

CRhoLaV: The Corpus of Rhodian Language Varieties

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Abstract

The Modern Greek language is rich in dialects and local varieties. Some of them are still very alive and used regularly while others are only used among the elderly. This paper introduces the Corpus of Rhodian Language Varieties (CRhoLaV). CRhoLaV is a dynamic Greek dialectal corpus of spoken language from the island of Rhodes. The corpus is constructed from real language material collected from speakers of various villages on the island of Rhodes. The collection of such material, as in spoken language corpora in general, is a very challenging task. We aim for CRhoLaV to be an important tool for linguists since it can be used for the exploration of dialectal features, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic etc. and the building of dialectal lexica and grammars. The corpus can provide significant help for the construction of new or the updating of existing dialectal dictionaries and grammars. Moreover, we aim that the corpus will be used by folklorists and researchers of the preservation of language heritage.

Keyword: Area Studies, Dialectal Corpus, Corpus Construction, Corpus Processing

1. Introduction

The Modern Greek language is rich in dialects and local varieties.² Some of them are still very alive and used regularly while others are only used among the elderly. The study of dialects and local varieties has always been an interesting subject for researchers and the use of modern methodologies, such as constructions of real language corpora and data-bases together with automatic and semi-automatic processing can assist to a great degree in their study.

There have been worthy efforts towards the systematic and organized digitization of dialectal material worldwide,³ and these efforts have also been applied to Greek dialectal language material.⁴ Such efforts can provide significant help for the construction of new or the updating of existing dialectal dictionaries and grammars.⁵

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²Indicatively: Ralli (2006), Κοινοσόπουλος (2001).

³Indicatively: Allen, Deal, Corrigan, Maguire & Moisl (2007), Anderwald & Wagner (2007) and Barbiers, Cornips & Kunst (2007).

⁴Indicatively: Baltazani, Fudos, Kainada, Kappa, Lengeris, Mattheoudakis, Mikros, Nikolaidis, Papazachariou, Revythiadou, Topintzi & Tzakosta (2013), Karasimos, Melissaropoulou, Ralli, Papazachariou & Asimakopoulos (2008),

Καρασίμος (2011), Καρασίμος, Γαλιώτου, Καρανικόλας, Κορωνάκης, Αθανασάκης, Παπαζαχαρίου & Ράλλη (2016), Κολιοπούλου, Μαρκόπουλος & Παντελίδης (2015), Ματθαίουδάκη (2015) and Ράλλη, Παπαζαχαρίου & Καρασίμος (2010).

⁵Indicatively: Karanikolas, Galiotou, Xydopoulos, Ralli, Athanasakos & Koronakis (2013), Λαοδημία Αθηνών (1933), Καραναστάσης (1984-1992), Καραναστάσης (1997), Κατσογιάννου (2008), Κωστάκης (1986-1987).

As for the Dodecanese varieties, these belong to the south-east dialectal zone of modern Greek varieties, together with the Cyprian dialect (Trudhill, 2003) Chios varieties (Newton, 1972; Κοντοσόπουλος, 2001) and Ikarian varieties (Tsopanakis, 1940; Παντελίδης, 1929). The Rhodian varieties, although they show a lot of common features, present interesting variabilities (Tsopanakis, 1940; Κοντοσόπουλος, 2001; Τσοπανάκης, 1992). The island of Rhodes is divided in two major zones, according to Tsopanakis (1940, 1992): the south-west zone and the north-east zone. This division, which is moreover divided in seven subgroups, was created mainly based on phonological criteria.

This study presents CRhoLaV, the Corpus of Rhodian Language Varieties, which is a project taking place in the Informatics Laboratory of the Department of Mediterranean Studies, School of Humanities, and University of the Aegean. The Rhodian varieties, spoken on the island of Rhodes, show archaic features that are actually apparent at all grammar levels (Browning, 1969; Κοντοσόπουλος, 2001). Corpus-based studies provide the systematic and efficient analysis of real language ensuring higher degrees of precision and completeness (McEnery & Wilson 2001; O’Keeffe & McCarthy, 2012). Specifically, this study applies the corpus-based methodology to the study of dialects and geographical varieties (Kolbe, 2012).

2. The Geographical Area: Collecting the Language Material

CRhoLaV is a dynamic corpus of spoken language material from native speakers of the island of Rhodes. CRhoLaV is part of a bigger project, CDoLaV, the Corpus of Dodecanese Language Varieties, a corpus of spoken language material from native speakers from the islands of the Dodecanese. The main aims of the construction of CRhoLaV and CDoLaV are to serve Language and Linguistic Studies, Island Studies, Folklore Studies and Culture Preservation Studies.

