

# Does writing matter?

## Entanglements of materiality and writing in Cypriot Greek

Marina Terkourafi

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Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

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## Diakritisch

# 150

'Diakritische tekens', dat klinkt als de signalen die je had moeten afgeven tijdens de dia-avond van oom Tjeerd in 1985, wat je niet deed, waardoor je nu zit met een vakantiefotofobie.

Maar nee, diakritische tekens zijn toevoegingen aan letters, zoals de cedille en het accent aigu. Ik moest hieraan denken na het zien van de prachtige voorstelling van Sadettin Kirmiziyüz, die onder meer gaat over 'kind zijn van een gastarbeider'. Kirmiziyüz stipt kort aan dat zijn naam altijd verkeerd wordt

uitgesproken. En geschreven ook, voeg ik daaraan toe, want waar zit de 'i zonder punt' op je toetsenbord? Vaak wordt het Kirmiziyüz. Is de punt op de i een diakritisch teken? Of is de afwezigheid ervan dat?

Kirmiziyüz vraagt zich af wat er zal overblijven van al die mannen die hier kwamen om te werken – nog geen rotonde-kunstwerk is er aan hen gewijd. Misschien is een mooi begin: dat we de i leren schrijven, de ş, en de ğ.

Paulien Cornelisse

de Volkskrant, 25 januari 2025

# The materiality turn in linguistics

- Aims to anchor language in reality (**outside our heads**)
- Not deterministic (meaning is not “reflected in” or “explained” by form)
- Meaning as **affordance**: meanings and forms are enabled by webs of relationships yet no less real (between positivism and constructionism)
- Sense-making is necessarily **multimodal** which results in **distributed** views of agency, cognition *and* language
  - “In their interactive processes of making meaning, humans use a variety of material resources, including linguistic and nonlinguistic sounds, body parts, gaze, and their positioning in space. They also use nonembodied and visual written signs, transmitted on paper or via electrical signals on screens. Thus, objects and material matter are involved in processes of sense-making” (Schneider & Heyd 2024: 2)
  - “agency, cognition, language, and identity can all be understood as distributed effects of a range of interacting objects, people, and places, distributed beyond any supposed human center, rather than as a property of the individual or as something located in the human mind or tied to personal action.” (Pennycook 2024: 115)
- Challenges viewing language as a self-contained system, cut-off from the interdependencies (of time, place, objects) in which it comes into existence (materializes)
- Explores the **affective and bodily involvement** of speakers as a way of bringing to the fore nonrational, noncognitive elements of language

# Language and materiality: some principles

- Language(-form) is not just a vehicle for meaning.
  - “language is not something you go through to get to something else, whether that be structures of the mind or propositional content, [...] it also has **palpable qualities in its own right**, which are not, as it were, immaterial.” Webb Kean in *Curated Conversation* [with Michael Silverstein]: “*Materiality: It’s the Stuff!*” (21.11.2013, p. 37)
- Language as substance (sounds, letters) is only possible at the **collective & socio-political** level.
  - “language is how it is because it is social before anything else” (Pennycook 2024: 111)
  - “language in interaction always involves the body as voice, gesture, and synchronized activity” (ibid.)
- These material aspects of language can also stir emotions in people, be (positively/negatively) evaluated in the same way as meanings can.
- In other words, language can have (perlocutionary) effects on people through:
  - What it means (truth-conditionally / non-truth conditionally, what it is about)
  - How it looks/sounds (how it is made publicly available to others)

# (Why) does writing matter?

The forgotten “other half” of language since, at least, Plato’s Phaedrus (ca. 370 BCE) but...

“Imagine language as an invisible being with an **audible voice** and think of writing as a visible garment worn by that being. In this sense, language and writing are like Mr. Griffin in the notorious novel by H.G. Wells (1897), *The Invisible Man*: unseen yet dressed up and speaking. Visuality is present only in the garment – **we cannot see language *per se***.

Now imagine the **orthography** as the pattern used to construct that garment. That pattern represents the underlying principle of what we ultimately visualize as concrete signs (letters and so on).

In prestandard periods, however, the inventory of graphemes, other graphic signs and their guiding rules were often unstable and characterized by an abundance of variation. Both the number of graphemes and the regulations governing them could fluctuate.” (Subačius 2023: 309)

Subačius G. (2023) Materiality of Writing. In: Condorelli M. & Rutkowska H. (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Historical Orthography*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 305-323.

