GREEK is the only certain representative of the branch of Indo-European commonly known as Greek (also Hellenic); the status of ancient Macedonian as a possible immediate sister to Greek is unclear because of its limited attestation. Speakers of Greek have lived for approximately four thousand years in the southern part of the Balkan area in southeast Europe; they first arrived there, according to most accounts, in waves of migration from the northeast, early in the second millennium BCE. For general reference, see Meillet 1920, Palmer 1980, Joseph 1987. On Ancient Greek, consult Blass & Debrunner 1896, Smyth 1920, Schwyzer 1939, Schwyzer & Debrunner 1950. On Medieval and Modern Greek, see Thumb 1895, Costas 1936, Mirambel 1959, Householder et al. 1964, Browning 1983, Mackridge 1985, Joseph & Philippaki-Warburton 1987.

The geographic spread of Greek has in all periods encompassed more territory than the southern Balkans, extending well beyond the modern political boundaries of Greece. In ancient times, Greek speakers colonized the entire eastern Mediterranean, with centers in southern Italy, Asia Minor, and Cyprus; later, conquests and trade expeditions placed Greek speakers throughout the Middle East, including Alexandria, and in the Black Sea area, including the Ukraine. In modern times, Greek has spread to North America, Britain, and Australia; in these areas, Greek-speaking communities form a modern ‘Hellenic diaspora’. In the late 1980s, there were close to 20 million speakers of Greek—nearly 1 in 14 million in Greece itself. [For details on varieties of Greek, see the Language List at the end of this article.]

Though forming its own IE branch, Greek shares certain characteristics with Armenian, and more distantly with Indo-Iranian. These include such morphosyntactic features as an overt past-tense prefix (the ‘augment’, reconstructible as *e-), and the negator *me; there are also some lexical parallels, especially with Armenian.

More recently, in the past thousand years, Greek has come to share several structural features with the neighboring Balkan languages [q.v.], these areal similarities, presumably resulting from language contact, constitute overlays on features which Greek shares with other IE languages through their common linguistic inheritance.

1. Periodization. Greek is attested virtually continuously, with very few significant breaks, from approximately 1400 BCE to the present. During this 3,500-year period, it occurs in several varieties—the result not only of diachronic differentiation, but also of dialect diversity at each stage in its development.

Four major periods of development can be recognized, defined partly by external political and historical factors, and partly by purely linguistic ones. These stages are
discussed below, together with an indication of the range
of dialect differentiation and the type of attestation avail-
able for each period.

Ancient Greek (ca. 1400–300 BCE) includes Myc-
eaean (ca. 1400–1200 BCE), the Greek of the Homeric
epics (ca. 800 BCE), and that of the Classical period (ca.
600–300 BCE). Mycenaean is the earliest attested form
of Greek; it was revealed through the efforts of Michael
Ventris and John Chadwick in the early 1950s, when they
deciphered the Linear B syllabic script of clay tablets
found in the late 19th century at Minoan and Mycenaean
sites in Crete and on the Greek mainland. It is indisput-
ably an early variety of Greek, but seems not to be the
direct ancestor of any later attested dialects; its exact
place within the ancient dialect picture is still somewhat
controversial. Homeric is the language of the Iliad, the
Odyssey, and the Homeric Hymns; it is basically Ionic,
but shows an admixture of other dialectal elements, most
notably Aeolic. Moreover, it contains remarkable archa-
isms, including phraseological and thematic parallels
with oral traditions found elsewhere in IE (e.g. in the
Rigveda). [See Stylistic Reconstruction.] Classical Greek
is known mainly in its Attic/Ionic variety, through the
writings of philosophers such as Plato, historians such as
Herodotus and Thucydides, playwrights such as Aeschy-
lus, Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes, and numer-
ous other ancient authors. It also survives in thousands
of inscriptions from Athens, the political and cultural
center of ancient Greece. In fact, it presents a broad
diversity of regional dialects. Besides Attic/Ionic, these
include Aeolic (comprising Thessalian, Boeotian, and
Lesbian), Arcado-Cyprian, and West Greek (Northwest
Greek and Doric); these are known through a wealth of
inscriptions, and through some literary works (e.g. Aeolic
through the works of Sappho of Lesbos).

