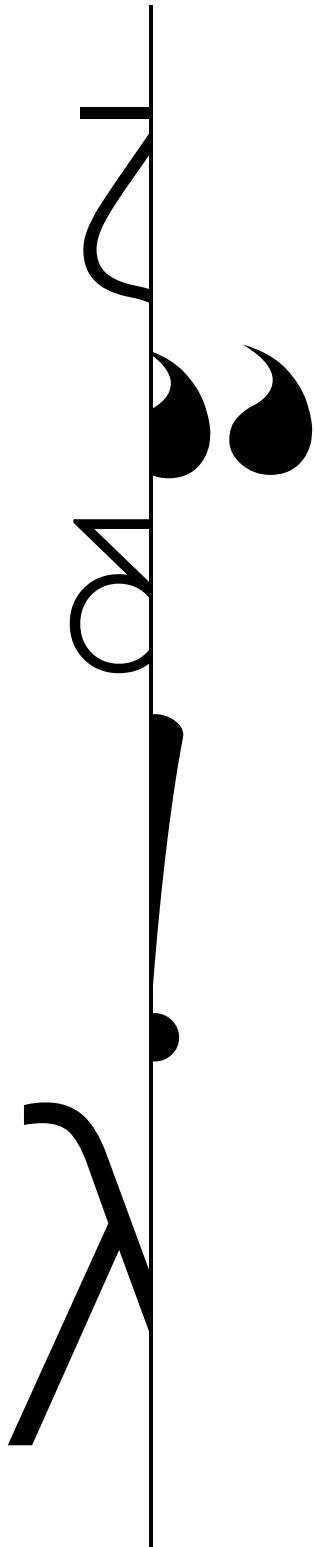


How to Politely Express Yourself in Greek:

Mastering Cultural Nuances through Language

Irene J. Karageorgou

Everything You Need to Discover the Heart and Soul of Greece through Language Learning!



**TO ALL FOREIGN VISITORS WHO
REALLY WANT TO GET TO KNOW**

**MY COUNTRY,
GREECE.**



IRENE J. KARAGEORGOY

AROUND THE CITY

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INTRODUCTION

The polite expression affects our daily interaction and interpersonal relationships, whether being friendly or formal. However, the concept of politeness and the way of expressing it in verbal communication differs significantly from one culture to another, since there is a difference in both the culture of each people and the expressive capacity of their language.

In the book "**How to express yourself politely in Greek**", which consists of **11 units**, you will be able to learn *when we, Greeks, consider a way of behaviour to be polite, what social rules we follow to express ourselves politely and what linguistic ways we choose - depending on the communication occasion - to show the appropriate degree of politeness.*

To be more specific,

- In **Unit 1**, entitled "**How the Greeks perceive and express politeness**", you will learn *how we, Greeks, perceive politeness and how we express it through our language choices.*
- In **Unit 2**, entitled "**Criteria for choosing singular or plural number. Part 1**", you'll learn *how verbal politeness is affected by age relationship and presence or absence of intimacy.*
- In **Unit 3**, entitled "**Criteria for choosing singular or plural number. Part 2**", you will learn *how verbal politeness is affected by communication occasions and social distance.*
- In **Unit 4**, entitled "**Expressing politeness using the singular number**", you will learn *what forms of grammar we use to speak politely to a person in the singular number.*
- In **Unit 5**, entitled "**Expressing politeness using the plural number**", you will learn *what forms of grammar we use to speak politely to a person in the plural of politeness.*
- In **Unit 6**, entitled "**When and how to eliminate the polite plural**", you will learn *in what ways we can ask a Greek interlocutor to reduce the distance in our linguistic communication.*
- In **Unit 7**, entitled "**The word "please" in the linguistic communication of the Greeks**", you will learn *the frequency of occurrence and the uses of the word "please" in the vocabulary of the Greeks.*
- In **Unit 8**, entitled "**The imperative as a verbal mode of politeness**", you will learn *how we can use the imperative to express ourselves politely.*
- In **Unit 9**, entitled "**The interrogative sentences as a form of politeness**", you will learn *how we can use interrogative sentences to express ourselves politely.*

- In **Unit 10**, entitled “**How to make a suggestion and politely decline an invitation**”, you will learn *how to make a suggestion or politely decline an invitation*.
- In **Unit 11**, entitled “**The word "sorry" in the linguistic communication of the Greeks**”, you will learn *the frequency of occurrence and the uses of the word "sorry" in the vocabulary of the Greeks*.

