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## “HAVE A ‘TASTY’ DAY!”: WISHES IN GREEK FOOD BLOGS

Wishes in Greek remain a largely unexplored area. Aiming to contribute towards this void, this study intends to examine the forms and functions of wishes in Greek food blogs. Drawing on im/politeness approaches, the study analyses 697 comments that include wishes and occur in the comment section of ten Greek food blogs. The aim of the study is to identify the triggering events and trajectories of these wishes and to consider possible explanations for the fact that some of them remain unacknowledged. The findings suggest that food bloggers view their participation in these blogs as ways of communicating online with people with shared interests and of constructing in-group identities with other bloggers. Our analysis also indicates that lack of response to a wish does not seem to be interpreted as impolite behaviour but rather as an instance of politic behaviour.

**Keywords:** wishes, im/politeness, online communication, relational work, food blogs

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Food blogs are written, asynchronous forums of digitally-mediated communication (DMC) which involve preparing, photographing and evaluating food, among others. Food bloggers and visitors to food blogs are people who are united in their interest in food, especially its preparation. These people post their food and cooking practices, frequently including photos, to which interested others may react, thus creating a ‘community of practice’ (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992). The joint enterprise that brings the members of this community of

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practice together appears to be sharing information concerning new recipes and dishes. Food bloggers are here to share their ideas, knowledge and experience with others, while blog visitors are here to present their own tweaked (changed) recipes, to get informed on new recipes and enrich their knowledge on various aspects of cooking (Tzanne 2022).

A prominent feature of Greek food blogs is the exchange of wishes, utterances which "a speaker addresses to his/her interlocutor in order to convey his/her desire that a positive state of affairs come about for the hearer" (Katsiki 2001 in Dumitrescu 2006: 23). Wishes in Greek remain a largely unexplored area with the exception of two studies comparing Greek and French wishes (Katsiki 2000, 2001), one comparing Greek and Turkish formulaic expressions including wishes (Tannen & Öztekin 1981), one focusing on the reciprocation of birthday wishes on Facebook (Theodoropoulou 2015) and one on well-wishing expressions at the end of interactions (Ndoci 2021).

Aiming to contribute towards filling this void, and, at the same time, purporting to further the study of im/politeness in online communication, in this paper we intend to examine wishes in the digital environment of Greek food blogs. More specifically, our aims in this paper are (i) to identify the different categories and triggering events of wishes in Greek food blogs, and (ii) to examine the trajectories of wishes in the specific context and consider possible explanations for the fact that some of them are not responded to by their recipients.

Our study has examined a dataset of over a thousand wishes found in 697 comments that appeared in the comment section of ten Greek food blogs run by amateur cooks. The comments were posted between 2007 and 2020 and collected between October 2019 and June 2020. In order to protect the privacy of all participants involved, the names or nicknames bloggers and commenters use to identify themselves have been replaced with pseudonyms.

The theoretical framework employed for the analysis of the comments involves Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, Culpeper's (1996, 2011) and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich's (2010) taxonomies of impoliteness strategies and the relational work approach to im/politeness (Locher & Watts 2005).

## 2. LINGUISTIC AND STRUCTURAL REALISATION OF WISHES

At a linguistic level, wishes are seen as formulaic expressions realised with a limited number of syntactic patterns. Of these the most common ones include:

- (1) a noun usually preceded or rarely followed by an adjective (mostly *καλός* 'good' but also *ευτυχισμένος* 'happy' and *χαρούμενος* 'merry' among others) or a quantifier (such as *πολλά* 'many'), and
- (2) an utterance, containing a subjunctive verb form with *να* or *ας* sometimes preceded by the main verb *εύχομαι* 'I wish' or by the exclamatory particle *μακάρι* 'may you/I wish' (Holton et al. 1997: 208).

Wishes exhibiting both these syntactic patterns abound in the dataset we have examined (e.g., *καλό μήνα* ‘good month’, *χρόνια πολλά* ‘many years’, *να είσαι πάντα γερή* ‘may you be always in good health’, *εύχομαι να το απολαύσετε* ‘I wish you enjoy it’).