The Dodecanese islands are in the south-east Aegean. The name “Dodecanese” comes from the number “12” (twelve), the number of the larger islands in this group. In fact, today, there are 21 inhabited islands, Agathonisi, Arkoi, Astypalaia, Chalki, Farmakonisi, Giali, Karpathos, Kalymnos, Kasos, Kos, Leros, Lipsi, Megisti, Nisiros, Patmos, Pserimos, Rhodes, Saria, Symi, Telendos and Tilos, while there are also islands that used to be inhabited until recently, Kinaros, Levida, Nimos, and Sirna⁶ (Picture 1). The fact that there are islands whose already small populations are decreasing further, sometimes to the point where they become uninhabited, makes even more apparent the need of preserving local varieties that tend to die with the people who speak them.



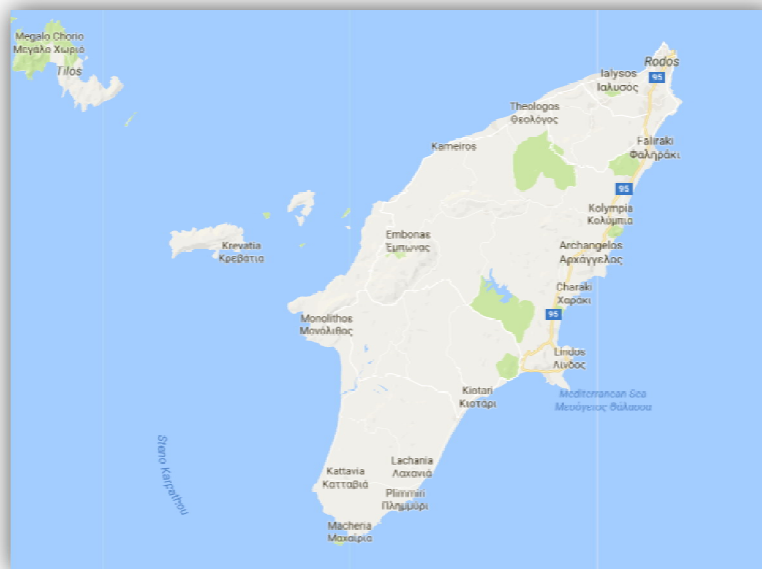
Picture 1: The Dodecanese islands

⁶<http://www.wikipedia.gr/wiki/Δωδεκάνησα>

⁷<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/country/europe/grdodecanese.htm>

This study focuses on the island of Rhodes and is a project in progress. Rhodes is the biggest of the Dodecanese islands and is in the south-east corner of Greece. The island covers an area of 1408km² with a maximum length of 79,7km and a maximum width of 38km. Its population is about 115,000.⁸The island numbers 45 villages. The aim is to collect real dialectal material from native speakers. For this reason, the language material is collected via area research. The material consists of interviews with native speakers of specific geographical varieties. Therefore, the collection of the data involved the travelling of the interviewers to villages of the island of Rhodes, making even more challenging the already hard task of building a dialectal corpus of spoken language.

Today the corpus contains language material from 11 villages of the island of Rhodes: Afandou, Damatria, Fanes, Ialysos, Kalavarda, Kalythies, Koskinou, Maritsa, Messanagros, Paradeisi, Soroni. Seven of these villages, Damatria, Fanes, Ialysos, Kalavarda, Maritsa, Paradeisi, Soroni are of the western part of the island and three of the villages, Afandou, Kalythies and Koskinou, are of the eastern part. All of the above mentioned villages are in the northern part of the island while Messanagros is in the south. Moreover, eight of them are close to the sea, such as Ialysos, Afandou, Fanes, Kalavarda, Kalythies, Koskinou, Paradeisi and Soroni while three, Damatria, Maritsa and Messanagros, are inland villages. Regarding their population, this ranges from a few hundred people (Damatria, Fanes, Kalavarda, Kalythies, Koskinou, Maritsa, Messanagros, Soroni), to a few thousand (Afandou, Ialysos, Paradeisi). The exact position of the villages is given in Picture 2 which gives a map of the island of Rhodes.



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Picture 2: Island of Rhodes

For the collection of the language material, the interviewers travelled to the villages in order to find those people that would be willing to take part in this research and who speak the local variety. The people that were interviewed were aware that they would take part in a university research and that the interviews would be recorded. They were also informed that what they said would be used for research purposes and that no personal data would be made known. In fact, we do not keep any personal information that would reveal the interviewees' identities.

