Representations of youth (language) in Greek TV commercials

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Drawing upon evidence from Greek TV commercials, we explore how youth language is mediated and what the ideological role of such depictions is regarding young people as a social group and the speech styles they employ. Given the fact that consumption is a major index of late modern (youth) identities, the way young people and their speech styles are represented in advertising has important implications for the identification process of young people and those who feel young. The analysis is made with the use of an analytical framework developed for the mediation of sociolinguistic reality in mass cultural texts (Stamou 2011). It consists of four components (a 'linguistic', a 'sociolinguistic', a 'semiotic', and an 'ideological' one) and is premised upon the framework by Coupland (2007) on 'style'. In the TV commercials analyzed, one could easily detect the dominant constructions of youth as a homogeneous social and cultural experience, framed in contrast to adulthood. Consequently, although the particular TV commercials are supposed to be about and for young people, being produced by (adult) advertisers, they do not escape from perpetuating, albeit often implicitly, the dominant construction of youth as incomplete adulthood.

Keywords: advertising; youth language; adolescence discourse; style; identity

1. Introduction

Drawing upon evidence from Greek TV commercials, we explore how youth language is mediated and what the ideological role of such depictions is regarding young people as a social group and the speech styles they employ. The way sociolinguistic phenomena are represented in mass cultural texts, such as advertising, has recently gained the interest of sociolinguistics, which has traditionally focused on 'naturally occurring' linguistic data as collected from everyday interactions. Yet, given the central role of mass culture in the formation of late modern social reality, such texts constitute the major vehicle through which (linguistically indexed) variation is constructed and consumed (Coupland 2009).

Advertising poses a particular interest for the study of the way mass culture shapes social practices, identities, and knowledge about the world, since, together with the message transmitted about the product advertised ('primary discourse of advertising' O' Barr 1994, p. 3), it also transmits particular messages about society (secondary discourse of advertising). In our case, this secondary discourse of advertising includes messages about the way young people speak and how they are conceptualized as a social group.

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A universal practice of young people is the creative blending (known as 'bricolage') of mass cultural resources, such as song lyrics, fragments from films and slogans from advertisements (e.g. Moje and van Helden 2004). Therefore, by examining the way youth language is depicted in the advertising text, we also contribute to the study of how such representations will be then exploited in youth communicative circumstances outside advertising. On the other hand, given the fact that we live in consumption-oriented societies, in which identities are to a large extent constructed through lifestyle choices, it has been supported that symbolic consumption is a central element of the ways in which young people claim significance in their lives and index specific identity positions (e.g. Miles 2000). Consequently, the way youth identity is shaped in TV commercials – constructed as a mainly consumer identity – has important implications for how young people, who are the primary targets of the particular texts, give meaning to the world, define themselves, and ultimately reflexively plan their lives (through the lens of 'life politics'; see e.g. Beck *et al.* 1994).

In what follows, we first provide a brief literature review on central topics for our study: youth language (ideologies), constructions of youth, and mediation of linguistic variation in advertising. Second, we offer the theoretical framework of our analysis (the Coupland's conceptualization of 'style') and the analytical apparatus developed and applied to the data. Next, we make a sketch of the textual material examined. Finally, we present and discuss the results of the analysis.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Youth language*

'Youth language' typically alludes to the total of linguistic resources young people employ. Most studies have limited the category of youth to adolescence (i.e. 13–19 years of age), while others have also included post-adolescence (i.e. until 25 or 30 years of age) (Androutsopoulos 2005). From a sociolinguistic perspective, youth language is regarded as a social variety, namely as a way of speech through which young people indicate their belonging to a distinct social group from both children and adults ('symbolic assertion of autonomy'), as well as their engagement with youth cultural practices (index of affiliation with peers) (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003, p. 4).

Youth language has been generally approached as a universal sociolinguistic phenomenon, bound up with phenomena of age grading (Romaine 1984). However, recent approaches have criticized the treatment of youth as a homogeneous social group and have stressed the diversity of youth practices across different socio-cultural contexts (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003). Besides, divisions among different groups of young people are often more significant for them than the traditional 'generation gap' with adults, since, by developing distinctive styles, youths are able to identify themselves with some of their peers while distancing themselves from others (Bucholz 2006). In this sense, youth language is considered to consist of a range of speech styles, while age functions as a unifying factor (Stenström and Jørgensen 2009).

Nevertheless, studies comparing speech styles of youth across different European countries (e.g. Britain, Germany, Italy, Greece) have found a large number of similar

features, which are mainly attributed to the homogenization of globalized youth culture (e.g. Androutsopoulos 1997). A major commonality includes extensive borrowings from English, due to the influence of English-speaking music styles and media. Moreover, a higher proportion of nonstandard/slang linguistic forms and taboo words than adults has been found, in order for young people to shape their identity in opposition to childhood and adulthood, and connote certain values, such as toughness and anti-establishment feelings (Bucholz 2002). Other universals among different youth speech styles include bricolage practices and verbal play with several local sociolinguistic (e.g. geographical dialects) and mass cultural (e.g. slogans from advertisements) resources (e.g. Rampton 1995). Furthermore, it has been found that young people tend to employ specific conversational routines and stereotypical address forms.

Finally, comparative studies have disclosed similar grammatical features among speech styles of the youth from different European countries (Androutsopoulos 1997). In sum, these include the over lexicalization of specific semantic fields, such as music styles, emotional state, social categorization of people (semantic level); processes of word creation and renewal based on neologisms, change of meaning of existing lexical items, English loanwords, clipping, syllable reordering, and redundant suffixes (vocabulary level); patterns of word formation and formal modification based on derivative and redundant suffixes, composition, clipping, and syllable reordering (morphological level); several innovative syntactic structures, such as new idiomatic phrases, personal pronouns without referent, and idiomatic syntactic structures for the expression of emphasis (syntactic level).