Concerning the structure of wishes in discourse, one could argue that rather than being two-part exchanges, i.e., adjacency pairs, they follow a tri-partite structure which includes the triggering event, the wish itself and the response to it (cf. Goffman 1976; Tsui 1989). These three parts constitute a coherent and bounded conversational unit. The specific triggering event seems to necessitate a wish and the wish in turn may trigger a response.

An example of this kind of structure is the following:

Triggering event: A festive day, New Year’s Day

Wish: *Καλή χρονιά*

*Happy new year*

Response: *Ευχαριστώ πολύ. Επίσης*

*Thank you very much. The same to you*

What is interesting in our data, is that the triggering event may be a photo of a dish and the response to the wish may be absent, as we will see below.

In general, responses to wishes range from acceptances through thanking to returns according to the context in which they occur. Absence of a response may be perceived by interlocutors as intentionally withheld and thus as impolite behaviour. As Dumitrescu (2006: 8) observes not performing such rituals in the way “they are expected to unfold is a noticeable offense, and the person ‘breaking the rules’” may be considered impolite. A notable exception to this rather general rule is observed in our data (see Tzanne 2022) where not responding to wishes does not appear to be interpreted as impolite by participants since they do not evaluate this absence negatively. We shall try to explain the reasons why this may be the case in section 4.

### 3. FINDINGS

Greek well-wishing remarks tend to focus on “eternal values, such as health, longevity, family and religion” (Dumitrescu 2006: 26, drawing on Katsiki 2001).

In general terms, wishes in Greek food blogs appear to fall into Katsiki’s (2001) categories of situational (culturally-specific wishes calling for a ritual exchange, mostly at the beginning of an interaction) and interactional (those often used to close an interaction on a positive note) wishes. An example of the latter is *καλή επιτυχία* ‘good success’, which relates to the execution of a recipe,

and instances of the former may concern Greek Orthodox festive days/periods (e.g., *Καλή χρονιά* 'Happy new year' or *Καλή Σαρακοστή* 'Good Lent') or other time periods (e.g., *Καλό φθινόπωρο* 'Good autumn'). Additionally, we have found wishes that relate to 'happy events' (Tannen & Öztekin 1981: 41), that is, wishes concerning 'occasions' such as bloggers' namedays or 'gain' such as the arrival of relatives whom bloggers have not seen for a long time.

More specifically, in our corpus of wishes, commenters and bloggers exchange wishes on festive days (e.g., *Καλό Πάσχα!* 'Happy Easter!'), namedays (e.g., *Χρόνια πολλά για τη γιορτή σου* 'Many returns of your nameday') and birthdays (e.g., *Χρόνια πολλά* 'Many years'). They also offer wishes that relate to specific time zones (e.g., *καλό βράδυ* (have a) 'good night', *καλή εβδομάδα* '(have a) good week', *καλό μήνα* '(have a) good month'). Other wishes concern people's health (e.g., *να'σαι καλά* 'may you be well', *να'σαι πάντα γερή* 'may you always be in good health'), activities people may engage in (e.g., *καλές αναρτήσεις* 'good postings', *καλές εργασίες* 'good works', *καλές διακοπές* 'happy holidays'), visiting or receiving people in one's own place (e.g., *καλώς ήρθατε* 'well you came', *καλώς σας βρήκα*, 'well I found you', *καλώς ήρθες στη μπλογκογειτονιά* 'welcome to the blogneighbourhood', *καλώς να τους δεχτείτε* 'may you receive them well'), going on a trip (*καλό ταξίδι* 'have a good trip' / 'safe journey'), and, of course, wishes regarding cooking or eating (e.g., *καλή επιτυχία* 'good luck', *καλοφάγωτο* 'may you eat it well', *να το ευχαριστηθείτε / απολαύσετε* 'may you enjoy it').

In this paper, we will focus on cooking/eating-related wishes as they are the most relevant to the content of food blogs, and, yet, they are very few and, interestingly, they all remain unacknowledged, which foregrounds them as deviating from the tri-partite structure of wishes we discussed earlier.

Let us now focus on the wishes that relate to cooking or eating.

(a) *Καλή (σας/σου) επιτυχία!* 'Good success (to you)!'