So, once you finish reading this book you will be able to:

- understand the Greek mentality on the issue of politeness
- use the Greek language in a variety of ways to express yourself politely
- adapt these language modes according to the communication situation
- use the appropriate way of addressing to a person

Unit 1:

HOW THE GREEKS PERCEIVE AND EXPRESS POLITENESS

The ways we, Greeks, use to express ourselves politely in our linguistic communication are formed both by the possibilities that our language provides us with and the mentality we have as people when it comes to politeness.

In this unit, you will learn *how we Greeks perceive linguistic politeness and how we express it from a linguistic point of view.*

More specifically you will learn:

- What is the Greek attitude on the subject of politeness.
- What ways of expression we use to speak politely.

Attitude of the Greeks

When we, Greeks, address to a person, whether that person is familiar to us or not, we avoid excessive linguistic sophistication and want our speech to be more spontaneous and natural, without including obvious indicators of politeness, such as the word “please” (*in English*) «**παρακαλώ**» (*in Greek*) [**parakaló**] (*Oral rendering in Greek according to IPA*) or the word “sorry” «**συγγνώμη**» [**sinynómi**].

Greek language capacity

The Greek language enables its speakers to speak politely using both numbers, since it is an inflectional language and many of its words such as names, pronouns and verbs have two numbers, singular and plural.

Thus, in Greek one can either use the **singular number** or the **plural number**, also called the polite plural, to talk to a single person in a polite way. In the following units you will see in detail under which circumstances the singular number is used and under which circumstances the plural number is used.

So, therefore, in order to understand the politeness in the words of a Greek interlocutor or to politely address your speech to a Greek interlocutor, you should also take into account the mindset of the Greeks when it comes to politeness and the capacity that the Greek language has.

Unit 2:

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING SINGULAR OR PLURAL NUMBER. (PART 1)

When we, Greeks, wish to address to a single interlocutor politely, we can speak to him both in the singular and plural number, which in this case is called the plural of politeness. However, the choice of singular or plural is neither random nor arbitrary, but it is affected by four parameters.

In this section, you will learn *2 of these 4 parameters we take into account in **everyday communicative interaction***.

More specifically, in this unit, you will learn:

- Which are the 2 parameters that regulate the use of singular or plural in our communication with a person.
- How are these 2 parameters combined.
- Which form of address is suitable for each combination.

PARAMETERS

1st parameter

*existence or lack of age symmetry
between the interlocutors*

That is,

- when we are addressing to a person of the **same age** we use the **singular number**. While,
- when we are talking to someone much **older** than us we use **the plural**.

2nd parameter

*existence or lack of intimacy
between the interlocutors*

That is,

- when we wish to address to a person, we feel **intimacy** with, we use the **singular number**. While,

- when we are going to address to a person, we **do not feel familiar** with, we usually use the **plural number**.

COMBINATIONS OF THESE TWO PARAMETERS

1st combination

existence of age symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
existence of intimacy
between them

In other words, if our interlocutor is of the **same age** and there is **intimacy** between us, either since he is our friend or our close relative, we can speak to him in the **singular number**.

This way, we show that there is intimacy, equality, friendliness and straightness between us.

2nd combination

existence of age symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
lack of intimacy
between them

Namely, if our interlocutor is of the **same age**, but we **do not feel intimacy** with him either because he is just a familiar person or a stranger, we can also speak to him in **the singular number**, since the closeness of age allows us to do so. However, we can also speak to him in the **plural**, because we are strangers and there is no intimacy between us.

If we speak to him in the singular, we show that we prefer to have a more direct communication with him.