2.2. *Youth language ideologies*

Metalinguistic articles in the media usually oscillate between stigmatization and acceptance of youth language, based on whether they target the general public or youth (Iordanidou and Androutsopoulos 1999). Certainly, opponents of youth language are found in more privileged positions than its supporters, and therefore it is the negative images of youth language which prevail in the public sphere.

Youth 'language ideologies', namely the 'shared bodies of common sense notions about the nature' of youth 'language in the world' (Rumsey 1990, p. 346), could not be considered separately from the broader language ideologies circulating in general and in the Greek socio-cultural context in particular, which encompass assumptions about the perceived beauty and/or intelligibility of certain linguistic varieties (e.g. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). Specifically, Greek youth language has been generally attacked for being unintelligible, exotic and irrational, namely as an example of 'bad language' or as a symptom of 'language decay', consisting of a restricted vocabulary mainly premised upon English loanwords, of neologisms and 'errors' (Iordanidou and Androutsopoulos 1999). The much smaller number of youth language supporters, on the other hand, tends to focus on the linguistic creativity and humor thought to characterize youth language.

In the prevailing negative evaluations of youth language one could easily detect the hegemonic 'standard language ideology'. This language ideology resides in commonsensical ideas about the superiority of the standard variety of a language. Standard language ideology is linked to a prescriptive view of language (Milroy 2001). Moreover, it is associated with a firm belief in linguistic homogeneity, by

seeing monolingualism in standard variety as the only normal condition, and by approaching any linguistic variability as a threat (Silverstein 1996). Consequently, the negative evaluation of youth language is linked to the overall stigmatization of nonstandard varieties, which are regarded as deviant from the standard and as disturbing the imagined (homogeneous) linguistic community.

2.3. *Constructions of youth*

Dominant constructions of youth – which are usually also projected by mass cultural texts (e.g. Heintz-Knowles 2000) – tend to conceptualize it as a universal and transitory phenomenon, while young people are seen as constituting a homogeneous social group and as being framed in opposition to adulthood. Specifically, three different discourses of youth could be discerned as being part of these established youth constructs: a discourse of 'adolescence', a discourse of 'youth as deviant subculture', and a discourse of 'youth as a class-based site of resistance' (Bucholz 2002).

According to the adolescence discourse, youth is approached as 'adolescence', namely as a universal life stage in the development of the individual. By giving emphasis on the transition to adulthood, adolescents are regarded as 'not-yet finished human beings' (Bucholz 2002, p. 529), who are characterized by instability, confusion, irresponsibility, and mood for searching. In this view, young people are also considered highly vulnerable to certain influences, such as popular culture. Therefore, they are often represented as passive recipients of mass cultural products, living in 'a swirl of brands, logos, music, TV, and Internet web pages' (Moje and van Helden 2004, p. 214). In sum, the adolescence discourse shapes youth identity in relation to a complete adulthood.

The conceptual shift from 'adolescence' to 'youth' brought by the other two discourses signals a shift from an account of the way young people are shaped for becoming adults to one of how young people form their own experiences and practices. Specifically, the discourse of youth as deviant subculture has focused on the ways subcultures created by young people and characterized as 'deviant' by the dominant culture are alternative symbolic resources for their members. On the other hand, the discourse of youth as a class-based site of resistance has given a stress on the exploration of working-class youth cultural practices in late industrial society. Yet, both discourses still shape youth identity in relation to adulthood: the former conceptualizes deviant youth subculture in opposition to mainstream adult culture, whereas the latter sees working-class youth in contrast to ruling class adulthood.

All the aforementioned dominant constructions of youth have been challenged by the recent work in the anthropology of youth (e.g. Rampton 1995). By highlighting the fluid, hybrid and local nature of youth identity construction, and drawing upon theories of practice, an emphasis has been put on youth agency and in the ways different aspects of youth identity emerge in specific local contexts. Moreover, far from simply reproducing mass cultural products, particular youth cultures are considered to be shaped through a creative negotiation (bricolage) with popular cultural practices, by giving local meanings to globalized cultural forms. Another important issue raised has been the focus on the richness of youth experiences across different socio-cultural settings (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003). Thus, this recent youth discourse stresses the distinctiveness characterizing different

groups of young people in terms of speech style, musical taste and patterns of consumption. Moreover, youth membership into specific cultural practices which is signaled by certain stylistic preferences is shifting rather than fixed. In sum, through this conceptualization, youth identity is determined in an affirmative way (what youth is), and it is no longer defined negatively and in comparison with adulthood (what youth is not/in what terms youth falls short of adulthood).

2.4. Representation of linguistic variation in advertising

Previous research has shown that advertising typically draws upon the whole range of the sociolinguistic resources being available in a linguistic community. In this way, linguistic varieties are commercially exploited by serving the profit-making aims of the genre. Specifically, the allusion of the advertising message to linguistic varieties with which the target audience is not familiar and/or does not expect can function as an attention-getter by stimulating surprise or humor (Bell 1992). More importantly, the selection of specific linguistic codes may facilitate identification with the advertising message through the construction of a positive brand image, by associating the products advertised with the cultural images and stereotypes attached to the particular linguistic varieties chosen as well as to the social groups speaking those varieties (Van Gijsel *et al.* 2008).

