

## CYPRriot AS A VOS LANGUAGE

Erma Vassiliou

### 1.0 Introduction

Cypriot is usually referred to as a dialect of Greek, but Standard Greek and Cypriot are mutually unintelligible. According to Newton (1972:19), “While speakers of village dialect do not nowadays experience much difficulty in following Standard Demotic and can often produce an approximation to it which is intelligible to mainland speakers, evidence derived from playing tape recordings to Athenian informants indicates that the intelligibility of Cypriot */xorkatika/* to the inhabitants of mainland towns is comparable to that of Dutch to speakers of High German.” The Cypriots understand and speak, more or less, many of the varieties of the Greek language. Standard Greek is used by Greek-Cypriots as their written form of language.

In this paper (which is derived from Vassiliou 1995) I intend to show that the Cypriot (basic) word order is V(erb) O(bject) S(ubject), as opposed to that of Standard Greek, which is SVO.

The data used for the purposes of this thesis represent Cypriot as it is spoken in the villages (*xorkatika* 'village dialect'), without any lexical, syntactic, phonological or morphological interference from any other form of Greek. The examples represent Cypriot at the time the texts have been transcribed in the early sixties. The examples from the different texts show clearly the syntactic structure of Cypriot, and more particularly its word order, “with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements.”

Cypriots use the VOS structure intuitively, as examples (1-2) demonstrate.

- (1) *eksevin o ilios* (intransitive)  
came out the sun-nom  
'The sun is shining, came out of the clouds'
- (2) *ekapsen ta sparta-pl.acc to xalazin* (transitive)  
burned the crop the hail-neut.nom  
'The hail destroyed the crop'

These examples indicate that the SVO structure of the Standard Greek (SG) written variety the Cypriots use for their everyday written communication does not interfere with their spoken VOS structure. According to Browning (1969:136), “only in Cyprus is the local dialect (of which there are several regional varieties) the universal medium of informal communication. In fact many Cypriots do not feel entirely at home in CMG (Common Modern Greek) and prefer to use *katharevousa* or English as a medium of formal communication.”

By examining the syntactic patterning of the various stages of Indo-European languages, linguists have documented changes in the word order within the clause particularly concerning the position of the Subject. Over time, Standard Greek was one among the many Indo-European languages that developed a Subject-initial structure. Most of the modern Indo-European languages have, today, a basic SVO structure and so has Standard Greek, in spite of its great flexibility in word order. However, Cypriot does not follow this order. The verb in initial position is used constantly by the Cypriot speakers in clauses where both S and O are independently represented, as well as in clauses where S is encoded within the verb and O is represented by a clitic pronoun.

From the various examples in this study, it can be seen that the V-initial structure is the preferred structure of Cypriot. The data provided in this work show how representative this V-initial ordering is. Although word order in Cypriot is remarkably flexible, due mainly to

pragmatic considerations, the Cypriot VOS order exemplified here demonstrates clearly that this order is not just another possibility of the extreme flexibility of the language, but is used by the speakers: a) to express a meaning in the way it is conceived by a Cypriot native speaker, and b) exclusively in the spoken form, or where the spoken form is directly transcribed into a written one.

### **1.1 Data**

The data are from texts transcribed by Newton (1972) from a number of tapes he recorded in Cyprus in 1963. The section 'Texts' in Newton's work is intended to illustrate the various dialects of Cypriot Greek spoken in the four main linguistic regions of Cyprus, Central Cyprus, North Paphos, South Paphos and Karpas. The texts were completely unedited, "tiresome through the continual false starts and repetitions."