Whereas, if we speak to him in the plural, we show that we prefer to have a more formal communication with him.

3rd combination

lack of age symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
existence of intimacy
between them

Accordingly, if our interlocutor is quite **older** than us, but we **feel close to him**, as he could be our friend or a close relative for instance, we can speak to him in the **singular number**.

This way, we show that there is intimacy, friendliness and immediacy between us.

4th combination

lack of age symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
lack of intimacy
between them

Namely, if our interlocutor is much **older** than us and we **do not feel intimacy** with him, because he is, for example, just an acquaintance of ours or we do not know him at all, then we necessarily speak to him in the **plural number**.

This way, on the one hand, we show respect to an older person while, on the other hand, we show the social distance that exists between us.

So, choosing the appropriate form of address is a combined action in which we must take into account the following:

- the **intimacy** that exists or does not exist between us and the interlocutor
- the **age** of the interlocutor
- the **purpose** we want to serve each time

That is,

- if we want to show respect
- or
- if we want to keep the social distance that exists between us and the interlocutor

➡ we will use the **plural number** to make our speech formally polite and this way, the communication becomes formal and distant.

While,

- if we want to show intimacy, equality and friendliness to our interlocutor,
- ➡ we will use the **singular number** to reduce social distance.



REVIEW

In this unit you have learned that:

- The two parameters we take into account when we speak to a person in the singular or plural are:
 1. the existence or absence of age symmetry and
 2. the existence or absence of intimacy

You have also learned that:

- When the interlocutor is of the same age & we feel intimacy, we speak to him in the **singular number**.
- When he is of the same age, but we do not feel intimacy, we can speak to him in both the **singular** and **the plural number**.
- When he is older and we feel familiar with him, we speak to him in the **singular number**.
- When he is older and we do not feel close to him, we speak to him in the **plural**.



EXERCISE

In this exercise you can see six different hypothetical communication situations and I would like you to choose the appropriate address that fits each time.

1st communication situation

Tom visits his peer George in Greece. Going to George's house, he will greet him by speaking to him:

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

2nd communication situation

Tom meets his friend's father at home, how will he speak to him?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

3rd communication situation

George introduces Tom to his younger cousin. How will Tom speak to her?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

4th communication situation

You want to ask a guy your age who works at the front desk of the hotel you're staying at to call a taxi for you. How will you address to him? You will speak to him:

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

5th communication situation

You want to give up your seat to an unknown old person. How will you speak to him?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

6th communication situation

You want to ask a young waiter to bring you a glass of water. How will you speak to him?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

Unit 3:

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING SINGULAR OR PLURAL NUMBER. PART 2

The *age distance* and the *degree of familiarity* with our interlocutor are not the only parameters that affect the way we address the speech. As the circumstances of communication and our relationships with other people are more complex, we take into account other factors, in order to select the appropriate way of addressing.

In this unit, you will learn *the other two parameters that we take into account in our **professional relationships** and in situations where **social hierarchy** applies.*

More specifically, in this unit you will learn:

- What are the other two parameters that regulate the use of singular or plural in our communication with a person.
- How these 2 parameters are combined.
- How these 2 parameters are combined with the parameters we saw in the previous lesson.
- Which mode of address is suitable for each combination.

ADDITIONAL PARAMETERS

3rd parameter

***social symmetry or social asymmetry**
between us and our interlocutor*

Being more specific,

- when we address to a person of the **same social status**, for example a colleague, we use the **singular number**, provided, however, that there is age symmetry or familiarity between us and also the communication takes place in an informal conversational environment. While,
- when we talk to a person of a **higher social status** than ours in a given situation, like our superior and given the fact that there is either no intimacy between us or there could be intimacy, but the communication takes place in a formal conversational setting, we use the **plural number**.

4th parameter

conversational environment
the communication takes place in

Namely,

- when the communication takes place in a **highly formal conversational environment**, thus a formal business meeting, and in case there is social symmetry between them and intimacy in their relationship the interlocutors use the **plural number**. While,
- when the communication takes place in an **informal conversational environment**, that is outside the working environment, the interlocutors use the **singular number**, as long as the intimacy that exists between them allows it.