Hellenistic Greek (ca. 300 BCE to 300 CE) com-
prises the Greek of the Septuagint and the New TESTA-
ment, of the non-literary papyri, and of works by authors
of historical, scientific, grammatical, religious, philoso-
phical, and satirical material—including Polybius (2nd
c. BCE), Dionysius Thrax (2nd c. BCE), Epictetus (early
2nd c. CE), and Lucian (late 2nd c. CE). Greek in this
period underwent great expansion with the conquests of
Alexander the Great. In a somewhat altered and relatively
uniform variety—based mainly on the ancient Attic/Ionic
dialect, and known as the Koiné (Ancient ἡ κοινὴ
didēktos ‘the common dialect’)—it came to be used as
a lingua franca across the eastern Mediterranean and
Middle East. This Koiné served as the basis for most of
the dialects of Middle and Modern Greek.

Middle Greek (ca. 300–1650 CE) comprises By-
zantine Greek (ca. 300–1100) and Medieval Greek (ca.
CE 1100–1650). The geographic spread of Greek in this
period shrank somewhat from its Hellenistic extent; but
Asia Minor and the Black Sea area, including Constantin-
ope (the center of Byzantine culture), remained
strongly Greek-speaking, and pockets of Greek speakers
continued elsewhere in the East. During the Medieval
period, Greek assumed most completely its current Balkan structural character, and the modern dialects began to take their characteristic forms. Religious and historical writings, mainly in a consciously archaizing variety of the language (see sec. 2 below), provide glimpses of colloquial Greek in this period; after the 12th century, colloquial Medieval Greek is the medium for a flourishing literature of poetry (e.g. by Theodoros Prodromos, mid-12th c.), romances (some translations of medieval European models, others of native Greek origin), histories (e.g. the _Chronicle of Morea_, ca. 1300), and drama (including several from the Cretan 'renaissance' of the 16th–17th centuries).

Modern Greek (ca. 1650 to the present) has witnessed few significant changes from the form of the language in the Medieval period, though at this stage the 'language question' (see sec. 2) has emerged most prominently. The modern standard language, as spoken in Athens and throughout urban Greece, is based historically on the southern dialect of the Peloponnesus (see sec. 4.1 for more on the modern dialects). Texts on all topics and in all genres are available, including such world-renowned literature as the works of Nikos Kazantzakis, Konstantine Kavafis, and the Nobel laureates George Seferis and Odysseus Elytis.

2. Diglossia. One facet of the social setting for Greek deserves special mention, since it has pervaded so much of Greek language use over the centuries; this is the degree to which a distinction between 'high' and 'low' varieties has been institutionalized. To be sure, similar distinctions are found in all speech communities; but what is striking about the Greek situation is its extent, and its culmination in what has been described as a classic instance of a DIGLOSSIC community.

In ancient times, a distinction between literary and colloquial is observable in the difference between the Greek of the great classical works, and that of informal inscriptions, e.g. many of those found in the Athenian _agora_. In postclassical times, a similar distinction emerges in comparison of literary works with the non-literary papyri of Hellenistic Egypt, which show numerous hypercorrections and outright mistakes in attempts to approximate Classical Attic style.

Later, many Byzantine and Medieval writers (especially those involved in more learned pursuits) wrote in a consciously archaizing variety, which emulated Classical Attic usage—even as the colloquial language, through natural processes of linguistic evolution from its Koiné basis, was developing along an entirely different path. Thus a well-developed stylistic rift emerged; it was maintained, partly in association with genre (e.g. colloquial love poetry vs. learned religious documents), and partly with situation (e.g. learned usage in formal contexts).

In the 1820s, when a Greek nation-state was founded after the war of liberation from Ottoman rule, Greek leaders wanted a national language as a symbol of unity. They faced the question of which variety of the language
to choose: the archaising, puristic Greek (also called *katharevousa* "purified"), which evoked a connection with the glory of ancient Greece; or the colloquial variety (also called *Demotic*, from Greek *dēmotikós* 'popular, of the people'), which emerged naturally from earlier spoken forms. This situation led to the politicization of the high vs. low distinction; the two main linguistic 'camps' became associated with different political stances (Katharevousa advocates being generally viewed as conservative, Demotic adherents as progressive); ultimately, there was functional polarization of the different varieties, resulting in true diglossia. The high variety took on most official and formalized functions during much of the 19th and 20th centuries, with more mundane functions left to the low variety. In this period, as a result, much linguistic, scholarly, and political discourse and energy focused on this 'language question': the debate over the merits and uses of the different varieties. As of the 1980s, the official position favors Demotic Greek as the emerging standard language, with basically Demotic, with an admixture of Katharevousa. 