In studying the different Cypriot dialects, Newton intended to illustrate the standardizing tendencies of the different speakers. The evidence of the taped material confirmed the common notion that the idiolects of older speakers "are necessarily more immune to standardizing influence; on the contrary, the most highly dialectal specimens found came from children who had hardly come under the influence of the elementary educational system or who had dealt with them by developing what may be regarded as a fluent bilingualism." Newton found that an effective method of ensuring that children's accounts had come from purely oral sources was to request a tale about Nasreddin Hoja, whence come the greater part of these stories. Nasreddin Hoja was, according to some, a real person, a Mullah or a *cadi* (Turkish judge) who lived in Asia Minor in the 15th or the 16th century. For some others he was a fictitious person and the hero of a great number of stories. The myths related to his achievements reveal naivety and intelligence, and a fine oriental humour (according to *O Symvoulos ton Neon* 1978:2317). The stories of the Hoja are interesting and popular, even today. It is also noteworthy that almost all the speakers were illiterate. This implies that Newton's sample constitutes a reliable basis for the study of unplanned discourse and, in consequence, of the typological characteristics of the Cypriot language. Newton's texts thus provide a reliable source for the study of spontaneous speech. They represent both male and female informants who are of different age, different educational backgrounds and come from different parts of the island.

The data consists of taped material running for a total of ten hours. These consist of 20 different stories and 2 poems. The poems were excluded from this study. Since the tapes were completely unedited, as mentioned by Newton (1972:132), we assume that the material shows genuine unplanned discourse. Each passage is followed by brief notes, "and by a literal translation, which reproduces even the extreme paratactic style of the original." Adult informants were instructed to speak *xorkatika*; young children were asked to speak as they did at home rather as they were taught to speak at school.

### **1.2 Methodology**

The research required that non-indicative clauses be ruled out of the total number of the clauses. After these sentences had been disregarded, a total number of 560 indicative sentences provided the raw material of the case study. This material consisted of a large number of sentences where S was encoded in the verb, clauses where O (direct Object) and IO (Indirect Object) were represented in the sentence by clitics, and a very small number of elliptical clauses.

Of the initial 560 there remained 195 clauses. This final residue was then divided into different categories. These sentences had all the three constituents V, O, and S independently represented. They were either Verb-initial or Subject-initial. Among the 195 clauses of the

residue there was no O-initial clause where V, O and S were all independently represented. There was an overwhelming predominance of Verbs in initial position.

Out of the 195 clauses, there were:

V-initial: 173

S-initial: 22

Some examples follow:

- (3) asfala tin portan o drakos (p.144)  
 closes the door-acc the dragon  
 'The dragon closes the door'
- (4) eklepsen to sentonim mu o kostas (p.159)  
 stole-3.sg the sheet mine the Kostas-nom  
 'Kostas stole my sheet'
- (5) epkasen to klidin i kopella (p.161)  
 took the key-acc the young girl-nom  
 'The young girl took the key'
- (6) ivren to cirtarin i foraa (p.167)  
 found the barley the mare-nom  
 'The mare found the barley'

Among the 173 V-initial clauses, the greater percentage, a number of 152, represented intransitive clauses, that is, VS clauses. The statistics showed the following:

152 VS  
 18 VOS  
 3 VSO  
 17 SV  
 5 SVO

It is important to add, here, that among the disregarded clauses a significant number (132 clauses) were VOn. The statistics on the disregarded clauses showed the following (where n=noun, pr=pronoun, and X=anything except S, V, O, IO.):

132	V On	8	V IOpr	2	Spr V On
46	V Opr	8	V IOpr Opr	3	Spr V
13	V Spr	1	V IOpr Sn	1	Spr IOpr V
63	V, or VX IOn			1	Spr IOpr
14	V Opr Sn	20	V IOpr Spr Opr V		
1	V Opr Spr	12	V IOn	1	IOpr V S
4	V IOpr On	1	V On IOn	1	On V Opr
Sn		6	V Opr IOn	1	Opr V Sn
14	V IOn On	2	V Opr On	1	O V IOpr
3	V IOpr Opr		Opr		
Sn				1	IOpr V S

It is interesting to look at the position of both S and IO in clauses with one or more pronominal participants. There is a good number of S-final clauses in the forms of, V Opr Sn clauses (14), V IOpr Spr (20), VSpr (13) as well as V IOpr On Sn (4), but we have fewer S-initial clauses, meaning that the number of S-initial clauses is even smaller among the

disregarded clauses. The overwhelming predominance of IO preceding O in all di-transitive clauses is also obvious, among the data of the study.