COMBINATIONS OF PARAMETERS BASED ON THE UNEQUAL SOCIAL STATUS OF THE PARTNERS

1st combination

existence of social asymmetry
between the interlocutors
&
lack of intimacy
between them
&
any conversational environment

To be more precise, if the interlocutor is of a **higher social status** than ours; he is our employer and **there is no intimacy** between us, i.e. we are neither friends nor close relatives, then we speak to him in the **plural number** whether we are of the same age or not, or if we are taking part in an **informal communication situation** or **formal communication situation**.

This way we show respect to our superior, but also to the hierarchical distance that exists between us.

2nd combination

existence of social asymmetry
between the interlocutors
&
existence of intimacy

between them
&
informal conversational environment

More specifically, if the interlocutor is of a **higher social status** than ours, like being our employer, but there is enough **intimacy** between us, since we could be friends or close relatives, then in **an informal conversational environment**, when, for instance, the two of us talk at work or outside of work, we will speak to him in the **singular**

In this case, the use of the singular indicates the intimacy that exists between us.

3rd combination

existence of social asymmetry
between the interlocutors
&
existence of intimacy
between them
&
formal conversational environment

Namely, if the interlocutor is of a **higher social status** than ours, like being our employer, but there is enough **intimacy** between us, since we could be friends or close relatives, then in a **formal conversational environment**, for example in a official business meeting, this same person must be addressed in the **plural**.

In this case, the use of plural indicates the social distance that exists between us due to the social and professional status of our superior.

So, in cases where there is a hierarchical relationship but at the same time there is intimacy between the speaker and the interlocutor, the choice of the appropriate mode of address is determined only by the conversational environment the communication takes place in.

COMBINATIONS OF PARAMETERS BASED ON THE EQUAL SOCIAL STATUS OF THE PARTNERS

1st combination

existence of social symmetry
between the interlocutors

&
existence of intimacy
between them
&
any conversational environment

That is, if the interlocutor is of the **same social status**, being our colleague for instance, and there is **intimacy** between us, since we could be friends or close relatives, then we will speak to him in the **singular**, whether we are of the same age or there is a difference age between us.

2nd combination

existence of social symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
existence of intimacy
between them
&
formal conversational environment

More specifically, if the interlocutor is of the **same social status**, being our colleague for instance, and there is **intimacy** between us, since we could be friends or close relatives, we will speak to him in the **plural**, regarding the fact that there is an extremely **formal conversational environment** in which the conversation is imperative to be in the polite plural.

3rd combination

existence of social symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
existence of age symmetry
&
lack of intimacy
&
informal conversational environment

More specifically, if the interlocutor is of the **same social status**, being a colleague of the same age for example, but there is **no intimacy** between us, since we could just be acquaintances, we can speak to him in the **singular number** in an **informal conversational environment**, as the age and

social symmetry between us allows it, but we can also speak to him in the **plural**, because there is not enough intimacy between us.

If we speak to him in the singular we show preference to a more direct communication with him, while if we speak to him in the plural we show that we prefer a more formal communication with him.

4th combination

existence of social symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
lack of intimacy
between them
&
existence of age symmetry
&
formal conversational environment

So, if the interlocutor is of the **same social status**, being a colleague of the **same age** for instance, but there is **no intimacy** between us, since we could be just acquaintances, we will speak to him in the **plural** in a **formal conversational environment** in which the use of the plural is required.

5th combination

existence of social symmetry
between the interlocutors
&
lack of intimacy
&
lack of age symmetry
&
any conversational environment

Respectively, if the interlocutor is of the **same social status**, being our colleague for example, but much **older** than us and there is **no intimacy** between us, then we speak to him in the **plural**, whether our communication takes place in a formal or in an informal conversational environment.

As it can be seen, in this case the choice of the appropriate mode of address is not determined by the social symmetry that exists between the interlocutors, but by the lack of familiarity and age symmetry that exists between them.