This is the most frequently occurring of the cooking/eating-related wishes found in the corpus. It appears 39 times and is offered by bloggers only (with the exception of one case where it is found at the end of a comment in which a visitor has presented their own tweak to the blogger's recipe). In the following example, the blogger (Georgia/G.) ends her post wishing the commenter 'Good success Good weekend'.

*Γεωργία* 15 Ιουνίου 2013 – 7:49 π.μ.<sup>3</sup>

Καλημέρα, να, μπορείς να αντικαταστήσεις  
το σπορέλαιο με την ίδια ποσότητα BITAM!  
Καλή επιτυχία Καλό Σ/Κ, Γ.

<sup>3</sup> Typo and other infelicities in the examples have been left intact.

*Georgia* 15 June 2013 – 7:49 a.m.

Good morning, yes, you can replace seed oil with the same amount of margarine!

Good success Good weekend, G.

It is worth noting here that debates emerge on the media from time to time as to whether the adjective *καλή* ‘good’ is pleonastic in some of these expressions such as *καλή επιτυχία* ‘good success’ and should, thus, be avoided. The argument goes that *επιτυχία* ‘success’ has a positive valence, so modification with *καλή* ‘good’ is redundant and *επιτυχία* ‘success’ by itself would be adequate. One counterargument to this is that even though languages do have redundant elements, in the above case the adjective ‘good’ is not superfluous as it really means *με το καλό να έρθει η επιτυχία* ‘may success come’ (see, e.g., Sarantakos 2018).

(b) *Καλοφάγωτο/η/α* ‘May you eat it well’

This wish occurs 9 times in the corpus, offered by 2 bloggers and 7 visitors. In some cases, it is clearly addressed to specific commenters, as in the following example in which the blogger (Dimitra) replies to the comments of two visitors (maria and Marita) on a recipe she has just posted:

maria είπε...

Πολύ ωραία!!!! Φτιάχνω και συχνά πίτσα!

Φιλιά!!!

Καλή εβδομάδα!

14 Απριλίου 2012 – 10:04 π.μ.

Marita είπε...

Πολύ ωραία και τραγανή σίγουρα!!!

15 Απριλίου 2012 – 11:44 π.μ.

Η Δήμητρα είπε...

καλοφάγωτη κορίτσια! Φιλιά!

17 Απριλίου 2012 – 5:26 π.μ.

maria said...

Very nice!!!! I also make pitsa often!

Kisses!!!

Good week!

14 April 2012 - 10:04 a.m.

Marita said...

Very nice and crispy for sure!!!

15 April 2012 - 11:44 a.m.

Dimitra said...

May it be eaten well girls! Kisses!

17 April 2012 - 5:26 a.m.

The following example is interesting in that the blogger, Olga, responds to all of the visitor's wishes except the one that relates to cooking/eating.

*O/H Afroditi*

16 Δεκεμβρίου 2017 στις 6:01 MM

Ωραία εικόνα Όλγα!! Καλώς τους δεχτήκατε. Καλές γιορτές και φυσικά καλοφάγωτο το cheesecake σας.

• O/H Όλγα

16 Δεκεμβρίου 2017 στις 7:12 MM

Σε ευχαριστώ Αφροδίτη καλώς τους δέχτηκα και καλό ταξίδι!! Καλές γιορτές και σε σας.

*Afroditi*

16 December 2017 at 6:01 PM

Nice photo Olga!! You have received them well. Good holidays and of course may your cheese cake be well-eaten.

• Olga

16 December 2017 at 7:12 PM

Thank you Afroditi I have received them well and may they have a safe journey!! Good holidays to you, too.

One could argue that Olga's thanking relates to both the wish and the compliment on the photo that accompanies the recipe. However, viewed closely, the structure of Olga's comment replicates the order in which the visitor has structured their comment (compliment – receiving people-related wish – festive days-related wish). This leaves the last part of the comment, i.e., the cooking/eating-related wish, without a response.

(c) *Να το απολαύσεις/ετε. Καλή απόλαυση.* 'May you enjoy it. Good enjoyment.'