3. Writing systems. Several different writing systems have been used for Greek over the centuries: the Mycenaean Greek Linear B syllabic script; the somewhat similar syllabary of ancient Cyprian inscriptions; and even the Arabic and Hebrew alphabets, which were used occasionally by Greeks (e.g. in Asia Minor) in the Medieval period. However, the alphabetic system adopted by the Greeks from a North Semitic source (traditionally said to be Phoenician) is by far the most common and best known system for writing Greek. This alphabet provided a relatively close, one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and phonemes for Ancient Greek; however, some long vowel phonemes are not uniquely represented, and some consonant clusters have distinct graphemes. The fit is less good for Medieval and Modern Greek, in which some new oppositions are represented secondarily by digraphs. Distinctive marks for the three ancient pitch accents were introduced only in Hellenistic times by the Alexandrian grammarians, and a shift to a single stress accent in Middle Greek left the orthography richer than necessary; a recent official reform has replaced the threefold graphic accentual system with a single mark. The Greek alphabet, with its ancient and current phonetics, is given in Table 1; diphthongs, consonantal digraphs, and diacritics are shown in Table 2.

4. A panchronic view of structure. To outline the major structural features of Greek, it is most appropriate to focus on the Classical and Modern languages; in general, the changes which characterize the differences between these had begun by the Hellenistic period, though they were not complete generally until Middle Greek. Moreover, Medieval and Modern Greek differ minimally. This discussion therefore provides not only a structural sketch of Greek at these two widely separated
periods, but also an indication of the major changes the
language has undergone.

4.1. Phonology. The presentation of the alphabet
above gives a good idea of the phonological systems of
Cl.Gk. and Mod.Gk. respectively. At both stages, relatively
balanced consonant and vowel systems are to be
found.

In Cl.Gk. there was a set of voiced plain stops, voiceless
plain stops, and voiceless aspirated stops (b d g, p t k, pʰ
rʰ kʰ); a dental fricative s (with allophone [z] before
voiced consonants), and a glottal fricative h; and the
sonorants r (with a voiceless allophone initially), l m n
(with the allophone [ŋ] before velars). The semivowels
[j] and [w] occurred only as offglides in diphthongs—
though both occurred in Mycenaean in other positions,
and [w] occurs outside of Attic/Ionic in Classical times.

Mod.Gk. retains the voiceless plain stops as such; but
early Post-Classical changes have phased a voiced stops
to voiced fricatives (v ɣ ɣ̄), and aspirated stops to voiceless
fricatives (f ɣ χ). In addition, the modern language
has voiced stops b d g, which resulted from earlier
clusters of nasal + stop; e.g., ancient entrepomai ‘I feel
misgivings about’ and endúno ‘I put on (clothes)’ yielded,
with regular vowel changes, modern drépome ‘I feel
ashamed’ and dínō ‘I dress (someone)’. Another source
of voiced stops is borrowings, e.g. bakális ‘grocer’ from
Turkish bakál, dás ‘shower’ from French douche, etc. In
addition, [tʰ] and [dʰ] were added in Middle Greek—
mainly through sporadic affrications of earlier k and t
before front vowels, but also through dialectal and foreign
borrowings. Mod.Gk. retains the sonorants, though without
the voiceless allophone of r; and [j] has reappeared,
as a variant of unaccented i adjacent to vowels, and of ɣ
before front vowels. Finally, Mod.Gk. maintains earlier
s, and z is now also a phoneme.

The vowels and diphthongs present a somewhat more
complicated picture. Classical Attic/Ionic had the inven-
tory shown in Table 3. Gaps in the short diphthong
inventory (lacking [ej] or [ow]) were caused by the pre-
Classical sound changes [ej] → [eː] and [ow] → [oː].
The long diphthongs were generally rare; relatively early
in the Classical period, those with [j] lost their offglide,
to merge with corresponding long monophthongs.

By contrast, Mod.Gk. has a simple five-vowel system,
with the short monophthongs i e a o u. This system arose
through the raising of [eː] to [iː], the loss of distinctive
length, the unrounding (after the 10th century) of [y] to
[i], and various developments with the diphthongs. The
last included the monophthongization of [aj] to [e], and
of [iy] and [oj] to [i] (through a stage of [y]), as well as
the consonantization of the offglide in [ew] and [aw]
to [v] before voiced segments, and to [f] before voiceless
ones. Mod.Gk. has some diphthong-like sequences of
various origin, e.g. borrowings (e.g. bói ‘stature’ from
Turkish) or optional stress-shifts (váltisa ‘I helped’ from
voi̇da); however, the analysis of these as distinctive diphthongs is controversial.

