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The Use of English in Greek Text Messaging: A Generational Analysis of Language Alternation and Perception

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**The Use of English in Greek Text Messaging: A Generational Analysis of Language
Alternation and Perception**

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Abstract

The growing use of English in Greek digital communication mirrors wider sociolinguistic changes driven by globalization and digital media. This study looks at how different generations use and perceive English borrowings in Greek text message communication comparing younger and older individuals. The results show a notable generational divide in understanding these English borrowings. Younger participants were more comfortable with messages that included English, using it for brevity, expressiveness and to express their identity. On the other hand, older participants found it challenging to recognize and interpret English words within Greek text messages, preferring to communicate solely in Greek and struggling with mixed language forms.

The findings suggest that exposure to bilingual digital environments and global communication enhances linguistic flexibility among younger users, while older participants encounter more difficulties with hybrid language use. Younger users utilize English borrowings not just as a stylistic choice but also as a way to demonstrate their global engagement and digital skills. In contrast, older users' limited interaction with English-integrated communication leads to unfamiliarity with certain terms, highlighting a generational gap in digital bilingualism and language adaptability. These insights emphasize the changing landscape of Greek digital discourse and how generational language habits influence multilingual communication. While younger participants easily switch between languages, older participants show resistance, reflecting broader worries about preserving language and cultural continuity.

Keywords: Digital bilingualism, generational language use, English borrowings, Greek text messaging, cultural continuity, digital discourse, generational gap

Background

This thesis investigates how English is integrated into Greek text messaging across different age groups, focusing on language preferences, communicative functions and the construction of social identity. With the increasing impact of globalization and technological advancement, digital communication has become a central site of linguistic innovation. Within this context, English is no longer just a foreign or second language, it has become a symbol of modernity, global engagement and digital fluency. In Greece, where language is strongly tied to national and cultural identity, the incorporation of English into everyday messaging practices reveals broader transformations in how individuals perceive and perform language.

The global spread of English has long been linked to political, economic and technological dominance. As Crystal (2003) argues, English has become the global lingua franca, permeating education, media and professional domains. In Greece, this influence is particularly visible in digital contexts, where younger users frequently incorporate English words, phrases, or stylistic conventions into their everyday communication. This phenomenon is not merely functional but it also reflects a growing bilingual and bicultural orientation. Exposure to English through social media, entertainment, online communities and international education reinforces the normalization of English in informal exchanges, especially among digitally literate younger generations.

Pennycook (2010) emphasizes that English should not be understood as a monolithic or fixed language system. Instead, it evolves through localized social practices, constantly being recontextualized within specific sociocultural environments. From this perspective, English as used in Greek text messaging is not simply an imported code but a resource adapted, hybridized and creatively employed to fit local communicative needs and identity performances. This aligns with the notion of “global Englishes,” where the language is shaped by local values, norms and cultural affiliations. In this context, the integration of English into Greek discourse represents a strategic and

symbolic act an expression of modern selfhood, participation in global youth culture and digital competency.

Digital communication plays a vital role in reshaping sociolinguistic norms. Androutsopoulos (2014) argues that digital media are not just neutral platforms but semiotic spaces that foster new forms of linguistic expression. Especially among adolescents and young adults, these spaces enable stylistic creativity and experimentation. Androutsopoulos (2014) argues that digital spaces enable hybrid language practices that function as stylistic resources for identity performance, social interaction, and the negotiation of cultural meanings. While Androutsopoulos does not focus specifically on Greek users, his findings about digital writing and youth culture apply broadly to technologically immersed communities. Digital interaction thus becomes a site for identity construction shaped by transnational flows, peer-group dynamics and the medium's built-in communicative tools.

Generational theory offers additional insight into these linguistic shifts. Members of Generation Z born approximately between 1997 and 2012 and younger Millennials are digital natives who have grown up with smartphones, the internet and social media as integral parts of daily life (Jayatissa, 2023). For younger users, switching between languages such as Greek and English is a routine part of their online multilingual practices, shaped by their participation in digital environments and the fluid, translocal nature of contemporary communication. Younger users engage in multilingual language play in informal digital contexts such as texting and social media, using these resources for identity work, stylistic creativity and participation in global digital cultures (Lee, 2017). In contrast, older generations often described as digital immigrants approach digital communication with more caution, relying on norms rooted in print literacy and formal Greek education. Their more limited engagement with informal English online may stem from unfamiliarity, linguistic conservatism and concern about the erosion of traditional language practices.

These generational differences are not just practical, they are also ideological. “Language ideologies are socially situated representations of language that influence both communicative behavior and broader social relations” (Woolard, 2021) For younger users, the use of English in text messaging may be perceived as ideologically neutral, a

flexible linguistic resource that enables engagement in transnational communication rather than marking fixed cultural identity. Older users by contrast may interpret English use as a threat to linguistic integrity and national identity. These opposing views highlight the symbolic weight that language carries and the ways in which everyday linguistic practices reflect deeper cultural anxieties and aspirations.

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital provides a useful framework for interpreting these sociolinguistic dynamics. For younger users, fluency in English, especially in online environments is a form of symbolic capital that grants access to global networks, enhances social mobility and affirms peer-group belonging. In digital contexts, the use of English extends beyond basic communication, serving as a marker of cosmopolitan identity, technological fluency and cultural adaptability. For older users, who may lack similar exposure or confidence in English, its presence in informal settings may signal exclusion or illegitimacy. This generational gap illustrates how language is unequally distributed and valued, reinforcing broader patterns of symbolic dominance and sociocultural stratification.

Tsokolidou (2015) conceptualizes bilingualism as a dynamic and negotiated process shaped by identity and social context. Her research on Greek-speaking communities highlights how language use reflects affiliations, values and power relations, particularly within educational systems where monolingualism remains the dominant norm.

Research Questions

This study explores the integration of English into text messaging among various demographic groups in Greece, with a particular focus on generational differences, cultural attitudes and communicative impact. The following research questions guide the investigation:

- How do different generations in Greece integrate English into their text messaging communication and what does this reveal about their linguistic preferences and cultural orientations?
- How does the use of English affect the clarity and effectiveness of communication within and between different generations?

- Do younger generations view English as a tool for global participation, while older generations see it as a threat to linguistic and cultural heritage?

2.1 Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is based in sociological principles that emphasize the language as a central component of social interaction and identity formation. An important overview of this research is global English and transactive flow, which highlights how English is not only an important global language, but also a dynamic resource that is continuously shaped in different cultural and linguistic surroundings. Pennycook (2010) argues that the language is shaped by local social practice, develops continuously because it is transmitted and adapted to different contexts. In the case of Greek text messages, the inclusion of English words from younger generations reflects the extensive processes of linguistic globalization, where the use of languages is shaped by digital communication, media effects and cross-cultural interactions. This perspective emphasizes that language choices in text messages are not just about efficiency or convenience, but also about interacting with identity, social-related and cultural hybrids.

This study also draws on the interactional perspective of code-switching, which highlights how speakers use language alternation as a contextual cue to shape meaning within conversation. Rather than viewing code-switching as a random or mechanical shift, this approach emphasizes its role in signaling shifts in stance, tone or identity. In Greek digital communication, younger users may insert English words within Greek messages as a form of participant-related code-switching, indexing alignment, distancing, or identity marking functions that reflect Auer's (1998) model of code-switching as a socially and interactionally motivated act. By contrast, older speakers tend to avoid such shifts maintaining linguistic boundaries that reflect more traditional norms. This interactional view complements broader sociocultural theories by demonstrating how language use even in short, digital exchanges builds identity and social meaning in real time.

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital provides an important objective to understand how English acts both as a practical tool and a symbolic feature of digital

communication. In this structure, language is not just a means of communication, but a social resource that shapes reputation, mobility and access to the group. English skill, especially in digital rooms may indicate educational background, the identity of the big city and the technical flow which can strengthen someone's position in a colleague and professional network. The ability to initially integrate English and online interactions reflects this social status, which can serve as a marker of status and identity in digital communication.

Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model sheds light on how the choices we make in language can reflect our identities, especially in text messaging. According to this model, "unmarked" choices are those that align with the expected norms of a conversation, while "marked" choices indicate a shift or a claim to a different identity or social group. For example, when younger Greeks incorporate English terms into their informal conversations, they are making a deliberate linguistic choice that reflects digital literacy, alignment with global youth culture and adaptability in communication. On the other hand, older speakers generally adhere to standard Greek favoring the unmarked linguistic code. This choice not only reveals their linguistic preferences but also reflects broader beliefs about tradition, cultural continuity and the integrity of language. This model is particularly valuable for understanding how the participants in this study consciously or unconsciously align themselves with various value systems through their language use.

Building on this ideological divide, translanguaging theory further enriches the understanding of multilingual communication in digital settings. García and Lin (2016) define translanguaging not just as code-switching but as a dynamic, agentive process through which multilingual individuals draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning, express identity and navigate social interaction. Unlike traditional models that treat languages as distinct, bounded systems, translanguaging emphasizes linguistic fluidity, hybridity and the speaker's control over language use. This approach recognizes that multilinguals do not compartmentalize their languages, but rather use features of all their linguistic resources strategically in context-driven ways.

In the case of Greek text messaging, this theoretical framework is particularly relevant: Younger users frequently blend Greek and English in ways that reflect not only

their linguistic creativity but also their sociocultural positioning. Their choices are often intentional used to align with global digital culture, construct in-group belonging, convey tone or irony, or distinguish themselves generationally. Translanguaging reflects the flexible and creative ways people use language in casual digital spaces, where cultural and linguistic boundaries are becoming more fluid. By viewing Greek-English blending as more than interference or borrowing, this theory helps reframe bilingualism in text communication as a sophisticated, identity-oriented practice shaped by global-local dynamics.

Monica Heller (2007) introduces a critical sociolinguistic approach to bilingualism, emphasizing that language practices are not simply communicative tools or reflections of linguistic competence but are deeply shaped by social structures, ideologies and power relations. She challenges the traditional view of languages as fixed, bounded systems and instead conceptualizes bilingualism as a site of ideological struggle where language choices reflect broader social dynamics such as legitimacy, identity and access to symbolic resources. In this view, code-switching and other forms of language mixing are not just pragmatic responses to communicative needs they are also socially meaningful acts that index a speaker's alignment with or resistance to particular social values or group memberships. This framework resonates strongly with the use of English in Greek digital communication, especially among younger users. Their selective use of English in informal contexts such as texting is not accidental, but an act of identity positioning signaling global affiliation, cultural modernity and digital fluency.

