying to be nice (a display of solidarity), trying to show that he has superior wisdom (a subtle display of power, since the one who knows more is one-up), or trying to bend her will to his by determining her actions (a more obvious display of power)? Probably he is doing all these and more. Furthermore, the interaction can be seen as a power struggle between Yórgos and Nákou over who is going to influence the American visitor.

3.3 *Styles of disagreeing.* The example also shows differences in linguistic means of disagreeing. Yórgos disagrees openly. When he introduces his suggestion of Sounion as a destination preferable to Aegina, his utterance comes as a disagreement with the foregoing conversation, and is marked overtly by his use of the adversative conjunction αλλά “but”:

- 7 Αλλά είναι ωραία στο Σούνιο.
But it's lovely at Sounion.

Later, when Nákou argues that Sounion is too far from Athens to warrant the trip (51 Αλλά είναι μακριά, δύο ώρες από εδώ “But it's far, two hours from here”), Yórgos first agrees but then changes his mind and contradicts her explicitly:

- 52 Ναι, δύο ώρες. Ε— όχι και δύο ώρες.
Yes. Two hours. No, surely not two hours.

Yórgos never grants the advantages of Aegina; instead, he argues repeatedly for the advantages of Sounion: it has a swimming pool and the sea is nearby (lines 8–9); there are bungalows (line 21); there are organized bus excursions (line 40); there are tavernas by the sea (lines 42–43). When Nákou argues that Aegina has the Temple of Apollo (line 25), George counters that Sounion has the Temple of Poseidon (line 33).

In contrast, Nákou grants Yórgos his points about Sounion before disagreeing implicitly by extolling the virtues of Aegina and explicitly by discounting those of Sounion. Nákou begins by agreeing with Yórgos's evaluation (7 *Αλλά είναι ωραία στο Σούνιο* "But it is lovely at Sounion") by repeating his evaluation (16 *ωραία είναι* "it is lovely"), but she goes on to disagree:

16 *Ωραία είναι αλλά να σου πω*
It is lovely but I would say

22 *Η ωραιότερη ση— για μένα*
The most beautiful spo— for me

23 *αλλά και για τους ξένους απ' όπi διάβαζα,*
but also for foreigners from what I've read,

24 *το ωραιότερο σημείο είναι ο— στη θέα της Αίγινας*
the most beautiful spot is the— the view of Aegina

Perhaps Nákou interrupts herself in line 22 in order to counter what she perceives as the thrust of the argument that foreigners like to go to Sounion.

When, in response to Nákou's reference to the Temple of Apollo on Aegina, Yórgos refers to Sounion's Temple of Poseidon, Nákou at first ostensibly agrees (35 *Ναι* "Yes"; 45 *Ναι το ξέρω* "Yes I know"), but then goes on to disagree (46 *αλλά δεν είναι τίποτα μπροστά—* "but it's nothing compared to—"). Similarly, before pointing out that Sounion is too far away from Athens (51 *Αλλά είναι μακριά* "but it's far away"), she agrees with Yórgos to the extent of suggesting that she and Tannen should go to Sounion some day (49 *Πάμε μια μέρα* "let's go one day"). Note, however, that by suggesting that she and Tannen go together she ratifies Yórgos's praise for Sounion but not his advice that Tannen go there instead of visiting her in Aegina. In the end, she states her disagreement with Yórgos in no uncertain terms: 53 *Ε δεν αξίζει τον κόπο* "Well it's not worth the effort".

In contrast to her tendency to agree with Yórgos before disagreeing with him, which may be seen as relatively conciliatory, Nákou is more contentious with Tannen. When Tannen says she has been to Aegina δύο-τρεις φορές "two or three times" (line 29), Nákou discounts her previous visits (30 *Αλλά όχι έτσι βιασικά* "But not like that, in a rush"). This contentiousness, however, is clearly aimed at solidarity: Nákou wants her young American friend to visit her on Aegina, so if having been there before is a counterindication to going again, Nákou is not about to accept it. Perhaps it is their greater friendliness,

or perhaps the parent-child-like footing between them, that enables the older woman to chide her young friend.

The verbal behavior of Tannen, the American participant, is in striking contrast to that of both Greek speakers in that she never disagrees openly. Quite the contrary, she expends considerable verbal effort to mitigate and mask her disagreement. When Tannen asks Yórgos, with reference to Sounion, 12, 14 *Πηγαίνουν πλούσιοι; Ξένοι;* "Do rich people go there? Foreigners?" she is implying that she is not interested. Although she is a foreigner, she does not want to go where other foreigners go, and, as a graduate student at the time, she is certainly not rich and neither could nor would want to go where rich people go. Her disagreement is so indirect, however, that Yórgos misses it. Although he ignores her question about the rich, he asserts that indeed foreigners do go to Sounion (15 *Ξένοι ναί* "Foreigners, yes") and continues extolling the virtues of the place. He seems to be assuming that the prospect of going to Sounion will be more rather than less appealing to this foreigner if other foreigners go there.

