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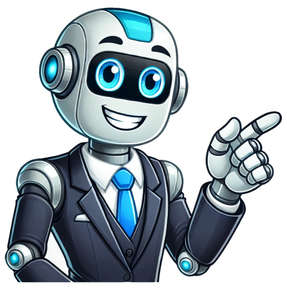

Since language constitutes one of the most important elements of Greek culture and its best transmitter, it is interesting to see, in brief, how the Greeks speak today, how the Ancient Greek language became the modern one known today. Here is a brief history of the Greek language to help us understand its changes and its evolution. Modern Greek is a descendant of the Ancient language and is affiliated to the part of the Greek or Hellenic branch of Indo-European. History and evolution of the language We propose below information about the evolution and history of the language in Greece. From the first written language to the language used in the 20th century. The First written language The first written Greek letters were found on baked mud tablets, in the remains of the Minoan Knossos Palace of Crete island. This language is known as Linear A and it has not been fully decoded till today. The most famous example of Linear A is written in the famous Phaistos Disc. In the 12th century BC, a new language started to develop, called Linear B, where each drawing symbol is a consonant-vowel combination. Linear B dates from the Mycenaean civilization. In the late 9th and early 8th century BC, the language found was based on the Phoenician syllabary, written from left to right and back again. This form of the inscription is the closest to the modern language of today. The Classical Period During the Classical period (6th-4th century BC), the territory of Greece was divided into numerous states and each one had its own dialect. The two more important dialects were the Ionic and the Attic. During this period, Athens established itself as the political, economic and cultural center of the Greek world, and therefore the Attic idiom started to be used as a common language. After the expeditions of Alexander the Great, Attic dialect was also expanded in the depths of the East and it was spoken by millions of people. This gradually led to a mixing dialect which was the beginning of the koine, or common dialect, mostly known as the Hellenistic Koine. This type of language survived through centuries and became an official language of the Roman Empire later on. The koine is the original language of the New Testament and the basis for the development of Medieval and Modern Greek. This language was developed all through Byzantine times. Katharevousa and Dimotiki With the creation of the modern Greek State in 1829, the question of the language, as an important part of the nation-building process, had to be resolved. After about 4 centuries of Ottoman occupation, Greece had mostly an oral culture due to all these centuries of different dominations. The question was the choice of language used in administration and education. One of the suggestions, to re-use the Attic language, was very attractive, especially because all the Western Europe was charmed by the Ancient Greek culture, and it would have been a great stimulus for the philhellenes. It proved impossible from a practical point of view. So, the Greek scholar Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), suggested reforming the spoken language of those times on ancient principals. This suggestion was accepted and the katharevoussa (meaning purified language) was created. The theme became politicized: a distinction rose between the Katharevoussa, which became the high-style language associated with official functions such as governmental affairs, education and religion, and the dimotiki language (popular language) used by common people in their everyday life. 20th-century language In the 20th century, the Greek language debate took a huge political significance: academics were sacked for using Dimotiki, riots were taking place in the streets and a lot of people were claiming that Katharevoussa was being used as an instrument of denying access to education to the common people. Nationalist governments like the dictator of the Junta, Ioannis Papadopoulos, favored Katharevoussa. The struggle between the proponents of Dimotiki and Katharevoussa raised various social attitudes and political positions. The theme was eventually solved in 1976, with actions of the after dictatorship government. Dimotiki language was adopted in education and administration and it has been kept since then as the formal language of modern Greece. The last thing worth mentioning is that most regions in Greece have their local oral dialects, never used as writing means. Every region has, of course, its local accent. More: Learn some Greek | Useful