In addition, computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) has been recognized as a valuable framework for studying online interactions, especially within text-based, multi-user environments. This approach highlights how discourse features such as turn-taking, topic development, and user role negotiation can be systematically examined to understand how virtual communities are formed and maintained. Although such platforms often produce overlapping and fragmented exchanges, users tend to manage coherence through strategies like direct address such as “@” references, enabling structured interaction despite the medium's limitations. The asynchronous and text-driven nature of these exchanges allows users to focus on their intentions and identities, thus supporting community-building through discourse. These insights underscore the social

complexity embedded in digital interaction, showing how identity, politeness, and group dynamics are co-constructed through language even in loosely organized, digitally mediated spaces (Li, 2020). In the context of Greek text messaging, CMDA provides a useful perspective for analyzing how younger users blend English and Greek pragmatically while navigating peer interaction and stylistic tone. It also sheds light on how older users may experience communicative challenges in these environments, particularly when hybrid expressions disrupt familiar language structures. Overall, CMDA helps clarify how code-switching operates not just as a linguistic shift but as a socially embedded strategy shaped by technological affordances and generational language ideologies.

In Greek digital communication, younger users may insert English words within Greek messages as a strategic way to navigate transnational influences, project digital competence and align with global youth culture. These bilingual practices are not only stylistic but reflect deeper social positioning within systems that value linguistic hybridity, adaptability and innovation. In contrast, older users shaped by monolingual ideologies and traditional literacy norms may perceive such hybrid usage as illegitimate or inappropriate viewing it as a departure from established linguistic and cultural expectations. Bilingualism in digital contexts, therefore, is not ideologically neutral but it is a socially regulated practice that reflects and reproduces broader structures of symbolic power and exclusion (Woolard, 2021).

2.2 English as a Global Lingua Franca

Text messaging really sparks linguistic creativity, letting users mix in abbreviations, different styles and even multiple languages for both practical and expressive reasons (Thurlow & Brown, 2003). These trends reflect bigger changes in digital literacy and how different generations communicate in multiple languages. By looking at how various age groups use English in Greek text messages, this study adds to the ongoing conversation about linguistic globalization and digital bilingualism. Jenkins (2014) points out that English acts as a flexible and evolving lingua franca, shaped by its many users instead of being limited to native standards. This idea is especially important in digital spaces where people adapt English to fit their communication needs. Similarly,

Graddol (2006) emphasizes that the worldwide spread of English is not just practical but also carries symbolic weight, linked to ideas of social mobility and modern identity. In Greece, this dual role of English serves as a generational marker: younger users effortlessly integrate it into their digital conversations, while older speakers often approach it with caution or resistance depicting different attitudes toward globalization and linguistic identity.

Building on this generational shift, Parry and Urwin (2011) suggest that generational differences are not merely chronological but socially constructed, shaped by shared historical experiences, technological exposure and evolving values. Applied to Greek digital communication, this helps explain why younger users raised amid mobile technology, social media and global digital culture tend to embrace flexible and hybrid language practices, such as mixing English into Greek text messages. These practices reflect not only brevity and efficiency but also openness to global influences and digital innovation. On the other hand, older generations who were raised in more print-focused and formal communication settings tend to adhere to more traditional language preferences and may find it challenging to adapt to the informal, globalized use of English in casual conversations. These generational language trends highlight broader changes in how identity is expressed, linguistic flexibility and attitudes toward globalization extending Parry and Urwin's sociocultural perspective into the world of multilingual digital communication.

Languages are not fixed or naturally bounded systems, but historically and socially constructed practices that are continually reshaped by those who use them. As Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue, multilingual individuals are not passive recipients of dominant linguistic norms but active agents who reinterpret and repurpose language in context-specific ways. Similarly, in Greek digital communication, younger users incorporate English into their text messages as part of an adaptive process by transforming and recontextualizing language to reflect their communicative goals and evolving sociocultural identities. Using English in multilingual and non-native environments can lead to some complex identification challenges. Generational differences in linguistic norms in Greece reflect a broader negotiation between global influences and entrenched local traditions. While younger speakers tend to adopt more

informal and solidarity-oriented styles influenced by globalization, older generations may perceive these shifts as disruptive to established politeness conventions. Yet, such concerns should not be viewed simply as signs of cultural decline, but rather as expressions of sociolinguistic tension within evolving communicative landscapes. Rather than viewing the generational divergence in language use as a sign of cultural decline, it reflects a dynamic negotiation between global influences and enduring local traditions. Globalization does not necessarily erase existing norms but often results in a layered coexistence of imported and traditional practices. In the Greek context, global discursive habits such as informal address and increased directness may be adopted selectively, especially among younger speakers, while older generations may continue to uphold more formal linguistic conventions. This interaction between change and continuity highlights the nuanced effects of globalization on language and identity (Sifianou, 2013).

2.3 Sociolinguistic Impact of English in Personal Communications

English is not only used for its communicative content but often functions as a symbol of modernity, sophistication and global orientation. Research on advertising shows that even when comprehension is low, English still evokes positive associations and can influence consumer attitudes and preferences, particularly among audiences who associate English with prestige and innovation (Hendriks et al., 2017). This aligns with research on linguistic accessibility in multilingual settings (Gerritsen et al., 2010). When it comes to Greek text communication, younger speakers effortlessly use English to keep their interaction brief, humorous and reflective of their identity due to their exposure to global media and digital trends. On the contrary, older speakers tend to resist this blend preferring Greek for its clarity and cultural significance. English plays a vital role in digital communication, serving as both a linguistic tool and a marker of social identity. The multilingual practices we see in online forums and social media depicts users' connections to global youth culture and their digital literacy.

Digital communication spaces support code-switching and linguistic mixing, allowing users to navigate social belonging and cultural identity. Among Greek-speaking users, the inclusion of English phrases, abbreviations and stylistic elements in texts and online chats reflects broader multilingual and diasporic practices. English serves as a

strategic resource for self-expression and cosmopolitan alignment, enabling users to signal group affiliation and participate in global digital discourse. These practices go beyond lexical borrowing, they also represent deliberate acts of linguistic blending that reinforce hybrid identities within online communities (Androutsopoulos, 2006).

Language choice in digital communication plays a crucial role in shaping social connections and expressing identity. Younger speakers often blend English with Greek not only for convenience but to align with global cultural flows while maintaining local identity. Translanguaging enables multilingual individuals to draw flexibly from their full linguistic repertoires depending on audience and context allowing them to construct meaning and negotiate identity in fluid, dynamic ways (García & Lin, 2016). In Greek digital spaces, this practice allows users to engage in globally mediated discourse while reinforcing their culturally hybrid identities.

Gen Z's communication style is deeply rooted in their immersion in digital culture, where informal and visually driven interactions dominate. Unlike older generations, who often adhere to traditional language norms and structured dialogues, Gen Z embraces a more flexible and hybrid approach, blending English phrases, abbreviations and internet slang into their interactions. This multilingual digital expression is not solely about efficiency but it also reflects their social identity and engagement within global online communities. Such shifts underscore broader generational differences in communication, belonging, and cultural integration (Peredy et al., 2024).

García and Lin (2016) concept of translanguaging provides a critical point for examining how bilingual users fluidly mobilize linguistic resources in context-dependent ways. Their theory reframes bilingualism as a dynamic and performative process that reflects the fluid sociolinguistic realities of digital interaction.

Building on the concept of translanguaging introduced by García and Li Wei (2011) develops the notion of translanguaging space, which offers a dynamic understanding of how multilingual individuals creatively and critically engage with language to construct identities and navigate social contexts. He argues that translanguaging is not merely the alternation between linguistic codes, but a transformative act through which individuals create new social realities and hybrid

identities. These “translanguaging spaces” are both cognitive and social environments where language users mobilize their full linguistic repertoires to express values, challenge dominant ideologies, and position themselves in relation to others. Li emphasizes the role of creativity and criticality two underexplored dimensions of multilingual practices which allow speakers to push against traditional norms and reshape communicative spaces to suit their personal, cultural, or relational goals. In the context of this study, young Greek users incorporating English in text messaging can be seen as engaging in precisely such a translanguaging space. Their hybrid expressions are not random but index specific identity positions that reflect global affiliations, digital fluency, and agency within contemporary sociolinguistic environments. Li’s framework is therefore particularly valuable in highlighting how multilingual youth negotiate belonging and self-presentation in an increasingly globalized and digitally mediated landscape.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp significantly influence language use among younger people, encouraging the incorporation of English phrases, slang, and abbreviations (Maghfur, Masruhan, & Indah, 2020). These platforms enable linguistic adaptation and engagement, allowing users to blend English into their communication in more dynamic and interactive ways. As digital interactions become increasingly immersive, the impact of social media on language choices continues to expand, reinforcing global linguistic trends while transforming multilingual communication. Furthermore, mobile apps and predictive text technologies promote English usage through auto-corrections and language suggestions, subtly shaping users' language choices. Consequently, younger users cultivate a digital linguistic fluidity that stands in stark contrast to older generations, who often adhere to conventional language norms.

Generational differences significantly influence language practices in text message communication. Younger generations tend to prefer an informal, concise texting style that is heavily influenced by English. They often use abbreviations, emojis and code-switching to make their messages more expressive and efficient. This linguistic adaptability is a result of their exposure to global media, English-centric education and active participation in digital communities. On the other hand, older generations are generally perceived to adhere more closely to conventional writing norms, including full-

word spelling and standard grammar, reflecting their socialization in more formal communicative contexts. This contrast underscores varying views on what is considered linguistically appropriate and efficient, as each generation navigates the changing landscape of communication technologies while preserving their unique linguistic identities. Younger users often alternate between English and Greek in their text message conversations, merging both languages to enhance expressiveness and foster social connections (Spilioti, 2009). This code-switching goes beyond just a linguistic strategy, it acts as a marker of identity, showcasing their engagement with global digital culture and reinforcing a sense of belonging in a medium that lacks nonverbal cues.

2.4 The Role of English in Greek Text Communication: A Generational Perspective on Linguistic Adaptation

The rise of digital communication has significantly altered how individuals engage with language, particularly in informal written contexts like texting and instant messaging. Young people in digitally saturated environments develop distinctive linguistic habits characterized by abbreviation, casual tone, and a blend of spoken and written norms. This transformation reflects deeper shifts in literacy practices, language ideologies and communication structures, where users prioritize brief, expressive and easily digestible content over traditionally structured writing (Baron, 2008).