We may be convinced, at this stage, that Cypriot is a Verb-initial language, that the number of VS clauses in Newton's texts are nearly 9 times the number of the SV clauses, and that VOS occurrence is 3.4 times greater than SVO and 6 times greater than VSO. We also realize that a great number of the raw material clauses have a great occurrence of V Opr Sn, VSpr and V IOpr Spr, a fact that could strengthen the hypothesis that Cypriot is VOS. Even though our figures can support this claim, with the data provided, what is noteworthy is that in almost all S-initial and S-centered clauses, S is used as a means to attract the hearer's attention in some particular parts of the narration. Further, it was noted that S very often associates with indefiniteness or the use of a demonstrative. It is these observations on the position of S, rather than the actual numbers we recorded, that give grounds for classifying Cypriot as VOS.

### 1.3 Variation

#### 1.3.1 S in initial position

A closer look at the sentences showed that while V-initial clauses introduced a statement heard for the first time in the narration, S-initial clauses seemed to occur in clauses which required special attention; they appeared with recapitulation, or where the subject was indefinite. In many instances S-initial seemed to arise when a noun phrase (NP) was repeated instead of a pronoun, either as S or as O in the next S-initial sentence. Some S-initial clauses appeared to have a demonstrative article preceding S, or even following it, when special attention was needed.

Let us examine a few examples: Let us take the story 'The Voice behind the Altar' (p.161) where a priest falls in love with a young girl and instead of telling her outright that he is in love with her, he fakes fainting. After he had fainted, the girl rushes in with (a bucket of) water. The information, here, is structured in V-initial order (VSX):

- (7) *evurisen c-i kopellua me to neron*  
 ran and the young girl with the water-acc  
 'And the girl ran with water'

For the narration of this incident V-initial clauses are used, until the passage where the story reveals the tricky priest and his manoeuvres which make the girl unhappy. The order of the words changes suddenly and instead of the V-initial structure the narrator has acquainted us with, a S-initial structure is now used. The narrator seeks special attention for the particular incident in which the girl, frightened by what the priest told her, starts to cry:

- (8) *i kopellua pkon arkisen klaman*  
 the young girl then started cry-neut.acc  
 'Then, the young girl started to cry'

In the same story we have a similar example (p.161), where the girl, after she had cried for her life, declares that from now on her life depends on the priest:

- (9) (a) *lali tu as erto s-ta serka su papa mu.*  
 says to him let me come-imper. into hands yours priest mine  
 (b) *i zoi mu pkon exartate pollousu*  
 the life mine then depend-pass.3.sg from you  
 'She says to him I would rather be in your hands, my priest;  
 my life depends on you, from now on'

(9b) has a S-initial structure, because it is semantically linked with the immediately preceding (9a). The expression 'coming into someone's hands', has the meaning of 'surrendering one's

life'. Here again, S-initial is triggered by the need of the narrator to highlight, or because of the fact that S has already been mentioned, even though indirectly, in (9a). It is also interesting to note that both the above S-initial sentences (8 and 9) have the word *pkon* 'then, in that case' following S, indicating that an interesting statement is about to be made. Highlighting and topicalization are the main reasons for S in initial position.

Further, S-initial structures help underlying areas of narration which need more attraction and the hearer's attention. They are used to recapitulate specific parts of a previous statement, with words from a previous clause, or with close expressions representing these statements. Apart from the areas where the narrator is seeking the attention of the hearer, the rest of the narration in 'The Voice behind the Altar' has a normal order and a normal flow of information which is prevailing in the text, with sentences constructed in the VS or VOS order.

Let us take another example (paragraph 1 from p.144) where S-initial structure is triggered by both recapitulation of one of the constituents, by topicality, or by both. The narrator, here, tells us the story of the three sons who set out to bring 'Goldilocks' from her father, the dragon. First, the narrator introduces the father and the mother of the three sons, whom he describes as 'the couple', the *androinon*. He mentions then, that the couple had three sons, and he only reveals the name of the youngest, who is the hero of the story. The first son is introduced for the first time with a V IO S structure (10). Let us examine the two clauses that follow the story's introduction. The two clauses in the text are separated with a short dialogue:

(10) *lali myan imeran tis manas tu o protos yos...*  
 says one day the mother-gen his the first son  
 'One day the first son says to his mother...'

