Everyday spoken discourse in Modern Greek culture: indexing through performance

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Abstract

This paper explores contemporary Greek conversational narratives in terms of their indexicality, namely, the ways in which they index or constitute social and cultural identities, roles, relationships, stances and activities in their contexts of occurrence. These are argued to be interrelated with the stories' performance which encapsulates a closed set of recurrent linguistic choices. The discussion focuses first on the main forms and functions of these performance devices and then on their role in the stories' indexicality. Specifically, it is shown how they index: (i) storytelling as a social and cultural activity, (ii) the storyteller as a figure projected by the story, a conversationalist and a social actor (with a gender identity), and (iii) the storyteller and audience alignments as part of the immediate conversational encounters as well as of larger social projects. The findings presented shed light on storytelling as a central mode of communication in Greeks' everyday interactions by addressing questions of primary importance for its understanding, such as: Why does storytelling play a dominant role in Greeks' conversations? How does its dramatic and involving style interact with this role? Which are the shared sociocultural codes most commonly invoked by the stories and how do they bear on the whole storytelling activity?

Introduction

Cross-linguistically, there is an increasing interest in the ways in which any text with its specific linguistic choices indexes or constitutes social and cultural identities, roles, relationships, stances and activities. This property of the linguistic construction of discourse, namely *indexicality*, is at the heart of sociolinguistic research on text-context interaction (see, for example, papers in Duranti and Goodwin 1992). The starting point of such research is that discourse construction is an essentially context-bound and interactively organized phenomenon which systematically varies across social occasions.

Discourse is thus defined as language in use, that is, not just as ways of speaking, but also as a mode of action in context. The notion of context in turn stands at the cutting edge of much contemporary research into the relation between language, culture and social organization. In simple terms, it is the environment in which linguistic material (a text) occurs: a world filled with people who have social, cultural and personal identities, knowledge, beliefs, goals and wants, and who interact with one another in various socioculturally defined situations. The indexing of context has mainly been explored in spoken discourse, particularly in narrative: viewed as an inexhaustible source for sociocultural data, everyday discourse frequently serves as a "window" onto a universe of linguistic forms that are both defined by and used to shape social activities and stances (e.g. Duranti and Goodwin 1992, Hill and Irvine 1993, Johnstone 1990, Stahl 1989). This preference is arguably attributable to the social and psycholinguistic primacy of spoken language which is produced and received in our everyday lives in massive quantities compared to written language. In particular, in cultures with strong ties with orality, this archetypal need for sharing experiences in spoken and, more specifically, narrative form is even more apparent. Hence the proliferation of research on the "breakthrough of cultural reality into personal reality" in the narratives of such cultures (e.g. Gee 1989, Hymes 1981).

In view of the above, this paper sets out to put in the limelight mundane and, in many ways, inglorious Greek texts such as everyday conversational narratives. It is rather significant that these texts come from a society which has been frequently alleged to exhibit a strong orality bias (e.g. Mackridge 1985, Sifianou 1989, Tannen 1980, Tziovas 1989). In the light of literature on spoken discourse, the assumption is that they are ideal research sites for indexicality. Furthermore, the need for such an investigation is apparent in view of the lack of systematic linguistic research on the text-context interaction in Greek spoken discourse. The aim of this paper is, thus, to shed light on the main mechanisms by which oral narratives interact as discourse with their context of occurrence. For this purpose, the conceptual tool of indexicality is chosen because of its association with latest advances in research on text-context interaction, which has been carried out within several major

disciplinary frameworks for a number of years (see discussions in Hanks 1992 and Ochs 1988, 1992).

According to current thinking, discourse is not a static reflection or mirror of a well-defined external context or "a world out there". Its linguistics invoke contexts but at the same time create, define or even redefine contexts. Text and context are ongoing dialogical processes which mutually feed into one another in a dynamic and complex relationship: texts enact activities, stances and shared codes as well as giving shape to and reconstituting them. Thus, rather than talking about contexts which determine the use of linguistic elements, it is more helpful to consider linguistic elements in discourse as indices of these contexts. Their indexing relation can be direct and communicated through their referential content as in the case of deictic expressions (e.g. I, he, she, here, there, now, then, etc.) which directly point to features of their surrounding context.[1] More commonly, it may be non-referential, non-exclusive and accomplished through a vast range of linguistic (e.g. syntactic, lexical, discoursal, etc.) devices. Furthermore, it can be a constitutive relationship (see Ochs 1992): this means that the indexing of certain contextual dimensions can be linked in a constitutive sense to the indexing of other dimensions (for example, tag questions may index a stance of uncertainty as well as the act of requesting confirmation; these two contextual features in turn may index female gender identity). Currently, research on indexicality is characterized by a move away from relating isolated linguistic forms to features of context towards specifying clusters of linguistic features or communicative styles as indices. The notion of *markedness* is a major guideline in the identification of such features. This means that indexicality is not viewed as an all-or-nothing matter, but as a distributional

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[1] The starting point for indexicality as an attempt to shed light on the relationship between text and context was linguistic deixis: it acts as a pointer to the surrounding context and its referents are constantly shifting as the relationship between utterance and context changes. The existence of deictic expressions within language poses with particular clarity the issue of how the analysis of language requires that features of context be taken into consideration (see Jarvella and Klein 1982, Silverstein 1976, 1985).

and probabilistic relationship which is associated with unmarked (i.e. frequent, expected, predictable) or marked (i.e. rare, unexpected) enactments of acts, stances and roles by linguistic features. The above assumptions form the background of this discussion, which aims at bringing to the fore certain recurrent and unmarked patterns of indexicality characteristic of Greek storytelling.

Data
The initial motivation for the data collection was the frequency and status of Greek conversational narratives as a communication mode. Stories seem to dominate conversational encounters and to entice both tellers and audiences. As Tannen (1989) has suggested, when heard by outsiders and non-Greeks, they come across as particularly dramatic, involving and enjoyable. On the grounds of their frequency and role in everyday interactions, the identification of appropriate contexts for the data collection was a straightforward procedure. Recordings of conversations and, consequently, stories which were embedded in them, took place in numerous informal contexts of interaction between intimates ranging from street-cafés, tavernas and beaches to gatherings in houses and car drives. A constant guideline was the pursuit of fairly relaxed environments in which the participants in the speech events know each other well. To an extent, this is a guarantee of as spontaneous and natural data as possible, bearing in mind that the tape-recorder intrusion cannot be totally eliminated in any real-world contexts. The ongoing data collection has led to thirty hours of recorded conversations, from which around 500 stories have been extracted. The majority of them are personal stories, involving the narrator's first-person account of a past (recent or not recent) experience. The narrators could be roughly characterized as (young or middle-aged) middle-class Athenians with University or college education. Thus, the stories are arguably stories from Greeks who would probably identify themselves as members of the mainstream or the silent majority.