Therefore, the 2 addressing ways we will choose, in the case we address to a person we have a **professional relation** with, depend on:

- The **social symmetry** that exists or does not exist between us and the interlocutor.
- The **intimacy** that exists or does not exist between us.
- The **conversational environment** the communication takes place in.
- The **purposes** we want to serve every time.

This means that,

- if we wish to show respect to someone hierarchically superior to us or
- if we wish to show the hierarchy distance that exists between us and the interlocutor or
- if we wish to have a more formal communication with someone
➡ we will use the **plural**.

While,

- if we wish to show the intimacy or equality that exists between us and the interlocutor or
- if we wish to have a more direct communication with someone
➡ we will use the **singular number**.



REVIEW

In this unit you have learned that:

- The two parameters we take into account when we speak to people in our working environment in the singular or the plural are:
 1. The existence or absence of social symmetry.
 2. And the conversational environment the communication takes place in.

You have also learned that:

- When the interlocutor is of a higher social status & there is no intimacy between us, we always speak to him in the **plural**.
- When he is of a higher social status & there is intimacy between us, we speak to him in the **singular** in an informal conversation.
- When he is of a higher social status & there is intimacy between us, we speak of him in the **plural** in a formal conversational environment.
- When he is of the same social status & there is intimacy between us, we speak to him in the **singular**.
- When he is of the same social status & there is intimacy between us, we speak to him in the **plural** in a formal business meeting.
- When he is of the same social status & the same age & there is no intimacy between us, we can speak to him in both **singular** and **plural** in an informal conversational environment.

- When he is of the same social status & the same age, but there is no intimacy between us we speak to him in the **plural** in a formal conversational environment.
- When he is of the same social status but considerably older than us and there is no intimacy between us, we speak to him in the **plural**, in any conversational environment.



EXERCISE

In this exercise you can see a person who is going to address to interlocutors in 6 different communication situations. I would like you to find in which of these cases, this person should speak in the singular and in which in the plural.

1st communication situation

A civil engineer came to work for some time in Greece. How will he speak to a colleague much older than him with whom they are merely acquaintances?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

2nd communication situation

How will the same civil engineer talk to a colleague who is much older than him, but they are friends?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

3rd communication situation

How will the civil engineer himself speak to a colleague who is of the same age and with whom he is merely an acquaintance?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

4th communication situation

How will he talk to his manager he only has business relations with?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

5th communication situation

How will he address to his headmaster, whom he has known since school years, in a formal meeting?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

6th communication situation

How will he talk to his headmaster, whom he has known since school years, on a private walk?

1. in the singular or
2. in the plural of politeness?

Unit 4:

EXPRESSING POLITENESS USING THE SINGULAR NUMBER

The use of the singular is imperative in cases where our relationship with the interlocutor is intimate and our conversation takes place in an informal conversational environment.


In this unit, you will be taught *which forms of grammar we use to talk to a person in the singular number*.

And specifically in this course, you will learn:

- Which forms of **personal pronouns** we use to talk to someone in the singular.
- What endings **verbs** have when we talk to someone in the singular.

SINGULAR GRAMMATICAL FORMS

When we want to address to a person in the singular, we should put:

- the personal pronouns
 - and
 - the verbs
- 
- in the second person **singular**

As for **personal pronouns** in this case, we will use:

- either «**σου**» [**sú**] (“your”) form
- or the form «**σε**» [**sé**] (“you”)
- or more rarely the form «**εσύ**» [**esí**] (“you”)

The «**σου**» [**sú**] form and the «**σε**» [**sé**] form are weak forms of the personal pronoun in the second person singular. Whereas, the form «**εσύ**» [**esí**], is a strong form of the personal pronoun in the second person singular.

Examples

«Γεια σου!» [**já sú**] (“Hello!”)

In this sentence, I used the form of the personal pronoun «**σου**» [**sú**], which is in the second person singular, to greet a friend of mine or someone of my age.

«Πώς σε λένε;» [pós sé léne?] (“What’s your name?”)

In this question, I put the personal pronoun in the second person singular which is «σε» [sé].