(11) *o ciris tu aapousen ton proton polla*  
 the father his loved the first one a lot  
 'His father loved the first one a lot'

What we see is that S in final position in (10) is recapitulated in the clause that follows (11), only that now S is in O position due to the preference of the speaker for active voice. However, the word *ciris* 'father' in (11) is a topic, introduced previously with the word *androinon* 'couple'.

There are many examples where S appears when a constituent has previously or just been introduced in the clause. In 'Goldilocks', the dragon's daughter sits on the balcony. The narrator suggests special attention to the fact that the Dragon's girl was sitting on the balcony, when the three young boys came to take her. Our attention is sought, here, with an elliptical S-initial structure. The word in parenthesis was missing from the text.

(12) *i kopellua (itoun) sto parkoni*  
 the young girl (was) in the balcony-acc  
 'The young girl was on the balcony'

However, later on in the text, the narrator reminds us of the scene of Goldilocks sitting on the balcony by using the structure in (13), where the previous scene is stated directly by the narrator himself. It is as if the narrator himself is telling us that S is in initial position because it is a recapitulation.

(13) *i kopellua, ipamen, itoun sto parkoni*  
 the young girl we said was on the balcony  
 'As we said, the young girl was (sitting) on the balcony'

Note too the parenthetical phrase *ipamen* which sets off the initial S rather like *pkon* 'then' in (8-9). In the following example, again, S in initial position is a recapitulation. From the

passage 'Moon in the Well' (p.139), we have a story where the villagers took some kind of hooks to take the moon out of the water. In paragraph 2 we have the following sentence:

- (14) e.            esinaxtisan    i            xristiani,    epiran    arpaya,    epiran    fkarka,  
          now           gathered       the       Christians took       hooks,    took       spades,  
          tsappes,    epiran           ta        arpaya    mes-tid    deksameni  
          pick axes, took-3.pl    the       hooks-acc in the       well-acc  
          'Now. The Christians took hooks, they took spades,  
          pick-axes, they took the hooks into the well'

In the immediately following sentence, a SV clause is used:

- (15) i            deksameni    ishe       rizes  
          the       well           had        roots  
          'The well had roots'

Another example of recapitulation is in (16-17), where the word *alogo* 'horse' has been mentioned in a previous clause (p.167):

- (16) ipen    tu        to        alogon  
          told    him      the      horse  
          'The horse told him'

But we find the same NP in initial position, a few clauses later:

- (17) to        alogon    pale    idopia    ton    afentikon    tou  
          the       horse    again    inform    the    boss-acc    his  
          'The horse, again, informs its boss'

Note too, that *pale* is parenthetical like *ipamen* and *pkon* in the examples discussed above. In some instances it is not clear whether S is a recapitulation, a highlight or both, as in the following example. Referring again to the Goldilocks story, the three brothers find an old woman who was taking her loaves out of the oven. Information is conveyed, so far, with a V-initial structure.

- (18) eksikiniasin ta    kopellya    mas    na    pasim    pian    ivrasin  
          set off-3.pl    the        boys-nom    our    to        go        went    found-3.pl  
          myan kotzakarín    c-eksefurnizen  
          one    old woman    and took loaves out of oven  
          'The boys set off, to go and go, they found an old woman  
          who was taking her loaves out of the oven'

The old woman has been introduced (in paragraph 4), and while new information continues to be conveyed with V-initial clauses, i.e. *ekatsan ta kopellya* (sat the boys) 'the boys sat', we find a S-initial clause, when our attention is needed. The first word in this clause (19) is a word used a few clauses previously (18):

- (18) .....ivrasin    myan kotzakarín..  
          .....found        one    old woman..  
          ..... 'The found an old woman..'  
          (19) i            kocakari    lali    tus  
          the        old woman    says    to them  
          'The old woman says to them'

Another example of S-initial seems to be supported by the use of the demonstrative *cinos-i-on* 'this one, that one' followed by the NP representing S. This is easy to detect when registering S-initial clauses. A number of these clauses use a demonstrative, either preceding or

following the main NPs. In 'The Magic Boots' (p.152), narrated by a fifteen-year old boy, we have more than one instance where a demonstrative precedes a NP in a recapitulation:

- (20) *enas adropos isen triz yues. cinos o adropos*  
 a man had three sons that the man  
*epien is-to panairin...*  
 went to the fair...