When the advertising text represents some regional and/or social dialect, these values might include, among other things, freshness and authenticity (e.g. a regional dialect for dairy products), or toughness and masculinity (e.g. working class accent for a beer) (Peters and Hammonds 1984). On the other hand, English, which has been employed in many advertisements across the world, tends to be associated with the ideas of modernity, technology, globalization, and cosmopolitism (Lee 2006).

Through practices of selection and transformation, the depiction of linguistic varieties resonate specific ideologies about language (e.g. youth language) and social reality (e.g. young people). Advertisers, in particular, tend to exploit dominant attitudes and prejudices about particular social groups, regions, countries and about the linguistic varieties linked to these entities, which have currency in a specific linguistic community, in order to attach desired values to the products advertised, and thus persuade the target audience (Vestergaard and Scrøder 1985). Consequently, the media in general, and advertising in particular, tend to perpetuate the hegemonic standard language ideology. A major strategy through which this language ideology is reproduced is the allocation of a regional dialect or low-prestige sociolect mainly to peripheral, vulgar and non-educated TV or film characters, whereas standard variety is typically reserved for protagonists and elite characters (Androutsopoulos 2010). In advertising, correspondingly, a socially stigmatized accent is usually selected for an actor opposed to the product and a prestigious one for the product endorser (Peters and Hammonds 1984).

3. Framework of analysis

3.1. Theoretical resources

In order to study the depiction of youth language in Greek TV commercials, we draw upon the framework proposed by Coupland (2007) on 'style', which helps us see

youth language as functioning as 'stylistic resource'. Specifically, Coupland calls linguistic varieties 'speech styles', and then puts them under a wider analytical approach of 'style'. Style is a way of doing something, such as speaking (speech style), wearing clothes (dressing style), or building a house (architectural style), which results from particular options. Hence, a speech style consists of a constellation of phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical options. Styles carry social meanings since they are used in order to signal social differences, and thus to shape identities. Thus, social identity is expressed through the deployment of specific stylistic features at many levels of linguistic and other semiotic organization (e.g. clothes, hair, patterns of consumption etc.). Another important component of this approach is that style is seen as a design-oriented process (i.e. 'styling') rather than as a finished product.

In case of speech style, in particular, Coupland has developed a three-dimensional framework according to which people display a strategic use of 'stylistic resources'. The resources upon which people draw and which condition their stylistic options are 'sociolinguistic features', 'communicative competence', and 'performance'. Specifically, speakers possess a lexico-grammatical knowledge of certain linguistic varieties which are potential carriers of social meaning (sociolinguistic features) as well as they are aware of the social norms with which these linguistic varieties are associated (communicative competence). Finally, speakers are given the possibility to subvert the conventional meanings expressed through specific linguistic features, by engaging critically with sociolinguistic rules (performance). The last component of stylistic resources allows talking about an active and creative conception of style.

Seen in this light, youth language can be regarded as analytical construct in order to examine linguistic behavior empirically (sociolinguistic features), as social stereotype that people use in order to tell that somebody 'sounds like a young person' (communicative competence), and as empirical reality in which specific speakers negotiate in complex ways with the previous symbolic constructs (performance). Entering mass cultural texts, stylistic resources are affected and constrained to a large extent by the representations reserved for them in those texts, which encode dominant linguistic attitudes and ideologies. Consequently, Coupland's framework could be enriched by a fourth dimension, that of 'mediation', which shapes and is also shaped by the other three dimensions.

3.2. Analytical framework applied to the TV commercials

Based on the framework described earlier, as well as upon relevant studies on the representation of linguistic variation in mass cultural discourse, such as advertising (e.g. Piller 2001), films (e.g. Marriott 1997) and TV series (e.g. Dhoest 2004), we have developed an analytical framework for the mediation of sociolinguistic reality in mass cultural texts (for more details, see Stamou 2011). This framework consists of four components: a 'linguistic', a 'sociolinguistic', a 'semiotic', and an 'ideological' one.

Specifically, the aim of the linguistic analysis is to determine the linguistic features employed in order to index youth identity in the advertising text. According to Fowler (1996, p. 191), a linguistic variety, such as a sociolect or a register, 'exists for language users as a package of sociolinguistic knowledge which can be activated

by relatively slight textual cues'. Hence, most people may not be able to speak or write in many linguistic varieties but they know through experience some of their linguistic features. Moreover, through particular cues, a number of different linguistic varieties can be drawn upon in a single text. Hence, except for the detection of textual cues linked to youth language, the linguistic analysis will account for any other speech stylistic resources which are probably drawn upon for the depiction of young people's language use.

The sociolinguistic analysis will examine the social profile (age, gender, and social class) of youth language users who participate in the TV commercials. It is interesting to see whether advertisers construct a particular version of 'youthfulness', and whether the social category of age is interwoven with other specific demographic positions. The social class of youth language users featuring in the commercials can be only indirectly determined, judging from their appearance, house decoration and/ or activities engaged in. Consequently, only assumptions can be made.

Another important component of the sociolinguistic analysis concerns the study of the situational context within which youth language is depicted. The contextualization of youth language will include the kind of products advertised and the activities in which youth language users engage, the spot format (e.g. 'product presentation spot', 'minidrama'; for details, see Van Gijsel *et al.* 2008) employed, and the other identity positions – except for the broader sociological ones – to which youth language users are linked. In particular, we will exploit the distinction made by Zimmerman (1998) between 'discourse' and 'situated identities', which both emerge during interaction. Specifically, discourse identities involve the interactional roles people are engaged in during the ongoing development and trajectory of talk and are reciprocally projected, such as those of speaker–listener, questioner-answerer, or storyteller-story recipient. Thus, they depend on the way activities are sequentially organized, and as the interaction unfolds those identities may be revised. In our case, we will consider in which position of the TV commercial youth language is heard: in the voice-over (i.e. 'the voice of authority': Piller 2001, p. 159), or in fictional characters (major or minor ones in terms of narrative importance), as well as whether youth language user has the role of product endorser vs. that of product opposer. Situated identities, on the other hand, refer to the specific roles which come into play in the situational setting in which talk is embedded, such as those of teacher vs. pupil (in a classroom interaction) or of doctor vs. patient (in a therapy session). In our case, we will account for the situated identities in which youth language users engage in TV commercials (e.g. friends, sons/daughters).