And as for the **verbs**, most are in the second person singular:

- either the ending –εις [-is]

For example:

The verb «κάνω» [káno] (“do”) in the second singular is: «κάνεις» [kánis]

- or the ending –είς [-ís]

For example:

The verb «μπορώ» [boró] (“can”) in the second singular is: «μπορείς» [borís]

- or the ending –άς [-ás]

For example:

The verb «μιλώ» [miló] (“speak”) in the second singular is: «μιλάς» [milás]

The endings you just saw are endings of many Greek verbs in the second person singular.

Examples

«Τι κάνεις;» [tí kánis?] (“How are you?”)

In this question, I put the verb «κάνω» [káno] in the second person singular which is «κάνεις» [kánis], and it has the verb ending –εις [-is] without being stressed.

«Μιλάς Ελληνικά;» [milás eliniká?] (“Do you speak Greek?”)

In this question, I put the verb «μιλάω» [miláo] in the second person singular which is «μιλάς» [milás], and it has the verb ending –ας [-as].

That is, we use **pronouns** and **verbs** in the second person singular when:

1. There is intimacy between us and the interlocutor and our communication takes place in an informal conversational environment.
2. There is no intimacy between us and the interlocutor, since we are peers, we have the same social status and our communication takes place in an informal conversational environment.

The fact that we do not use the plural number in these cases does not mean that we do not speak in a polite way or that we do not respect the interlocutor, but on the contrary, by using the singular number to speak to someone, we show, on the one hand that there is comfort and intimacy in our relationship and on the other hand, we show that we are friendly towards him and wish to have a

more direct communication with him. Therefore there is no question of rudeness or disrespect when we use the singular number.



REVIEW

In this unit you have learned that when we address to a person in the singular we use the pronouns:

- either the form «**σου**» [**sú**]
- or the form «**σε**» [**sé**]
- or the form «**εσύ**» [**esí**]

And the verb or verbs of the sentence usually have:

- either the ending **-εις** [**-is**]
- or the ending **-είς** [**-ís**]
- or the ending **-άς** [**-ás**]



EXERCISE

In the following sentences, I would like you to recognize the grammatical forms which show us that the person speaking is addressing to the interlocutor in the singular number.

1st sentence:

Γεια σου! [**já sú**] (“Hello!”)

2nd sentence:

Θέλεις μια μύρα; [**thélis mñá bíra?**] (“Would you like some beer?”)

3rd sentence:

Σου αρέσει η παραλία; [**sú arési i paralía?**] (“Do you like the beach?”)

4th sentence:

Μπορείς να έρθεις; [**borís na érthis?**] (“Can you come?”)

5th sentence:

Σε ευχαριστώ. [**se efxaristó**] (“Thank you.”)

Unit 5:

EXPRESSING POLITENESS USING THE PLURAL NUMBER

When we wish to address to a person by showing them respect, we speak in the plural, which, in this case, is called plural of politeness.

In this unit, you will learn *which forms of grammar we use to address a person in the polite plural*.

More specifically, in this unit, you will learn:

- Which forms of **personal pronouns** we use to talk to someone in the polite plural.
- What endings the **verbs** have when we are talking to someone in the polite plural.

GRAMMATICAL FORMS OF PLURAL NUMBER

When we wish to address to a person in the plural, we should put:

- the personal pronouns
 - and
 - the verbs
- } in the second person **plural**

As for **personal pronouns** in this case, we will use:

- either «**σας**» [**sás**] (“your”) form
- or less often the form «**εσείς**» [**esís**] (“you”)

The form «**σας**» [**sás**] is a weak form of the personal pronoun, which is in the second person. In addition, the form «**εσείς**» [**esís**] is a strong form of the personal pronoun, which is in the second person plural.

Examples

«Γεια **σας!**» [**já sás**] (“Hello!”)

In this sentence I used the form of the personal pronoun «**σας**» [**sás**], which is in the second person plural, to greet a single person.

«**Πώς σας λένε;**» [**pós sás léne?**] (“What's your name?”)

In this question I put the personal pronoun in the second person plural, which is «**σας**» [**sás**].