expressions Greek belongs to the Hellenic branch of the Indo-European language family. It is spoken mainly in Greece and Cyprus, and also in Australia, Albania, Italy, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania and Hungary. It is an official language in Greece and Cyprus, and is recognised as a minority language Albania, Armenia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine [source]. In 2012 there were about 13.1 million speakers of Greek worldwide, including 10.7 million in Greece, 1.1 million in Cyprus, and 15,200 in Albania. There were about 238,000 Greek speakers in Australia in 2016, and in 1987 there were about 20,000 Greek speakers in Italy [source]. Greek at a glance Native name: (elinika) [elinika] Language family: Indo-European, Hellenic Number of speakers: c. 13 million Spoken in: Greece, Albania, Cyprus, and a number of other countries First written: 1500 BC Writing systems: Linear B, Cypriot syllabary, Greek alphabet Status: official language of Greece, an official language of Cyprus, officially recognized as a minority language in parts of Italy, and in Albania, Armenia, Romania and Ukraine. [top] A Brief History of Written Greek Greek was first written in Mycenae with a script known as Linear B, which was used between about 1500 and 1200 BC. This variety of Greek is known as Mycenaean. On Crete another script, known as the Cypriot syllabary, was used to write the local variety of Greek between about 1200 and 300 BC. Greek alphabet ( ) The Greek alphabet has been in continuous use since about 750 BC. It was developed from the Canaanite/Phoenician alphabet and the order and names of the letters are derived from Phoenician. The original Canaanite meanings of the letter names was lost when the alphabet was adapted for Greek. For example, alpha comes for the Canaanite aleph (ox) and beta from beth (house). When the Greeks adapted the Phoenician alphabet to write their language they used five of the Phoenician consonants to represent vowel sounds: yodh () [j] became (iota), waw () [w] became (upsilon), 'aleph () [] became (alpha), 'ayin () [] became (omicron), and he () [h] became (epsilon). New letters were also devised: (phi), (chi) and (psi). The result was the world's first fully phonemic alphabet which represented both consonant and vowel sounds. At first, there were a number of different versions of the alphabet used in various different Greek cities. These local alphabets, known as epichoric, can be divided into three groups: green, blue and red. The blue group developed into the modern Greek alphabet, while the red group developed into the Etruscan alphabet, other alphabets of ancient Italy and eventually the Latin alphabet. By the early 4th century BC, the epichoric alphabets were replaced by the eastern Ionic alphabet. The capital letters of the modern Greek alphabet are almost identical to those of the Ionic alphabet. The minuscule or lower case letters first appeared sometime after 800 AD and developed from the Byzantine minuscule script, which developed from cursive writing. Today the Greek alphabet is used only to write Greek, however at various times in the past it has been used to write such languages as Lydian, Phrygian, Thracian, Gaulish, Hebrew, Arabic, Old Ossetic, Albanian, Turkish, Aromanian, Gagauz, Surguch and Urum. Notable features Type of writing system: alphabet - the first one to include vowels. Writing direction: Originally written horizontal lines either from right to left or alternating from right to left and left to right (boustrophedon/). Around 500 BC the direction of writing changed to horizontal lines running from left to right. Diacritics to represent stress and breathings were added to the alphabet in around 200 BC. In 1982 the diacritics representing breathings, which were not widely used after 1976, were officially abolished by presidential decree. The letter sigma has a special form which is used when it appears at the end of a word. Used to write: Arvanitic, Bactrian, Cypriot Arabic, Greek, Griko, Karamanli Turkish, Tsakonian [top] Ancient Greek alphabet This alphabet is based on inscriptions from Crete dated to about 800 BC. Greek was written mainly from right to left in horizontal lines at this time. It is uncertain what names were given to the letters, and some letters had more than one form. Source: [top] Greek alphabet (Classical Attic pronunciation) Note = [z] before voiced consonants Archaic letters Learn the Classical Greek alphabet [top] Greek numerals and other symbols The Ancient Greeks had two numeric systems: the Acrophonic or Attic system used the letters