Baron's research on American university students highlights generational differences in linguistic behavior: younger users tend to abandon traditional spelling and punctuation in favor of economical and emotionally expressive forms. Their messages often exclude capitalization, include nonstandard spellings, and rely on expressive devices such as exclamation marks and emoticons, serving pragmatic purposes tied to tone and relational alignment. In contrast, older users typically adhere to conventional writing norms, underscoring generational divergence. Notably, features like sentence fragments and conversational rhythm in text messaging reveal how written digital discourse increasingly mirrors spoken interaction emphasizing efficiency and functional adaptability.

A complementary framework is provided by the faceted classification scheme of computer-mediated discourse (CMD) which distinguishes between technological

medium-related and social situation-related features. For instance, message length constraints and platform affordances like predictive text or emoji use influence informal and abbreviated language especially among younger, digitally fluent users. In peer-oriented and informal environments, language tends to be playful, elliptical, and multimodal. These tendencies reflect a broader shift toward flexible language use shaped by platform norms and participation structures (Herring, 2007).

A cross-sectional study further supports these patterns, revealing both generational tensions and areas of convergence such as shared use of platforms like Facebook. While younger users prefer fast-paced, text-based interaction, older users tend to favor face-to-face or email communication, reflecting deeper ideological divides regarding multitasking, fluency, and interactional preferences (Pierce & Payne, 2018).

Together, the findings of Baron and Herring suggest that generational contrasts in digital language use stem from both technological affordances and ideological orientations. Younger users internalize these tools as part of their habitual language repertoire, while older users replicate print-based conventions highlighting how digital literacy norms diverge across age groups.

The role of age in language acquisition offers a valuable perspective through which to understand the generational divide observed in this study. While younger learners often achieve higher ultimate attainment in a second language, this advantage is not necessarily due to faster learning, but rather to implicit learning processes that are more readily accessible during early developmental stages. These processes allow younger individuals to absorb language patterns more naturally through exposure and repetition, particularly in informal and immersive contexts such as digital communication. In contrast, older individuals tend to rely more heavily on explicit learning strategies, which are often more analytical and rule-based. Although these strategies can be effective in formal learning settings, they may not be well suited to the fluid, creative, and socially embedded language practices that dominate online interaction. This may help explain why older Greek users in the study expressed discomfort or confusion regarding English lexical insertions, whereas younger users seamlessly integrated them into their texts with confidence and stylistic ease. The findings thus support the broader claim that age-related

cognitive and experiential differences significantly shape language use, especially in dynamic and multilingual digital environments (DeKeyser, 2013)

Finally, Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment links language use to identity, ideology, and symbolic capital. Language is not merely a communicative tool, but a means through which individuals seek social returns such as recognition or belonging. In Greek digital contexts, younger users' integration of English reflects an investment in cosmopolitan identity and peer-group affiliation, while older users may resist such practices due to differing ideological positions or access to resources. This framework underlines that digital bilingualism is shaped not only by ability but also by belief systems and sociocultural positioning.

2.5 Linguistic Innovation and Identity Construction

The integration of English in Greek digital communication reflects broader patterns of linguistic innovation shaped by globalization and identity negotiation. Among youth, the blending of English and Greek is not merely functional but serves as a form of stylistic and cultural expression. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue, identity is interactionally constructed and shaped by cultural context. Through strategies like code-switching and lexical borrowing, speakers actively position themselves in social spaces, indexing affiliations and asserting stances. For young Greek users, these practices reflect a negotiation between global modernity and local identity. Bucholtz and Hall's principles of positionality and indexicality illuminate how such hybrid expressions signal not just demographic traits but also momentary stances and ideological positions, revealing identity as a dynamic and discursive process.

Multilingual writers, particularly in digital communication, alternate between languages not only for pragmatic clarity but also for discursive effect such as structuring information, marking boundaries or conveying stance and emphasis (Sebba, 2012). In the Greek context, younger users may incorporate English terms for their perceived trendiness or global appeal, especially when expressing sarcasm, irony or humor. By contrast, returning to Greek may index a shift in tone or a reorientation toward local norms, shaped by context-specific literacy practices and shared assumptions. These alternating choices are not random, but they are influenced by technological means,

social expectations and multimodal resources available to users. Visual and orthographic features in digital discourse such as the use of Greek script for English words, capitalization and emoji act as contextualization cues that shape meaning in interaction. These multimodal elements allow users to perform identity and manage interpersonal relationships through stylistic and strategic language mixing (Sebba, 2012). Digital discourse, particularly in informal computer-mediated communication (CMC) blurs the boundaries between spoken and written language. This hybrid communicative style allows users especially younger ones to combine oral-like immediacy with the permanence of written text drawing on a range of expressive resources such as code-switching, internet slang and emotive punctuation.

These choices are not random but reflect the user's social intentions, identity positioning and alignment with peer norms. In the context of Greek digital messaging, the use of English by younger users exemplifies such stylistic flexibility, serving as a tool for stance-taking, group affiliation and participation in global youth discourse. These practices highlight how language use in CMC is deeply embedded in social meaning-making and identity work (Georgakopoulou, 2011).

Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic framework, particularly the principle of positionality, offers valuable insight into how Greek youth construct identity in bilingual digital contexts. Language choice becomes a key resource through which users position themselves socially and ideologically. For younger speakers, the selective use of English within Greek messages functions as an index of cosmopolitanism, digital fluency and alignment with global youth culture. These linguistic practices are not arbitrary but reflect what Bucholtz and Hall describe as acts of adequation and distinction, strategies whereby individuals align with certain social groups while simultaneously differentiating themselves from others. By embedding English phrases young users signal belonging to digitally connected, English-influenced peer networks, while setting themselves apart from older or more traditional language users. This indexicality illustrates how identity is actively performed through everyday language practices shaped by both global cultural flows and local generational dynamics.

Greek users on social media actively construct their identities through their posts, comments, and language use. Drawing from a range of case studies, researchers have shown how users employ English not just for its semantic content but as a resource for self-presentation, stance-taking, and audience design. Social media platforms offer tools such as hashtags, usernames, and filters that combine with language to produce complex, layered identities. In this context, Greek youth may incorporate English lyrics, catchphrases or internet slang into their messages using them to signal belonging to globalized communities while also showcasing local pride through stylized Greek expressions or cultural references. This interplay between global and local codes is not indicative of linguistic erosion but of cultural hybridity. Instead of erasing local language, globalization creates opportunities for reconfiguring it in creative, playful and socially strategic ways. Identity online is performed rather than declared, shaped by iterative linguistic choices that reflect users' intentions, imagined audiences and social positioning (Georgalou, 2021). For Greek youth, language use on online platforms becomes a semiotic act which is a way of narrating who they are, where they belong and how they wish to be perceived. Their incorporation of English into Greek messages thus becomes part of a broader discourse of modernity, tech-literacy and self-expression.

The digital space fosters an environment where users are free to experiment with identity. This experimentation involves adopting language patterns that would be deemed inappropriate or informal in traditional, offline settings. In line with Bucholtz and Hall's notion of emergence, identity is continuously shaped through interaction meaning that one's language choices on social media can change depending on topic, audience and communicative goal. Similarly, Sebba (2012) emphasizes that such code choices are functionally motivated and situated within discourse strategies rather than static linguistic rules.

In sum, linguistic innovation among Greek youth in digital settings is deeply connected with the construction of social identities. Drawing on frameworks by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Sebba (2012) and Georgalou (2021), it becomes clear that code-switching and style-shifting are not just pragmatic or aesthetic moves but part of a larger discursive negotiation of self. These practices reflect users' efforts to navigate multiple

linguistic and cultural worlds, using language to articulate belonging, difference and aspiration in a rapidly globalizing environment.

Methodology

3.1 Participant Demographics and Stimulus Text

The study takes a structured approach to examine the differences in English usage among various generations in Greek text messages. Participants were categorized into two main demographic groups: older individuals (Generation X or older) and younger individuals (Generation Z or millennials). Each group was then divided into two smaller groups of 10 participants each, leading to a total of four subgroups:

- Group A: 10 younger participants
- Group A: 10 older participants
- Group B: 10 younger participants
- Group B: 10 older participants

This arrangement ensured a balanced representation across generations, facilitating a more accurate analysis of linguistic preferences, understanding, and adaptation patterns. Each subgroup was assessed using two sets of stimulus texts, offering insights into how different generations engage with bilingual digital communication.

Two sets of stimulus texts were developed to assess participants' comprehension and linguistic preferences. Stimulus Text A consisted of a randomized mix of five English messages (E1–E5) and five Greek messages (G6–G10), while Stimulus Text B featured a different randomized combination of five Greek messages (G1–G5) and five English messages (E6–E10). Each participant was assigned to evaluate a single set of texts to prevent overlap between subgroups and ensure the reliability of the results.

Procedure

Participants completed two tasks: first, indicating whether they understood each message (Yes/No), and second, listing any unfamiliar words or phrases. To minimize bias, messages were presented in random order. Data analysis combined quantitative methods, examining comprehension rates across generations, with qualitative insights

into linguistic challenges and preferences. This structured approach provides a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic impact of English in Greek digital communication.

This group division splitting participants into two subgroups per generation was strategically designed to minimize bias and ensure that no participant evaluated both sets of stimulus texts. By separating each generation into two smaller samples (Group A and Group B), the study maintained control over message exposure while also capturing a wider range of responses within each age cohort. This structure allowed for more robust comparisons both within and between generations, improving the internal validity of the results.

The randomization of message order within each stimulus set was another crucial design feature aimed at reducing potential priming effects or order-related bias. If participants had encountered messages in a fixed sequence, they might have adapted their response patterns based on earlier exposures. Randomization ensured that each message stood on its own and that participants' comprehension and reactions reflected their genuine, immediate interpretations rather than accumulated guessing strategies. Furthermore, the balanced inclusion of five English and five Greek messages in each set enabled the study to compare not just generational comprehension but also participants' responses to bilingual content in a controlled yet naturalistic way. The English and Greek messages were selected to represent everyday digital language featuring informal tone, abbreviations and common texting conventions so that participants would engage with content reflective of actual texting behaviors. This balance made it possible to observe how each generation navigates the interplay of local and global linguistic elements in real communication contexts.