All interviews took place from December 2015 to February 2016. Each interview involved one or two interviewees, men or women, all but one either middle-aged or older. Some of the interviewees decided, with no interference from the interviewer, on the issues they wanted to talk about, which made the procedure easier. In the cases where the interviewees would not start to talk by themselves, the interviewers helped them by asking questions regarding issues that were considered to be interesting for conversation by the interviewees.

⁸ Wikipedia, <https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος>

⁹ Google Maps, <https://www.google.gr/maps/@36.1279969,27.7838014,10z?hl=en>

These issues involved everyday life in the village when the interviewees were young (school, children's games, work, family life, housework, farming), memories of the 2nd World War, the current political situation, etc. The interviewers asked such questions in order to make the interviewees interested in topics so they would start talking freely. In some cases the interviewees changed the subject or often jumped from one subject to another. The interviewers did not interrupt the interviewees but let them talk freely about whatever pleased them.

3. The CRhoLaV Description

The corpus consists of four types of data:

1. Audio files of spoken language material: These are the audio recordings of the interviews as they were taken.
2. Files of transcriptions of the spoken language material: The transcriptions were made as precise as possible from the audio files of the spoken language material: These files contain both the questions of the interviewers as well as the responses of the interviewees.
3. Files of transcriptions of the language of the interviewees only: These files contain the same material as the files mentions above without the interviewers' portion.
4. The metadata file: This file consists of information on the description of the language material.

Table 1 gives information regarding the current status of the CRhoLaV. The first column gives the villages where the spoken language material was collected. The second column gives the number of interviews encountered in the specific village, the third column the size of the spoken language material collected in terms of the number of words and the fourth column the percentage of this specific language material in the corpus.

<i>Village</i>	<i>Number of Interviews</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Afandou	7	19,290	20.74
Damatria	1	4,120	4.43
Fanes	1	10,056	10.82
Ialysos	13	32,973	35.46
Kalavarda	1	7,969	8.57
Kalythies	1	5,008	5.39
Koskinou	1	894	0.96
Maritsa	2	4,972	5.35
Messanagros	1	3,445	3.71
Paradeisi	1	1,079	1.16
Soroni	1	3,175	3.41
total	30	92,981	100

Table 1: Villages and spoken language material

As can be seen from Table 1, more than one third of the total amount of language material in terms of number of words in the current status of the corpus, 35.46%, comes from the village of Ialysos, the west side of the island, and one fifth of the total amount, 20.74%, comes from the village of Afandou, the east side.

Table 2 gives the information regarding the language material of Ialysos. As can be seen, thirteen interviews took place in Ialysos, six of which involved two interviewees while seven involved one interviewee. The ages of the interviewees range from 40 to 90 years. The smallest interview is of 450 words giving 1.36% of the total material while the longest is of 10,802 words giving 32.76% of the total language material of the village of Ialysos.

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Number of Interviewees</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	2	Female	70-80	2,859	8.67
		Male	80-90		
2	1	Female	70-80	450	1.36
3	2	Female	70-80	1,669	5.06
		Male	80-90		
4	2	Female	70-80	593	1.8
		Male	80-90		
5	1	Female	60-70	10,802	32.76
6	2	Male	70-80	3,917	11.88
		Male	70-80		
7	1	Male	50-60	958	2.91
8	1	Female	60-70	1,793	5.44
9	1	Female	60-70	1,991	6.04
10	2	Male	60-70	1,563	4.74
		Male	70-80		
11	2	Female	70-80	1,327	4.02
		Female	70-80		
12	1	Female	80-90	3,842	11.65
13	1	Male	40-50	1,209	3.57
total				32,973	100

Table 2: Interviews from the village of Ialysos

Table 3 gives information regarding the language material of the village of Afandou, on the east side of the island, where seven interviews took place. Six of the interviews involve one interviewee and one involves two interviewees. The ages of the interviewees range mainly from 70 to 90 years with one interviewee in his twenties and one in her forties. The smallest interview is of 609 words giving 3.16% of the total language material while the longest is of 4,910 words giving 25.45% of the total language material of the village of Afandou.

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Number of Interviewees</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	1	Female	80-90	4,910	25.45
2	2	Male	80-90	2,472	12.81
		Male	80-90		
3	1	Female	40-50	3,353	17.38
4	1	Male	70-80	609	3.16
5	1	Male	20-30	3,101	16.08
6	1	Male	70-80	2,139	11.09
7	1	Female	70-80	2,706	14.03
total				19,290	100

Table 3: Interviews from the village of Afandou

Maritsa is the last of the villages where more than one interviews took place. The interviews of Maritsa give 5.35% of the total language material of the corpus. Table 4 gives information on the two interviews of Maritsa: each interview involves one interviewee. Both interviewees are male, one of the age of 70-80 and the other of the age of 80-90. The first interview contributes 41.23% to the total size of the corpus language material of Maritsa while the second contributes 58.76%.