iota, delta, gamma, eta, nu and mu in various combinations. These letters were used as they represented the first letters of the number names, with the exception of iota: (gente) for 5, which became (pente); (Deka) for 10, (Hektaton) for 100, (Khilioi) for 1,000 and (Myrion) for 10,000. This system was used until the first century BC. The Acrophonic system was replaced by an alphabetic system that assigned numerical values to all the letters of the alphabet. Three obsolete letters, digamma, koppa and sampi, were used in addition to the standard Greek letters, and a apostrophe-like numeral sign was used to indicate that letters were being used as numerals. [top] Modern Greek alphabet Hear the Modern Greek alphabet Hear a recording of the Greek alphabet by Vasiliki Baskos of learn-greek-online.com Hear a recording of Modern Greek pronunciation by Vasiliki Baskos of learn-greek-online.com Greek alphabet learning game Notes = [] before back vowels [a, o, u]. Before front vowels [e, i], it is pronounced [] and transliterated y = [k] before back vowels [a, o, u], and [c] before front vowels [e, i] = [] before an unstressed i followed by another vowel, e.g. [ma] = [] before an unstressed i followed by another vowel, e.g. [o] When the sound [i] is preceded by a voiced consonant and followed by another vowel, it becomes [], e.g. [kos]. When it is preceded by a voiceless consonont and followed by another vowel it is pronounced as [], e.g. [fot]. In both cases it is not stressed. = [z] before voiced consonants = [] before back vowels [a, o, u], and [] before front vowels [e, i] Download Greek alphabet charts in Excel, Word or PDF format Notes = [av] before vowels and voiced consonants; [af] elsewhere. = [ev] before vowels and voiced consonants; [ef] elsewhere. = [iv] before vowels and voiced consonants; [if] elsewhere. = [nd] in the middle of words; [d] at the beginning. = [mb] in the middle of words; [b] at the beginning. & = [k] in the middle of words; [] or [] at the beginning of words and in some loanwords, and [] or [] elsewhere, although in informal speech they are often pronounced [] or [] elsewhere. A dieresis is used to indicate that vowels are pronounced separately, e.g. [ait]. However, when the first of the two letters is stressed, the dieresis sign is not necessary, e.g. [iaros]. When , , , , and are preceded by a word that ends in they become voiced and the final N turns into the corresponding nasal sound, e.g. [tombatra]. [top] Sample text in Greek Transliteration li i nthropi yeninde elftheri ke si stin aksioprpia ke ta dhikemata. ne prikizmni me loyik ke sindhisi, ke oflun na simberifronde metaks tus me pnvma adhelfosnis. A recording of this text by E (Eftychia Panayiotou) Another recording of this text by (Christos Papadopoulos) Sample text in Polytonic Greek Sample text in handwritten Greek Font from: Translation All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) Corrections and notes on pronunciation provided by (Dimitris Christoulias) [top] Sample videos in Greek Information about Greek | Phrases | Numbers | Family words | Time | Idioms | Proverbs | Tongue twisters | Tower of Babel | Articles | Links | Learning materials | Books about the Greek alphabet Information about Ancient Greek Information about Greek (Ancient and Modern) | Phrases | Numbers | Tower of Babel [top] Links Information about the Greek language Information about Greek numbering systems Online Greek lessons (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern) (Modern/Ancient) (New Testament) ancgreek/ (Ancient) (Ancient) Ask Greek - the place to ask questions about the Greek language Learn Greek Online via Skype - Learn Greek online with GreekPod101 - Learn Greek with Glossika - Greek Electronic talking dictionaries - Greek learning software - Find Greek Tutors with LanguaTalk More Greek links ALPHABETUM - a Unicode font for ancient scripts, including Classical & Medieval Latin, Ancient Greek, Etruscan, Oscan, Umbrian, Faliscan, Messapic, Picene, Iberian, Celtiberian, Gothic, Runic, Old & Middle English, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Old Nordic, Ogham, Kharosthi, Glagolitic, Anatolian scripts, Phoenician, Brahmi, Imperial Aramaic, Old Turkic, Old Permic, Ugaritic, Linear B, Phaistos Disc, Meroitic, Coptic, Cypriot and Avestan. Hellenic languages Greek, Griko, Pontic Greek, Tsakonian, Yevanic Languages written with the Greek alphabet Arvanitic, Bactrian, Cypriot Arabic, Greek, Griko, Karamanli Turkish, Tsakonian Alphabets A-chik Tokbirim, Adinkra, ADLaM, Armenian, Avestan, Avoiuli, Bactrian, Bassa (Vah), Beitha Kukju, Beria (Zaghawa), Borama / Gadabuursi, Carian, Carpathian Basin Rovas, Chinuk pipa, Chisoi, Coorgi-Cox, Coptic, Cyrillic, Dalecarlian runes, Elbasan, Etruscan, Faliscan, Fox, Galik, Georgian (Asomtavruli), Georgian (Nuskhuri), Georgian (Mkhedruli), Glagolitic, Global Alphabet, Gothic, Greek, Hurf- munfasla, Irish (Uncial), Kaddare, Kayah Li, Khatt-i-Bad, Khazarian Rovas, Koch, Korean, Latin, Lepontic, Luo Lakeside Script, Lycian, Lydian, Manchu, Mandaic, Mandombe, Marsiliana, Medefaidrin, Messapic, Mongolian, Mro, Mundari Bani, Nag Chiki, Naasioi Otomaung, N'Ko, North Picene, Novo Tupi, Nyiakeng Puachue Hmong, Odduw, Ogham, Old Church Slavonic, Oirat Clear Script, Ol Chiki (Ol Cemet' / Santali), Old Italic, Old Nubian, Old Permic, Ol Onal, Orkhon, Osage, Oscan, Osmanya (Somali), Pau Cin Hau, Phrygian, Pollard script, Runic, Szkely-Hungarian Rovs (Hungarian Runes), South Picene, Sutton SignWriting, Sunuwar, Tai Viet, Tangsa, Todhri, Toto, Umbrian, (Old) Uyghur, Wancho, Yezidi, Zoulai Other writing systems Page last modified: 08.06.25 [top] You can support this site by Buying Me A Coffee, and if you like what you see on this page, you can use the buttons below to share it with people you know. If you like this site and find it useful, you can support it by making a donation via PayPal or Patreon, or by contributing in other ways. Omniglot is how I make my living. Note: all links on this site to Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk and Amazon.fr are affiliate links. This means I earn a commission if you click on any of them and buy something. So by clicking on these links you can help to support this site. [top] Also on this page: The Greek Alphabet, Greek Letter, Greek Alphabets, Greek Characters, The Greek language, known as (Ellinik) in Greek, stands as one of the worlds oldest recorded living languages. With a history spanning over 3,400 years, Greek has a rich legacy in the realms of philosophy, science, politics, and the arts. Predominantly spoken in Greece, Cyprus, and by diaspora communities worldwide, Greek boasts an estimated 13.4 million speakers. This article seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of the Greek language, touching on its historical development, unique linguistic aspects, dialects, and cultural significance.Historical BackgroundThe history of the Greek language can be divided into several periods:Mycenaean Greek: The oldest form of Greek, dating back to the 14th13th centuries BCE, recorded in the Linear B script on clay tablets.Ancient Greek: This is the Greek used during classical antiquity, spanning from the 9th or 8th century BCE to the 6th century CE. This phase includes Classical and Koine Greek.Medieval Greek: Also known as Byzantine Greek, used from the 4th to the 15th century.Modern Greek: Emerging after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, Modern Greek has been spoken from the 15th century to the present.Writing SystemGreek uses its own alphabet, comprising 24 letters. The Greek alphabet has been used since the late 9th or early 8th century BCE and is the oldest continuously used alphabet. It serves as the basis for the Latin, Cyrillic, Armenian, and other alphabets.Phonological FeaturesVowels and ConsonantsModern Greek has 5 vowel sounds and about 17-18 consonant sounds. The language has a relatively simple vowel system but a more intricate set of consonants, which include voiced and voiceless stops, fricatives, and nasals.Stress and IntonationGreek words have stress accent, meaning one syllable is emphasized more than the others. Incorrect stress can alter the meaning of a word.Grammatical StructureNoun Cases and DeclensionsGreek nouns are declined for case, number, and gender. There are four cases in Modern Greek: nominative, genitive, accusative, and vocative. The dative case exists in ancient forms but has been largely phased out in modern usage.Verb ConjugationGreek verbs are conjugated based on mood, tense, voice, aspect, person, and number. The language features a variety of tenses, including present, past, and future, each with its own set of conjugation rules.Word OrderModern Greek generally follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) sentence structure, but its quite flexible due to its inflectional nature. Word order can often be rearranged for emphasis or stylistic reasons without affecting the sentences overall meaning.DialectsGreek dialects are broadly categorized into Demotic and Katharevousa, the latter being a more formal, archaic form used in official documents and older literature. Other dialects include Pontic, Cappadocian, and Tsakonian, each with its own unique set