Additional dimensions of the contextualization of youth language involve whether this is depicted to be employed by young people in their interactions with peers (ingroup use) and/or with adults (outgroup use), as well as whether youth language users shift their speech style by responding to the communicative demands of the scenes in which they participate (dynamic view of style), or whether they exhibit a stable linguistic behavior throughout the scenes (static view of style). The media tend to depict speakers – especially those who employ socially stigmatized linguistic varieties – as commanding a narrow linguistic repertoire, and thus to represent a view of style as behavior rather than as performance (Androutsopoulos 2010).

The sociolinguistic analysis will also include any comments made about youth language and/or young people as a social group. The evaluation of speakers'

linguistic behavior and the shaping of language attitudes is a central concern of sociolinguistic research, since it is bound up with issues of language ideologies. On the other hand, opinions expressed about social groups are revealing of the images and ideologies people possess about these groups.

An additional component of the sociolinguistic analysis will concern any cases of miscommunication and misunderstandings detected between characters speaking youth language and others (mainly adults) employing different speech styles. The construction of a 'linguistic Babel' is a practice often employed by the media when they depict linguistic variation (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2000), and constitutes an implicit form of negative commenting on specific linguistic varieties.

Finally, the sociolinguistic analysis will account for any cases of 'crossing' into youth language. Crossing 'is concerned with switching into languages that are not generally thought to belong to you' (Rampton 1995, p. 280), namely to cases of momentary appropriation of another group's speech style. It may be motivated by several factors, such as the affiliation with a certain group and its values. In our case, although youth language tends to be negatively evaluated by adults, it may also have a covert prestige for them, by connoting the positive values of youthfulness. Consequently, we are interested to see whether in the TV commercials analyzed adults are represented as occasionally appropriating youth language features.

Following Coupland's inclusion of speech style to a broader conception of 'style', the semiotic analysis aims to uncover the other stylistic features which, together with language, construct youth identity, such as clothes, hair, habits and music tastes. Non-linguistic systems of signification and iconography have proven to be of paramount importance for the representation of social differences among characters in mass cultural texts (Marriott 1997).

Finally, the ideological analysis will attempt to offer a synthesis of the other components of analysis. Its aim is to explore what relevance has the depiction of youth language and young people in TV commercials with the dominant youth language ideologies and constructions of youth. This process will lead us to delve into the ideological underpinnings of Greek advertising regarding the representation of young people and their patterns of speech.

4. The textual material

The data for the present study consist of 46 commercials, which were broadcast in Greek television during the last five years. TV spots were accessed through the website www.youtube.com (for examples, see the Appendix). The selection of the spots was made on the basis of whether there was a reference to youth language. By making an extensive search on the particular website, there was an attempt to include all Greek TV commercials depicting some features of youth language during the aforementioned time period. The motivation behind this study was our empirical observation that the depiction of youth language had increased in Greek TV commercials in the last years. Thus, a natural question arisen was why this happened, and mainly (something that the present study in particular attempted to address), with what consequences for the construction of youth language and identity.

Examples provided later are presented in the Greek language (and alphabet), followed by their translation in English. The translation of style is a really hard task.

Unfortunately, in most of the cases, the translated youth speech style will be opaque for the English-speaking reader.

5. Analysis

5.1. Linguistic analysis

Greek TV commercials were found to depict most of the well-known features of youth language. The most frequent textual cues of youth language were drawn upon from the lexical level, while there were much fewer ones from the syntactic, semantic and discourse level (Table 1). On the other hand, morphological features were sparse. Given that the lexicon is the most obvious source for speech style mediation in advertising (Bell 1992), it seems that Greek advertisers tended to exploit the most conspicuous and widely recognized characteristics of youth language, in order to activate their target audience's stereotypical sociolinguistic knowledge.

Specifically, the most frequent lexical feature was the change of meaning of existing lexical items, followed by English loanwords. For example, the word 'πακέτο' (literally meaning 'parcel') signifies 'together' (in the phrase 'πάνε πακέτο' ['they go together']). English loanwords included several lexical items which are widely spread in Greek mass culture, such as 'free' and 'cool'. In most of the cases, there was code mixing (English mixed with Greek) rather than switching: e.g. 'το νέο hot place της Αθήνας: funky φατσούλες, trendy καταστάσεις' ['the new hot place of Athens: funky faces, trendy events'].

At syntactic level, youth language was mainly indexed through personal pronouns without referent and new idiomatic phrases. The former included cases such as 'τα πήρα στο κρανίο' ['I was pissed off'] (where the personal pronoun 'τα' has no referent). The latter concerned cases such as 'έφαγα X' ['I was disapproved of'] (literally meaning 'I ate an X').

At semantic level, there was an abundance of words mainly employed for evaluation, and much less for signaling emotional state. Evaluative comments mostly concerned the approval of other people (e.g. 'είσαι και πολύ τρελό θεματάκι' ['you are something else'] [a young man is flirting a woman]. Emotional state referred to diverse things, such as extreme surprise ('ξεράθηκες?' [did you get astonished?'] [about the low prices offered by a mobile telephony company]) and irritation ('σπαστικό δεν είναι να μην έχεις σήμα?' [is not it irritating not to have cell phone signal?']).