Phonologically, the ancient dialects differed from one another in several respects. One was the distribution of semivowels: [j] and especially [w] occurred more freely in Mycenaean, Doric, and Aeolic than in Attic/Ionic. More significant variation is found in the outcome of the Common Gk. labiovelar stops, which are found intact in Mycenaean; labial reflexes occur in Aeolic (mostly) while dental reflexes occur elsewhere (e.g. Lesbian pèmpe 'five' versus Attic/Ionic pènte, from *penk-े). Clusters involving obstruents plus semivowels were treated variously, e.g. *t + j → [tt] in Attic and Boeotian, but [ss] in Ionic, Arcadian, and most of Doric. Clusters of sonorant + *s developed into geminates in Aeolic, but show compensatory lengthening elsewhere. Major dialectal differences are also found in the vowel system; thus Attic/Ionic raised and fronted Common Gk. *a: to [e:] and ultimately to [e], and fronted *u(:) to [y(:)].

As for the modern dialects, the mostly rural dialects in the north differ from the standard language primarily in deleting most unstressed high vowels and raising unstressed mid vowels. Palatalizations (especially [tr] for [k] before front vowels) characterize dialects of the southeast (including many of the Aegean islands and Cyprus), and of Crete.

The accentual system deserves special mention. Cl.Gk. had three distinctive pitch accents: high (known as 'acute'), low ('grave'), and contour ('circumflex'). The placement and type of accent were distinctive, as shown by such pairs as olik [at home] vs. olkoi 'houses', and tímà 'two honors' vs. tíma 'you honor!'. However, some aspects of accent placement and realization were predictable: thus circumflex accent could only appear on a long ultima—or, with a short ultima, on a long penultimate syllable. Moreover, accent placement in finite verb forms and certain declined forms of nouns was 'recessive': it occurred as far from the end of the word as possible, though it was limited to one of the last three syllables of a word, and was subject to mora-based restrictions (e.g. accent on the penultimate or ultima with a long ultima).

Accordingly, if the length of the final syllable changed during inflection, accent placement in recessively accented forms also changed—e.g. kómitó 'I provide for', with penultimate accent because of the long ultima, vs. ekómisà 'I provided for', with antepenultimate accent because of the short ultima.

Mod.Gk., by contrast, has only a single stress accent, the result of a late Hellenistic/early Middle Gk. change; however, the placement of the stress corresponds largely to the placement of the earlier high pitch (acute or circumflex accent) in a word. Since length distinctions were lost, the Mod.Gk. equivalent of the Three Mora Law is a 'three syllable law'. However, analogical leveling has led to stable stress in many paradigms that earlier had mobile accentuation. Mod.Gk. accent is still distinctive, as shown by such pairs as kírios 'master', kirios 'chiefly'.


4.2. Morphology. Greek has always been a generally
fusional, inflectional language, marking most important
grammatical distinctions with affixes that simultaneously
encode several grammatical features (e.g. [-ο:] for 1sg.
non-past indicative active). In Middle Greek, many analy-
tic formations arose to replace earlier synthetic ones
(e.g., the future tense, 1st and 3rd person imperatives, or
comparative and superlative adjectives); but even
Mod.Gk. can be said to be basically of the same typologi-
cal variety as the classical language. Greek has a rela-
tively large number of inflectional categories, so that the
overall set of distinct forms for a given nominal or verbal
stem is extremely high; consequently, no attempt is made
here to list the forms themselves (which are available in
all standard grammars), and instead only the categories
are given.

Several categories were relevant for the nominal system
(nouns, adjectives, and pronouns). Cl.Gk. had five cases
(nomina
tive, accusative, genitive, dative, vocative), three
numbers (singular, dual, plural), and three gender classes
(traditionally called masculine, feminine, and neuter). By
contrast, Mod.Gk. has four cases (the dative in its indirect
object function has given way to the genitive or to
prepositional periphrasis, and in its prepositional object
use to the accusative), two numbers (singular and plural),
and the same three gender classes.