of vocabulary and grammatical rules.Modern Usage and Cultural ImportanceToday, Greek is the official language of Greece and Cyprus and is one of the 24 official languages of the European Union. The language plays an essential role in the Orthodox Church and features prominently in Greek diaspora communities worldwide.Greek has contributed extensively to world culture and knowledge. Classical Greek literature, including works like the Iliad and Odyssey by Homer, philosophical treatises by Plato and Aristotle, and historical accounts by Herodotus and Thucydides, have had a lasting impact. Greeks influence is also visible in the fields of science, mathematics, and medicine, where numerous technical terms derive from Greek roots.ConclusionThe Greek language serves as a living testament to a culture and history that has profoundly shaped Western civilization. With its complex grammar, rich vocabulary, and extensive literature, Greek remains a subject of academic study and a crucial part of the worlds linguistic heritage. Its influence is not confined to the past; it continues to evolve and contribute to various fields, embodying the essence of a civilization that values knowledge, inquiry, and the complexities of human experience. by greek.com?Greece is the birthplace of democracy and a land full of culture and a rich history that offers travelers a great variety of vacation options. The entire country of Greece is a paradise for tourists who are interested in the history of art, culture and literature.From mainland Greece with its famous archaeological sites, to the Greek islands with their own unique flavors, Greeces set and setting provide the ultimate vacation destination for all types of travelers. In fact, Greece has been a popular vacation spot for many centuries. From touring the ancient historical sites in Athens to the sunny Greek islands of Santorini, Crete, Corfu, and Rhodes, Greece is first on the list of anyones ultimate Mediterranean vacations. Ancient Greece gave us fantastic architecture and the Olympics, but today travelers go to Greece for the social life and shopping opportunities as much as they do to visit the Acropolis and Mount Olympus.greek.com is dedicated to maximizing your vacations and holidays in Greece and the Greek islands. Let us help you organize and plan your travel to one of Europes favorite holiday destinations where you will learn more about the most popular attractions in Greece and the surrounding islands. greek.com also delivers up-to-date info on hotels and accommodation suggestions as well as many other travel-related services including online hotel booking, island tour packages, cruises, car rentals, tours and scuba diving services. The best way to experience the unique beauty and culture of Greece is to tour both the mainland and the islands of this incredible Mediterranean vacation destination. In addition to Athens and Delphi on the mainland, spending a few nights at each island will allow you to fully experience each unique island on its own.Greece is a mountainous country located in southeastern Europe, bordered by Albania, Turkey and Bulgaria. The nation is surrounded by more than a thousand small islands, only 200 of which are populated. The history of ancient Greece gores all the way back to the powerful Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations that flourished around 3000 BC. Greece was also the site of the powerful city-state of Athens, which was the high-point of Greek civilization in 800 BC.Today, Greece is a modern European country, with a strong democratic government, and a developing economy. The Greek government is a parliamentary republic guided by a Democratic Constitution and the president of the republic is the head of the state, while the prime minister is the head of the Greek government. Most of the people in Greece are concentrated in the major urban areas, with Athens containing nearly a third of the countrys population. The country has always been a seafaring nation and that tradition has continued throughout its history until the present day with the Greek merchant shipping fleet being one of the largest world-wide. Greece currently owns one-seventh of the worlds shipping fleet in terms of total tonnage and is the second largest in the world behind Japan and just ahead of China and Germany. In 2000 Greece adopted the Euro as the official currency to help solidify its position as a global shipping leader.If you thinking of traveling to Greece, let greek.com help you plan, book and organize your ultimate Mediterranean vacation all in one convenient location. U.S. and Canadian