# Written Cypriot Greek?

- As a variety of Greek, Cypriot Greek is written in the Greek alphabet (Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω)
- A number of sounds not found in Standard Modern Greek (some present in other Greek dialects)
  - postalveolars [ʃ], [ʒ], [tʃ], [dʒ]
  - “double” (geminated) consonants: αλλᾶ [l:], θάλασσα [s:], κύτταρο [tʰ:]
  - geminates also word initially in Cypriot Greek: Ττερκουράφη [tʰ], λλιος [l:]
- These sounds, which have distinctive value in Cypriot Greek, are **not representable** in the Greek alphabet or within standard orthography norms
  - Double consonants are preserved in historic Greek orthography but not pronounced as such
  - No distinct graphemes for post-alveolars
- Authors / scholars have devised a number of solutions for writing Cypriot Greek (esp. post-alveolars)
  - switching to English characters: <sh> e.g. **sh**έριν for χέριν (=hand)
  - diacritics (used by the *Historical Dictionary of Greek* and in textbooks): **š**έριν [NB: breve or caron/haček]
  - new diacritic: *dialektikó* modelled on *isubscriptum* of Ancient Greek **ς**έριν
  - sequence of Greek letters BUT following Cypriot reading convention: <σι> **σι**έριν [cf. <llama> Anglo or Spanish way]

# (Why) does writing matter?

1. Gives language public visibility and accessibility **beyond the here and now**
2. Traditionally reserved to **standard languages**
  - being written can **raise the prestige** of a variety
3. Depends on (and evolves with) available **technologies**
4. Basis for defining **literacy** with consequences for **cognition** and **ideology**

# (Why) does writing matter?

1. Gives language public visibility and accessibility **beyond the here and now**



# 1. Public visibility and accessibility beyond the here and now

A quick timeline of Cypriot Greek in writing:

- 14<sup>th</sup> c.: Earliest appearance in the *Assizes* (14<sup>th</sup> c.), followed by the *Chronicles* of Machairas (15<sup>th</sup> c.), Voustronios (16<sup>th</sup> c.) and the *Love rhymes* (Ρίμες Αγάπης; 16<sup>th</sup> c.)
  - legal, historical, literary texts
- 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> c.: Continuous presence in poetry and dialogical parts of theater sketches
  - However, shunned from public acceptance in other domains (e.g., controversy over placenames, early 1990's)

# Placenames controversy

- Under auspices of **UN Group of Experts of Geographical Names** (est. 1960)
  - (i) standardization should be in official language of country (Greek and Turkish in Cyprus) and
  - (ii) countries sharing the same official language should follow the same transliteration system (Greece and Cyprus)
- **Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names (CPCSGN, METTO)** (est. 1977)
  - tasked with standardization and Romanization of Cypriot toponyms (placenames)
  - 67000 toponyms submitted in 1987 of which 98 changed to meet UNGEGN standards (Georgiou 2009)
  - At the same time, a similar taskforce established in the non-government controlled area in the North (later Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) with the avowed aim of Turkifying the placenames north of the Green Line under the guidance of the Maps Authority in Ankara (Navaro-Yashin 2010)

Georgiou, Vasiliki (2010). Competing discourses in the debate on place names in Cyprus: Issues of (symbolic) inclusion/exclusion in orthographic choices. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 9(1), 140–164.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael (2010). “The materiality of sovereignty: Geographical expertise and changing place names in Northern Cyprus”. In Diamandouros, P., Dragonas, T. and Keyder, C. (eds.) *Spatial Conceptions of the Nation: Modernizing Geographies in Greece and Turkey*. London: I.B Tauris, 127-143.