3.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative and Analysis

The quantitative analysis examined participants' text message language habits focusing on English word usage and comprehension rates. Statistical tests determined the significance of generational differences in text comprehension, revealing patterns in language habits between Gen Z and Gen X. Bar charts were used to interpret the findings. These visuals helped clarify generational trends in English usage and comprehension, while also cross-validating with qualitative insights for a more comprehensive understanding. The statistical approach ensured objectivity in measuring language recognition patterns across groups allowing for clear identification of outliers and consistent trends.

The qualitative analysis focused on linguistic challenges, categorizing responses based on unfamiliar vocabulary and code-switching. Participants were asked to identify words they didn't understand, which were analyzed for patterns in loanwords, slang and English terms. These items were then grouped into thematic categories to detect frequency trends and assess lexical familiarity. Particular attention was given to culturally marked expressions or English digital slang such as abbreviations, phrasal blends, which younger participants tended to recognize more easily. This enabled the study to contrast not only literal comprehension, but also socio-pragmatic familiarity with informal digital language.

Results

4.1 Text Understanding

Figure 1

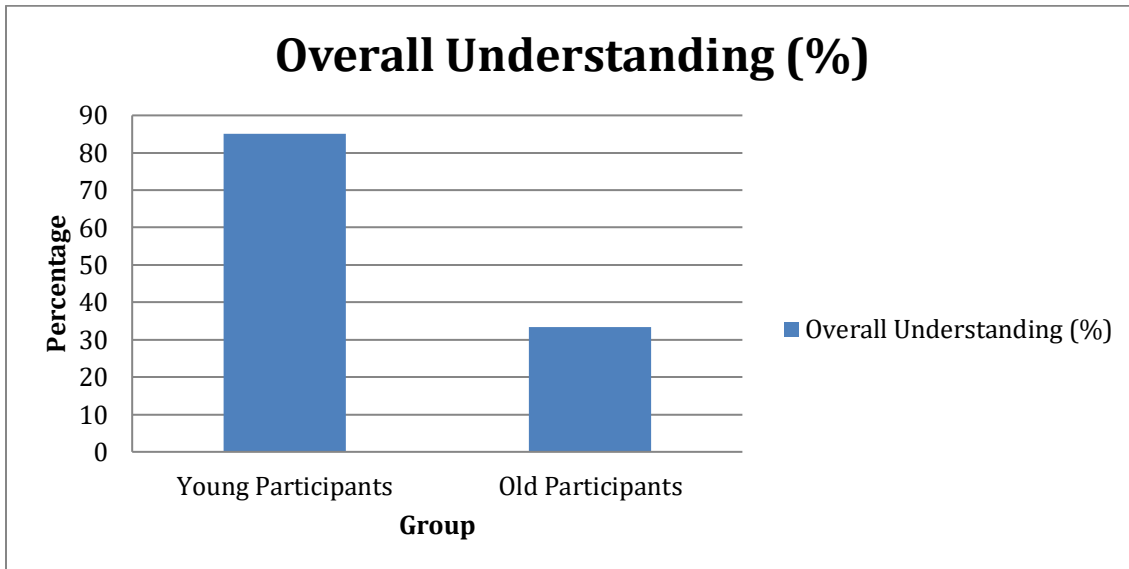


Figure 1 presents a comparative analysis of comprehension performance between the two participant groups, young Participants and old Participants based on their self-reported understanding of ten stimulus text messages. The x-axis categorizes the generational groups, while the y-axis displays the percentage of participants who reported full comprehension.

The results show a pronounced generational gap. Young participants reported a high level of comprehension with an average score of approximately 85% across the message set. The responses in this group were remarkably consistent with very little variation between individuals. Most participants indicated full or near-full comprehension of the majority of texts. This trend was stable across both younger subgroups suggesting that neither the content sequencing nor the specific messages used in each set influenced comprehension outcomes within this group.

In contrast, old participants reported significantly lower comprehension, averaging just 33% across the same message set. This group exhibited a wider range of comprehension scores with some participants demonstrating moderate understanding of

Greek-dominant texts, while others reported limited or no comprehension of messages containing English slang, abbreviations or informal register. Across the entire cohort, the most substantial drops in comprehension occurred on texts that featured English borrowings, code-switching and digital speech conventions such as emojis or shortened forms.

The visual representation in Figure 1 makes the disparity between the groups immediately apparent. The bar representing young participants stands at more than twice the height of the old participants' bar, reflecting a gap of approximately 52 percentage points in overall understanding. No participant in either group achieved a perfect 100% score, indicating that a baseline level of linguistic complexity existed across all messages. However, the lower bar for Old participants confirms a consistent trend of reduced understanding among older respondents, particularly on hybrid or informal message types.

Further analysis of individual message scores supports this interpretation. In the older group comprehension declined significantly on English-heavy messages, with these texts consistently flagged as confusing partially understood or unfamiliar. Some participants in this group reported understanding fewer than four out of ten messages. Meanwhile, in the younger group the vast majority of participants rated all or nearly all messages as fully understood even when English and Greek were blended. The consistency of the younger group's scores further reinforces the group-level contrast. While the old participant group showed considerable score variation and text-specific difficulty, the young participant group demonstrated a tight performance range, with no participant reporting comprehension below 60%. Even the lowest scores among younger respondents exceeded the average of the older group.

In summary, the data in Figure 1 confirms a clear and stable generational disparity in overall message comprehension. Young Participants consistently demonstrated a high level of understanding across all message types including those containing English elements or informal phrasing. Old participants, by contrast, showed reduced comprehension particularly in response to digitally stylized or hybrid language messages. This result corresponds with patterns observed in unfamiliar word frequency and comprehension item breakdowns across the rest of the study.

Total Unfamiliar Words by Age Group

Figure 2

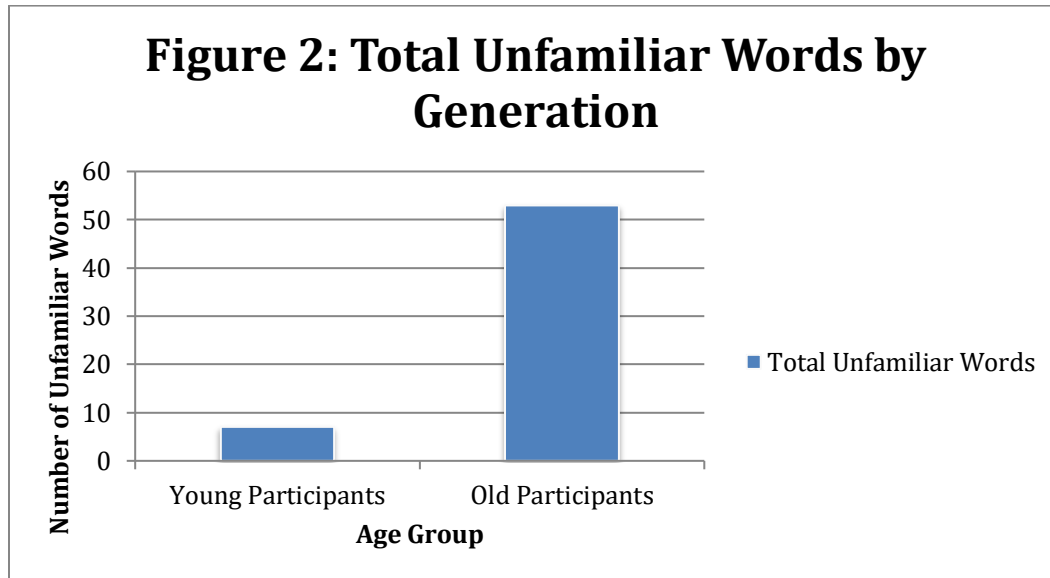


Figure 2 presents the total number of unfamiliar words identified by participants across the two generational groups. Young participants reported a total of 7 unfamiliar words, while old participants reported 53 based on responses to ten hybrid digitally styled text messages. This difference reflects a notable generational divide in lexical recognition, with the older group encountering significantly more difficulty in processing informal, stylized or English-influenced vocabulary. On average, young participants reported 0.35 unfamiliar words each whereas older participants reported 2.65. The chart illustrates this disparity clearly with the bar representing Old Participants standing over seven times taller than that of the young participants. This visual and numerical contrast underscores the consistent lexical familiarity of younger individuals compared to the heightened challenges faced by older respondents reinforcing the broader finding that age strongly influences language comprehension in hybrid digital contexts.

4.2 Statistical Significance Test

Table 6: Chi-Square Test Results

Statistical Test	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
Chi-Square Test of Association	Level of Understanding	Generational Group (Old Gen vs. Young Gen)

Table 6 summarizes the results of a Chi-Square Test of Association conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between participants' generational group, young vs. old, and their reported level of text comprehension. The dependent variable was comprehension level understood vs. not understood and the independent variable was generational category.

The test led to a Chi-Square value of $\chi^2 = 12.38$ with an associated p-value of 0.000434. As the p-value falls well below the conventional level of 0.05 the result is statistically significant. This outcome indicates that the distribution of comprehension levels differs meaningfully between the two age groups.

Specifically, younger participants were more likely to report high levels of comprehension while older participants were more likely to report lower levels. The strength of this association, as measured by the Chi-Square test, confirms that generational group is significantly related to the level of understanding in this context.

The assumptions for the Chi-Square test were met. All expected cell frequencies were above the minimum threshold required for valid analysis and no data transformation or continuity correction was necessary. The observed values followed a suitable 2x2 contingency structure supporting the appropriateness of the statistical method.

These results offer robust statistical evidence that generational group is associated with differences in language comprehension in the context of Greek text messaging. This finding supports the descriptive trends reported in previous sections and forms the quantitative basis for exploring broader generational patterns in digital language processing.