Most of Tannen's verbal energy is devoted to agreeing with Nákou. When Nákou says that Tannen would like Aegina, Tannen agrees: 4 *Στην Αίγινα θα είναι ωραία* "It must be lovely on Aegina". When Nákou suggests that they go to Sounion together one day, she again agrees: 50 *Θα ήθελα να πάω* "I'd like to go". In fact, Tannen recalls that she wanted to spend time with Nákou, and the end of the story is that she did visit Nákou on Aegina when she returned from Crete. Needless to say, she did not go to Sounion, and never considered going there.

3.4 *Disagreement as solidarity.* In recalling her years spent living in and visiting Greece, Tannen remembers her conversations with Greeks as an unending but futile effort to be agreeable. *Ναι* "yes", *βεβαίως* "certainly", *σίγουρα* "sure", *ακριβώς* "exactly", *αποσολήγοτε* "absolutely", *χωρίς άλλο* "without any doubt", and *φυσικά* "of course" were constant interjections in her speech, chanted almost like a litany. Yet somehow these earnest markers of agreement often reaped a harvest of disagreement. The following excerpt is a brief example of how this happened.

The excerpt is from another conversation that took place at Nákou's home in Halándri, this time including Tannen, Nákou, and a friend of Nákou's whom we will call Mrs. Pappas. Mrs. Pappas has been telling about having made formal complaints to the police about a construction crew that persisted in working through the siesta hour, an annoyance that is also illegal. Tannen attempts to support Mrs.

Pappas's position, yet her agreement is not quite accepted; instead, it is reframed as if in disagreement:

- Deborah: Έχετε δίκιο.
(you) have right
- Mrs. P: Εγώ έχω δίκιο.
I have right
- Κοπέλλα μου, δεν ξέρω αν έχω δίκιο ή
girl my not know if (I have) right or
- δεν έχω δίκιο.
not have right
- Αλλά εγώ υπερασπίζομαι τα συμφέροντά μου
But I defend the interests my
- και τα δικαιώματά μου.
and the rights my

Translation

- Deborah: You're right.
- Mrs. P: I am right.
My dear girl, I don't know if I'm right or not right.
But I'm defending my interests
and my rights.

Mrs. P. seems to accept Tannen's assessment by repeating it (Εγώ έχω δίκιο "I am right"), but she does not lexicalize agreement by saying "yes"; her emphasis on the verb έχω seems somehow contentious in tone. She then undercuts that agreement (δεν ξέρω αν έχω δίκιο ή δεν έχω δίκιο "I don't know if I'm right or not right") and goes on to redefine the explanation of her behavior in her own, different terms (εγώ υπερασπίζομαι τα συμφέροντά μου και τα δικαιώματά μου "I'm defending my interests and my rights").

Tannen recalls the gnawing discomfort she frequently felt in Greece when trying to be agreeable and getting responses that seemed determined to resist her agreement.

Pomerantz (1984: 77) claims that speakers prefer agreement in interaction "as comfortable, supportive, reinforcing, perhaps as being sociable and as showing that they are like-minded." Tannen (1990) demonstrates at length that American women prefer agreement to disagreement to a greater degree than do American men. Disagreement, it seems, is not as disagreeable to native speakers of modern

Greek—male or female—as it is to Americans.⁵ In this sense, Tannen's discomfort with Greeks' disagreement resulted from a cross-cultural misunderstanding involving power and solidarity. She was frustrated because she felt distanced and put down when her attempts to agree were met with contentious responses. In an attempt to make things right, she stepped up her efforts to achieve agreement, consequently overusing the agreement phrases noted above. Her Greek interlocutors were probably puzzled, irritated, and bored by her relentless agreement, and probably stepped up their contentiousness in their efforts to liven up the interaction.⁶

4. Solidarity markers in disagreement

The preceding example evidences two ways in which the potentially power-tinged act of disagreement is marked by solidarity: Nákou's tendency to verbalize agreement before going on to disagree, and Tannen's indirect expression of disagreement. However, there is a sense in which disagreement itself can be a marker of solidarity.