The realization of these categories in Cl.Gk. depended,
for nouns and adjectives, on phonologically determined
inflectional classes, with different inflections for conso-
nant stems (including i- and u-stems), o-stems, and a:-
stems. In Mod.Gk., the assignment of nominal inflec-
tional classes is largely based on gender, not on
phonological shape. Thus, whereas the Cl.Gk. masc.
consonant stem noun patēr ‘father’ and the fem. conso-
nant stem mētēr ‘mother’ had similar inflectional patterns
(e.g. acc. sg. patēr-a, mētēr-a, gen. sg. patēr-ōs, mētēr-ōs),
in Mod.Gk. the patterns differ (e.g., nom. sg. patēr-a,
mētēr-ō, gen. sg. patēr-θ, mētēr-θ).

The verbal system of Cl.Gk. showed greater richness
in morphological categories than did the nominal system.
Three persons were inflectionally relevant, as were three
numbers (singular, dual, and plural)—though the combi-
nation of 1st person and dual was not generally realized.
Person and number markings served as a morphological
indicator of finiteness, which was also marked by rece-
sive accent (see sec. 4.1). The non-finite forms included
several participles and infinitives—which differed ac-
cording to the voice, aspect, and tense categories de-
scribed below—as well as verbal adjectives denoting
obligation and capability.

Within the category of voice, a three-way distinction
was made among the active, the passive, and the ‘middle’,
which indicated reflexive or subject-oriented actions (e.g.
active bouleîō ‘I take counsel’ vs. middle bouleíōmai ‘I
take counsel with myself, deliberate’). Passive voice was
formally distinct from middle only in the future and
simple past tenses. Cl.Gk. also had four verbal moods—
indicative, subjunctive, imperative, and optative—all of
which occurred in the various voice and temporal/aspect-
cutual categories.

Finally, Cl.Gk. is generally said to have had seven
tenses': present, future, present perfect, pluperfect, fu-
ture perfect, imperfect past, and simple past (the "aorist");
these categories actually encoded not only purely
temporal distinctions of present, past, and future, but also
aspectual distinctions of continuous (imperfective), com-
pleted (perfective), and punctual action (aorist). Only the
past time forms show the aspectual distinction in its
entirety (imperfect, pluperfect, and aorist); but it is real-
ized partially in the present and the future, and the non-
finite forms also participate.

Mod.Gk. has most of the same categorial complexities,
though its expression of the categories is often analytic
rather than synthetic. The dual number has been lost
outright; the system of non-finite forms has been consid-
erably reduced, with loss of the infinitive—a Balkan
feature—and only a few participles remaining. The
distinctions in mood, voice, tense, and aspect generally
remain, though the optative mood is expressed lexically
rather than inflectionally, and many of the modern reali-
zations differ from their ancient counterparts. The middle
and passive formations are now identical in all tenses;
and the subjunctive, future, and non-2nd person impera-
tives are all expressed analytically, or with prefixes and
suffixes instead of only suffixes, depending on certain
analytic assumptions (the existence of a formal category
of subjunctive is somewhat controversial). Moreover,
while the same tenses and aspects are found as in Cl.Gk.,
the modern perfect system continues a Middle Gk. inno-
ventive formation that arose after the loss of the ancient
perfect in Hellenistic times; and the future continues a
Middle Gk. periphrasis with the verb 'want' (another
Balkan feature). Finally, the language has extended the
continuous/punctual aspectual distinction into the future
tense, and has created a conditional formation with the
future marker and the formal past tense.

4.3. Syntax. The syntax of Greek can scarcely be
treated in brief, but a few features are particularly salient.
Cl.Gk. presented an elaborate system of verbal comple-
mentation. The non-finite verbal forms, i.e. infinitives
and participles, were used as complements to matrix
predicates, as were the finite forms, which in different
combinations of tense and mood with various subordi-
nating conjunctions signaled semantic distinctions which
were often quite subtle. Complex restrictions on sequence
of tense and mood played a role in the formation of
subordinate clauses. By contrast, Mod.Gk. has only finite
complementation, having gradually done away with the
infinitive (see above). This Balkan feature is in keeping
with other movements in the language toward analytic
expression, e.g. prepositionally marked indirect objects.

Greek at all stages has allowed word order that is fairly
free from a syntactic standpoint, though different orders
had stylistic functions. Cl.Gk. had a well-developed sys-
tem of pronominal and sentence-adverbial clitics in
Mod.Gk., weak pronominal forms—possibly true affixes
at this stage—remain alongside the strong forms. Finally, at all stages after Homeric, the definite article could be used to substantivize any lexical or phrasal category, giving considerable flexibility of expression.