The linguistics of performance
Qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data, which are beyond the scope of this discussion, brought to the fore a

constellation of linguistic devices that form the stories' building blocks of organization or discourse structuring. These devices (co-) occur in such highly patterned and predictable ways that they can be argued to precontextualize storytelling events: this means that on a distributional and probabilistic basis, they form part of the stories' generic schema, which covers the expectations about how they should be. They thus transcend the time of their utterance production and reception and constitute past and future storytelling events (for a discussion see Ochs 1992). From the point of view of their discourse function, they can be captured by the notion of *performance* devices (Wolfson 1982), that is, devices which key the stories as replayings of the events narrated and not as simple reports. When spoken discourse takes on the features of a performance, it becomes a form of artistry in which the teller assumes the responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill and effectiveness (see Bauman 1986, 1993). The data analysis suggested that in Greek stories this performance is based on the orchestration of the following devices:

(i) narrative (historic) present;
(ii) instances of (characters') direct speech/thoughts and dialogues, which if introduced by a quotative verb, are almost unexceptionally introduced by "λέω" (say and think);
(iii) να imperfect (narrative-specific structure in Greek) and less commonly imperfect;
(iv) deictic "τώρα" (now) for "then" and less commonly "εδώ" (here) for "there".

Of these devices, the narrative present and the direct quotations were also included in Tannen's list of features which contribute to involvement in Greek stories (1983). The list also comprised ellipsis, repetition and second person singular, which did not prove as salient in the data at hand. What needs to be stressed about the performance devices posited here is the pivotal role of narrative present and (characters') speech: the two devices form the stories' skeleton or backbone, a pattern into which the rest of the devices are intercalated (for a discussion see Georgakopoulou 1994a). It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the Greek story essentially comprises action and

speech segments in narrative present which interact in various ways. By contrast, discussions of the two devices in the literature (a) do not report such a strong co-occurrence between them (e.g. Schiffrin 1981) and (b) report a much more restricted use of the narrative present, covering only one third of a story's action verbs (e.g. Fludernik 1991, Schiffrin 1981, Silva-Corvalan 1983). In view of this, their extensive occurrence and co-occurrence in Greek stories are both treated here as markers of a fully-fledged narrative performance. Similarly, Leith (1995), comparing Scottish folktales in terms of the use of historic present, claimed that for a narrative performance to be fully-fledged and sustained the historic present needs to form the norm in the narration. In the Greek stories, more overwhelming evidence for their full performances comes from the orchestration of the narrative present not only with other performance devices but also with certain structural features. These are essential components of the emerging performance and are listed below:

(i) Deep embedding of the stories into the conversational event, resulting in the lack of explicit prefaces and codas, the minimization of the initial orientation section (setting) and the quick passage into the story's complicating action.[2]
(ii) Minimal interruptions from the audience, except for supportive backchannelling. Challenges which seriously disrupt the storytelling activity are very rare.
(iii) Minimal external evaluation (term from Labov 1972), that is, suspension of the story's action by the narrator to refer explicitly to the story's point or the tellability of certain events (same finding in Tannen 1983). This is interconnected with the minimization of the explicit resolution of the complicating events. As a result, the joke-type ending with a punchline (usually in the form of direct speech) is very common.
(iv) Expressive phonology, imitations of (characters') voices, variations in pitch, loudness, stress and gestures.

The following story exemplifies the Greek narrative performance, as discussed so far. The story was told to a mixed

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[2] For a discussion of these narrative structure categories see Labov 1972.

company of six people aged 25 during a New Year's Day gathering in a house in Athens. Takis starts teasing Kostas, who is a good friend and travel companion of his, by relating humorous incidents from their trips. Kostas is about to take revenge:[3]

(1) Τ: Τώρα Κώστα μπορείς να πάρεις ρεβάνς=
Κ: =Εγώ θα ντο ρίξω αλλού βέβαια:. Λοιπό:ν, ξεκινάμε πέρσι από Αθήνα για Κέρκυρα, πρώτο ταξίδι με μηχανές, και το πνεύμα της παρέας ήταν να πάμε τουριστικά. Λέμε .. άντε παιδιά, και τουριστικά, και <u>να δούμε</u> και. κανα τοπίο. Λοιπόν .. φεύγει ο κύριος από δω .. <u>τουριστικό:τατα,</u> αρχίζει εκατόν ογδόντα .. διακόσια στις στροφές, εμείς από πίσω είχαμε πετάξει μια γλώσσα ΤΟ:ση για να σε φτάσουμε, >κούραση ιδρώτας ξέρω γω<, χαμογελαστός αυτός, δεν γκουράστηκα καθόλου//
Μ: //κλασσι//κό
Κ: //λεμε κι εμείς με το Χρήστο, δε <u>μπάει</u> άλλο, κάτι πρέπει να ντου κάνουμε .. λέμε. Η(?)μαστε τώρα ο Χρήστος .. εγώ: .. ο Τάκης, κι ο Γιάννης συνοδηγός, >Τάκης Γιάννης οι γρήγοροι<, κι εμείς οι δυο οι αργοί δηλαδή:. Λοιπόν .. σταματάμε σε κάποια φάση, λέμε με το Χρήστο .. κάτι πρέπει να ντου κάνουμε, να ντη μπατήσει, θα ντου μιλήσουμε για ωραία τοπία, που Αποκλεί:εται να έχει δει, έτσι όπως πηγαίνει, θα ντου πω εγώ .. λέω .. γι αυτό το ωραίο ηλιοβασίλεμα, στο γεφυράκι από κάτω, λέει ο Χρήστος, θα ντου πω εγώ γι αυτή τη χρυσαφένια παραλία. Ξεκινάμε τώρα,

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3 The transcript symbols used for the texts are as follows:
// indicates overlapping utterances, = indicates continuous utterances, : indicates extension or prolongation of a sound (:: denote longer extension), ; (? in the English text) indicates rising intonation, ! indicates animated tone, > < indicate delivery at a quicker pace than the surrounding talk, underlining is used for parts of utterances which are emphasized or stressed, (he he) indicates laughter, ( ) indicate editorial comments, capitals are used for talk that is spoken louder, a comma indicates a continuing intonation, and a full-stop a stopping fall in intonation, dots indicate intervals (adapted from Button and Lee 1987).
Of the above symbols, > <, :, underlining, dots and capitals are not used in the English translation of the stories.