citizens visiting Greece for any period of less than three months need only a passport for entry and there are no immunizations required either. Those wishing to spend more than three months in Greece can obtain the necessary permits at the Greek Embassy in their country of residence. Mathematics: Greek letters represent variables, constants, and functions. They're essential in calculus, geometry, and analysis. Physics: From elementary particles (, , ) to physical properties (, , ), Greek letters are fundamental to physical notation. Statistics: Greek letters denote population parameters (, , ) and hypothesis testing values (, ). Geography & Travel Languages Greek language, Indo-European language spoken primarily in Greece. It has a long and well-documented historythe longest of any Indo-European languagespanning 34 centuries. There is an Ancient phase, subdivided into a Mycenaean period (texts in syllabic script attested from the 14th to the 13th century bce) and Archaic and Classical periods (beginning with the adoption of the alphabet, from the 8th to the 4th century bce); a Hellenistic and Roman phase (4th century bce to 4th century ce); a Byzantine phase (5th to 15th century ce); and a Modern phase.Separate transliteration tables for Classical and Modern Greek accompany this article. Some differences in transliteration result from changes in pronunciation of the Greek language; others reflect convention, as for example the (chi or khi), which was transliterated by the Romans as ch (because they lacked the letter k in their usual alphabet). In Modern Greek, however, the standard transliteration for is kh. Another difference is the representation of (bta or vta); in Classical Greek it is transliterated as b in every instance, and in Modern Greek as v. The pronunciation of Ancient Greek vowels is indicated by the transliteration used by the Romans. (upsilon) was written as y by the Romans, indicating that the sound was not identical to the sound of their letter i. Modern Greek (psilon) is transliterated as i, indicating that the sound used today differs from that of the ancient . While it is possible that speakers of Hellenic or pre-Hellenic arrived earlier, there is no linguistic evidence of Hellenic prior to the first half of the 2nd millennium bce on what is now the Greek peninsula, where the language brought by the relevant people(s) developed into Greek. Later, Greek-speaking people occupied most of the islands of the Aegean and, about 1000 bce, the west coast of Anatolia. With few exceptions that is still the area occupied by the Greek language today. In the second quarter of the 1st millennium bce, a vast colonial movement took place, resulting in establishments founded by various Greek cities all around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, especially in southern Italy and Sicily. This extension of the linguistic area of Greek lasted only a few centuries; in the Roman period, Latin, more or less rapidly, took the place of Greek in most of these ancient colonies. After the conquest of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt by Alexander the Great, Greek was the standard language of the rulers in the new urban centres of these countries until the invasions of the Arabs and the Turks. Colonial Greek survived longest at Byzantium, as the official language of the Eastern Empire. Click Here to see full-size tableAncient Greek is, next to Hittite, the Indo-European language with documents going furthest back into the past. By the time it emerged in the second half of the 2nd millennium bce, it had already acquired a completely distinct character from the parent Indo-European language. Its linguistic features place it in a central region on the dialect map that can be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European; the ancient languages with which it has the most features in common are little-known ones such as Phrygian. In the study of Indo-European dialectology, phonetic data are the most readily available and provide the most information. In this respect the position of Ancient Greek is as follows. The vowels of a and o quality, both short and long, remain distinct, whereas they are completely or partially confused in Hittite, Indo-Iranian, Baltic, Slavic, and Germanic. Greek is the only language that distinguishes by three different qualities (, , ) the secondary short vowels resulting in certain positions from the three laryngeal sounds, *H1, *H2, *H3, of Indo-European. (An asterisk preceding a sound or word indicates that it is not an attested, but a reconstructed, hypothetical form. For a discussion