'A man had three sons. That man went to the fair..'

In paragraph 3 we have the same structure again. A 'shepherd' is introduced in the story, with a V-initial structure (VS).

- (21) *irten enaz voskos istera pu kamposes imeres*  
 came one shepherd after from several days  
 'A shepherd came after several days'

The clause (VS) is repeated once more in the paragraph and immediately after S is re-introduced with a demonstrative in a S-initial structure (SV):

- (22) *sto metaksin cinos o voskos isen mya sillua*  
 in the between that the shepherd had one bitch  
*myan kattua ce myan aluppua*  
 one she-cat and one vixen...

'In the meantime, that shepherd had a bitch, a she-cat and a vixen...'

Again in paragraph 3 the same structure appears. Here, it is an IO (in 23) that takes the position of S in the following clause (24):

- (23) *c-axicen ta tis genekas tu esso*  
 and left them the wife-gen his at home  
 'And he left them to his wife (to keep) at home'

- (24) *ce cini i geneka tu efkalen enal lakkon*  
 and this the wife his dug one hole-acc  
 'And this wife of his dug a hole'

In many cases, S-initial clauses have an indefinite subject. The indefinite articles are *enas*, *mya*, and *enan*. If indefiniteness is expressed with these articles, the clauses are likely to have a S-initial structure. Let us take the example (from p.135):

- (25) *mya kocakari esarizen*  
 one old woman sweeping-imperf.3.sg  
 'An old woman was sweeping'

This is by no means a strict rule. In the same story, 'The Beanstalk', we also find:

- (26) *ce irten mya alli kocakari*  
 and came one other old woman  
 'And another old woman came'

V-initial can be used with indefinite *enaz* in intransitive clauses:

- (27) *lali enaz eksipnos pu cinus*  
 says one clever among them  
 'A clever one among them says'

See also example (21). However, by and large, indefiniteness triggers S-initial structure. In 'Tractor in Well' (p.158), we find indefinite article *enaz* triggering a S-initial structure again:

- (28) o enaz troxos tu traxtu kremnisen mes-tol lakkon  
 the one wheel of the tractor hung down inside the well  
 'One of the tractor's wheels hung down inside the well'

In another example, again, we find S in initial position followed by both a demonstrative and an indefinite, as in the following elliptical clause:

- (29) i istoria touti mya(f) foran ishen..  
 the story this one time had  
 'This story (says) that there was once..'

It is almost in every story of Newton's texts that we find indefinite *mya* 'one' in the beginning of the first paragraph. It is used to convey the meaning of 'once upon a time'. Further to these indefiniteness examples there are examples in the texts where a definite article is used in initial position, but it denotes indefiniteness. As odd as this may sound it has its explanation. For instance, the Greek Grammar uses a definite article where zero article is used in English:

- (30) i papades den pantrevonte  
 the priests not marry  
 'Priests do not get married'

Similarly in the Greek Grammar we find an indefinite article playing the role of a definite article. According to Mirambel (1978:172,II) on the indefinite article *aoristo arthro*: *Απο ορισμενες αποψεις παιζει το ρολο του ταξινομητη που εχει το οριστικο* 'from some point of views it plays the role of a classifier which has (such as) the definite article' (my translation). As we can see in the following example (from p.139), S in initial position expresses indefiniteness, because the word *papas* 'priest' does denote classification, but in that case it is followed with definite article *o*:

- (31) o papas esikothin na pai pu tin afkin na potisi  
 the priest got up for,to go from the dawn-acc to water  
 'A priest got up to go at dawn to water'

We also noticed that, in the stories of the illiterate 90-year-old woman (p.133-4), there was no S-initial structure. We have seen so far that S in the beginning of the Cypriot clause does not signal the normal flow of the narration. The same can be said for S in middle position.