του λέω εγώ, Χρήστο του λέω, το είδες αυτό το
φοβερό ηλιοβασίλεμα: πετάγεται ο Τάκης, πού:; μου
λέει, λέω σ'εκείνη τη γέφυρα, ο Γιάννης, ποιΑ:
γέφυρα; εκεί που έγραφε μήκος .. οχτακόσια μέτρα;
(he he) Εντω μεταξύ ... γελάμε εμείς με το Χρήστο,
και πετάγεται ο Γιάννης καπάκι, το οποίο ήτανε
χαρακτηριστικό, και λέει ποια:; μετά την αριστερή
ανοιχτή στροφή; Οπότε την άλλη μέρα, τι μας
κάνουνε; πλακώνονται εκατόν ογδόντα διακόσια, και
να δείχνουνε κάτι ά:σχετα πράγματα, >κάτι βουνά:,
κάτι καμένα δά:ση< πω:: πω::! φοβερό τοπίο κι αυτά=
Α: =και καλά .. ότι το απολαμβάνα//νε
Κ: //να λένε κάτι άσχετα,
Τ: πω: πω: κάναμε, φοβερό:.
Κ: Τέλος πάντων .. τα ξαναπαίρνουμε με το Χρήστο,
βγαίνουμε το βράδυ τώρα .. βόλτα στην Κέρκυρα,
νύ:χτα τώρα, μιλάμε δύο η ώρα το βράδυ, πί:σσα
σκοΤΑδι, δεν έβλεπες τίποτα, και να κάνει ο
Χρήστος, πω: πω:! φοβερό, και να δείχνουμε τον
ουρανό .. μέσα στο σκοτάδι, και να αναφωνούμε, πω:
πω: (he he) Το ξεφτιλίσαμε τελεί:ως πια.

T: Now Kostas you can take revenge=
K: =I will get you, but not the way you think. So, last year we set
off on a trip from Athens to Corfu, first road trip on the bikes,
and the general feeling was that we'd go at a touring speed. So we
say, touring speed guys, let's see some scenery too. This gent here
gives new meaning to the word touring, he starts by taking turns,
at a hundred and eighty or two hundred (kilometres), we were
panting like this, trying to keep up with you, getting knackered,
getting sweaty, he (was) smiling, (saying) I'm not tired at// all
M: // typical//
K: //so, Christos and I say, well we've had enough, we must do
something, now there's me, Christos, Takis, and Giannis on the
back, Takis and Giannis the quick ones, and us two the slow
ones. So at some point we stop, Christos and I say, we must give
him a lesson, we'll describe beautiful scenery, that he's sure to
have missed, the way he's going, I say, I'll tell him about that
beautiful sunset at that bridge, Christos says, I'll tell him about
that golden beach. So we set off now, I say, Christos did you see
that beautiful sunset? Takis goes, where? I say at that bridge,
Giannis (says), where it had this road sign saying eight hundred
metres long? (he he) Meanwhile Christos and I can't help

laughing, and Giannis adds, which was typical, which bridge? after the open left turn? So next day, what are they up to? They start going at a hundred and eighty, two hundred, and pointing at completely irrelevant spots, mountains, burnt forests, (saying) blimey, this is the view for you=
A: =as if they enjo//yed it
K: //talking rubbish,
T: we were going, blimey, isn't this fabulous!
K: Anyway, Christos and I become furious, (now) we all go out for a ride in Corfu that night, and it was dark now, two o'clock in the morning, pitch black, and we (were) showing the dark sky, and saying, wow, (he he) We really started going over the top then.

As we can see, the story immediately jumps into the action (*so we set off*); background information is strategically positioned at various points in the story later on. Throughout the complicating action, we find an overwhelming dominance of performance devices (signposted in the Greek text) which mostly follows the pattern: narrative present action – speech (e.g. *we set off ... we say*). This is enhanced by the use of the marker "now" (e.g. *so we set off now*) and of *να* imperfect in the story's climactic action (e.g. *showing irrelevant spots ... saying wow*). The narrative ends on its "high-point" with the addition of only one concluding phrase (*we really started going over the top then*). The evaluation of the events is thus deeply embedded in the drama which makes up for the lack of explicit encodings of the narrator's attitudes and emotions.

The patterns of (co-)occurrence of the above devices en-capsulate the parameters of the "Greek" narrative performance in as much as they form a generic norm for storytelling in the community. As I have argued elsewhere (Georgakopoulou 1994b, 1995), functional linguistic analyses suggest that the essence of this performance is conveying a sense of proximity between the world of the story and the immediate conversational situation. There are numerous linguistic categories for encoding subjectivity and emotionality in language, such as categories related to assertiveness or non-assertiveness, certainty or doubt, positive or negative evaluation, intensity, quantity, etc. (see Besnier 1994, Caffi and Janney 1994). Among these, proximity is fundamental and has been widely attested in discourse. Proximity strategies

are related to far/near orientations, to the speaker's positioning towards the message and the participants. The commonest proximity markers are related to temporal deixis (e.g. use of tenses). This is evident in the Greek stories, too, by the strategic role of narrative present, "να" imperfect, imperfect and the deictic "now".

The claim that proximity strategies underlie the encoding of emotion and experiential subjectivity in the Greek narrative performances does not go so far as to exclude all other emotive devices from that process (e.g. intensity markers, emphatic particles, lexical repetition, evaluative lexical choices, etc.). This is not an all-or-nothing issue. However, proximal devices are clearly dominant, qualitatively and quantitatively, in the textual encoding of affect. As such, they are also the main devices in which the stories' participatory engagement is rooted. Since their discoursal role is to bring the events close to the speakers' and hearers' immediate situation, they are expected to set the pattern for the audience's participation in the story-telling: a participation which is reminiscent of that of audiences of theatrical performances, since it is connected with the ideas of proximity and visualization. The audience become involved in the narrative through the sense of co-witnessing the events with the narrator. This is the reason why, as suggested, serious disruptions of or challenges to the storytelling activity are very rare.

Contextualization cues of storytelling activities
The uncovery of the main devices of the communicative style of Greek stories is an indispensable step towards exploring the salient aspects of the stories' indexicality. The argument is that performance choices, being central to the organization of the storytelling activity, manage through their recurrence to evoke and encapsulate the stories' meaning, in the sense of sociocultural significance for storytellers and audiences. In Gumperz's terms (1992), they act as *contextualization cues*: this is a concept which has stemmed from research on indexicality. It embraces highly patterned linguistic choices which act as mediating devices in that they trigger to the addressees a certain set of sociocultural expectations, attitudes and social actions associated with the activity. At a global level, they signal what is to be expected

from the activity and help the addressees form predictions about its outcomes and the quality of interpersonal relationships in it.

