

**Kormakiti Maronite Arabic: Prospect of documentation and community response**  
*Chryso Hadjidemetriou*  
*University of Fribourg, Switzerland*

Kormakiti Maronite Arabic (KMA) is an endangered language spoken by a small community of speakers in Cyprus. The uniqueness of KMA lies in its having been heavily influenced by contact with Cypriot Greek (CG). It has been argued that KMA is a bilingual mixed language – Arabic and Cypriot-Greek – (Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Thomason 2001, Thomason 2003), rather than a variety of Arabic with extensive structural borrowing from CG. The opposing view is that KMA has never been a mixed language, but is a manifestation of an elaborate code-switching phenomenon in which Cypriot-Greek elements appear according to social context (Borg 1985).

The aim of this paper is twofold: (i) to demonstrate the distinctiveness of this Arabic variety by focussing on contact-induced changes and by pointing out that there is insufficient linguistic and sociolinguistic evidence on which to base the claim that KMA is a bilingual mixed language, and (ii) to outline the prospects for language documentation preparatory to a language revitalisation programme that will be implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the committee of ministers of the Council of Europe in response to the Republic of Cyprus' application of the European charter for regional or minority languages.

Certain contact-induced changes in KMA that can be ascribed to contact with CG are subjected to a concise analysis (phonological, morphological and lexical features). This analysis of contact-induced changes calls into question the assumption that KMA is a mixed language and demonstrates that KMA has undergone extensive structure borrowing from CG (Hadjidemetriou: in preparation, Hadjidemetriou 2007).

The second part of this paper outlines a plan-in-progress for documenting KMA with the aim of revitalizing the language by applying the European charter for regional or minority languages. The community response to this plan is considered important and thus evaluated in order to understand how it might affect documentation efforts.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Bakker, P. (2003). 'Mixed languages as autonomous systems'. In Matras and Bakker (eds.) (2003): 106-150.
- Borg, A. (1985). *Cypriot Arabic*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft.
- 'European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Application of the Charter in Cyprus' (September 2006). Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available online: [http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal\\_affairs/local\\_and\\_regional\\_democracy/regional\\_or\\_minority\\_languages/2\\_monitoring/2.3\\_Committee\\_of\\_Experts%27\\_Reports/Cyprus\\_1st\\_report.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/local_and_regional_democracy/regional_or_minority_languages/2_monitoring/2.3_Committee_of_Experts%27_Reports/Cyprus_1st_report.pdf)
- Hadjidemetriou, C. (in preparation). *Language contact and its outcomes: Armenian and Maronite Arabic in contact with Cypriot-Greek*. PhD Dissertation. University of Fribourg, Switzerland.
- Hadjidemetriou, C. (2007). 'Kormakiti Maronite Arabic: An Arabic-Greek mixed language?'. Paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Greek Linguistics, 30 August-2 September 2007, University of Ioannina, Greece.
- Matras, Y and Bakker, P. (eds.) (2003) *The mixed language debate: Theoretical and empirical advances*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Thomason, S.G. (2001). *Language contact: An introduction*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Thomason, S.G. (2003). 'Social factors and linguistic processes in the emergence of stable mixed languages'. In Matras and Bakker (eds.) (2003): 31-39.
- Thomason, S.G. and Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.