At discourse level, youth language was depicted by means of stereotypical address forms and conversational routines. Address forms included cases such as

Table 1. Features of youth language in TV commercials.

Level of analysis	Frequency (%)
Morphological	5.7
Syntactic	18.3
Semantic	16.6
Lexical	46.9
Discourse	12.6
Total	100.0

'αδερφέ' (brother). Conversational routines mostly involved English loanwords, such as 'ok' and 'OMG' (a common abbreviation standing for 'Oh My God[ness]'/Oh My Gosh', often employed in SMS and Instant Messaging).

Finally, the most frequent morphological characteristics were various derivative suffixes, all of which were diminutives. The most widely used was the suffix '-άκι' (e.g. 'φιλαρ-άκι' ['[little] friend']). Another morphological feature which was less often employed was clipping (e.g. 'προχώ [instead of 'προχωρημένη'] ['high']).

Except for youth language, youth identity was often indexed in conjunction with other speech stylistic resources. The most frequent speech styles drawn upon were the register of computing/technology, which mainly concerned English loanwords (e.g. 'o task manager είχε παγώσει' ['task manager got frozen']) and colloquialism (e.g. 'βάλε κανένα χεράκι' ['give me a hand']) (Table 2). Although the quite frequent use of colloquialism is not surprising, since it is undoubtedly tightly knitted to youth language, the extensive depiction of the register of computing/technology to index youth identity is noteworthy. As we shall see in the sociolinguistic analysis (Section 5.2.), products of information and communications technology were the most frequent type of advertising product with which youth language was associated.

Other activities (and corresponding registers) with which youth identity was associated were music, the army and football. Registers of music styles were not associated with a particular type of product, involved different music cultures (e.g. pop, rap, and heavy metal), and extensive borrowings from English (e.g. 'θυμάσαι που ήθελα να κάνω ένα συγκρότημα heavy metal progressive hard core thrash death metal?' [Do you remember that I wanted to create a band of heavy metal progressive hard core thrash death metal?']). On the other hand, given that the majority of youth language users represented in commercials was male (see Section 5.2.), it is not unexpected that youth identity was linked to 'masculine' considered activities, such as football (e.g. 'πω πω γκολάρα! Πάμε μία replay' ['This was a great football goal! Let's see it on video replay']) and the army (e.g. 'δεν κατάλαβα κύριε Διοικητά' ['I did not quite understand you, Commanding Officer']).

Since youth language tended to be interwoven with other sociolinguistic resources, in the next sections, under the label 'youth language', we mean all these stylistic resources indexing youth identity.

5.2. *Sociolinguistic analysis*

It was observed that youth language users were represented as sharing common social characteristics across different commercials, not only in terms of age, but also

Table 2. Speech stylistic resources as indices of youth identity.

Resources	Frequency (%)
Colloquialism	28.6
Register of computing/technology	39.3
Register of the army	10.7
Registers of music styles	10.7
Register of football	10.7
Total	100.0

regarding gender and social class. Specifically, youth language was constructed as a 'masculine' linguistic variety, by being mainly used by men (87.0%), or by both men and women (8.7%). Interestingly, even in cases in which youth language was only heard in the voice-over of the commercial, it was a male voice that was selected. This could be explained by the fact that youth language was so tightly knitted to information technology, considered also a typical 'masculine' activity. With respect to age, youth language users were mostly of around 20–25 years old (65.0%), while there were fewer teenagers (35.0%). Regarding social class, judging at least solely from appearance, setting of action, and activities, we assumed that most of youth language users (95.0%) seemed to belong to middle-class.

The context in which youth language was depicted was also quite specific. More analytically, the vast majority of commercials depicting youth language concerned products of information and communications technology (67.4%), namely telephone services and broadband Internet services. Another type of product advertised in which youth language appeared were refreshments (23.9%). These involved rather 'unhealthy' nutritional habits, such as ice-creams and soft drinks.

All TV commercials belonged to the spot format of 'minidrama', namely they concerned the telling of a story, with some actors engaging in dialogue and playing a certain scene (e.g. see Spot 1; the URLs for watching all spots given as examples in brackets are provided in the Appendix). The major activity in which youth language users engaged related to Internet services (e.g. information mining, e-shopping), or to discussions about cell phone company offers (e.g. see Spot 2). An important proportion of commercials also referred to how young people have fun. These included activities associated with music (e.g. playing music), night life (e.g. going to a bar), or football (e.g. watching a match on TV) (e.g. see Spot 3). Another quite frequent activity depicted was everyday family routine. In these commercials, some family scene was represented in which young people discussed with their father, mother, or grandmother about a 'favorite' family topic, such as the professional future of the son (e.g. see Spot 4). It might also involve the representation of some traditional family activity, such as that of a grandmother cooking for her grandson (e.g. see Spot 12).

Youth language was mainly heard in the voice of fictional characters (57.1%), who were protagonists in the action depicted in the commercials. Nevertheless, there were many cases in which youth language was also heard in the voice-over (23.8%), or only in the voice-over of commercials (19.0%). The latter position stands for the 'voice of authority' of the advertisement (Piller 2001, pp. 159–160), since it expresses the philosophy of a brand name. Therefore, advertisers tend to put in this position prestigious linguistic codes. Moreover, in 92.1% of the commercials youth language users were constructed as current or future product endorsers, an identity position which also tends to be held for a speaker of a prestigious linguistic variety (Peters and Hammonds 1984). The frequent use of youth language in such privileged discourse identity positions – together with that fact that it represented the voice of central fictional characters – indicates advertisers' attempt to target young people, by mediating familiar to them patterns of speech, which enjoy (covert) prestige.