of these laryngeal sounds, see Indo-European languages.) Greek keeps the distinction between the original voiced stops and voiced aspirated stops of Indo-European (e.g., Indo-European *d becomes Greek d, and Indo-European *dh becomes Greek th), whereas Iranian, Slavic, Baltic, and Celtic confuse them. (Some linguists, however, assume that Greek th continues Indo-European th and that Greek d goes back to an Indo-European glottalized stop.) Greek avoids the general shifts of stop consonants that are displayed, independently, by Armenian and Germanic, as well as the change of palatal stops (k, etc.) into affricates (ts, etc.) or spirants (s, etc.) in Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Baltic, and Slavic. In these respects Ancient Greek is conservative, as are, generally speaking, the western Indo-European languages (Italic and Celtic). On the other hand, it does show innovations. One of these, the devoicing of the original voiced aspirated stops, is shared with Italic, although it is realized in different ways (*dh- yields Greek th-, Latin f-, Osco-Umbrian f-), but others are foreign to Italic. The latter include, for example, the weakening of spirants and semivowels at the beginning of words before a vowel, the evolution of *s- to h- (pre-Mycenaean), and *y- to h- (contemporary with Mycenaean). Morphological criteria must, of course, be taken into account in defining the position of a language. It should be noted that there are few grammatical innovations shared by Greek and Italic, apart from the extension to nouns of the pronominal ending of the genitive feminine plural *-sm (Greek -n; Latin -rum, Umbrian -aru, Oscan -azum) and of the pronominal ending of the nominative masculine plural *-oi (Greek -oi; Latin -). The last innovation, however, is not shared with Osco-Umbrian but is found instead in Germanic (in the strong declension of adjectives) and partly in Celtic. The dialectal individuality of Greek is very clearly marked in the organization of the verb, which is without parallel except for an approximation in Indo-Iranian. Starting from a foreign script known as Linear A (used in Crete to record a native language known as Minoan), the Greeks devised, toward 1500 bce at the latest, a syllabic script to record their own language. Known as Linear B, this script was deciphered in 1952 by the British architect Michael Ventris and the British classicist and linguist John Chadwick. At present more than 100 very short Linear B inscriptions painted on vases have been found in Crete and in continental Greece (e.g., Thebes), where they were imported from Crete. The major source of Linear B inscriptions are some 4,500 unbaked clay tablets found at Knossos (14001350 bcethis date has been questioned) and at Thebes, Tiryns, Mycenae, Pylos, and Chania (12501200 bce). There are no literary texts and hardly any continuous texts (only a small number of complete sentences exist); the tablets contain accounts of the great Mycenaean palaces and their dependencies, written in the Greek language, in a very concise style. The Linear B syllabary consists of about 90 signs. In principle, each sign represents a syllable beginning with one consonant and ending with a vowel. Thus, there are five different signs for ta, te, ti, to, tu, but there is no sign for the consonant t without a following vowel. As an initial syllable may be formed by just a vowel, there are also signs for a, e, i, o, u. The script does not distinguish r and l, unvoiced and voiced consonants (except for /d-/), and nonaspirated and aspirated consonants, so the sign pa can be read in Greek as pa, ba, or pha. Final consonants are omitted, and consonants followed by other consonants are either omitted or expressed by means of the sign corresponding to the next vowel (e.g., pe-ma for sperma, ta-to-mo for stathmos). Consequently, the spellings are often ambiguous, such as pa-te for pantes and patr, pa-si for pansi and phsi. This inconvenient script and the nature of the documents make Mycenaean inscriptions harder to exploit and less rich in data than the later alphabetic inscriptions, but the information that can be gathered on the state of Greek five centuries before Homer, incomplete as it may be, is of capital importance. Another syllabary, distantly related to Linear B, was in use in Cyprus. From the 11th to the 3rd century bce it was used to record a native language of the island (Eteocypriot) as well as Greek. GREEK A LANGUAGE of south-eastern Europe, a classical LANGUAGE of the Western world, and a member of the INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGE family. It