# Placenames controversy

- Reluctance to represent postalveolars in writing, favouring instead an artificial representation in Standard Greek and Roman script patterned on that, resulted in some absurd solutions
  - The village of [viza'dʒa] became BYZAKIA/Vyzakia
  - Huge uproar (media, parliamentary and ministerial meetings) peaking in 1994-5 (ca. 250 news items, editorials, opinion articles, readers' letters and brief satirical comments)
  - Two municipalities had their names changed after intense protest (Λακκιά > Λατσιά/Latsia, Αγλαγγιά > Αγλαντζιά / Aglandzia)
  - A returning discourse echoing the age-old Greek diglossia *Katharevousa* vs. *Dhimotiki* debate:
    - Standard Greek orthography = right-leaning
    - Cypriot orthography = left-leaning



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  - legal, historical, literary texts
- 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> c.: Continuous presence in poetry and dialogical parts of theater sketches
  - However, shunned from public acceptance in other domains (e.g., controversy over placenames, early 1990's)
- 21<sup>st</sup> c.: Written Cypriot Greek breaks into the mainstream with the advent of social media (early 2000's; “from below”)
  - Soon thereafter (early 2010's), Cypriot Greek moves centerstage also “from the top-down” in theatrical performances, narrative parts of (award-winning) novels, music, all of which brought it to wider and international audiences (also raising the question of its translation into other languages)

# Use in lyrics and novels

Πρώτον φως αλύχτησεν, το όρομαν δονεί  
Το πισσούριν εξεθώρκασεν τζ' ανάψαν οι ουρανοί  
Εκρυσεν τους δαίμονες τζ' έθκιωξεν τα στοισείά  
Στον αλαβροστοισειώτην η νύχτα εν φορεσίά

Εν κορασιά με φορεσίαν  
Στην ξιππασιάν σουζετ' η φυλλωσιά

Με μιαν ανάσαν 'ρούφησεν του νήλιου την λαμπρήν  
Οι νοσσίές αλληθωρήσασιν τζαι είπαν τον ππεκρήν  
Αποστάτης παρταλός στις μέρας τον καμβάν  
Ψάλλουσιν τ' αερικά μεσημερκού χαβάν

Τέθκοιος χαβάς που τον φυσά  
Αποσπερνά τ' άστρα παραπλανά





... and T-shirts!



# (Why) does writing matter?

1. Gives language public visibility and accessibility **beyond the here and now**
2. Traditionally reserved to **standard languages**
  - being written can **raise the prestige** of a language variety

## 2.a To be written or not to be written?

Being written can raise prestige of a variety > promote recognition as a (standard) language

- “In cultures of literacy and print, the ability to create long-lasting conventions in dictionaries and grammar books, and to thus **fix language** in time and space, has an effect on the **enregisterment of linguistic resources as resources of power**” (Schneider & Heyd 2024: 8)
  - Cf. impact of Gutenberg’s printing the Bible in several European languages. Conversely,
- “linguistic practices that have not materialized in visualized form through script—regional varieties, creole languages, mixed forms, oral genres, and so on—are typically regarded as **less prestigious**.” (ibid.)
  - Cf. one of the first (if not the first) project of missionaries encountering new languages in the Americas was to invent writing systems for them (whether they previously had one or not).



## 2.b *How to be written?*

- Writing systems:
  - unstandardized
  - artificial (top-down orthographies for new writing systems)
  - naturally developed (based on usage, settled over time for older writing systems)
- Grapholinguistics vs. orthography:
  - “unlike the graphematics of a writing system, which is unconsciously shaped by all members of a literate community [...], **orthography is palpable** by existing in the form of rules and involves everyone as **everyone is expected to learn, master, and adhere to these rules.**”
- Functions of orthography:
  - uniformity of correct spellings allows for **efficient and routine reading**
  - **variability** is undesirable and **deviance** (un-/intended) carries **social meaning**
  - orthographies can provide users with a sense of **continuity and (linguistic) security**

Meletis, Dimitrios & Dürscheid, Christa (2022). *Writing Systems and Their Use: An Overview of Grapholinguistics*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

## 2.b *How to be written?*

Languages can go through centuries of evolution before developing standard orthographies, if at all

- **Early dialect selection standard languages** in Europe (Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Polish, Spanish and Swedish)
  - laid basis for standard orthographies during early modern period but took several hundred years until uniform orthographic standards were developed, usu. during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> c.
- **Late dialect selection standard languages** (Albanian, Croatian, Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian)
  - orthographies typically not standardized until late 19th / early 20th century
- Some European orthographies (Galician, Macedonian, Rusyn, Valencian, Võru, Yiddish [and Cypriot Greek] are **evolving up to the present day**.
  - Some variation still present even in highly standardized orthographies (e.g., German daß / dass, English minuscule / miniscule), Greek τρένο / τραίνο]