4.4. Lexicon. The Greek lexicon has always been a mix of inherited elements and borrowings. Some Mod.Gk. words are virtually unchanged (except in accentual realization) from Cl.Gk., e.g. ánemos ‘wind’; others are still recognizably like their ancient sources despite shifts in pronunciation, morphology, and meaning, e.g. πρᾶξo ‘I write’ (Cl.Gk. grápho), ánthropos ‘human being’ (Cl.Gk. ánthrōpos).

Greek has always been receptive to borrowings—including those from earlier stages of Greek itself, in the form of learned terminology and conscious ‘high’ archaisms. In ancient times, borrowings from Anatolian and Semitic languages can be discerned—as well as presumed loans from apparently indigenous speech communities, the so-called ‘Pre-Greeks’ or ‘Pelasgians’, who lived in Greece before the coming of the Greek tribes proper. In Hellenistic times and into Middle Greek, Greek absorbed numerous loan words from Latin; in the Byzantine and early Medieval periods, some Slavic and Albanian words entered the language. In the late Medieval period, many Turkish words (and through Turkish, words of Arabic origin) took a place in the Greek lexicon, and several continue in use today. Mod.Gk. has seen numerous lexical contributions from French, especially in the early 20th century, and more recently from English. Except for the more recent loans from European languages, most borrowings have been assimilated morphologically, and to a lesser extent phonologically, to existing Greek patterns.

BRIAN D. JOSEPH

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### Table 1. The Greek Alphabet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital/Small letter</th>
<th>Ancient Pronunciation/Transliteration</th>
<th>Modern Pronunciation/Transliteration</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ευ</td>
<td>[eu]/eu</td>
<td>[ev] (+ voice)/ev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οι</td>
<td>[oi]/oi</td>
<td>[i]/i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ου</td>
<td>[ou]/ou</td>
<td>[u]/u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ιυ</td>
<td>[yi]/yi, ui</td>
<td>[i]/i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γι, γι, χι, ξι</td>
<td>[gi]/gi, kh, ks)</td>
<td>[g]/n (–g, h, ks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>γκ</td>
<td>[gk]/nk</td>
<td>[(t)g] medially/(n)g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ιβ, ιντ</td>
<td>[mb, mp]/mb, mp</td>
<td>[(m)b] medially/(m)b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ιαδ, ιντ</td>
<td>[nd, nt]/nd, nt</td>
<td>[(nd)] medially/(n)d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τζ</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>[d]*/dz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τσ</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>[t]*/ts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ</td>
<td>(– absence of h)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ꞌ</td>
<td>high pitch/´</td>
<td>primary stress/´</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ɥ</td>
<td>low pitch/´</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ꞓ</td>
<td>contour pitch/´, Ꞓ</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3. Classical Attic/Ionic Greek Vowels and Diphthongs

| iːː / yːː | yj |
| eːː / øːː | ej ew eːːw oːj oːj |
| eː / øː | aj aj aw aːːw |
| aːː / aːː |
LANGUAGE LIST

Greek, Ancient: spoken and written in ancient times in Greece and in colonized areas from southern Italy to the Black Sea.

Greek, Hellenistic: used in Greece, and as the lingua franca of the Middle East, from the time of Alexander the Great. The variety known as the Koiné was the language of the New Testament.

Greek, Middle: the language of the Byzantine Empire and of medieval Greece, and the predecessor of Modern Greek.

Greek, Modern: around 11,500,000 speakers reported in 1986, with 9,960,000 in Greece, 500,000 in Cyprus, 20,000 in Italy, 5,000 to 8,000 in Turkey, 107,000 in Australia, 60,000 in Egypt, 459,000 in the United States, 344,000 in the USSR, and 104,000 in Canada. Also used in Corsica (France), Rumania, and Bulgaria. Also called Romanic or Neo-Hellenic.

Pontic: formerly spoken on the Black Sea coast of Turkey; now spoken near Athens, Greece, and in the United States and Canada. Speakers may still remain in Turkey. Speakers of Standard Greek cannot understand Pontic. Young people speak Standard Greek as their first language; but speakers in North America are reported to hold onto their language more zealously than those in Greece.

Tsakonian: 10,000 speakers reported in 1981, on the eastern coast of the Peloponnesos, Greece. Monolingual speakers were reported in 1927. Tsakonian is not inherently mutually intelligible with modern Greek.

Yevanic: possibly 50 speakers in 1971, in Israel and the United States. Also known as Judeo-Greek.

By the end of the 20th century, the total number of speakers approached 13,000,000, with some 11,000,000 in Greece and 600,000 in Cyprus.