Finally, the wishes *να το απολαύσεις/ετε* and *καλή απόλαυση* ('may you enjoy it / good enjoyment') occur 5 times in the corpus (4 and 1, respectively).

They are all offered by bloggers and, similar to all wishes of this category, they all remain unacknowledged.

Λένα

Σ'ευχαριστώ για τα καλά σου λόγια! Εύχομαι καλή επιτυχία αν την δοκιμάσεις και να την απολαύσεις!

Lena

Thank you for your good words! I wish (you) good success if you try it and may you enjoy it!

(d) *Καλή (μας) όρεξη!* 'Bon appetit (to us)'

The wish appears twice in the dataset, as *καλή όρεξη* ('bon appetit') and *καλή μας όρεξη* ('bon appetit to us'). Both wishes occur at the very end of comments made by visitors who offer their own tweaks of the blogger's recipe. These wishes appear to be addressed to all blog participants, blogger, commenters and lurkers alike; yet, they both remain unacknowledged. For example:

Unknown 11 Μαρτίου 2018 – 9:40 μ.μ.

ΠΕΣ ΤΑ ΒΡΕ ΚΟΠΕΛΑ ΜΟΥ ΟΤΙ ΘΕΛΕΙ ΤΟΣΗ ΩΡΑ...ΚΙ ΕΓΩ 1 ΩΡΑ ΚΙ ΕΝΑ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΟ ΣΕ ΣΙΓΑΝΗ ΦΩΤΙΑ ΤΟ ΒΡΑΖΩ ΜΕ ΤΟΝ ΙΔΙΟ ΤΡΟΠΟ ΚΑΙ ΓΙΝΕΤΑΙ ΣΟΥΠΕΡ...ΑΠΛΑ ΟΣΟΙ ΤΟ ΘΕΛΟΥΝ ΣΕ ΜΙΣΗ ΩΡΑ ΕΤΟΙΜΟ, ΠΡΟΣΘΕΤΟΥΝ ΚΟΡΝ ΦΛΑΟΥΡ...ΑΛΛΑ ΤΟ ΑΥΘΕΝΤΙΚΟ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΑΛΛΟ ΠΡΑΓΜΑ....ΚΑΛΗ ΜΑΣ ΟΡΕΞΗ...!!!!

Unknown11 March 2018 - 9:40 p.m.

SAY IT, MY GIRL, THAT IT TAKES SO MUCH TIME...I, TOO, LET IT SIMMER FOR AN HOUR AND A QUARTER IN THE SAME WAY AND IT'S GETS REALLY GOOD...IT'S SIMPLY THAT, PEOPLE WHO WANT IT READY IN HALF AN HOUR ADD CORN FLOUR...BUT THE AUTHENTIC DISH IS REALLY SOMETHING... BON APPETIT TO US...!!!!

#### 4. DISCUSSION

When searching for reasons for the fact that no food-related wish is acknowledged in the data, the first explanation that comes to mind is one that relates to the asynchronous nature of communication in blogs. For example, a blogger wishes *Καλή επιτυχία* 'Good success' to a visitor who said she was going to make the dish, but the visitor sees the wish at a much later point, when the wish is no longer temporally relevant (e.g., the visitor has already made and perhaps consumed the dish). In this case, the felicity condition of 'temporality'

(Dumitrescu 2006) is not met and this is probably the reason the visitor decides not to respond to the wish.

Another possibility is that, as almost all of these wishes are interactional wishes (Katsiki 2001) that appear in the closing section of a comment, participants may take them to be the signing-off part of the comments that signals the end of the interaction. In this case, the new discourse role of wishes may be said to override their interpersonal force, which is to enhance interactants' 'affiliation image' (Dumitrescu 2006: 24).

Additionally, the observed lack of response to wishes may indicate in some cases that participants focus on the main body of the comment and not on its closing part where the wish is. For example, if the visitor has made a request for information (How much sugar do we need for the syrup?), they are likely to focus more on the part of the comment where the blogger provides this information rather than on the way she closes the comment, and that may explain the fact that they do not respond to the wish. However, we should note that, not responding to wishes is also observed in the case of comments which contain only a greeting and a wish. So, we need to consider another explanation that may also cover cases such as these, especially since not responding to such acts may be perceived as impolite.