Regarding the situated identities in which youth language users were positioned, TV commercials could be distinguished into two broad categories: whether youth language users were constructed as interacting with their peers (52.3%), or with adults (47.7%). In the former case, a symmetrical relationship was depicted between

friends or lovers (e.g. see Spots 2, 3). In the latter case, in contrast, an asymmetrical relationship was represented, either this concerned a family one (e.g. father–son; e.g. see Spot 4), or an institutional one (e.g. police officer–citizen; e.g. see Spot 1), or an interaction with strangers (e.g. see Spot 5). When youth language was contextualized into depictions of interactions among young people themselves, it concerned ingroup use. In contrast, when it was represented in interactions with adults, it involved outgroup use. Moreover, youth language was represented as being a stable language choice (i.e. behavior) rather than as a dynamic process (i.e. performance), since young people were not depicted as style shifting in order to address the communicative demands of their interlocutors. Rather, they were constructed as monolithic language users, by employing a very restricted linguistic repertoire, and thus probably assuming that they were unable to command other speech styles (e.g. standard variety) except for youth language. Consequently, youth identity was shaped as something fixed and taken for granted, and hence presumably as the only kind of identity young people are disposed with across contexts. This idea of 'closure' around youth identity made advertisers more easily isolate young people from the rest of the advertising text and convey the ideas of 'youthfulness' and the desired values attached to it.

The isolation of youth from the universe of adulthood was further accentuated by three strategies employed, confirming the so-called 'generation gap': metalinguistic comments about youth language, negative evaluation of young people as a social group, and instances of miscommunication between youth language users and non-speakers of youth language. All three strategies were mainly drawn upon in commercials depicting interactions of young people with adults.

The most common metalinguistic comment concerned the representation of youth language (quite often mingled with a register of computing/technology) as being unintelligible for non-speakers. In the majority of the cases, such metalinguistic comments were expressed in an indirect way. For instance, in a commercial about the Christmas offers of a cell phone company (e.g. see Spot 7), Santa Claus is reading in a rather puzzling way the message of a child containing many English technological terms (e.g. 'ABS', 'antispin', 'navigator', 'Bluetooth'). Another metalinguistic comment concerned the representation of youth language as non-language, by its substitution with other forms of communication. For example, in a commercial about a telephony company (e.g. see Spot 8), three young people are just playing rap music without talking to each other over the phone. This form of communication is characterized by the voice-over as 'conversation for three people'. In other words, young people's verbal communication becomes here identical/is completely substituted by the 'language' of music.

In most of the cases, negative comments about young people were made by adults, who were critical of youth's 'swallow' style of life (pursuing mainly to have fun), of their unhealthy nutritional habits, lack of good manners, pessimism, irresponsibility etc. Interestingly, such comments tended to be expressed non-verbally, and thus non-explicitly, through facial expressions. For example, in a commercial about a croissant (see Spot 9), a psychologist is interviewing a teenager who belongs to the emo culture, which is notorious for its pessimism, and is asking him/his opinion about the environment. The teenager tells that the environment is 'τελειωμένο' ['has no chance to survive'] (literally meaning 'finished'), but at the end, after eating the croissant, he appears more optimistic and urges people to 'save the

parrots'. Then, the psychologist looks rather puzzled at the camera about the teenager's unstable behavior.

Instances of miscommunication between youth language users and non-users/ adults constituted another implicit way of metalinguistic commentary on youth language, by representing it as undecipherable. For instance, in a commercial about Internet broadband services (e.g. see Spot 10), when the father is asking his daughter what is wrong with her, because she looks rather sad and pondering, she is starting describing the problem she had with her computer, by using a very specialized English jargon ('Δοκίμασα control, alt, delete αλλά ο task manager είχε παγώσει' ['I tried the buttons 'control', 'alt' 'delete' but task manager got frozen']). Her father looks rather puzzled and worried, but since he does not understand her concern, he asks her if she has told her mother about it.

Despite the prevailing – yet implicit – stigmatization of youth language and young people as a social group by adults, there were some cases in which youth speech style and the style of life attached to it enjoyed covert prestige for adults (e.g. values of trendiness, coolness, familiarity with technology), making them occasionally cross into youth language expressions. For example, in a commercial about broadband Internet services (e.g. see Spot 12), a semiotically 'traditional' grandmother has cooked a traditional Greek food ('γιουβέτσι' ['giouvetsi']) to her grandson. When her grandson is praising her for the delicious food she has made, she replies, quite unexpectedly, that she has downloaded a new recipe from a website (instead of having it, for instance, from her mother). Here, the grandmother's crossing into the register of computing/technology signals her engagement in technology (according to the voice-over heard 'how broadband services are changing all people's life'). Given that technology is a powerful index of youth identity, she finds, in this way, a contact point with her grandson.

5.3. Semiotic analysis

Non-verbal stylistic features were also drawn upon in order to index youth identity and build the idea of 'closure' from the rest of the advertising text. In other words, young people did not only differ from adulthood in terms of their way of talking, but also regarding the visual images constructed for them in the commercials.

Specifically, regarding appearance, there was a preference for everyday clothes and sportswear (e.g. see Spots 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13), as well as for black colors (e.g. see Spots 3, 6, 12). Moreover, youth language users tended to have a trendy haircut (e.g. see Spots 1, 2, 5, 12, 13). A special case constituted young people who were depicted as fans of a particular youth culture, such as emo (e.g. see Spot 9), or of a specific music style, such as rap and heavy metal (e.g. see Spots 4, 8), who adopted the particular stylistic conventions of the youth culture to which they participated.