Kakavá (1989) claims, following Schifffrin's (1984) study of East European Jewish conversation, that contemporary Greeks in in-group settings, such as casual conversation among family and friends at home, may use contentiousness as a form of sociability. This seems to be the dynamic at play in the preceding example. Throughout the Greek conversations studied, the friendly nature of disagreement is linguistically marked by the appearance of solidarity markers at the point of disagreement. One such marker is the use of address terms: first names, diminutives of first names, or figurative kinship terms.⁷ Another is personalization of the argument. These will be illustrated in turn.

4.1 *Terms of address.* Mariánthi Makrí-Tsilipákou recorded a casual conversation among two couples in Thessaloniki.⁸ In one segment of this conversation, examined by Kakavá, the seven pages of transcript in which there was no argument contained no use of names in direct address. However, in a ten-page segment in which an argument erupted, names were used eight times (only by the two women present). Six of these eight instances occurred at points of disagreement, whereas two did not. Of the six instances of names used at points of disagreement, two were used by a woman addressing the other woman, and four were used by women addressing men.

For example, one segment of the discussion concerns how often and why people tend to go out for entertainment. One of the women, Katerina, argues that it depends on age: the younger one is, the more

one likes to go out. The other woman argues that it is more a matter of individual personality. In doing so, she inserts her friend's name mid-sentence:

→ Παρόλ' αυτά όμως Κατερίνα
Besides these however Katerina

εγώ πιστεύω ότι δεν είναι μόνο αυτό.
I believe that not is only this

Είναι θέμα να είσαι και τέτοιος άνθρωπος.
(it) is issue to be and such person

Translation

→ Still and all, though, Katerina
I think it's not only that.
The point is to be that kind of person.

The name comes at the end of a string of introductory words signaling the ensuing opposition.

A similar pattern emerges in the dinner table conversation recorded by Kakavá—a conversation that took place among her family in Halkida, Greece.⁹ The participants were Kakavá, her parents, and her youngest sister, Fotoúla. The conversation at this point concerned current events: the much-publicized affair between then Prime Minister Papandreou, who was 69, and a 35-year-old woman (whom he subsequently married). Fotoúla, who was sixteen, argued that the woman must have fallen in love with the prime minister. Her older sister, Christína, who is a full dozen years older, argued that the woman more likely had motives other than love. In the conversational excerpt that follows, Kakavá posits what is to her a more plausible explanation of the woman's motives: by having an affair with the prime minister, and getting her name on the front pages, the young woman may feel that she is accomplishing something notable. Fotoúla dismisses this explanation, saying that having an affair would be too high a price to pay for such a benefit:

Christína: Θέλω να σου πω λοιπόν,
want to you tell therefore

το γεγονός ότι μόνο και μόνο—
the fact that only and only

ότι αυτή έγινε,
that she became

μπήκε στο— στο πρώτο μέτωπο των νέων
entered in the in the first front of the news

σ' όλη την Ελλάδα, (lines omitted)
in all the Greece,

ε σου λέει «εντάξει, εγώ κατάφερα κάτι,
you (she) says okay I achieved something

έκανα κάτι», κατάλαβες;
(I) did something," do you understand

→Fotoúla: Πολύ μεγάλο τίμημα ρε Χριστινάκι
very big price re Christináki

να πληρώσεις πάντως.
to pay anyhow

Translation

Christína: So the point I'm making is,
merely the fact that
that she became,
that she made the headlines
all over Greece, (lines omitted)
she must have thought, "Okay, I accomplished
something,
I did something." You see what I mean?

→Fotoúla: In any case, that's a very high price re Christináki
to pay.

At the point of disagreement, Fotoúla addresses her older sister with an affectionate form of her name, the diminutive Christináki.

In the twenty-six minutes of this dinner table conversation recorded and analyzed by Kakavá, Fotoúla, the youngest family member present and the youngest of three sisters, is as argumentative as the rest. However, she uses the most terms of address to mark disagreement: *μαμά* "mom" twice, *μητέρα* "mother" once, *παππά* "dad" twice, *Χριστίνα* once, and *Χριστινάκι* twice, and she uses them only when she is disagreeing with the addressee. In contrast, Christína uses *μαμά* "mom" only once.