To this end, we suggest turning our attention to wishing in im/politeness research. Dumitrescu (2006: 24) states that a wish is "a powerful marker of solidarity among members of communities that share the same system of cultural values". In that respect, wishes can be viewed as enhancing the affiliation image of interactants (Dumitrescu 2006: 24). In other words, wishes are realisations of positive politeness in terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. More specifically, wishes can be seen as an output of the 'notice, attend to H's wants' or 'intensify interest to H' or 'give gifts to the hearer' such as "goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation" strategies (cf. Ndoci 2021: 1), which presuppose and assert common ground between commenter and blogger. The question which arises here is whether we could really talk about cooking/eating-related wishes as instances of politeness in this context.

It is our contention that, in order to offer a comprehensive explanation of these unacknowledged wishes within im/politeness research, we need to approach the issue with the aid of relational work (Locher 2004; Locher & Watts 2005). This is a discursive approach that distinguishes among positively marked relational work (i.e., politeness), politic work (i.e., work that is merely adequate and appropriate in the specific context), and negatively marked relational work (i.e., impoliteness).

Exchanging well-wishing remarks has been discussed in terms of performing positively marked relational work (Theodoropoulou 2015). However, the fact that



these wishes in the context of food blogs remain unacknowledged and there is no comment indicating that someone was offended by this absence strongly indicates, in our view, that they are not considered instances of positively marked, polite work, but rather instances of politic relational work, that is, merely adequate and appropriate for the specific task at hand. According to Locher and Watts (2005: 11), such instances go largely unnoticed by interactants. In this sense, it can be argued that blog participants see cooking/eating-related wishes as something so typical of this context that they hardly notice them.

At this point, we should note that some wishes (e.g., *καλή επιτυχία* ‘good success’) seem to be closer to politic work than others (e.g., *καλοφάγωτο* ‘may you eat it well’). In particular, the reason this wish is not acknowledged may relate to the fact that it may not be so conventionalised as to have a specific, more or less automatic response (unlike sequences like *καλώς ήρθες* / *καλώς σε βρήκα* ‘well you came’ / ‘well I found you’ and *καλή επιτυχία* ‘good success’ / *ευχαριστώ* ‘thank you’). So it is possible that interactants do not have a suitable response for it immediately available.<sup>4</sup> Another explanation for not responding to this wish may relate to the fact that the adjective *καλοφάγωτο* (‘may you eat it well’) does not specify who the dish is going to be consumed by, and, therefore, interactants may not feel directly involved so as to reply to the wish.

In the following comment, a visitor praises the blogger for the wonderful recipe she has posted, wishes her to enjoy eating the dish and promises to try the recipe. Note that the visitor talks about the recipe and not the dish, so it is not particularly clear who is going to make and eat it well (the blogger, her family, visitors and/or lurkers).

O/H Viva 22 Ιουνίου 2016 στις 6:59 MM

Ευχαριστούμε που αποκάλυψες μια όντως εξαιρετική συνταγή! Καλοφάγωτη! Θα τη δοκιμάσουμε οπωσδήποτε!

Viva on 22 June 2016 at 6:59 PM

Thank you for revealing a truly exceptional recipe! May it be eaten well! We will definitely try it!

A final point now concerning wishes and impoliteness is that not responding to a wish when this response is expected (according to the tri-partite structure of wishes we discussed earlier) is an impoliteness strategy (Withhold politeness), as claimed by both Culpeper (1996, 2011) and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2010). In fact, other studies (Dumitrescu 2006; Theodoropoulou 2015) have suggested that

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<sup>4</sup> As Makri-Tsilipakou commented after the presentation, in some real life contexts such wishes are followed by offers as a response.

lack of response to a wish may be considered impolite and offensive behaviour. However, it appears that in the specific context of Greek food blogs, there is no discursive evidence to support the claim that not responding to such a wish is considered impolite. Let us note here that in discursive approaches to im/politeness, politeness is seen as a situated evaluation rather than a stable given and what is perceived as im/polite relies on the interlocutors' assessment and not just the speaker's production or intention (Eelen 2001: 107).