## 2.c Orthography and language variation

- **Unilectal** approach: a single variety chosen to serve as the basis for a standard due to its large number of speakers or being spoken in a region of particular political importance
  - Choice fulfils a unifying function that is not only politically symbolic but may also be linguistically functional
- **Dialectal** approach: multiple orthographies corresponding to different varieties
  - Bears risk of social fragmentation and simultaneously diminishes linguistic usefulness of each standard
- Establishing a standard orthography for Cypriot Greek means moving **from a unilectal to a dialectal approach for Greek**, visually representing different varieties (suggesting equal status); a BIG DEAL
  - In the case of Cypriot Greek (unlike AAE, e.g. Amerykah), this means not just new reading conventions but new graphemes
  - Language status for Cypriot Greek? .... Ay, there's the rub!
  - Spoiler alert: interesting compromise suggested by users themselves

# Question posted on Quora (ca. 2020)

**Has Cypriot Greek ever been written with diacritics for its non-standard consonants?**

- “There have been reform proposals discussed recently for Cypriot spelling, which I don’t know enough about to comment on. **But honestly it ain’t broke enough to fix. Yes, the lay transcription is imperfect, and you have to know Greek historical orthography already** (and rely a little on context) to realise that <syllos> is /ʃilos/ and not /silos/. But **outside of linguistics, that level of ambiguity and guesswork is acceptable; certainly more acceptable for non-academic Cypriots than starting to use diacritics would be.** (The reform proposals don’t use diacritics either; as far as I know, they resort to digraphs.)”

# Question posted on Quora (ca. 2020)

If not, would such a system be useful?

- The only place where a Cypriot system of writing would be useful would be **somewhere where one would insist on using “formal” writing WHILE utilizing the “informal” Cypriot Greek language**. The only place I can think of myself where letters would need to be written down in a formal alphabet while informal language is utilized would be:
  - 1. **Subtitles for Cypriot TV shows**, which are in Cypriot Greek, but the subtitles couldn't really be in Greeklisch because it'd be way too informal for TV, but couldn't really be in Greek because they wouldn't portray the spoken language very accurately, and
  - 2. **Cypriot poetry**, which as I mentioned at the very beginning is the only instance I'm aware of where a proper Cypriot writing system has been used in the past. This could also include some other art form which would involve the Cypriot language being used. Here the poet/artist might want to use the Cypriot Greek for artistic/expressive purposes, but writing that in Greeklisch or in wonky Greek would be too awkward since it's poetry (or some other form of art) which is supposed to be presentable and aesthetically pleasing. Hence why if a poem or the like is written in Cypriot it would be useful to type it out with some sort of Cypriot writing system.

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### 3. The impact of technology

- Available technologies have always affected the form of writing, from the choice of which texts to commit in writing (durability *vs.* ephemerality) to the types of letters/graphemes used (upper- vs. lowercase, use of diacritics, placement on the page etc.)
- Advent of social media in Cyprus meant that for the first time Cypriot Greek was written and read **on a massive scale** by people from all walks of life (all ages, genders, professions, levels of education etc.)
- This had several consequences, notably:
  - Familiarization with visual representation of the dialect (no longer marked or taboo)
  - Various ways to write Cypriot Greek, with **Greeklish** (Greek typed in Roman characters) prevalent among them
  - Greeklish remains preferred for Cypriots on social media, even after Standard users switched to typing in Greek
  - Other suggestions involve use of **diacritics** (as in the Από-αποικιο-ποίηση project) or use of the **dialektikó**
  - Implemented in specialized keyboards or as fonts (reverse impact on technology)

Figure 8. Analytic table of the proposed new typographic system in its final form

| phoneme | new grapheme | based on the grapheme of the Greek alphabet | word example in GCD | pronunciation | transl. in SMG | transl. in English |
|---------|--------------|---|---------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|
| [ʃ]     | σ   ξ        | σ   ξ                                       | σέριν   ιμίξ        | ʃérin   imíʃ  | χέρι   τάχα    | hand   supposedly  |
| [ʒ]     | ζ            | ζ   | ζω                  | ʒ.o           | ζω             | live (v.)          |
| [kʃ]    | ξ            | ξ   | ξουρίζω             | kʃuriz:o      | ξυρίζω         | shave (v.)         |
| [pʃ]    | ψ            | ψ   | αψουρίζουμαι        | apʃuríz:ume   | φταρνίζομαι    | sneeze (v.)        |
| [tʃ]    | τσ           | τσ  | κότσινος            | kóʃʰ.inos     | κόκκινος       | red                |
| [dʒ]    | τζ           | τζ  | καντζέλλιν          | kandzé:lin    | καγκελόπορτα   | gate               |

Papadima, A. (2016). Visual Graphetics and Language Ideology: Typographic Design for the Greek-Cypriot Dialect. *International Journal of Signs and Semiotic Systems* 5(2), 35–51.