At this level of indexing storytelling arenas as social activities, performance devices in Greek stories generally promote a solidarity ethos and a sense of bonding between tellers and listeners. As a result, they maximize the power of stories in conversations as devices for creating interactional allegiances between the participants and a widened base of support for the tellers' positions. This is mainly achieved by the *participation framework* invoked by performances, that is, the positions which storytellers and audiences may take in relation to what is said (Goffman 1981). First, the stories are so embedded in the conversations and so "proximal" that, though invoking a different participation framework from that of conversations, they are still perceived as very much part of the "here and now" of the conversational world. They are, therefore, powerful devices for affecting it. In addition, with their animation of (characters') voices and minimal narratorial interference, they allow a very safe and powerful position for the storyteller: a diffusion of the responsibility for attitudes and sentiments to two positions other than the storyteller, namely the author and the principal (idem). The author is that aspect of self responsible for the content of the talk and the principal is someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, whose beliefs are told, who is committed to what is said. These are positions which can be manipulated in narrative production. In the case of Greek performances, the two capacities work in favour of the figure which is projected by the story and ultimately of the teller, freeing the speaker from sole responsibility for the truth and validity of the positions. Thus, if part of the stories' power as a genre is that the audience can gain an idealized view of the experience through the author and of the teller through the figure (Schiffrin 1990), in Greek stories this is used to its full potential. This kind of indexing through performance underlies the pivotal role of Greek storytelling in conversations for expressing views and opinions at the expense of expository discourse.

Example 2 below exemplifies this relationship between the participation framework of performances and the act of opinion-expressing. The story is typical of numerous stories in the data

which replace expository discourse. In this case, the conversation is about nudism on Greek beaches in a company of three men and four women. The storyteller, who gradually and discreetly supports the view that it is a healthy stance and should be allowed, relates the following incident before she expresses any of her views. The story, which only implicitly encodes her opinion on such a sensitive and taboo topic, is arguably a powerful device for achieving the audience's sympathetic alignment towards her view.

(2) Το άλλο στη Φολέ:γανδρο:, οι ντόπιοι είχαν ξεσηκωθεί, επειδή κάνανε οι ξένοι γυμνισμό, κι εκεί στην παραλία ... για να πλυθούμε, είχε ένα μεγάλο τεπόζιτο νερό, που έλεγε .. νερό μη πόσιμο, >το 'χαν για πότισμα ξέρω γω<. Τέλος πάντων ανοίξαμε εμείς εκεί, πλενόμαστε, ένας ξένος λοιπό:ν, δεν ξέρω τι ήταν αυτός .. Ολλανδός, ήταν ένας ξανθός εκεί, μακρύ μαλλί, κατεβάζει το μαγιό .. να πλυθεί. Αρχίζουνε λοιπόν .. απ' το απέναντι μπαλκόνι, <u>βάλτο βρακί σου ρε. βάλτο βρακί σου ρε. βάλτο βρακί σου</u> (he he) ΠΟΥ να καταλάβει ο άνθρωπος, κι ένας εκεί να απειλεί με μια μαγκούρα, <u>βάλτο βρακί σου</u>, <u>ΝΤΡΟΠΗ ΣΟΥ</u> ρε (he he), κι οι άλλοι να φωνάζουνε. Κάποια στιγμή .. λέει αυτός, τι μου φωνάζουν; μήπως λέει το νερό .. λέει το θέλουνε; επειδή ξοδεύουμε το νερό; όχι λέει ένας, το μαγιό, το μαγιό σου (whispers), α::! λέει (whispers), το μαγιό. Το φόρεσε τελικά.

This happened in Folegandros, the locals were up in arms, because of the nude tourists, and on the beach, there was a large water tank, for showers, and it said, don't drink this water, they had it for watering their plants, or I don't know what. So we used some to wash, and there was this tourist, probably Dutch, blonde guy, long hair, he pulls down his trunks to wash. So they start yelling, from a balcony opposite, oy put your pants on, put your pants on, put your pants on. How could he understand? And someone threatening him with his walking stick, put your pants on, shame on you, and the others shouting at him. At some point he says, why are they yelling at me, do they want to save the water? (whispers) it's your trunks, somebody tells him, it's your trunks, oh my trunks. And he finally pulled them back on.

While this is an eye-witness and not a personal story, the teller manipulates the participation framework to indirectly encode her view. She subverts the authors (people from the village whose voices she animates and imitates) and empathizes with the character of the tourist. The figure (the self of the narrator) is displayed by the story by means of ridiculing the islanders (as the authors and principals in the text). Meanwhile, the audience are lured into accepting the story-teller's view through enjoying the humorous delivery of the narrative events. The use of performance devices allows the narrator to internalize her point and let the events speak for themselves. The follow-up to the story by one of the conversationalists shows that the story's point has been communicated successfully:

εγώ .. ιστορίες που έχω ακούσει .. και κυκλοφο-
ρούσανε:, είναι ότι τους πετάγανε .. καρύδια, πέτρες
ξέρω γω, τους πετροβολούσανε...

Well I've heard stories too, that they were throwing walnuts at them, stones, that they were stoning them...

In the next example, we have a slightly different participation framework. The narrator here happens to disagree with one of his conversationalists. His view is that looking for love and financial well-being in one's marriage is a feasible goal. But instead of expressing this in the form of an argument, he chooses to narrate the incident below:

(3) A: Κοίτα Νίκο, κι όλα δε μπορείς να ντα βρείς,
πρέπει να βάλεις τις προτεραιότητές σου=
N: =αυτό δε μπορείς να ντο πεις. Εγώ είχα ένα φίλο,
πολλά: χρόνια φίλος, και τόνειρό του, συζητάγαμε
ξέρω γω, και μου λέει, καλός είν ο έρωτας .. μου
λέει, αλλά καλό είναι και το πακέτο .. μου λέει να
έχει, το Ντελόρ. (he he) Τέλος πάντων .. του λέω, όλα
δε συμβαδίζουν Κωστάκη μου .. λέω, λίγο πολύ κάπου
θα πέσεις έξω, ή στο χρήμα ή στην αγάπη. Μετά από
καμιά βδομάδα μου λέει, ξέρεις κάτι, καλό καλό είναι
μόνο το πακέτο, άμα έχεις το πακέτο, βρίσκεις την
αγάπη .. μου κάνει. Ε πέρασε λίγος καιρός, γνωρίζει

μια κοπέλλα, >χωρίς να ξέρει τίποτα<, γνωριστήκανε, ξέρεις τυχαία, τελικά του βγήκε πλούσια! Παντρευτήκανε ωραία και καλά, ξανασυζητάμε μια φορά, μου λέει, αυτή είναι η επιτυχία μου λέει, και αγάπη και λεφτά.