On the other hand, judging from their posture, bodily expressions, and habits, young people were represented as being characterized by a relaxed attitude and an 'epicurean' preoccupation for material goods and entertainment. More analytically, youth tended to be associated with boredom and inactivity. Characteristic examples are the Spots 4, 6, 10 and 12, in which young people were represented as sitting in a very lazy way. On the other hand, they were never depicted as working or studying. Their only concern was to go out and have fun. For example, in Spot 1, the young man is returning from shopping; in Spot 2, two friends are talking about a party in

which one of them went the previous night. Except for their keen interest in information technology, young people were also constructed as being particularly engaged in music. Besides using quite often the registers of particular music styles and adopting their corresponding stylistic conventions, young people were depicted as playing, listening to, or talking about music (e.g. see Spots 4, 5, 8).

The iconography of 'youthfulness' is further stressed when it is juxtaposed to that of 'adulthood'. Specifically, in most of the cases, the adults who were depicted in the commercials were in sharp contrast to young people, either because of their very conservative appearance (e.g. see Spots 4, 6), or due to their institutional role (e.g. police officer; e.g. see Spot 1). Certainly, there were commercials in which adults had a 'normal' appearance (e.g. see Spot 11). On the other hand, in some commercials some interesting subversions occurred, in order to provoke humor and surprise. For instance, in one commercial, the youthful appearance of the father (i.e. jeans and trendy T-shirt) was in sharp contrast to the misunderstanding that happened with his daughter due to his ignorance of the computer jargon (e.g. see Spot 10). Conversely, in another commercial, the appearance of the traditional rural grandmother contrasted with her crossing into the register of computing/technology (e.g. see Spot 12).

5.4. Ideological analysis

In the TV commercials analyzed (for an overview of the results, see Table 3), one could easily detect the dominant constructions of youth as a homogeneous social and cultural experience, framed in contrast to adulthood. Specifically, young people were mainly conceptualized through the adolescence discourse of incomplete adulthood. Their inadequacy and incompleteness was expressed through their depiction as being immature, rude, inactive, superficial, and eating unhealthy food. Moreover, they were constructed as being particularly vulnerable to mass cultural products, by consuming

Table 3. The dominant construction of youth (language) as emerging from Greek TV commercials.

Social profile	Youth language spoken by men
	Youth language users being of around 20–25 years old
	Youth language users belonging to middle-class
Situational context	Youth language associated with products of information and communications technology
	Youth language put in privileged discourse identity positions (e.g. voice-over)
	Youth language depicted in both interactions with peers (ingroup use) and adults (outgroup use)
	Youth language as a stable linguistic behavior
Evaluation of youth (language)	Isolation of youth from adulthood (metalinguistic comments, miscommunication, negative comments of adults)
Iconography	Preference for everyday clothes and sportswear, black colors and trendy haircuts
	Relaxed attitude and 'epicurean' preoccupation for material goods and entertainment
	Keen interest in music and fans of specific music styles

trendy and technologically advanced products. Their way of talking was also sometimes represented as incomplete compared to the adults', since in some commercials young people were depicted as communicating solely through music, in which case their verbal communication was identical/was completely substituted by the 'language' of music. The striking homogeneity of young people across the commercials was disrupted by the aesthetic distinctiveness made by particular young people, in order to index their affiliation with a specific youth culture and/or music style. Yet, in such cases, young people were depicted as passively reproducing rather than negotiating these global cultural practices.

Another dominant construction of youth detected more sparingly in the commercials was the discourse of youth as deviant subculture. This discourse was instantiated through depictions of youth language as being undecipherable to adults, and therefore as diverging from the mainstream adult speech style. The image of youth language as exotic and unintelligible is dominant in the Greek media, in an attempt to stigmatize young people's speech style, since it is usually framed within the hegemonic standard language ideology, according to which adult (standard) speech is assumed to be the only 'correct' linguistic variety (Iordanidou and Androutsopoulos 1999). Nevertheless, given that in the commercials analyzed youth language was tightly linked to information technology skills and competence, and was put in privileged discourse identity positions (e.g. in the voice-over), it could be also viewed as a technical style of talk which indicated digital literacy, and hence needed deciphering by non-expert (adult) people. Correspondingly, the crossing of some adults into youth language marked their familiarity with information and communications technology.

Interestingly, in some cases, advertisers attempted to challenge the dominant youth discourses. For instance, although information technology was generally unproblematically represented as a central part of youth identity, there were some commercials in which young people's alienation and antisocial behavior caused by computers were underlined. A characteristic example is one commercial which narrates the story of a young man trying to flirt a woman at a bar (e.g. see Spot 3).The man is very shy and does not know how to approach her. When they finally introduce themselves to each other, he gives her, by habit, his email address instead of his real name. Other commercials attempted to subvert some of the negative stereotypes about young people which form part of the adolescence discourse. For instance, contrary to the stereotypical idea about youth's indifference towards politics, several young people are expressing their support for a specific political party (e.g. see Spot 13).

Nevertheless, if we look more closely at the aforementioned commercials, we can infer that they are still articulated within the framework of the dominant constructions of youth, by including contradictions. Specifically, although the commercial with the two young people at the bar (e.g. Spot 3) tries to denounce the negative impact of computers on human relationships, it refutes itself, since it advertises a product of information technology (broadband Internet services). On the other hand, in the commercial which depicts young people being interested in politics (e.g. Spot 13), nothing there transmits this message, since they do not make anything different from the other young people constructed in the rest of the commercials (e.g. playing music as DJs, returning from shopping). Moreover, they fail to express a solid political stance by limiting themselves to show their general approval of the

political party advertised through the use of youth language expressions (e.g. 'είναι cool' ['they are cool']; 'τους πάω με χίλια' ['I like them a lot']).