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ Ν Ξ Ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ψ Ω  
α β γ δ ε ζ ζ η θ ι κ λ μ ν ξ ξ ο π ρ σ ς σ τ υ φ χ ψ ψ ω

Αχιλλέως, Α., Αρμιοστής, Σ., Σωκράτους, Ε. (2022) *ΑΠΟ-αποικιο-ΠΟΙΗΣΗ: Γλωσσοπλάσματα που μηχανές τζαι πλάσματα. Λεμεσός: Υπόγεια Σκηνή.*



# The ΑΠΟ-αποικιο-ΠΟΙΗΣΗ project (2022)

## Can AI (ChatGPT 2) learn to converse in Cypriot Greek?

1. 9 Cypriot authors instructed to write original texts in Cypriot Greek following regular orthography rules
  - Postalveolars indicated by diacritics
  - Also phonotactic rules
2. Texts edited by team of linguists for consistency
3. Final corpus of 101,000 words ‘fed into’ machine-learning algorithm of ChatGPT 2
4. Authors ‘asked’ ChatGPT questions which it answered producing its own ‘text’ in ‘Cypriot Greek’
5. More successful with phonology/morphology than syntax/semantics
  - Reproduced a lot of existing words but also created its own, which follow Cypriot phonotactics; it “sounds” Cypriot Greek
  - Text often non-sensical (inexistent words or inappropriate chaining of words)

### 3. The impact of technology

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  - Other suggestions involve use of **diacritics** (as in the Από-αποικιο-ποίηση project) or use of the **dialektikó**
  - Implemented in specialized keyboards or as fonts (reverse impact on technology)
  - Creates new reasons to standardize the orthography (for the sake of humans and nonhumans/ChatGPT)... or not?

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## 4. Consequences for cognition and ideology

- Cognitive consequences of orthography:

- “We read more quickly and absorb the information the text contains more efficiently when the orthography is unmarked. We **do not want to be distracted by orthographic discrepancies** that do not comply with our expectations and hinder our progress through the text. Over many **years of training, we develop the skills** required to read machine-made (printed) texts quickly, and orthographic uniformity guarantees our proficiency and contributes greatly to our ability to compete with the many other skilled readers in our present-day society. The uniformity of standard orthography is an asset that enables thoughts and ideas to be shared and exchanged much more quickly than before. ... **the more texts to which readers are exposed, the more their reading skills improve.** Thus, consumers benefited from the standardization of orthography achieved through printing.” Subačius (2023)
- Learning to read Cypriot Greek means **learning new orthographic conventions** (different from those of Standard Greek)
- If the text switches between standard and Cypriot forms, the **reader must be able to visually switch** between reading conventions as well

## 4. Consequences for cognition and ideology

- Ideological consequences of orthography:

### **Collective:**

- orthographic preferences taken to signal political affiliation,
- resistance to spelling reforms, ...

### **Individual:**

- in Standard Greek, value judgements about users of Greeklish depend on type of Greeklish used (orthographic vs. phonetic)
- no such judgements for users of EnGreek (English in Greek characters)

Mouresioti, E., & Terkourafi, M. (2021). Καλημέρα, kalimera or kalhmera?: A mixed methods study of Greek native speakers' attitudes to using the Greek and Roman scripts in emails and SMS. *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 21(2), 224-262,

Mouresioti & Terkourafi (in prep.)