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Number of Interviewees</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	1	Male	70-80	2,050	41.23
2	1	Male	80-90	2,922	58.76
total				4,974	100

Table 4: Interviews from the village of Maritsa

For each of the rest of the villages there is one interview in the corpus. Regarding the village of Fanes, on the west side of Rhodes, which gives 10.82% of the total dialectal material of the corpus, we can see from Table 5 that there is one interview that involves four interviewees. The ages of the interviewees range from 70 to 90 years and the total size of the Fanes language material is of 10,056 words.

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Number of Interviewees</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	4	Female	70-80	10,056	100
		Female	70-80		
		Female	70-80		
		Female	80-90		
total				10,056	100

Table 5: The interviews from the village of Fanes

The village of Kalavarda, west side, gives 8.57% of the total language material with one female interviewee at the age of 60-70 while the villages of Damatria and Kalythies give 4.43% and 5.39% respectively to the total language material of the corpus, both with female interviewees at the ages of 60-70 and 80-90 respectively. Messanagros, in the south, gives 3.71% of the total material with a male interviewee at the age of 70-80 and Soroni, west, 3.41% with a female interviewee of 60-70 years old. Finally, Paradeisi and Koskinougive 1.16% and 0.96% of the total corpus material respectively, in Paradeisi with a female interviewee aged 60-70 and in Koskinou with a male interviewee aged 70-80 (Table 6).

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Size</i>
Damatria	1	Female	60-70	4,120
Kalavarda	1	Female	60-70	7,969
Kalythies	1	Female	80-90	5,008
Koskinou	1	Male	70-80	894
Messanagros	1	Male	70-80	3,445
Paradeisi	1	Female	60-70	1,079
Soroni	1	Female	60-70	3,175

Table 6: Interviews from the rest villages

The corpus is organized in folders according the villages we already have interviews from. Within each such folders there are sub-folders for the audio material, i.e. the interviews as recorded, for the transcription of the interviews that contains all the language material of the interview, that is, both the interviewer's and interviewees' words and for the "clean" language material, that is, only the words of the interviewees. The files of the written material are held in plain text format as well for processing purposes. The production of the "clean" dialectal material is in line with a system of transcription rules. The sample of dialectal material that follows is from the interview that took place at Damatria village.

ΓΚ: Μπίλιες κάτω στοργυλές ΤΣαι κάναμε λακκhouδάτσιαισικάνναμεντες έτσι μίαντα με το χέρι σ' όποιο λακκhouδάτσιαισικάνναμεντες αν έμπαννε μέσα στο λακκhouδάτσιαισικάνναμεντες όταν έβγαινεν έξω έχαννες. Ε...εχροντόεπαιζάμε, επαιζάμενι γύρω γύρω, το μαντήλι ΤΣαι εκρόββαμεν ντο που πίσω μας, όποιος το πιαννεν ντο μαντήλι εσηκάνουνταν ΤΣαι ΤΣονήγαννηράλητη. Αυτά ήταν τα παιχνίδια μας. Εν είσεν τζαι πολλά παιχνίδια.

4. Future Plans

CRhoLaV is a dialectal corpus of language material from the island of Rhodes and is part of a project in progress for the construction of CDoLaV, a dialectal corpus of Dodecanese language varieties. The corpus is dynamic and is periodically updated with new material. Today, the corpus consists of spoken material. The collection of such material, as in spoken language corpora in general, is a very challenging task. The methodology used in gathering data is periodically evaluated and adjusted. The constant enhancement of the corpus with new spoken material is an ongoing task. This means that we obtain new material both from villages already mentioned in the corpus and villages not yet mentioned in the corpus. We moreover aim to enhance the corpus with written dialectal material.

We aim for the CRhoLAV to be of great importance to linguists since it can be used for the exploration of dialectal features, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic etc. and the building of dialectal lexica and grammars. This type of research is part of our direct future plans. Moreover, we aim that the corpus will be used by researchers of the preservation of culture and folklorists since quite often interviewees show a preference for talking about issues of their lives when they were young. CRhoLaV is aimed to be a corpus that will be available and free to use both by academics and researchers and by anyone else with an interest in local language varieties, folklore or cultural information.

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