4.3. Unfamiliar Words and Phrases

Figure 3

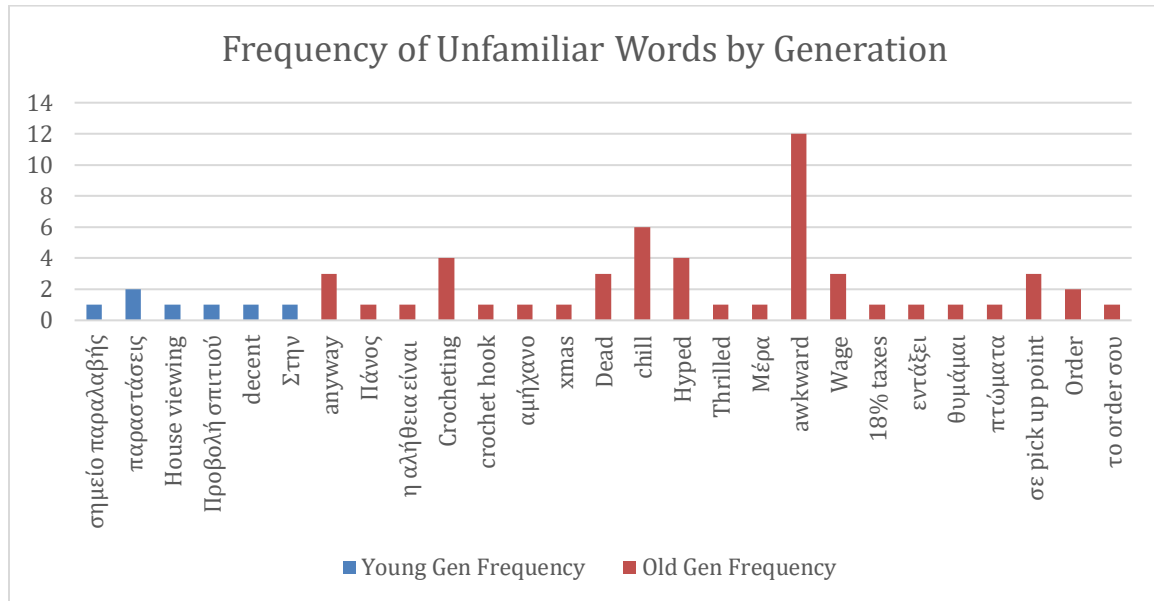


Figure 3 displays the frequency of individual lexical items that participants marked as unfamiliar, categorized by generational group. The x-axis presents the specific words and phrases identified during the comprehension task, while the y-axis reflects the number of participants in each group who reported those items as unfamiliar. Responses are visually distinguished by generation: blue bars represent young participants and orange bars represent old participants.

The chart demonstrates a clear generational contrast in both the volume and type of lexical unfamiliarity. Older participants reported a broader range of unfamiliar terms and at significantly higher frequencies. English-origin words such as awkward, hyped, thrilled, deal and anyway were flagged multiple times within this group. Among these, the word awkward was the most frequently reported unfamiliar term, with a total of 13 mentions making it the dominant outlier on the chart. Several hybrid or mixed-language expressions such as totally your style, order σου, and 18+ vibes also appeared prominently in the responses from the older group, often flagged by multiple participants across different message prompts.

In contrast, young participants exhibited far lower levels of lexical unfamiliarity. Their unfamiliarity reports were limited to a small number of items, most of which were formal or institutional Greek expressions. Examples include *παραστάσεις* (performances), *σημείο παραλαβής* (pickup point) and *προβολή* (viewing). These words were generally flagged by no more than one or two participants each. Crucially, no English-origin term appeared more than once in the unfamiliarity reports from the younger group. English expressions such as sorry, anyway, or deal, frequently flagged by older participants, were entirely absent or only minimally represented in the younger group's data.

The visual distribution reinforces the asymmetry: orange bars dominate the chart in both height and frequency, indicating a dense pattern of unfamiliar word identification among old participants. Blue bars appear less frequently and are consistently shorter, highlighting the younger group's relative lexical ease with the material. No lexical item reached the same level of unfamiliarity in both groups and no item exceeded three unfamiliarity reports in the younger group.

Overall, the data visualized in Figure 3 reveals that older participants experienced a higher frequency and wider distribution of unfamiliar terms, particularly those related to English borrowings, informal vocabulary, and hybrid constructions. In contrast, young participants reported unfamiliarity only rarely and primarily in response to specialized or formal Greek terminology. These results confirm a generational divide in lexical familiarity which aligns with earlier findings on comprehension scores and total unfamiliar word counts across the sample.

Figure 4

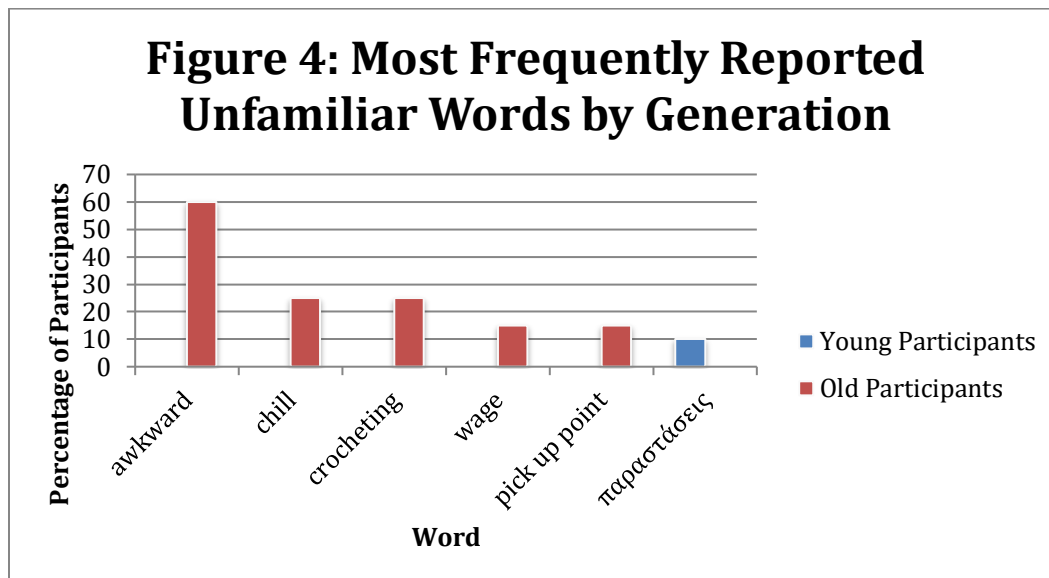


Figure 4 illustrates the most frequently reported unfamiliar words across the two generational groups, measured by the percentage of participants who identified each word as unfamiliar. The results reveal a striking generational contrast, with older participants consistently reporting higher unfamiliarity rates. The word awkward was flagged by 60% of the older group followed by chill and crocheting, each reported by approximately 25%. Additionally, 15% of older participants indicated unfamiliarity with wage and pick up point. In contrast, the only word flagged by the younger group was the Greek term παραστάσεις, reported by 10% of young participants. None of the English terms were unfamiliar to the younger group. This distribution highlights the generational gap in exposure to informal English expressions and digital-era terminology underscoring older participants' greater lexical challenges when engaging with hybrid, contemporary text messaging.

Figure 5

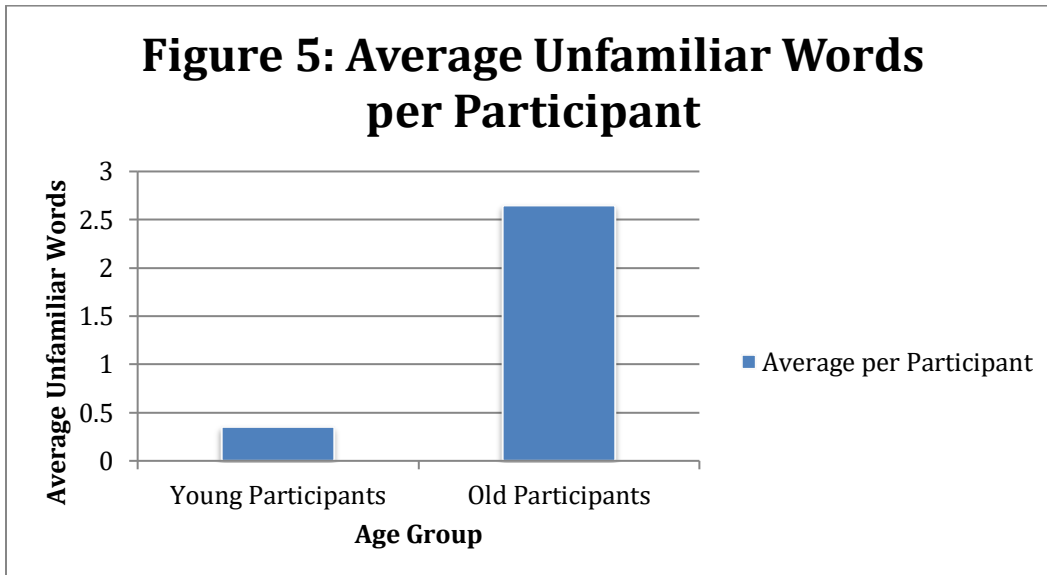


Figure 5 illustrates the average number of unfamiliar words reported per participant across the two generational groups. Based on the total counts of 7 unfamiliar words for the Young Participants and 53 for the Old Participants, and with 20 individuals in each group, the calculated averages are 0.35 and 2.65 unfamiliar words per participant, respectively. This substantial difference reveals a marked generational divide in lexical familiarity, with older participants encountering unfamiliar vocabulary at a rate over seven times higher than their younger counterparts. The visual disparity between the two bars reinforces this contrast, clearly showing that older respondents struggled significantly more with the informal, hybrid language used in the stimulus messages. The data affirms that younger participants were far more attuned to the lexical and stylistic norms of contemporary digital communication.

5.1 Study Summary and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a significant generational divide in the integration of English within Greek digital communication. Younger participants demonstrated a strong ability to comprehend and incorporate English words and hybrid phrases into their everyday text messaging practices. In contrast, older participants showed reduced familiarity with these elements, particularly when exposed to informal English or digitally mediated expressions. This pattern suggests that while younger speakers view English as an embedded component of their communicative repertoire, older speakers continue to engage primarily with Greek finding English insertions less accessible or contextually appropriate.

This generational contrast points to broader shifts in language behavior driven by digital exposure, global connectivity and evolving communicative norms. Generation Z and younger millennials, immersed in internet culture and digital platforms, have normalized code-switching as part of their linguistic identity. English is not treated as a separate language but as a pragmatic resource for social signaling, stylistic variation and alignment with global cultural trends. Older generations, on the other hand, appear less likely to adapt to this hybrid form of communication, often interpreting English phrases as intrusive or confusing.