That the youngest child would participate fully in a family argument might surprise some Americans. But Aschenbrenner (1986: 42, 45) observes that Greek families encourage children to express emotion, opinions, and disagreement in the private family context

(though not with outsiders). Why, however, does Fotoúla use the most solidarity markers in disagreeing? At sixteen, Fotoúla is a teenager, and teenagers are caught at a crucial moment of development in terms of the tension between power and solidarity, as Tannen (1986) observes. As children, they were completely under the power of their families and also blessed by their families' protection. As adults, they will have to give up some of this protection in order to achieve a greater measure of autonomy. Caught in transition between these states, Fotoúla may be using disagreement to claim her right to participate in arguments with the adults. But she may mitigate her disagreement with solidarity markers because she is aware of her position as the lowest-ranking member by age.¹⁰

4.2 *Personalization of conflict.* Another marker of solidarity found in the Greek conversations is the personalization of an argument at the point of disagreement. A brief example comes from the same conversation as the preceding one. Here Fotoúla uses a personal analogy in order to drive home her point. The discussion is focused on another aspect of Papandreou's affair: when the prime minister entered a hospital in London, his girlfriend was in constant attendance, and his estranged wife did not visit him. Fotoúla argues that Papandreou's wife was wrong not to visit her husband in the hospital, but her mother argues that the wife may not have been able to approach him because of the presence of the other woman. In challenging her, Fotoúla figuratively places her mother in Mrs. Papandreou's position:

- 1 Fotoúla: Δηλαδή άμα ήξερες
that is if (you) knew
- 2 πως ο άντρας σου ήταν με μια άλλη στο
that the husband your was with an other in the
Λονδίνο,
London
- 3 δεν θα πήγαινες να τον δεις;
not will go to him see
- 4 Δεν θα είχες ενδιαφέρον για την υγεία του;
not will (you) had interest for the health his
- 5 Mitéra: Ποιός ξέρει;
who knows
- 6 Fotoúla: Θα το μάθαινες από την τηλεόραση, δηλαδή;
will it learned from the t.v. that is

- 7 A, ωραία.
oh nice

Translation

- 1 Fotoúla: You mean to say, if you knew
2 that your husband was with another woman in London
3 you wouldn't go to see him?
4 You wouldn't have any interest in his health?
- 5 Mother: Who knows?
- 6 Fotoúla: In other words, you'd find out about it on t.v.?
7 Oh, that's great!

Fotoúla puts her mother on the spot by personalizing the argument. Whereas the mother excused Mrs. Papandreou's failure to visit her husband in the hospital, Fotoúla forces her to extend this to her own situation: would she not visit her own husband if he were in the hospital in London? The mother evades the question (5 Ποιός ξέρει "Who knows"), apparently unwilling either to change her opinion about Mrs. Papandreou or to go on record as saying she would not visit her husband in the hospital. This permits Fotoúla to score a point by remarking sarcastically on the resulting appearance of impropriety (6-7 Θα το μάθαινες από την τηλεόραση, δηλαδή; Α ωραία "In other words, you'd find out about it on t.v.? Oh, that's great").

5. Linguistic markers of disagreement

The preceding discussion illustrates the dynamics of disagreement in Greek conversation as well as the use of solidarity markers at the point of disagreement. In the remaining discussion, we identify two linguistic strategies that tend to appear at the point of disagreement: the particle *pe* and what we call adversative imperatives.

5.1 «*Pe*» as a marker of friendly disagreement. The earlier example in which Fotoúla addresses her sister as *Christináki* also shows the use of the particle *re* immediately preceding the name: *re Christináki*. We conclude, based on analysis of all the conversations examined, that *re* is a pervasive formulaic marker of friendly disagreement.

The formulaic nature of *re* coupled with an affectionate term of address is most apparent in the widespread formulaic expression *όχι pe παιδί μου* "no, my child", where the lexical item most clearly associated with disagreement, *όχι* "no", is linked with the particle *re* and two solidarity markers: a figurative kinship term, and the possessive

pronoun. Moreover, when used by women, this expression is typically uttered in high pitch, a paralinguistic marker of affection which is typically used in speech to babies, children, and intimates. In another extended body of conversational data, a fifty-minute argument among four friends (two men and two women, one of whom was Kakavá), there were 20 instances of παιδί μου “my child”, of which 16 occurred with the particle *re*.¹¹

5.2 *Adversative imperatives*. A final type of linguistic marker of disagreement that occurs in all the conversations examined is what we call adversative imperatives. They include such familiar imperatives as κοίταξε “look”, σώπα “be quiet”, κάτσε “sit”, πρόσεξε “pay attention”, άκου “listen”, κοίτα να δεις “look to see”, and έλα να σου πω “come for me to tell you”. For example, in the following excerpt from the dinner table conversation, the discussion has turned to whether or not Papandreou’s girlfriend has a rightful place at the hospital with him. The father argues that, by her constant presence, she is protecting the prime minister from would-be assassins. The mother disagrees:

- Κοίταξε να δεις
look to (you) see
- δεν κερδίζεις και τίποτα το—
not (you) earn and nothing the
- να τον σκοτώσεις τον άνθρωπο
to the (you) kill the person
- Translation
- Look
you wouldn’t gain anything
by killing the man.

