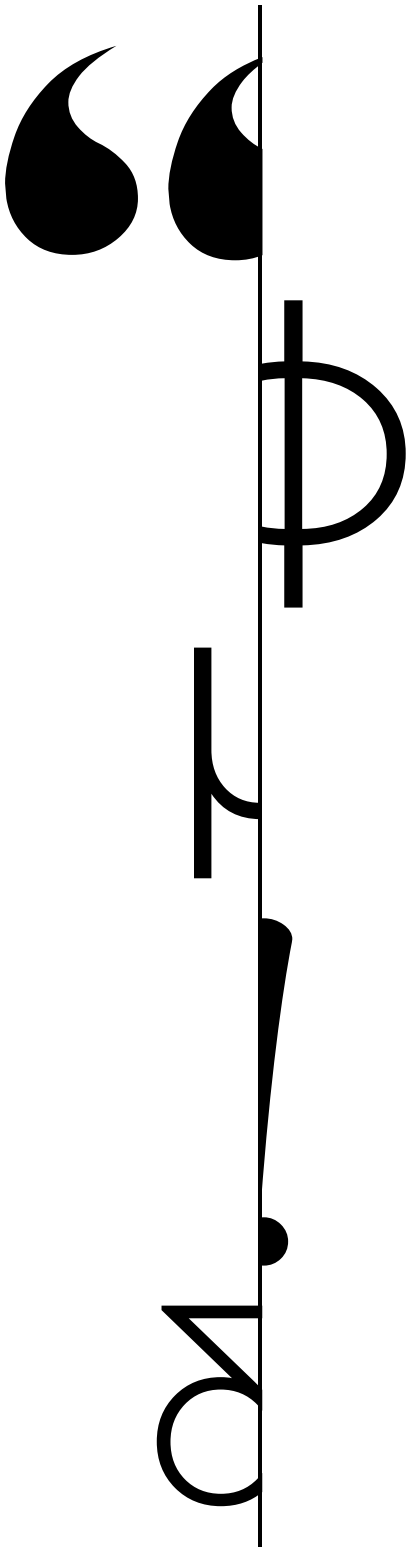


# How to Politely Express Yourself in Greek:

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**

HOW TO POLITELY EXPRESS YOURSELF IN GREEK

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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

##### 1<sup>st</sup> 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**.

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

### 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **1<sup>st</sup> 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?

### **2<sup>nd</sup> 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?

### **3<sup>rd</sup> 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?

### **4<sup>th</sup> 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?

**5<sup>th</sup> 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?

**6<sup>th</sup> 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?