

**Searching for Translation: language commensurability among
the Greek linguistic minority of South Italy**

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This paper discusses the methodological complexities of conducting research with the tri-lingual Grecanici, the Greek linguistic minority of Reggio Calabria, South Italy. Grecanici are trilingual: they speak Grecanico (also termed 'Grico' or 'Greco'), which is comprised of archaic Doric, Hellenistic, Byzantine as well as local Romanic and Italian linguistic elements. They also speak the local Calabrian dialect and the official Italian language. Grecanici have managed to successfully promote their minority status in contemporary politics through linguistic claims.

The methodological implications when working with multilingual subjects call for a reappraisal and reconsideration of Geertz's search for meaning through multilayered winking. Commensurability is not always possible through the linguistic levels of analysis. The idea that research and researched are caught in a semiotic web of multi-dimensional meanings – introduced by multilingualism – proposes a knotted methodological approach where every knot sustains a specific web of connections and relations. In this sense language and relations are examined as complementary entities. For example, kinship terminologies in Grecanico denote a different kinship structure when compared to the equivalent terminologies in Italian. How could such incommensurability be avoided?

Through reflexive material collected from ongoing research in Reggio Calabria, South Italy, I propose that a complementary approach to multilingual research can yield fruitful anthropological and sociological data that will enhance our understanding and deepen our analytical capacity when conducting research within multilingual communities.