The question which arises here, is whether this is a case of 'withholding politeness', that is, a case where politeness is expected but it is absent (Culpeper 1996: 357). We believe that not responding to these wishes should be seen not as impolite behaviour (Withhold politeness), but as politic work in the specific digital context (Greek food blogs). Politic work seems to involve not only the expression of cooking/eating-related wishes themselves, but also the lack of response to them. In other words, lack of response to this category of wishes can also be considered politic work, that is, the type of relational work that is simply appropriate for dealing with such wishes in this communicative context. That is probably the reason why no participant, blogger or visitor, gives evidence for being offended by providing some kind of reaction relating to the fact that their wish remains unacknowledged.

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## ΕΥΧΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΣΥΝΤΑΓΩΝ

### Περίληψη

Οι ευχές ορίζονται ως εκφράσεις τις οποίες «ο ομιλητής απευθύνει στον συνομιλητή του για να μεταφέρει την επιθυμία του να προκύψει μια θετική κατάσταση πραγμάτων για τον ακροατή» (Dimitrescu 2006: 23, αντλώντας από Κατσίκη 2001). Οι ευχές στα Ελληνικά παραμένουν σε μεγάλο βαθμό ανεξερεύνητη περιοχή με εξαιρέσεις όπως Katsiki (2000, 2001), Tannen και Öztek (1981), Theodoropoulou (2015) και Ndoci (2021). Με στόχο να συμβάλει στην κάλυψη αυτού του κενού, η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει τις μορφές και τις λειτουργίες των ευχών στο ψηφιακό περιβάλλον των ελληνικών ιστολογίων συνταγών. Βασιζόμενη σε θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις της ευ/αγένειας, η μελέτη αναλύει 697 σχόλια που περιλαμβάνουν ευχές προκειμένου να εντοπίσει τα γεγονότα που τις προκαλούν και τις τροχίες τους στο συγκεκριμένο πλαίσιο και να προτείνει πιθανές εξηγήσεις για το γεγονός ότι ορισμένες ευχές δεν απαντώνται από τους/τις συμμετέχοντες/ουσες.

Με βάση την κατηγοριοποίηση των ευχών της Katsiki (2001 στην Dumitrescu 2006: 27), η μελέτη εντόπισε ευχές «αλληλεπίδρασης» (π.χ. *καλή επιτυχία*, που σχετίζεται με την εκτέλεση μιας συνταγής), αλλά και «καταστασιακές» ευχές που μπορεί να αφορούν εορταστικές ημέρες/περιόδους (π.χ. *Καλό Πάσχα*) ή άλλες χρονικές περιόδους (π.χ. *Καλό φθινόπωρο*). Επιπλέον, βρήκαμε έναν μεγάλο αριθμό ευχών που σχετίζονται με «χαρούμενα γεγονότα» (Tannen & Öztek 1981: 41), δηλαδή ευχές που αφορούν «περιστάσεις» όπως οι γιορτές των bloggers ή «κέρδος» όπως η άφιξη συγγενών που οι bloggers δεν έχουν δει για πολύ καιρό. Η ανάλυσή μας δείχνει ότι, σε αντίθεση με ό,τι άλλες μελέτες (Dumitrescu 2006, Theodoropoulou 2015) προτείνουν, η έλλειψη ανταπόκρισης σε μια ευχή στο συγκεκριμένο πλαίσιο των ελληνικών ιστολογίων συνταγών δεν φαίνεται να γίνεται αντιληπτή ως αγενής συμπεριφορά. Μια πιθανή εξήγηση για αυτό θα μπορούσε να είναι ότι η απουσία ευχών αποτελεί περίπτωση «πολιτικής» συμπεριφοράς (Locher & Watts 2005), πράγμα που σημαίνει ότι θεωρείται ως η αναμενόμενη, κατάλληλη συμπεριφορά και δεν απαιτεί απάντηση/αντίδραση.

**Λέξεις-κλειδιά:** ευχές, ευγένεια, διαδικτυακή επικοινωνία, σχεσιακή εργασία, ιστολόγια συνταγών