### 1.3.2 S in middle position

The few examples of VSO in Newton's texts provide us with an affirmation that the presence of S in the middle position is not a characteristic of basic clauses. All VSO clauses demonstrate the need of the narrator to highlight a special fact, a climax in narration. Additionally, he is reminding us of the topic which controls, as narration goes, other verbs. It is used to remind the hearer of the independent S (topic), if the narration has been going on for a while, and only if the verbs encoding it have been used. It is as if it follows a pattern:

VS, VOS, VSX.....dialogue, VSO, V, V, V, V,.....

In paragraph 12 of page 145, for instance, S representing *imisos* (the hero of the story, 'Half') has not been mentioned at all. It has been mentioned, however, in the previous paragraph. The narrator starts paragraph 12 with two VprX clauses. Further, he introduces a dialogue, where the characters talk to each other, and where particular attention is needed for the outcome of their talk. In this specific incident, a horse asks the hero, *imisos*, to pull out a hair from its tail. The hero is mentioned in this paragraph only indirectly, and in the form of an address; *kalos ton imiso* 'welcome, Half'. The narrator, meanwhile, uses a dialogue, to make the passage more interesting; the hearer may lose track of the main NP. He is suddenly reminded of the

Subject. This Subject, in this particular position, is understood to refer to the verb that precedes, and to a number of verbs (V, VX, VOn), that follow:

- (32) *tavra o imisos myam mallan ekserizosen..*  
 pulls the Half one hair uprooted..  
*kaxiski.. etraien*  
 sits it on sets out..  
 'Half pulls a hair, he uprooted it...sits on....sets out...'

The same happens in the next paragraph. The hero is mentioned in this paragraph only in an indirect way: *ien ton, ton imison* 'she saw him, Half'. In this paragraph, the presence of the dragon's girl is confusing the hearer as to who the subject of a number of enumerated verbs in the story may be. The narration reminds us of this Subject with a VSO structure, where the verbs that follow are not confusing the listener as to who their S may be:

- (33) *efaen o imisos staxilin. eksekinisen,*  
 ate the Half grapes-part. set out  
*epien s-tol lakkon*  
 went to the well-acc  
 'Half ate some grapes. He set out and went to the well'

The same again happens in (34) where the narrator has to put into a row, or to enumerate a number of verbs, where S is found in the middle position. In this example, S in middle position appears after a dialogue between the characters, and it precedes V, VX:

- (34) *efaasin ta kopellya to stafylin, eksekiniasin*  
 ate the boys-nom the grapes-acc set out  
*epian s-tol lakkon tu draku*  
 went to the well of the dragon  
 'The boys ate the grapes, then set out and went to the dragon's well'

In VSO clauses S is a topic. It is reminding the hearer of the topic, particularly when this has not been mentioned for quite a while, and where information is packed with verbs. These observations on S-initial and S in the middle of a clause illustrate the need of the narrator to deviate from a normal, stylistically free, non-technical narration where the constituents have the following VOS structure (from p.168):

- (35) *ien tod drakon to kopellin*  
 saw the dragon-acc the boy-nom  
 'The boy saw the dragon'

This normal or basic structure is better observed in the following example, where a whole paragraph with a number of VS clauses reveals it (p.167):

- (36) *kalliceſki o drakos, yiniskete enas kapnos..*  
 rides the dragon, created one cloud of smoke..  
*ekatevin o drakos*  
 dismounted the dragon-nom  
 'The dragon rides the horse, a cloud of smoke is created...  
 the dragon dismounted...'