6. Conclusions

It has been argued that in the context of reflexive modernization and risk society, identities are no longer constructed by the traditional categories of class, gender, or ethnicity, and are to a large extent constructed by individuals themselves. Self has become a 'reflexive biographical project' (Giddens 1991) in which people are required to fashion an identity and make choices and decisions about their lives. This reflexive self-monitoring about how to live and who to be is known as 'life politics' (Beck *et al.* 1994). In reflexively constructing their identities and planning their lives, people draw information mostly from the media, while consumption is central to the construction of images, styles and identities. Hence, 'neo-tribes', namely ephemeral groups linked to sign-laden commodities and spatially located in shopping malls, sports centers, and stadia are formed, replacing earlier social collectivities (Maffesoli 1995). The phenomenon of 'neo-tribalism' is particularly relevant for youth cultures in the era of reflexive modernization, since the choice of material commodities, such as clothes and music styles are crucial to the construction of youth identities (e.g. Cohen 1997, Griffin 1997).

In this context, advertising constitutes a central force for the formation of young people's life politics. In the TV commercials we analyzed, 'youthfulness' was linguistically and semiotically isolated from the rest of the advertising text in order to serve the aims of this genre (e.g. surprise, humor, ingenuity). Moreover, by mediating familiar to young people images of their world and attaching a covert prestige to their patterns of speech by putting them in privileged discourse identity positions, (adult) advertisers are able to target young people. Moreover, through the depiction of adults' occasional crossing into youth language, advertisers are selling to those who are or want to be 'young' at heart (Brookes 2003).

In the TV commercials examined here, young people are invited to plan their lives around the consumption of information and communications technological gadgets and music products, while their sole pursuit is to 'just have fun'. Furthermore, youth identity was constructed as something fixed and finally established, leaving no possibility for multiple positionings of young people. Hence, our analysis indicates that although the particular TV commercials are supposed to be about and for young people, being produced by (adult) advertisers, they do not escape from perpetuating, albeit often implicitly, the dominant construction of youth as incomplete adulthood. Consequently, the present study suggests that marketing practices, – even in cases which are intended to be 'youth-oriented' – being controlled by adults and addressing the general public, are crafted in order to infiltrate and sell back to both young and adult consumers hegemonic construals of youth.

Interestingly, the commercials analyzed did not only represent young people primarily as consumers of information technology, but also as having a specific social profile in terms of gender and class. Although there is a general tendency for youth to be associated with technology in advertising (Lee 2006), and while a digital divide is thought to exist between men and women (e.g. Bimber 2000), the direct linking of information technology with class issues on the part of advertisers is worth considering. There is often a techno-utopian belief that computers and the Internet

eradicate social inequality and divisions, but it seems that they actually reproduce them. For instance, there have been studies witnessing social divisions regarding the use of the social network sites of MySpace and Facebook on the part of American young people (e.g. Boyd 2007, 2011, Hargittai 2007, Watkins 2009), bringing to the fore that people's engagement with computers reveals social differences. Specifically, it has been found that teenagers and college students coming from less privileged backgrounds appear to be head towards MySpace, whereas it is more likely for young people coming from wealthy families to use Facebook. Ethnic divisions have also been disclosed, with white and Asian youth privileging Facebook, while black and Hispanic students preferring MySpace.

Finally, it is interesting to consider how traditional media as TV commercials are intersecting here with new forms of communication, such as social computing (e.g. Lusoli and Cachia 2009, Lusoli and Miltgen 2009). This interface is not only due to the fact that social media were depicted by the commercials as a strong index of youth identity, but also because these commercials have been uploaded in a famous social computing application as YouTube (from where in fact we accessed the material of our study). In this way, commercials become a material for new social media uses (e.g. production of parodic videos, commenting by viewers etc.). In fact, as an interesting line for future research, the comments by viewers of the spots could be a valuable source of qualitative data, if we wished to explore how (young) people respond to the images mediated by these commercials, which are constructed by adults and do not necessarily reflect youth perspectives.

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Appendix 1. Examples from the TV commercials analyzed

Spot 1
'Magnum ice-cream: police officer'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = NPHqYFvoFIwandfeature = related (Accessed 3 December 2011)

Spot 2
'Wind mobile telephony company'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = fAODFM3pPFM (Accessed 3 December 2011)

Spot 3
'OTE broadband internet services: Miltos'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = 0Z9XfPi7i2w (Accessed 3 December 2011)

Spot 4
'Commercial Bank of Greece'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = v2J90NLA9s4&feature = related (Accessed 3 December 2011)

Spot 5
'Magnum ice-cream: elderly'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = Qb_gYQkzga4 (Accessed 4 December 2011)

Spot 6
'Break chocolate'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = VMvD_SLoQME (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 7
'Cosmote mobile telephony company: Santa Claus'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = SHNuocWKD1A (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 8
'Ote telephony company'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = 4leeV5WxI3Q (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 9
'Molto croissant'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = 64EdOM_f6do (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 10
'OTE broadband internet services: Did you tell your mother about it?'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = -6or7G30shYandfeature = related (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 11
'Conn-X internet and phone services'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = kuJ3Z8sBMqwandfeature = related (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 12
'OTE broadband internet services: Giouvetsaki
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = gHhBIIMgyKg (Accessed 6 December 2011)

Spot 13
'Greek conservative party'
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = QyYRjdQHGsM (Accessed 8 December 2011)