A: Look Nikos, you can't have it all, you must get your priorities right=
N: you can't say this. I have a friend, I've known him for years, and his dream was, well we were talking once, and he tells me, love is good, but the package is good too, the Delors package. (he he) Well I tell him, you can't have your pie and eat it too Kostas, you will lose out somewhere, either in money or love. A week later he tells me, well you know something, only the package is good after all, if you have the package, you can have love too. Some time went by, he meets a girl, without knowing anything about her, they just met, accidentally, but it turns out she's loaded. They got married, we have another chat after that, this is success he tells me, love and money at the same time.

In this case, three capacities, namely the author, the figure and the principal encapsulated by the narrator's friend, work in favour of the teller's views and lend them validity: the friend's story is proof for the teller's opinion. Invoking such a participation framework by means of a story is chosen by the teller as a more powerful device than putting his views forth in the form of arguments.

Participation frameworks and storytellers' self-presentation
The above examples demonstrate that the relationship between the stories as performances and their participation frameworks indexes not only the role and status of storytelling in conversational contexts but also the storytellers' self-presentation. Self-presentation is an integral part of the stories' indexicality since it is at the heart of both the functions (purposes) of narrative communication and the construction of narrative worlds. Narratives are one of the most instrumental devices for social actors to pursue their agendas, achieve interactional ends and, generally, perform actions. One such action, central in the storytelling of numerous cultures, is that of self-enhancement (i.e. self-aggrandizement, self-foregrounding).

In Greek stories, it is intertwined with performed deliveries. First of all, the sense of proximity and dramatization make this inherently face-threatening act as little threatening as possible by securing the addressees' sympathetic alignment with the story's figure. The figure in turn presents the narrator in a positive light. Similarly, the dramatization of voices usually embeds the self-enhancement in the role of the author (i.e. characters in the story responsible for the talk) and not the storyteller.

This shifting of positions is very effective for self-presentation: it is, once again, through the capacity of the author and the principal that the teller's position is enhanced. More importantly, proximity underscores the current relevance of the self-enhancing events and situations: it allows their presentation not just as a part of a narrative world, a world which is gone and forgotten, but as an integral part of the conversational here and now. In this way, it helps the narrator as a conversationalist to forge alliances with the audience. The following brief story of self-enhancement will serve to illustrate the above:

(4) Ηρθανε σε μια φάση σεμάς κάτω .. κάτι άγγλοι, >ήτανε κανά πεντάρι άτομα<, και τώρα μας βρίσκουνε σε μια: κατάσταση εμά:ς, όπου έχουμε οργανώσει τραπέζι, τα πηρούνια σωρός εκεί .. σένα τραπέζι, τα μπριζολικά, τα κρέατα. Τους λέω εγώ, μη μας περνάνε εδώ .. λέω οι άνθρωποι, να ντους βάλουμε μια μπριζόλα να φάνε, ξεφτίλα είναι, ναι ρε λένε, καλά λες, ξεφτίλα λένε, να ντους βάλουμε. Κοιτάξτε .. τους λέω, ελάτε να φάμε, έχουμε μια συγκεντρωσούλα, κάθε Παρασκευή συνηθίζουμε να κάνουμε .. τέτοια, ξέρετε .. ντροπαλοί στην αρχή, μετά από δέκα λεπτά, αρχίζουνε >τις αγκαλιές τα φιλιά τις μπύρες χάινεκεν<, τύ::φλα, τύ::φλα. Μέχρι το άλλο βράδυ κοιμούνταν.

At some point some English people came down to us (i.e. the narrator's colleagues), they were around five people, and now they land on us having set the tables for lunch (the colleagues had organised a lunch party), heaps of cutlery at the tables there, steaks and meats, I tell them (his colleagues), we don't want the people getting the wrong idea about us (i.e. about our generosity),

> let's serve them some steaks, it wouldn't be on not to, they tell me,
> yeah you're right, it's not on, we'll give them some. I tell them (the
> English) look, why don't you join us, we have a bit of a gathering,
> we always have one on Fridays, at the beginning [they were] shy
> you know, ten minutes later, they start hugging and cuddling us
> and having Heineken beers, pissed, completely pissed. They were
> in bed after that for a whole day.

In simple terms, the self-enhancement of this example lies in invoking the values of hospitality and *filotimo*, stereotypes of the Greeks. Their manifestation is set in motion by the narrator's suggestion to his colleagues to treat the "foreigners" hospitably. These are presented as very grateful recipients of this hospitality: hesitant and shy at the beginning, as North Europeans stereotypically are, but later on warm recipients of the friendliness and hospitality, which was initiated by the narrator. The narrator here seems to be trying to cast a positive light on himself (as the story's figure) by means of strategically employing cultural stereotypes. This is characteristic of numerous stories in the data, that is, linking their tellers' presentation with a closed set of social actions, roles and attitudes. Such values have often been characterized in the literature as the stories' "cultural grammar" (Polanyi 1989). They can be abstracted from stories "by what was most interesting, storyworthy or compelling about their propositions; the culturally salient material generally agreed upon by members of the producer's culture to be self-evidently important and true" (6). They thus underlie the stories' point or tellability.

In the Greek stories, the list of tellable themes and topics in most cases invokes a set of values which could be characterized as "traditional". For instance, an overwhelming 80% of the personal stories are family-oriented stories: they narrate incidents concerning the narrators' (immediate) family and their point revolves around family life. This means that the experiences arising from it are projected as inscribing personal experience. Happiness or unhappiness within it are instrumental to the narrator's happiness or unhappiness respectively. In addition to this, there is a dominant tendency in the data to invoke kinship-oriented themes and, in particular, the distinction between in-group and out-group in various forms,

which are beyond the scope of this discussion. Here, it suffices to say that the in-group is almost unexceptionally conceptualized in terms of the narrator's immediate or extended family while the out-group is variable, shifting and dependent on the narrative context. The distinction between the two is normally invoked with the aim of strengthening and reaffirming the value system and identity of the in-group. If the above is combined with the social drama which the stories create through their constant animation of voices, we get an overall picture of an anti-personalist or highly interpersonal construction of meaning and conception of self in the stories.[4]