That narration is about to follow a normal flow can be observed everywhere in Newton's texts. The narrators, themselves, speak of it. In the first paragraph of p.153, all the clauses are V-initial; in 'Cow on Roof' (p.155), we understand from a signalling word used by the narrator that the story continues without interruptions or highlights:

- (37) istera irten i geneka pu to xorafin  
 then came the woman-nom from the field-acc  
 'Then, the woman came from the field'

'Then' means 'after whatever we said' here. It is in many passages of the texts that the different narrators give us a sign or a clue that narration is now about to continue normally. In paragraph 8, p.144, the narrator uses a dialogue with a number of non-indicative clauses, and gives a theatrical aspect to the story. When this finishes, in paragraph 9, the narrator signals that normal narration is now about to start. A VS structure is then used:

- (38) telos panton, na men ta polloloume, eksekinisen c-o imisos....  
 any way let's not this speak a lot, set out and the Half  
 'Anyway, so we may not make a long story, Half set out..'

In sum the unmarked order in Newton's texts is VOS, with SVO and VSO being used primarily to mention a topic explicitly, either because it has been represented pronominally for a number of clauses or because it has been a non-subject and is becoming a subject-topic.

## 2.0 Classifying Cypriot

### 2.1 Cypriot and genetic classification

Given the fact that Cypriot is a language deriving from Ancient Greek, it should not be surprising that it has a VOS basic order. Originally, Proto-Indo-European languages had verbs at the end of sentences as a norm (Aitchison 1991:92). Ancient Greek was a SOV language. Its verbs could also be moved to the front, in special circumstances. Some languages, such as Cypriot, never lost this option; further, they adopted a large number of constructions without an overt subject, as, again, is the case with Cypriot. What is surprising is that among the Hellenogenic languages, only Cypriot has adopted the option of V-initial as a norm.

### 2.2 Cypriot and areal classification

It is important to consider the areal classification of Cypriot. The geographical position of Cyprus allows us to relate its V-initial structure to other languages of the Eastern Mediterranean such as Arabic, which was predominantly verb-initial, and to Ancient Hebrew.

The Eteocyprian, the language of Cypriots in prehistoric years, was most probably a Semitic language, and most probably a verb-initial. It was spoken on the island until the 3th century B.C. and the Hellenistic era. In 'The ethnology of the Cypriot towns' Scyllax, a geographer who lived about the 3rd century B.C., points out: "...towards Cilicia, there is the island of Cyprus and its towns are the following: Salamis, Greek...Carpasia, Kyrenia, Lapithis, are Phoenicians, Soloi...Marion (are) Greek and Amathus is an ancient indigenous (town). There are also other barbarian (non-Greek) towns in the hinterland" (cited in Hadjioannou 1985; my translation from Greek).

Contemporary scholars and academics are still investigating the fact of Eteo-Cypriot ceding its place to Greek in the 4th and 3th centuries B.C. Greek's take-over of the Semitic languages in Cyprus has been discussed intensely by scholars such as Brixhe (1988:6): "There must have been a persistence in the use of the syllabic script in Cyprus, and if the Semites have finally failed to impose themselves linguistically, this is due to the fact that the Cypriots might have lost their syllabic script, with scripts written in perishable material, and that they finally adopted the alphabet, as they were closer to the sources of the alphabet" (my translation from French). By losing their syllabic script, says Brixhe, the Cypriots lost their 'flag'. "A flag means a feeling of ethnicity."

Further to its earlier presence on the island, the Arab element appeared again with the 250 years of the Ptolemaic dynasty, which the island experienced after 323 B.C. In addition to the

constant presence of the Arab-speaking world in Cyprus, the continuous invasions and raids of the Arabs, particularly in the the 7th century A.D, detached Cyprus from the Greek-speaking world for more than two centuries. “These centuries of relative isolation are probably the period in which the Cypriot dialect began to follow a different path of development from the Greek of more central areas” (Browning 1969:131)

### **3.0 Conclusion**

If areal classification constitutes a possible explanation of the Cypriot VOS structure, and if the Arab world has, to some extent, influenced the development of the Cypriot structure, this is probably the only existing influence of the Arabic on Cypriot. As far as vocabulary is concerned, the number of the Arabic words in the Cypriot lexicon is insignificant.

Today, more than ever before, Cypriot is under great influence from Standard Greek. In spite of this influence, VOS structure is still the prevailing structure of the basic Cypriot clause. Newton's texts have been an eloquent proof of the structure of the *xorkatika* spoken in the sixties.

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