# Asking the users: some data

- Focus group discussion organized by Cyprus Acquisition Team of University of Cyprus (May 2024)
- Four questions:
  - How do you feel when you see written Cypriot Greek?
  - Do you write Cypriot Greek? How?
  - Should Cypriot Greek be written? How?
  - Who do you think should decide that?
- 2h online session
- 17 participants (7 actively commenting; mostly academics and authors)

# Focus group discussion: main findings (1)

- Surprised when first encountering written Cypriot Greek in 1998, **initially found difficult to read + write**
  - Guidelines given for how to write it (as in ΑΠΟ-αποικιο-ΠΟΙΗΣΗ project) encouraged + facilitated its adoption
  - Possibility of similar guidelines introduced in schools parallel with StG (lack of orthographic consistency puts people off from using it)
- **Happy and proud** to see dialect represented in contexts where it is also spoken
  - Liberating, conveys own voice better, comes closer to how one feels and thinks, language of our soul
  - Does not cut it off from Greek but only separates it to realize that it has value of its own
- **No necessary adoption as official orthographic norm**
  - This is a job for linguists, there is no political will for this; but also no shared public will (a step too far?)

# Focus group discussion: main findings (2)

- Instead users distinguish between **registers of writing**
  - An informal register where written Cypriot Greek can be used
  - A formal register to which Standard Greek is better suited (according to some)
- Written for other Cypriots (**in-group code**), not for mainland Greeks who wouldn't know how to read it
  - Similar to orally code-switching to Standard Greek with speakers from the mainland
- Informal Cypriot Greek can be written using diacritics (artificial) or adding –ɪ as in σɪ (naturally developed)
  - Using diacritics is better because it avoids ambiguity of which reading conventions to follow (standard or Cypriot) BUT
  - Diacritics can be distracting and prevent reader from immersing themselves into the text; negative reception by readers
- Using diacritics easier when **writing it by hand** vs. **typing it** (need to switch keyboard)



# Focus group discussion: some analysis (1)

- Written Cypriot Greek is more informal in two ways: (i) used for informal registers/tasks, (ii) in handwriting
  - but see its use in social media >> yet there it is mostly realized as Greeklish
- Handwriting is individual, like one's voice (cf. first person narration in novels only possible in CyG) — because of this **affective association**, CyG feels more appropriate when writing by hand (not just matter of ease)
  - lends (additional) authenticity to the text
  - typing associated with more formal registers/tasks/interlocutors we don't know (out-group)
- The higher formality associated with typography also explains why it can be controversial to introduce special graphemes for writing CyG
  - typography enables potential introduction of CyG to domains where it is currently not used, creating new affordances for the variety as a whole, not just its written version
  - this aspect of materiality (hand-writing vs. typography) can change indexicalities of CyG beyond current domains of use

# Focus group discussion: some analysis (2)

- Translation of Marx's *Das Kapital* into CyG (a pandemic project, completed in May 2023)
  - breaks from exclusive use of written CyG in artistic expression, extends it to new domains (political thought)
  - strengthens association of written CyG with a leftist political ideology
  - could generate resistance / hamper uptake of the new writing conventions by more conservative users
- The party politics dimension:
  - Writing in Cypriot Greek associated with not just being Cypriot but with being a left-leaning Cypriot
  - cf. CyG in parliament introduced by the only communist head of state (Dimitris Christofias, 2001-2013)
- This leftist association could be lifted if written Cypriot Greek were used in other public discourses, e.g. advertising BUT
  - CyG is **not visible** in ads, written as either Greeklish or using existing orthographic conventions
  - In artistic expression (incl. T-shirts) **CyG is the product sold (risky, no consensus)**, while in advertising **CyG is used to sell something else** (another aspect of materiality)

# Written Cypriot Greek in ads vs. T-shirts



# Entanglements of materiality and written Cypriot Greek

- Authors / artists don't always have long-term plans for the consequences of their choices, neither do small local publishers for their publications (and where those choices might or might not lead).
  - This fits the discourse of materiality that views **agency as distributed**
- Written Cypriot Greek is “tolerated” in artistic production but carries indexicalities of leftist ideology and may be rejected on nationalist ideology grounds if used outside of it
  - Proponents of new graphemes very careful not to trigger associations with other ethnicities (e.g., Slavic indexicalities of haček) and emphasize ‘Greekness’ of their proposed solutions through a discourse of continuity with ancient Greek
- Cypriot Greek used for artistic purposes or hand-written in private is nothing new
  - it can continue being used as it has for centuries without standardizing its orthography
- Technology (ChatGPT, Machine Translation, educational resources) provides **new reasons** (and **new means**) for standardizing its orthography, resulting in a dia-lectal (2 written standards) orthography for Greek
  - technology as an agent that can lead to new outcomes, possibly beyond the intentions of the human agents proposing and adopting these solutions