The above core elements of the stories' "cultural grammar" are particularly interesting for their role in indexing participant relations in conversational encounters.[5] They show how discoursal choices can invoke as well as be shaped by shared sociocultural codes; also, how this relationship can be turned to the service of social projects in which the participants of a speech event are engaged. A further illustration of this is the following extract from a female narrator's story about the purchase of a flat. In the context where the story was told, the narrator, who had recently bought a flat with her husband in a posh neighbourhood of Athens, was asked whether it was worth buying something so expensive. She immediately tells the story to justify and cast positive light on their choice:

(5) ... λοιπόν βλέπουμε εκεί .. την ώρα που φεύγαμε, μια .. αφοί Γκιώνη .. τάδε τηλέφωνο, το παίρνει ο Θωμάς, λέει αυτός, τούτη τη στιγμή δεν έχω .. λέει, αργεί να γίνει. Του λέει ο Θωμάς, <u>παιδάκι</u> μου, μήπως είσαι από το Κακούρι; λέει .. όχι, γιατί; γιατί εμείς είμαστε από κείνα τα μέρη, εμείς είμαστε από την

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[4] For details on the encoding of an anti-personalist view of meaning in discourse and its association with speech animation see Duranti 1993.

[5] This indexicality is not reducible to sweeping cultural conclusions. Ethnographic studies have shown that Greek society is complex and questions widely held assumptions about the polarity between urban-rural or modern-traditional. Thus, it cannot be characterized with opposite poles of dichotomies such as traditional vs modern or collectivist vs independent (e.g. Faubion 1993, papers in Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991).

Αλωνίσταινα, του λέει αυτός, ΕΛΑ δω του λέει, είσαι
σαβατογεννημένος, θα σε φτιάξω του λέει, έρχομαι
του λέει ο Θωμάς. Σηκωνόμαστε και πάμε, ψάχνοντας
τώρα, δύο η ώρα το μεσημέρι, πάμε, με το που το
βλέπουμε το διαμέ:ρισμα, μείναμε, μείναμε. Λοιπό:ν του
λέμε, σε δυο ώρες μπορούμε να:, κατά τις τέσσερις να
το δούμε, γιατί να φέρουμε και τους δικούς μας.
Φέρνουμε την κουνιάδα μου, έρχεται κι ο κουμπάρος
μας ο Δημήτρης, και η αδερφή μου η Βάσω, με το που
το είδανε αυτοί, λένε .. καθίστε κάτω και κλείστε το,
τέτοια αυτή δε θα ξαναβρείτε ...

... so as we were leaving we see an ad for "Afoi Gioni", ring such-
and-such a number, Thomas calls them up, he says, we haven't got
anything at the moment, it's still in the pipeline. Thomas tells him,
matey you ain't from Kakouri, he says no, why? 'cos we are from
those parts, well we are from Alonistena he tells him, well come
here, you were born "on a Saturday" (born lucky; blessed by the
stars), I'll sort you out, I'm coming Thomas tells him. So we go
down there, hunting around at two o'clock in the afternoon,
when we laid eyes on the flat, we were gobsmacked, gobsmacked.
So we tell him, can we in two hours, can we come back at four?
we want to bring our relatives. So we take my sister-in-law with
us, Dimitris our "koumbaros" (best man) comes along too, and my
sister Vaso, when they saw it they tell us, sit tight and strike an
offer, flats like this don't grow on trees ...

As in example 4, in the above extract too shared codes are
strategically employed as vehicles for the narrator's self-
presentation and as modes of action in the teller-audience
interaction. It is interesting how the in-group agenda lurking
beneath the events narrated serves this purpose. The narrator
seems to be suggesting that it was because of her husband's
common origin with the estate agent that they managed to
purchase the flat. In view of the cultural codes that she assumes
she shares with the addressees, the purchase is contextually
cued as a successful and fortunate event. Additionally, a whole
army of relatives including the *koumbaros* (best man) come to the
flat as advisors on the purchase. The narrator's agenda when
invoking such values is to diffuse responsibility for the purchase
from her husband and herself to the social drama with
relatives: these are the authors, responsible for the praise of the

flat. Their views are lent validity by their association with the symbolic and cultural capital of kinship values. The proof for this is that stories like (5) do not backfire in the contexts in which they occur. They are tellable as long as the audiences treat them as tellable.

Gendered aspects
The strategic use of sociocultural values, attitudes and stances is also evident in the communicative styles of self-presentation which index the storyteller's gender identity. In terms of the nature of indexing, this is a constitutive relationship. The linguistic features in question do not directly and exclusively index gender. They rather index stances and social acts, such as the ones discussed so far, which in turn help to constitute gender meanings. A first instance of how this takes place is the discourse style of verbal aggression and adversativeness. This is very much associated in the data with the male narrators' self-presentation. It suffices to mention that half of the stories from men revolve around the themes of contests and conflicts.[6] As for the rest, it is very common to find instances of disagreement and verbal aggression in the interactions which they encode. In some cases, the whole narrative takes the form of an incident involving an antagonistic verbal interaction or "duel", such as the example below:

(6) Μου λέει προχθές ο Τάσος ο Ρουμελιώτης, λες για λαγούς μου λέει, κάτι λέγαμε εκεί πέρα, αλλά δε θα ντον έχεις δει το λαγό πώς είναι, του λέω <u>σε μένα</u> τα λες αυτά ρε Ρουμελιώτη του λέω, <u>πάμε</u> στο σπίτι ρε του λέω, εκατό χιλιάδες εγώ .. του λέω, βάλε και δέκα εσύ του λέω, πάμε σπίτι, αν δεν έχω δύο ή τρεις του λέω, δε θυμάμαι καλά, δύο <u>στάνταρτ</u> του λέω, αν είναι κάτω από δύο χάνω τις εκατό χιλιάδες, αν είναι ένας του λέω, χάνω τις εκατό χιλιάδες, αν είναι δύο όμως, θα τις κερδίσω του λέω τις δέκα τις δικές σου. ΠΑμε ρε του λέω. Πού:: να τολμήσει ο Ρουμελιώτης να 'ρθει! Ελα ρε του λέω. Τους είχα

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[6] The association of conflict and aggression with the discourse style of men is a common finding in the linguistics literature on gender differences (see e.g. Tannen 1993).

όμως εγώ τους δύο, προχθές έγινε αυτό. Που να 'ρθεί ο Τάσος.

Two days ago Tasos Roumeliotis tells me, you're talking about hares all the time he tells me (the narrator is a hunter), 'cos we had a discussion, but I bet you haven't even seen one, I tell him/ are you talking to me Roumeliotis, come on then, let's go to my place now, I bet a hundred thousand drachmas, you place a bet of ten, let's go to my place, where I keep two or three I tell him (hares that he had killed), I'm not sure, but it's minimum two, if it's less than two I'll give you a hundred thousand drachmas, but if it's two your ten thousand drachmas will be mine, let's go then I tell him. As if Roumeliotis would dare! Come on then, I say. But I was sure I had two (hares), this happened two days ago. As if Tasos would come.