Digital literacies offer a useful framework for interpreting this generational divide, which highlight how multilingual practices in online environments serve not only functional but also expressive and identity-related purposes. In digital spaces, language learners engage in creative and hybrid practices such as translanguaging, remixing and stylistic experimentation that are central to digital participation and the construction of self. These practices often challenge traditional views of language as fixed or standardised embracing instead the fluidity and adaptability required in globalized, online contexts. In this study, the use of English by younger Greek users reflects such dynamics. Firstly, it operates not simply as a communication tool, but as a means of performing digital fluency, cultural affiliation and peer-group belonging. These users draw on

fragments of English to participate in a broader youth-oriented digital culture, often in ways that resist or reshape traditional linguistic hierarchies. Meanwhile, older participants' discomfort with English use in texting illustrates the ideological tension described in emerging digital literacies (Hafner, Chik, & Jones, 2015).

This generational contrast can also be interpreted through the framework of recent sociolinguistic work on digital identity and identification. Social media platforms serve as important arenas where users mobilize a range of semiotic and linguistic resources to perform acts of identification and disidentification. This process not only signals affiliation but also reflects strategic distancing from particular linguistic norms or cultural ideologies. In this study, the incorporation of English into Greek text messaging by younger participants can be interpreted as a display of cosmopolitan identity and digital fluency. In contrast, older users' avoidance of English reflects a form of disidentification, maintaining alignment with traditional monolingual values and linguistic purism. These findings resonate with the view that digital language practices are shaped by users' social positions and the ideological tensions of contemporary multilingual settings (Leppänen et al., 2020).

These findings are consistent with observations that digital communication technologies have introduced new patterns of discourse. The constant connectivity of the digital age has reshaped not only how we communicate, but also how we engage with language, literacy, and identity. Younger users adapt quickly to the brevity, informality, and multitasking demands of digital writing, viewing linguistic hybridity as natural and even desirable. This aligns closely with the code-switching practices identified among younger Greek users in this study (Baron, 2008).

Similarly, a multifaceted framework for analyzing computer-mediated discourse highlights how technological features and digital contexts influence patterns of communication. Aspects such as synchronicity, message persistence and social context condition the form and function of online communication. Applying this framework to the present findings, it is evident that synchronous and informal platforms such as messaging apps support a type of hybrid, playful, and adaptable language favored by younger users, while older users gravitate toward more structured and persistent communication formats (Herring, 2007).

These theoretical insights really enhance our understanding of the generational divide explored in this study. Blommaert's (2010) theory of sociolinguistic mobility offers a useful perspective. Particularly, the access to and control over linguistic resources such as English aren't evenly spread across different social groups. In today's globalized world, English acts as a form of symbolic capital and younger generations due to their constant engagement with digital spaces are becoming more adept at using these resources. On the other hand, older generations tend to stick to monolingual practices that are influenced by local traditions and educational systems. Moreover, the concept of translanguaging is evident in how young speakers effortlessly mix Greek and English, selecting linguistic elements that best fit their communication needs. This depicts a dynamic and intentional use of language, which stands in contrast to the more rigid and regulated language choices of older users. In this context, translanguaging isn't just a tactic but a reflection of digital social identity and a cultural connection to global conversations (García & Lin, 2016).

5.2. Code-Switching and Generational Adaptation

This study highlights the increasing role of code-switching in Greek digital communication, especially among younger users. The data, both quantitative and qualitative, reveals that Generation Z has embraced English as a key part of their everyday language. Instead of seeing English terms as foreign additions, they view them as stylistic tools that boost the speed, tone and cultural relevance of their text messages. This trend depicts a larger movement towards mixed linguistic styles and flexible language boundaries in online interactions.

Code-switching is described as a lively linguistic tool that bilingual speakers often use to adapt to different social situations and contexts (Puspita & Ardianto, 2024). Their research aligns with the findings of the current study, which reveals that Gen Z participants frequently use English words and phrases in their conversations to match the tone and vibe of their peers in casual online environments. Social media platforms play a significant role in this trend, acting as vibrant spaces where English not only serves as a global common language but also as a way for young people to express themselves.

These platforms encourage language mixing by adding English into memes, captions, comments, and trending topics, further embedding it into our daily digital conversations. Younger participants in this study demonstrated not only comprehension of English-infused messages but also comfort and agency in using these forms themselves. This supports existing scholarship on digital multilingualism, where language users exploit the existence of new media to construct flexible, context-sensitive identities. The integration of English borrowings reflects both linguistic creativity and social alignment, helping users manage peer-group dynamics, humor, and informal politeness conventions within digital environments. This suggests that for younger speakers, switching between Greek and English is not only a functional tool, but a performative act through which they assert digital belonging and generational distinction.

These patterns resonate with Carmen Lee's (2017) research on online multilingualism, where bilingual users see language boundaries as flexible and adjust their code-switching based on the medium, audience and their communication goals. Lee points out that digital spaces give users more freedom to make use of all their available linguistic skills not just to fill communication gaps but also to express their identity and foster social connections. She particularly notes how younger users cleverly mix languages in blog posts, social media and texting to convey affiliation, humor, or solidarity, all of which were evident in the current study. Similarly, young Greeks mix languages not because they have to, but to express emotions and feel part of a global youth culture.

Further supporting this perspective, translanguaging is not simply code-switching, but a dynamic and strategic use of multiple language resources for meaning-making, identity negotiation, and social engagement (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Although their work focuses on bilingual classrooms, their findings apply readily to digital communication, where language users fluidly move across linguistic boundaries to align with different audiences and purposes. In Greek digital messaging, such translanguaging reflects intentional identity performances, where younger users draw from both Greek and English not out of necessity, but as a way to signal cultural fluency, humor, and affiliation. This reinforces the idea that linguistic mixing is a valuable and

agentive practice that serves expressive and relational functions, rather than being a marker of linguistic deficiency.

In contrast, older participants in the study showed limited familiarity with English-based terms and hybrid expressions and were more likely to view such usage as unclear or disruptive. While many acknowledged English as a valuable tool in professional or technical domains, its presence in informal personal communication was often met with resistance. This generational hesitation is consistent with sociolinguistic literature suggesting that older speakers tend to uphold language purity ideologies, especially in the face of rapid linguistic change driven by globalization and media convergence.

The differences in how people switch between languages can be traced back to their exposure to technology and global language experiences at various stages of life. Older generations came across digital tools later on, and their language habits were mostly influenced by a Greek-centric print culture and in-person conversations. Moreover, the coexistence of these generational preferences may be shaping Greek into a linguistically stratified digital ecosystem. While younger speakers drive innovation by blending English with Greek in fluid and creative ways, older users often preserve more traditional forms of expression. This gap in how we use language can really lead to misunderstandings between generations or even shape our opinions about each other. For instance, younger folks might see speaking only in Greek as a bit old-fashioned or too stiff, while older generations might view the use of English phrases as sloppy, disrespectful, or just not needed. These contrasting views can widen the social gap and might even influence how language is judged in schools, workplaces or family settings.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, the findings reaffirm that code-switching is not solely a matter of linguistic proficiency but also a reflection of identity, ideology and cultural capital. Drawing from Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital, it becomes clear that English competence and particularly the ability to use it informally in the right social contexts functions as a marker of status among younger speakers. It signifies not only digital fluency but also access to cosmopolitan identity and alignment with transnational values. For older speakers, who may possess other forms of cultural capital,

the rising symbolic dominance of English may feel exclusionary, thus reinforcing their preference for Greek monolingualism.

In summary, this section demonstrates how code-switching functions not only as a linguistic act but also as a generational marker of digital fluency, identity construction and social positioning. The findings suggest that younger Greeks are not simply borrowing English words, but actively reshaping their language to reflect the cultural logic of digitally mediated, globally interconnected communication.

These findings reflect wider global patterns in which language practices are not only shaped by digital communication but also by underlying ideologies that govern legitimacy and access. As argued by scholars, the increasing complexity of multilingual practices in the digital age often clashes with monolingual language ideologies that continue to dominate both public discourse and institutional expectations (Spotti, Swanenberg & Blommaert, 2022). The generational divide observed in this study where younger Greek users integrate English as a form of digital identity and global affiliation, while older users regard it with suspicion, illustrates this conflict. Such tensions exemplify what Blommaert describes as “sociolinguistic re-stratification,” whereby digital platforms reconfigure traditional notions of linguistic authority and belonging. By highlighting this divide, the study contributes to current discussions about the politics of language use in superdiverse societies and the ways digital communication reshapes the boundaries of what is considered legitimate or valued language practice.

5.3 Comparison with Existing Literature

The findings of this study align closely with prior research on language contact, bilingual adaptation, and generational variation in language use. Previous sociolinguistic studies consistently suggest that younger users engage more readily in code-mixing and lexical borrowing, particularly in informal, digitally-mediated contexts where language norms are flexible and stylistically innovative. This growing body of research helps frame the current findings within wider patterns of multilingual adaptation shaped by digital technology and peer-group dynamics.

Generation Z users favor expressive and dynamic language forms on platforms like Instagram, blending hybrid phrases, abbreviations, and memes to align with their

digital social environments. This discursive economy is shaped less by grammatical tradition and more by immediacy, relevance, and peer-group identification. Such findings mirror this study's observations, where Greek Gen Z participants adopt English in ways that emphasize social alignment and stylistic fluency. These choices are not merely lexical but reflect broader sociocultural positioning, supporting the argument that Gen Z constructs meaning through fluid, playful, and context-sensitive language (Telaumbanua et al., 2024).

Digital inequality must be understood not just as limited access to technology but also as unequal participation in digital communicative practices. In this framework, the generational gap observed in the current study becomes more than a linguistic phenomenon. It becomes a marker of differing communicative agency. Older participants, although digitally connected, displayed hesitancy in navigating the informal, English-influenced language practices of younger speakers. This supports the view that digital literacy encompasses interpretative flexibility and sociocultural adaptation resources younger users possess through greater exposure to online and transnational communication (Van Dijk, 2020).

Further supporting this interpretation is García and Lin's (2016) notion of "translanguaging spaces," which describes how multilinguals operate beyond rigid language boundaries, drawing on their full linguistic repertoire. The present study reflects this trend, with younger participants fluidly alternating between Greek and English to create expressive forms that convey emotion, humor, and emphasis. These participants did not simply borrow English terms but they integrated them as part of their discursive norm. These practices contribute to the development of hybrid communication styles that challenge and reshape notions of what constitutes legitimate language use in informal digital settings.