Like the other solidarity markers discussed, the adversative imperative, uttered in the familiar second person, marks the point of disagreement by introducing the oppositional proposition.

6. Summary

The examination of modern Greek conversation among women and men in three different casual, naturally occurring settings has resulted in the following findings. First, we examined an extended discussion in which two Greeks differed in their advice to an American visitor. We discussed the subtle interplay of power and solidarity in giving advice and showed that the disagreement evidenced a conflict

in frames. We also examined the individual differences in the linguistic means by which the three participants displayed their agreement and disagreement: the Greek man expressed disagreement directly and without mitigation; the Greek woman prefaced disagreement with agreement; and the American woman expressed agreement directly and disagreement indirectly. Next, we showed that disagreement is frequently accompanied by linguistic markers of solidarity: address terms (first names, kinship terms, or diminutives) and personal analogy. Finally, we identified two linguistic markers of friendly disagreement: the particle *re* and what we term adversative imperatives.

7. Conclusion

Agreement is inherently symmetrical: saying “We believe the same thing” implies “We are equally right, equally wise.” Disagreement is asymmetrical: it says, “We are different,” and it is a short—maybe an inevitable—step from “We’re different” to “I’m right, so you’re wrong,” or “I know, and you don’t.” Asymmetry is the essence of the power dynamic, symmetry of solidarity. Why, then, are solidarity markers used to mark disagreement? Perhaps it is a way to redress the power imbalance: whereas the disagreement pushes interlocutors away, the affectionate term of address brings them closer. Furthermore, it is a means to reinforce involvement, which is potentially threatened by disagreement. In this sense, the solidarity markers that accompany disagreement can be seen to counteract the effects of the disagreement. But, in another sense, they can be seen simply to reinforce the solidarity that can be inherent in disagreement. As Schiffrin (1984) and Ong (1981) argue, taking oppositional stances can be a means of creating involvement, especially if the opposition is ritual rather than literal. The contentious character of Greek conversation may be understood in this light. If it is, then the use of solidarity markers does not conflict with the spirit of disagreement but rather reinforces the solidarity function of disagreement in modern Greek conversation.

NOTES

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¹Goffman (1981: 128) defines "footing" as "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance." Davies and Harré (1990) use the term "positioning" to express a similar concept.

The example was originally provided by Ralph Fasold, to whom thanks.

²The term and concept "frame" traces to Bateson (1972) and is developed by Goffman (1974). It is explored in conversational discourse by Tannen (1986) and Tannen and Wallat (1987). Framing refers to superordinate messages (in Bateson's terms "metamessages") about how utterances are intended. In Bateson's classic example, a bite or punch denotes an attack within the frame of fighting but could be reframed as playful by the metamessage "This is play."

³The threat to solidarity inherent in leave-taking, and the desire to repair it by reference to a reunion, is reflected linguistically in the leave-taking formula καλή αποχώρηση. Tannen and Ortek (1981) discuss the use of Modern Greek verbal formulas such as this one.

⁴It is, however, more disagreeable to Japanese speakers than it is to most Americans, as Yamada (1992) argues and demonstrates.

⁵The technical term for this mutually aggravating process is complementary schismogenesis (Bateson 1972), which Tannen (1986) describes as common in cross-cultural communication.

Not shown here, but similar and related in use, are terms of endearment such as αγαπή μου "my love," καλέ "good one," and, as seen in the preceding example, κατέλλα μου "my (dear) girl".

⁶We are grateful to Makri- Tsilpákou for permission to use her recordings, which were, like all the conversations analyzed here, transcribed by Christina Kakavá.

⁷Some of the examples discussed here also appear in Kakavá (1989).

⁸Tannen surveyed students in an anthropology class at Princeton University, Fall 1991, with regard to participation in family dinners in their homes. Several American students noted that a teenaged sister habitually engaged in arguments with the father at the dinner table. This reinforces the hypothesis that teenagers may seek disagreement to assert their independence.

⁹Other variants of *pe* are *βpe* (for example, the father in the dinner table conversation says έλα βpe "come on *vre*", and Fotoúla says βpe παιδάκι μου "*vre* my little child") and *μωρέ* (as in the commonly heard όχι μωρέ and άντε μωρέ). The fifty-minute argument just referred to included three instances of παιδιά "children" (more readily translated "guys"), of which one was preceded by *vre* and one by *re*.

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