The verbal confrontation is a necessary component of all contest and fight stories and normally precedes the physical part of the conflict, as illustrated in the short extract below:

(7) ... και παρεξηγείται ο κρητικός, ο κλασσικός κρητικός δηλαδή σε τέτοια μπαρ, θα σκοτώσω κανέναν βραδιάτικα σήμερα λέει. Τον γκοιτάω, δε θα 'σαι καλά του λέω, σε ποιον τό 'πες αυτό του λέω, στον αέρα του λέω, σε μένα του λέω, σε ποιον τό 'πες. Δίνει σύνθημα ο μάγκας ας πούμε και τα λοιπά, εμφανίζονται τέσσερις πέντε έτσι, εμείς την είχαμε πάρει χαμπάρι τη δουλειά ...

... and this Cretan gets annoyed, your typical Cretan who hangs around in the bars, I am gonna kill someone tonight he says. I look at him, you must be mad I tell him, who are you talking to I tell him, are you talking to the air I tell him, are you talking to me I tell him, who are you talking to. The toughie signals to his mates you know, four or five of them show up, we suspected this'd happen ...

Examples like (6) and (7) above verge on the grotesque in their depiction of conflicts, in that they blatantly invoke a spirit of machismo. Taking into account that such stories are not marginal but part of the repertoire of stories told by "educated" professional men, we could place them at the explicit end of the continuum of narratives which serve the male narrators' self-

presentation by means of a gendered agenda. As Shuman has suggested (1986), the major functions of fight stories are very often not representational: more stories are usually told than fights are fought. This is a very relevant argument for Greek men's fight stories and contests, which essentially function as attempts to shape potentials in the social arena in which their tellers operate. By invoking an agenda which is recognizably gendered and by drawing on gendered stereotypes, men storytellers promote their personal agendas in conversational contexts: they reassert and reaffirm their position, present themselves in a positive light, justify their actions, etc. As shown so far, the participation frameworks invoked through performances allow them to achieve this in the least face-threatening way. Hence, they "can get away" with such stories in mixed audiences.

On the whole, self-presentation in contest and fight stories is interrelated with the ways in which men storytellers build the audiences' sympathetic alignments towards them. As a rule, these are based on a male-associated solidarity and male-bonding ethos. This is particularly evident in the instances of "amicable" verbal aggression between friends which are very frequently encoded in men's stories. The extract below exemplifies this:

(8) ... μου λέει ο Γιάννης, έλα ρε τι κωλώνεις, πάμε από 'δώ, ρε Γιάννη του λέω ξέρω γω έτσι όπως είμαστε, με πάνινα αθλητικά παπούτσια, καλτσούλα .. μαγιό και τίποτα άλλο. Ξέρεις τώρα ιδρώτας, τον ιδρώτα της ζωής μας. Λέει .. σιγά ρε, τι κωλώ:νεις, κωλώνεις τώρα; δεν γκωλώνω ρε Γιάννη, αλλά είσαι σοβαρός τώ:ρα; Μου ανοίγει τη μπόρτα, άντε, άντε ρε φοβιτσιάρη μου λέει, μη γκωλώνεις ρε, τι κωλώνεις, μπες μέσα. Μπαίνω κι εγώ μέσα ...

... Giannis tells me, come on, what are you 'fraid of, let's go this way, I don't know Giannis I tell him, in this state, you know trunks, socks and trainers and nothing else. You know, a real sweat, completely soaked. Oh come on, whatcha 'fraid of, whatcha 'fraid of, no I'm not afraid Giannis, but I mean are you serious? He opens the door, come on he tells me, go on you wimp, don't be scared, why are you scared. So I enter...

This is a typical male interaction which involves a lot of joking and teasing as elements of a sociable disagreement before reaching agreement on a course of action. It can be argued that in these cases the discourse style of adversativeness and disagreement precipitates friendship, a sense of solidarity and bonding.[7] This can be aligned with Tannen and Kakava's (1992) finding that the Greek cultural style in conversations places more positive value on dynamic opposition which is essentially a form of sociability. On the basis of the sample of Greek stories, we could argue that this sociability is more associated with men storytellers' self-presentation and participant alignments in conversations.

By contrast to the above, women's storytelling as a rule exhibits a self-presentation which is based more on self-deprecation (self-effacing). This commonly takes the form of troubles-telling or stories of gaffes, embarrassments and fear. Such self-presentation, as in the case of men's stories, is constitutive of gender meanings. Once again, this indexicality is mediated by stances and acts which bear on the participation framework of conversations and the creation of participant alignments. As a result, it is rather inappropriate to view it as an exclusive and direct relation. This means that self-deprecation (i) is an unmarked but not unexceptional case in women's storytelling, (ii) can be found in men's storytelling as well and (iii) is not necessarily a direct index of women storytellers' gendered position in the society. The contextualization of self-deprecation suggests the multi-functionality of the choice. As is the case with men's self-presentation style, it, too, is associated with modes of strengthening solidarity and sociability between tellers and audiences in conversational arenas. Thus, in numerous cases, it is a vehicle for enhancing women storytellers' profile in the conversation. We can see how this is achieved in the following example:

(9) Εγώ μια φορά έτυχα σε ταξιτζή πορνοστάρ, τρεις η ώρα στο Χαλάνδρι .., ή στη Νέας Σμύρνης. Ε .. με συνοδεύει κάποιος στο ταξί, οπότε λέω εντάξει, θα

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[7] For a discussion of how conflict and verbal aggression can precipitate solidarity in certain conversational contexts see Tannen 1993.