Sergeant and Tagg (2014) also underscores the influence of online multilingual environments in fostering linguistic agility. Their research emphasizes that youth raised in these contexts develop ease with language alternation and can switch codes for rhetorical effect. The findings here reinforce the point that younger Greek users demonstrated strategic use of English not just for comprehension, but to establish tone, voice and group alignment. In contrast, older users who experienced language through

more monolingual and print-oriented channels, exhibited discomfort or resistance when encountering hybrid forms. Their analysis is especially valuable in explaining how exposure to informal discourse patterns memes, captions, hashtags cultivates a comfort with linguistic variation that is less prevalent among older users.

David Crystal (2003) offers a nuanced framework for understanding the global spread of English, particularly emphasizing how its dominance is tied to historical economic, political and technological power. He argues that English has become embedded in global communication not through linguistic superiority, but through its association with global capitalism, digital media and transnational cooperation. Importantly, Crystal acknowledges that English does not replace local languages outright. Instead, it is adapted and recontextualized by its users. This view strongly resonates with the present study's findings: younger Greek users do not adopt English as a sign of linguistic submission but rather as a creative, stylistic enhancer within Greek digital discourse. Their integration of English into everyday texting is less about formal instruction and more about informal participation in global youth culture. Crystal also notes that the evolution of "New Englishes" often incorporates local linguistic and cultural features, supporting the idea that English becomes localized rather than standardized. In this light, the use of English by Greek Gen Z speakers is a form of pragmatic innovation, one that reflects both global connectivity and local identity performance.

Lee (2017) includes an additional perspective from her research on Greek teenagers' Facebook interactions. She observed that teenagers engage in "audience design," modifying their linguistic choices based on the imagined readers of their posts. English expressions were often used to project a cosmopolitan persona or align with global trends. Similarly, in the current study, younger participants used English to express alignment with online communities, participate in digital humor, or adopt trendy expressions. Lee's work also highlights the multimodal nature of such discourse such as emojis, images, hashtags which interact with text to produce layered meaning. In contributing to this growing literature, the present study offers a uniquely grounded perspective by analyzing naturalistic data from a Greek sociolinguistic context. Many prior studies center on global English use or language learning in institutional settings. In

contrast, this thesis analyzes everyday communication, revealing how hybrid expressions emerge organically within peer-group interaction. The use of English is not just instrumental but it is symbolic, relational and socially negotiated.

Spolsky's (2004) framework on language ideology helps interpret the resistance from older participants. In Greece, where language is historically linked to national identity and cultural preservation, Spolsky's concept of linguistic purism becomes especially relevant. His argument that language policy is enacted through everyday beliefs and practices, not only legislation, explains why older users may oppose English integration. It is not simply a question of intelligibility but of perceived loyalty to tradition. This helps explain why older users may reject even familiar English terms, perceiving them as a threat to the symbolic purity of the Greek language.

Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic theory deepens this analysis by framing identity as a performance enacted through language. Their principles such as positionality, indexicality, and emergence are all reflected in the current findings. Greek Gen Z users express identities based on digital proficiency, global engagement and real-time social interaction through their incorporation of English in text messaging. Meanwhile, older users maintain linguistic practices that align with more conservative values and monolingual norms. These identity performances are not only age-related but are shaped by ideological alignment with either global innovation or local preservation.

In conclusion, this thesis confirms and extends the insights offered by prior scholarship. It demonstrates that younger Greeks are not simply copying global English trends but are creating localized, meaningful and socially expressive forms of communication. Older users, by contrast, remain grounded in ideologies of linguistic purity and cultural continuity. These patterns reflect broader global tensions between language innovation and heritage preservation. By analyzing real-life text messages and participant reactions, this study offers empirical weight to existing theories while emphasizing the evolving nature of digital language use in multilingual societies. It reinforces the idea that communication is not only a technical skill but a social act shaped by ideology, identity and access.

5.4 Code-Switching and Digital Bilingualism

The findings of this study provide empirical support for García and Lin's (2016) theory of translanguaging, which frames bilingualism as a dynamic and agentive process. Rather than perceiving English and Greek as separate systems, younger participants seamlessly integrated English elements into their messages for expressive and pragmatic purposes. This reinforces the idea that bilinguals draw from a unified communicative repertoire. In contrast, older participants often viewed English borrowings as disruptive or culturally inappropriate underscoring a generational divergence in language ideologies. These opposing views one valuing communicative fluidity, the other prioritizing linguistic preservation highlight the ideological underpinnings of bilingual behavior in digital settings.

Digital platforms further normalize translanguaging behaviors, particularly among younger users. Instant messaging apps, social media, and online gaming environments are saturated with English content, shaping how youth engage with language. This shift has been described as the emergence of hybrid digital vernaculars, where local and global codes coexist in novel and often playful combinations (Androutsopoulos, 2014). These practices follow a recognizable social logic. For instance, young people use global language forms to signal identity, convey humor and engage in social interaction. In this study, English expressions appeared not as direct translations but as discursive tools with global connotations. Their comprehension among younger Greek participants suggests the presence of shared, hybrid norms of expression.

Generational contrast also emerged in users' orientation toward audience and formality. Younger users demonstrated sensitivity to context, adjusting their language when addressing parents versus peers or when switching between platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp. This adaptability aligns with the notion of translanguaging as a dynamic, context-responsive practice (García & Lin, 2016). In contrast, older participants were more likely to maintain a single register and expressed concern about the perceived informality or inappropriateness of English terms, particularly in family-related messages.

This highlights not just differences in language use but in broader communicative orientations. Importantly, this linguistic flexibility functions as a marker of in-group

identity for younger generations. The use of English terms operates as a form of symbolic capital allowing users to assert their affiliation with global youth culture and digital fluency.

In contrast, older participants consistently viewed English terms as unfamiliar, redundant or culturally inappropriate. Their reactions point to what Spolsky (2004) refers to as language ideology deeply held beliefs about what constitutes “correct” language. Within this ideology, Greek is tied to national identity, history and cultural preservation, while English is viewed as a symbol of cultural assimilation. The discomfort with hybrid expressions is therefore not only cognitive but ideological, signaling an investment in linguistic purism that resists change even when comprehension is possible. This phenomenon echoes García and Lin’s (2016) framing of translanguaging not just as a practice but as a site of ideological tension. It also resonates with Lee’s (2015) discussion of how bilingual youth navigate identity through online language use, particularly in relation to cultural expectations and generational affiliation. Code-switching can also be understood as a powerful strategy of identity negotiation in multilingual contexts, particularly when individuals navigate social roles, resist linguistic marginalization or assert affiliation with hybrid cultural identities (González Rojas, 2025). In the present study, younger Greek users selectively incorporate English into their texts not only to enhance expressiveness, but also to signal global awareness and digital belonging. This practice aligns with broader patterns of identity construction observed in other multilingual settings, where language alternation is used to manage visibility, legitimacy and inclusion. By viewing bilingual texting through this approach, we can better understand how code-switching serves not just a functional or stylistic purpose but becomes a socially strategic act embedded in power and recognition.

Code-switching in multilingual communities functions not merely as a communicative tactic, but as a socially meaningful practice through which ethnic identities are constructed, negotiated and performed (Khalilli, 2025). Research shows that language alternation, particularly in digital settings, can index belonging, assert hybridity and even act as resistance to dominant linguistic ideologies. This perspective resonates with the findings of the present study, where younger Greek users engage in English-Greek code-switching to signal cultural modernity and peer alignment. Such practices are

not accidental or superficial but they reflect a deeper identity performance embedded in a globalized and increasingly hybrid linguistic landscape.

Overall, this study suggests that code-switching in digital communication is both a reflection of generational language practices and a key mechanism through which identity and belonging are enacted. Younger users embrace linguistic hybridity as a creative and empowering tool where older users shaped by monolingual norms and linguistic ideologies often reject such practices. These contrasting views not only impact how English is integrated into Greek texting but also influence the broader sociolinguistic landscape in digital Greece.

5.5 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations

While this study provides meaningful insights into the generational differences in the use of English within Greek text messaging, a few limitations should be acknowledged. One major limitation is the sample size which while sufficient for exploratory analysis restricts the generalizability of the findings. The demographic scope was also relatively narrow focusing primarily on age while overlooking other potentially influential factors such as regional origin, socio-economic status and educational background. Including a more diverse and representative sample in future research would allow for a richer understanding of how different social variables intersect with language use in digital environments.

Another important limitation lies in the exclusion of gender as a variable. Gender may play a significant role in shaping linguistic preferences, code-switching behavior and attitudes toward hybrid language use. Exploring how gender interacts with generational factors could provide valuable insights into the complexity of multilingual practices in digital communication. Furthermore, the study did not address the role of punctuation, emojis and other stylistic markers that are critical to meaning-making in text-based interaction. These elements often carry important pragmatic functions, especially in informal contexts and can influence how messages are interpreted or misunderstood across generations.

To build on the findings of this research, future studies are encouraged to expand their sample size and participant diversity incorporating individuals from various regions,

socio-economic groups and educational levels. They should also integrate gender as a key variable and examine the combined influence of demographic variables on code-switching and linguistic attitudes. In addition, analyzing multimodal features such as punctuation, emoticons or visual markers could shed light on the stylistic and pragmatic strategies employed in bilingual messaging. Longitudinal studies or cross-platform comparisons would further illuminate how these practices evolve over time and differ across digital environments. Lastly, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews could offer deeper insight into participants' language ideologies, motivations and emotional responses to bilingual communication. Addressing these limitations would contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of linguistic behavior in the digital age.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the contrasting ways in which younger and older Greek speakers incorporate English into their text-based communication, revealing a clear generational divide in linguistic practices, cultural attitudes and comprehension outcomes. For younger participants, particularly those in Generation Z, the integration of English into Greek text messaging emerged as a routine and intuitive practice. These users demonstrated a high degree of fluency in navigating hybrid digital discourse, drawing from both languages to communicate more effectively and expressively. Their linguistic choices reflected a cultural orientation shaped by global media, peer interactions and digital fluency suggesting that English is not simply an external influence but a meaningful and functional part of their communicative resources.

This use of English was rarely perceived by younger users as problematic or intrusive. Instead, it enhanced message tone, conveyed irony or humor and allowed for alignment with global youth culture. In this way, English served as a tool of participation in transnational digital communities, providing users with the flexibility to shape their identity and maintain relevance in online interactions. The integration of English into everyday texting reflects broader shifts in cultural norms and media consumption, where linguistic hybridity has become a marker of modernity and adaptability (Lee, 2017).