is commonly divided into Ancient or Classical Greek (often thought of as a dead language) and Modern Greek, the language of Greece, Cyprus (with Turkish), enclaves in the Soviet Union and the eastern Mediterranean, and Greek and Cypriot immigrants in Australia, Britain, Canada, and the US.Greek in English The influence of classical Greek on English has been largely indirect, through LATIN and FRENCH, and largely lexical and conceptual, with some orthographic and other effects. For speakers of English, Greek has been traditionally perceived as remote, esoteric, and yet worth a certain respect: compare the idiom It's Greek to me (I can't understand it) and the saying The Greeks had a word for it (expressing a traditional view of the richness of the language). Greek word-forming patterns, words, and word elements were adopted and adapted into Latin over c.1,500 years, and passed through Latin into many European and other languages, being used in the main for scholarly and technical purposes. The flow into English was at first limited and largely religious, such as Old English cirice and its descendant church (from kriakn dma the Lord's house). The significant influx was in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as with catalogue 1460, rhetorical 1476, stratagem 1489, psalmodize 1513, analytical 1525.Greek in Latin dress The spelling of Greek words in English has been shaped by the orthographies of Latin and French: Greek kalligraphia becomes Latin calligraphia, French calligraphie, English calligraphy. Occasionally, however, a more Greek look survives: kaleidoscope, not *calidoscope, kinetic, not *cinetic. Synonymous variants sometimes occur: ceratin, keratin, both from kras horn. Contrasts occur when a k survives in some usages but not in others: ceratosaurus horned lizard, keratogenous producing horny tissue; cinematography making moving pictures, kinematograph (obsolete) a film projector. Although most Greek personal and place-names have a Latinate look in English (Achilles, Hercules; Athens, Crete), they can, for literary and other purposes, take forms closer to the classical (Akhilleus, Herakles) or the modern (Athinai, Kriti). The use of ph as a marker of Greek words in Latin survives in English because it was favoured by French writers, the ph representing the Greek letter phi. English philosophy and French philosophie contrast with Italian filosofia and Spanish filosofa, which did not keep the Latinism: see F, P. English neuralgia, neurosis are closer to Greek than both French nvralgie, nvrose and Italian nevralgia, nevrosi, which have been influenced by the pronunciation of Modern Greek.Hybridized Greek Because it has been filtered into English through Neo-Latin, the Greek contribution has been liable to hybridization. However, because some loans (diuretic, deontology, dogmatism) are fairly close to their originals, and other forms are virtually identical with them (diphtheria, dogma, drama), the effects of Latinization and the easy creation of hybrids have tended to be overlooked. The words rhetorical and analytical are largely Greek, but they end with the suffix -al, an adaptation of Latin -alis. Scholars have tended to minimize such adaptations, because Latin and Greek were equally classical, sometimes discussing Greek as if it were a self-contained and pure source of technical vocabulary for English. Henry Bradley put it as follows:So well adapted is the structure of the Greek language for the formation of scientific terms, that when a word is wanted to denote some conception peculiar to modern science, the most convenient way of obtaining it usually is to frame a new Greek compound or derivative, such as Aristotle himself might have framed if he had found it needful to express the meaning (The Making of English, 1904).This is only partly true. A new formation is likely to be more NEO-LATIN than classical Greek. It was circumstance rather than inherent worth that made Greek a prime source of terms for European academic discourse. Other classical languages, such as ARABIC and SANSKRIT, are comparably extensive in systems of WORD-FORMATION exploited in their own scholarly traditions, but have had little impact on English because no such channels as Latin and French were open to them. Elsewhere, however, they have had a comparable impact.See BIBLE, BISOCIATION, BORROWING, CLASSICAL COMPOUND, CLASSICAL ENDING, CLASSICAL LANGUAGE, COMBINING FORM, COMPOUND WORD, EARLY MODERN ENGLISH, FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR, INTERFIX, PREFIX, RHETORIC, SUFFIX, WORD.

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