κάτσω μπροστά, δε μού 'κοψε ότι θα 'μαι μόνη μου, μίνι εγώ εν τω μεταξύ, καθότι μετά από δείπνο >δεν ξέρω κι εγώ τι<, ξεκινάμε εκεί, ανάβουμε τσιγάρο κι οι δύο, >πώς σε λένε τι κάνεις τι σπουδάζεις<, λέω εγώ .. θέατρο και κινηματογράφο, λέει.. α λέει .. έχω δουλέψει κι εγώ στο σινεμά. Τον γκοιτάζω καλά καλά, λέω στο σινεμά; τι κάνατε; λέει να, μια μέρα βάζω στο ταξί μου ένα ντύπο, ένα λέει <u>καταπληκτικό</u> σκηνοθέτη, ο οποίος μου ζήτησε να παίξω σε ταινία του, λέω εγώ τι σκηνοθέτης ήταν αυτός, ποιος σκηνοθέτης; τι ταινία; μου λέει, να μου λέει, να .. σε κάτι πορνοταινίες ήτανε. (he he) Τέλος πάντων, εγώ εκείνη την ώρα λέω, <u>ωχ θεούλη</u> μου που έμπλεξα:, εν τω μεταξύ εκείνη την ώρα πέφτει ΚΑΤΑΡΑΜΕΝΟ φανάρι, κόκκινο. Και μου κάνει έτσι μία, πιάνει <u>γερά</u> το μπούτι, και μου λέει, εγώ μου λέει είμαι <u>πολύ</u> γερός στον έρωτα, και ποια λέτε ήταν η απάντησή μου εκείνη τη στιγμή; μπρά::βο, μπρά::βο. (he he) Να μη μου κόψει να πω τίποτα άλλο! (he he). Τέλος πάντων .. εκεί λέω θα το παίξω παρθενόπη, και να του λέω, και ξέρετε έχω αργήσει, οι δικοί μου έχουνε ανησυχήσει πολύ, (he he) κι έχουν ανησυχήσει πά:ρα πολύ, και θα με περιμένουνε κι αυτά, και πρέπει να γυρίσω γρήγορα σπίτι, γιατί θα ειδοποιήσουν αστυνομίες, και να κάνω τέτοια. Με τα χίλια ζόρια φτάνω σπίτι μου, του λέω να με σταματήσει μια πολυκατοικία πριν, έτσι όπως έτρεμα από το φόβο μου, και μπαίνω στη διπλανή πολυκατοικία, και τον έβλεπα αυτόν με το ταξί εκεί πέρα, περί:μενα, περί:μενα, τσούκου τσούκου έφυγε αυτός, μετά πατάω κι εγώ μια τρεχάλα. Καλά μετά έκανα και νέα βλακεία, να πω όλη την ιστορία στους γονείς μου, οι οποίοι με κοιτάζανε στο έτσι.

I once chanced on a porn star cabby, at three o'clock in the morning in Halandri, or was it in Nea Smirni, a friend walked me to the taxi, so I say (to myself) fine I'll sit next to the driver, I didn't think that I'd be the only passenger, me wearing now a hot mini skirt, because I'd been to a dinner-party. So we set off, we both light a cigarette, what's your name, what do you do, what's your subject, I say I study theatre and film, he says I've worked in the film industry, I give him a good look, I say really? what did you do? he says one day I pick up this guy, a fantastic director, and he asked me to act in one of his movies, I say which director,

which movie, well some porn flicks, well at that point I think oh
my god, what have I got into, meanwhile the bloody light changes,
red, and he does this to me, grabs my thigh tight, and tells me, I'm a
real stud in bed, and what do you think I answer, good for you
(he he), I can't believe I didn't come up with anything else (he he).
Anyway at this point I decide to pretend I am pure as snow, I tell
him my parents must be worried sick (he he), and they must be
worried sick, and they'll be waiting for me, and I must go back
home before they call the police (he he), and saying stuff like that.
At last we manage to get home, I tell him to drop me off one block
of flats before mine, I was so scared at that point, and I enter the
building next door, and I could see him in the cab over there, and I
waited and waited, a bit later he slowly pulled away, and I
sprint off. Well then I put my foot in it once more, I told my
parents what had happened, who were looking at me like this.

The example above is typical of many women's stories in the
data which draw on gender stereotypes to construct the
narrator's "figure" as a frightened creature, unable to defend or
assert herself when confronted with difficult or embarrassing
situations. In this case, the choice of self-presentation can be
understood in the light of the context where the story was told.
Self-deprecation, a tellable theme for a woman's storytelling,
allowed the narrator to achieve a humorous and successful
delivery judging from the audience's uptake and the fact that
the story set the pattern for a whole storytelling round from the
rest of the women in the company. This storytelling round
changed the balance of the whole interaction which, up to that
point, had been monopolized by the two men's storytelling.
Furthermore, the self-deprecation of the story's figure
ultimately served the self-enhancement of the storyteller in the
conversational setting. This self-enhancement mainly relied on
strategic recasting of gendered stereotypes and positions (e.g.
taxi-driver flirts with female client, woman invokes the
protection of her family when confronted with a man's advances,
etc.).

While the discussion of this section has by no means
exhausted the topic of the stories' indexing of gender, it has
demonstrated how the tellers' self-presentation and their
relationships with the audience in conversational contexts are
shaped and mediated by social acts and stances larger than the

projects they are momentarily engaged in. In addition, it has shown how differences in men's and women's styles of self-presentation are preferential choices which achieve inter-actional goals for the social actors by drawing on culturally gendered positions.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on Greek conversational narratives, a discourse type which, though unsensational, is a central communication mode and at the heart of everyday interactions in Greece. The aim of shedding light on the indexicality of its main linguistic choices seemed timely in view of an apparent need to (i) investigate oral discourse types in the Greek "orality-biased" society and (ii) contribute to the growing body of sociolinguistic studies which are vital for establishing interpretative links between linguistic usage and sociocultural processes in Greece. The notion of indexicality was chosen as a conceptual tool for analyzing the social potential of discourse construction, in line with current thinking in research on text-context interaction. The starting point of the discussion was the finding that the essence of the Greek stories' textuality lies in the creation of a performance which is based on a specific set of linguistic devices. The argument was that these devices are essentially modes of action and strategies in their communicative contexts. As such, they index the roles and functions of the storytelling activity, the storytellers' sociocultural identities and their relationships with the audience. The above was mainly demonstrated through a focus on how performances serve the storytellers' self-presentation and, by implication, their alignments with the audiences. It was found that, in order to create sympathetic alignments with the audiences and a wide base of support for their views, storytellers capitalize on the participation frame-works which narrative performances create. In addition, they strategically employ social and cultural stereotypes which point to a kinship-oriented and interpersonal construal of meaning. These are also involved in a constitutive relationship with the storytellers' gender identity.

Since any text's indexicality is multi-faceted, the discussion has covered only salient indexing properties of the stories. Its aim was to show how new light can be shed on linguistic

strategies when they are linked to social and cultural projects. For the Greek stories, this meant that their performance choices are not just the sum of linguistic devices, the exponents of a dramatic style or even the intelligent choices of individual tellers. They are rather the main vehicles for the stories' indexing of their immediate and wider context. Furthermore, their patterning and un-markedness are not just an impressive stylistic statistic. They are also a key to the understanding of how performances systematically act as resources or context-ualization cues for participants in their everyday interactions.

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