In contrast, older participants demonstrated a markedly different approach. Their responses suggested an adherence to monolingual norms and a general preference for the perceived purity and continuity of the Greek language. For many in this group, the casual integration of English into Greek messages was unfamiliar. It probably raised concerns about the erosion of national linguistic identity. These findings confirm that age influences not only communicative behavior but also deeply held language ideologies, where younger users frame English as an empowering resource, while older users often associate it with linguistic threat or cultural loss (Woolard, 2021).

These differing views and practices translated into measurable disparities in comprehension. Messages containing English borrowings, code-switching or informal digital expressions were easily understood by the younger group, whose average comprehension scores remained consistently high across all stimuli. The older group, however, struggled significantly with the same content, reporting higher levels of lexical unfamiliarity and lower comprehension overall. This outcome reinforces the idea that the effectiveness and clarity of digital communication are strongly influenced by generational familiarity with hybrid linguistic norms. While younger users benefit from their immersion in bilingual, internet-mediated spaces, older users may experience exclusion or confusion when faced with rapidly evolving language forms.

At the same time, this shift reflects a global trend toward multilingual and hybrid language practices in digital spaces. English is not replacing Greek but is being reshaped and localized within Greek discourse, serving purposes that range from emphasis and irony to social bonding and stylistic innovation. The challenge is not whether English belongs in Greek digital messaging, but how speakers of different generations perceive and negotiate its presence. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing language not only as a tool for communication but as a reflection of identity, ideology and cultural transition (García & Lin, 2016).

The findings of this study reveal a distinct generational divide in how English is integrated into Greek text messaging. Younger users, particularly those in Generation Z, seamlessly blend English into their digital communication, using it as a tool for brevity, humor and self-expression. This reflects their comfort with global media, digital culture and hybrid linguistic identities. In contrast, older users prefer monolingual Greek

messaging, often viewing English borrowings as disruptive or culturally inappropriate. This divergence underscores differing linguistic preferences and cultural orientations: While younger generations embrace English as a means of global participation and stylistic innovation, older generations tend to perceive it as a threat to linguistic integrity and cultural heritage. These generational perspectives significantly affect the clarity and effectiveness of communication, with younger users navigating hybrid forms easily and older users often struggling to interpret English-infused messages.

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Appendix I: Sample Text Messages Used in the Study

1. Anyway, sorry που άργησα να απαντήσω. Σήμερα ορκίστηκε ο Πάνος.
2. Πήγα στο Ζάρα χθες και είδα ένα φόρεμα που είναι απόλυτα το στυλ σου! Να στο πάρω αν ξαναπάω;
3. Ήταν κάπως awkward η όλη φάση στο στρατό αλλά εντάξει he made it.
4. Ο Γιάννης με χαιρέτησε, ενώ δεν θυμόμουν το όνομά του... αμήχανο.
5. Α, επίσης δεν θυμάμαι αν σας είπα ότι ξεκίνησα crocheting και φτιάχνω xmas στολίδια με crochet hook.
6. Τώρα είμαστε και οι δύο dead οπότε θα κάνουμε κάτι πιο chill, μάλλον θα κάτσουμε στον καναπέ να δούμε Netflix.
7. Ωραία ήταν αλλά I wasn't thrilled, η αλήθεια είναι. Πήγα πιο hyped.
8. Εδώ έχουν μόνο 18% φόρους. Και ο κατώτατος μισθός είναι 3.500 ευρώ.
9. Έφτασε η παραγγελία σου. Είναι σε σημείο παραλαβής.
10. Μέρα. Έλα να βρεθούμε για δεκατιανό την Κυριακή. Θα είναι πιο χαλαρά και θα προλάβουμε να πούμε τα νέα μας.
11. Ο Γιάννης με χαιρέτησε ενώ δεν θυμόμουν το όνομά του... awkward.
12. Εντάξει, συγγνώμη που άργησα να απαντήσω. Σήμερα ορκίστηκε ο Πάνος.
13. Εδώ έχουν μόνο 18% taxes. And minimum wage είναι 3.500 ευρώ.
14. Ήταν κάπως αμήχανη η όλη φάση στο στρατό αλλά εντάξει τα κατάφερε.
15. Α, επίσης δεν θυμάμαι αν σας είπα ότι ξεκίνησα να πλέκω και να φτιάχνω χριστουγεννιάτικα στολίδια με βελονάκι.
16. Τώρα είμαστε και οι δύο πτώματα οπότε θα κάνουμε κάτι πιο χαλαρό, μάλλον θα κάτσουμε στον καναπέ να δούμε ταινία.
17. Ωραία ήταν αλλά δεν ξετρελάθηκα η αλήθεια είναι. Πήγα με περισσότερες προσδοκίες.
18. Έφτασε το order σου. Σε pick-up point.
19. Πήγα στο Ζάρα χθες και είδα ένα φόρεμα που είναι totally your style. Να στο πάρω αν ξαναπάω;
20. Morning. Έλα να βρεθούμε για brunch την Κυριακή. Θα είναι πιο chill και θα προλάβουμε να πούμε τα νέα μας.
21. Θα έπρεπε να είχαμε επιλέξει ένα σημείο παραλαβής από την αρχή αντί για το σπίτι.

22. Είναι ωραία, έχει και performances και είναι γενικά αρκετά chill.
23. Είδα το νέο iPhone χθες και είναι αξιοπρεπές, αλλά πολύ ακριβό. Σκέφτομαι να περιμένω λίγο.
24. Ψήνω. Αν είναι, φεύγω 18:45 ακριβώς και τους λέω ότι έχω προβολή σπιτιού.
25. Sorry που άργησα να σου απαντήσω, αλλά ήμουν busy. Τι λέει, κανονίζουμε για αύριο;
26. Έλα, με το που κάνεις update το app, στείλε μου να δούμε αν δουλεύει.
27. Ξέρω γω, πήγαινε αύριο. Και worst scenario ρώτας customer service.
28. Yes, θα είναι στον Άραξο που θα είναι πιο decent από ό,τι στη Τρίπολη.
29. Όσο ήμουν μόνη στο σπίτι έβαζα να ακούσω κάποιο podcast και έπλεκα. Ήταν διασκεδαστικό.
30. Βασικά κλείστε ό,τι ώρα θέλετε σε περίπτωση που έχω πρακτική το πρωί και έχω να δουλέψω σε καμία προθεσμία.
31. Είναι ωραία, έχει και παραστάσεις και είναι γενικά αρκετά χαλαρό.
32. Όσο ήμουν μόνη στο σπίτι έβαζα να ακούσω κανένα podcast και έπλεκα. It was fun.
33. Συγγνώμη που άργησα να σου απαντήσω, αλλά ήμουν απασχολημένος. Τι λέει, κανονίζουμε για αύριο;
34. Βασικά κλείστε ό,τι ώρα θέλετε σε περίπτωση που έχω internship το πρωί και έχω να δουλέψω σε κανά deadline.
35. Έλα, με το που ενημερώσεις την εφαρμογή, στείλε μου να δούμε αν δουλεύει.
36. Well, έπρεπε να βάλουμε pick-up point εξαρχής αντί για το σπίτι.
37. Ξέρω γω, πήγαινε αύριο. Και στο χειρότερο σενάριο, ρώτα την εξυπηρέτηση πελατών.
38. Ναι, θα είναι στον Άραξο που θα είναι πιο αξιοπρεπής από ό,τι στη Τρίπολη.
39. Είδα το νέο iPhone χθες και είναι decent, αλλά πολύ ακριβό. Σκέφτομαι να περιμένω λίγο.
40. Ψήνω. Αν είναι, φεύγω 18:45 ακριβώς και τους λέω ότι έχω house viewing.

Appendix II: Participant data

Age	Clarity	Unknown Words	Group
24	YES		Young Participants
26	YES		Young Participants
26	YES		Young Participants
24	YES	προβολή σπιτιού	Young Participants
26	YES/NO	The sentence doesnt make any sense	Young Participants
27	YES/NO	Σημείο παραλαβής	Young Participants
26	YES		Young Participants
26	YES	decent	Young Participants
27	YES		Young Participants
25	YES		Young Participants

Young Group 1

Age	Clarity	Unknown Words	Group
50	YES		Older Participants
56	YES/No	awkward, pick up point, chill	Older Participants
65	YES	awkward, pick up point, chill	Older Participants
57	Yes/NO	wage	Older Participants
59	YES/NO	Awkward	Older Participants
53	NO	awkward, εντάξει, chill, πτώματα, αλήθεια	Older Participants
69	YES/NO	Awkward,wage	Older Participants
72	YES/NO	awkward,wage, pick-up-point, order, totally your style, chill	Older Participants
60	YES		Older Participants
59	YES	awkward,18% taxes, order, chill	Older Participants

Old Group 1

Age	Clarity	Unknown Words	Group
26	YES/NO	έχει και παραστάσεις	Young Participants
25	YES		Young Participants
19	YES		Young Participants
26	YES		Young Participants
30	YES		Young Participants
23	YES	-	Young Participants
26	YES		Young Participants
42	YES/NO	House viewing	Young Participants
25	YES/NO	Παραστασεις	Young Participants
36	YES		Young Participants

Young Group 2

Age	Clarity	Unknown Words	Group
50	YES/NO	crocheting, dead	Older Participants
50	YES/NO	awkward, crocheting, crochet hook, thrilled, hyped	Older Participants
56	YES/NO		Older Participants
59	YES/NO	crocheting, awkward, hyped	Older Participants
58	YES/NO	Πάνος,awkward,αμήχανο,crochet hook,μέρα	Older Participants
59	YES/NO		Older Participants
47	YES/NO	awkward, crocheting, crochet hook, crochet,dead,hyped	Older Participants
57	YES/NO		Older Participants
55	YES/NO	Anyway, awkward, crocheting, chill, thrilled, hyped	Older Participants
51	YES		Older Participants

Old Group 2

Appendix III: Questionnaire on Text Message Clarity and Language Use

Welcome to the Text Message Comprehension Survey!

This survey explores how participants perceive short text messages in Greek or English.

Please answer all questions honestly.

Your input is highly valued and completely anonymous.

Thank you!

Please enter your age:

1. Was this message clear to you?

1.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

2. Was this message clear to you?

2.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

3. Was this message clear to you?

3.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

4. Was this message clear to you?

4.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

5. Was this message clear to you?

5.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

6. Was this message clear to you?

6.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

7. Was this message clear to you?

7.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

8. Was this message clear to you?

8.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

9. Was this message clear to you?

9.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.

10. Was this message clear to you?

10.1 List any words or phrases that were unfamiliar to you.