

Structural contact in the Greek-speaking world

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When modeling the emergence of new grammars under conditions of unbalanced contact, a core task is distinguishing between possible and impossible interference. In this paper, we explore aspects of syntactic microvariation in the nominal system of two groups of colonial Greek dialects (listed in 1), which display the typical conditions of heritage languages (Rothman 2009):

- (1) a. Italiot Greek: Salento (Grecia Salentina), Calabria (Bovesia).
- b. Asia Minor Greek: Romeyka Pontic (from the village of Anasta, Çaykara region, Turkey); Capadocian (descendants of refugees from Misti, Turkey); Pharasiot (descendants of refugees from Varaşós, Turkey).

We explore data discussed in recent literature (Guardiano et al. 2016, Guardiano and Stavrou 2014, 2019 a and b), and we compare these areas to one another and to Standard Modern Greek, with the aim of understanding effects of horizontal transmission in contexts of unbalanced contact: indeed, we believe that the Greek-speaking world can be construed as an optimal tripartite ‘Galilean’ laboratory to explore the mechanics of syntactic change under contact.

We make the following idealizations:

- (2) a. Languages are immune to spontaneous/primitive syntactic (non-morphophonological /lexical) change (*Inertia*, Keenan 1994 and subsequent work).
- b. All the Greek varieties that we consider descend from Hellenistic *Koiné* as their exhaustive or prevailing ancestor.
- c. Homeland Greece is not subject to relevant interference in the domain of the facts considered.
- d. Asia Minor Greek is subject (only) to Turkic interference, Italiot Greek is subject (only) to Italo-Romance interference.

The comparison of the above areas under these idealizations allows us to:

- (3) a. Diagnose which changes can in theory be attributed to syntactic interference (Longobardi et al. 2013, Guardiano et al. 2016).
- b. Measure the amount of syntactic interference and assess its impact on the vertical signal.
- c. Explore how syntactic interference is formally constrained by grammar (i.e. which parametric values languages can and cannot accept from horizontal contact).

As for (3)a and b, we argue that interference is plausible in some cases, but we show it is modest enough not to seriously undermine the vertical signal quantitatively captured by phylogenetic models (Guardiano et al. 2016). We focus then on (3)c.

For each of the diaspora areas listed in (1) we investigate two properties of nominal syntax: one where the diaspora varieties diverge from homeland Greek and are strikingly similar to the respective dominant/neighboring language(s), and one in which they resisted changes which would have been conceivable under pressure from the latter.

The first scenario, in which the diaspora varieties diverge from Greek and converge with the dominant language of the area where they are (or were) spoken, concerns N-movement (or its absence). In recent work (Guardiano and Stavrou 2014, 2019 a and b), it has been shown that in Italiot Greek, as opposed to Standard Modern Greek (and actually all historically recorded Greek; Manolessou 2000, Guardiano 2003, 2016, Guardiano and Stavrou 2019b), attributive adjectives obligatorily follow the noun (with few lexical, nanoparametric exceptions; Guardiano and Stavrou 2014, 2019b). The situation is identical to that of Southern Italo-Romance (and typologically uncommon also in the rest of Romance and most of Europe). This is assumed to be produced by Noun movement over a series of adjectival projections originally merged prenominally, a type of movement that is unattested in any other (ancient or contemporary) Greek variety: this case is a perfect candidate for interference.

As far as Asia Minor Greek is concerned, in all the varieties explored most noun modifiers, crucially including relative clauses (Pharasiot: *tu iða zapá:na to peškíri*, lit ‘the saw.1s in.the.morning the towel’, ‘the towel that I saw in the morning’), occur to the left of the noun (Guardiano et al. 2016): the presence of prenominal relative clauses is extraneous to the rest of Modern Greek and to all Indo-European languages of Europe, while it is typically possible in Turkic. Therefore, it is not unreasona-

ble to suspect that Asia Minor Greek speakers have developed them under the pressure of Turkish.

The second scenario, namely a subdomain where the diaspora varieties exhibit persistence of patterns which are uniformly attested in the rest of Greek, but diverge from both Romance and Turkish, is represented by the syntax of genitives (Longobardi and Silvestri 2013). As a matter of fact, Italiot Greek sharply differs from all of Romance in retaining the non-iterable, positionally more fixed and partly inflected genitive already consolidated in the New Testament *Koiné* (functional GenO in Longobardi and Silvestri 2013; see also Guardiano 2011 and Guardiano and Longobardi 2018). This type is very rare and residual, at best, in Romance (Silvestri 2013), while the prepositional type (labeled *free* genitive by Longobardi and Silvestri 2013) is pervasive at least in Central and Western Romance: it can be considered the direct and nearly unique replacement of Latin genitive after the erosion of case endings. This is a perfect potential example of resilience by Greek dialects against overwhelming Romance pressure. Similarly, such a salient feature of Altaic languages as a genitive case realized in the immediately pre-adjectival position (called GenS in Longobardi and Silvestri 2013) has not been imported into Asia Minor Greek, though so obviously represented even in simple Gen-N patterns.

The relevant cases can be summarized as follows:

	Italiot Greek	South. Italo-Romance	Greek	
N over adjectives	YES	YES	NO	→ Interfered (I)
Free (prepositional) Gen	NO	YES	NO	→ Resisting (II)

	Asia Minor Greek	Turkish	Greek	
Prenominal Rel. Clauses	YES	YES	NO	→ Interfered (III)
GenS	NO	YES	NO	→ Resisting (IV)

A possible explanation could run as follows. The change in (I) was possible because the Greek adjectival system independently features strings superficially compatible with parsing in terms of N-movement: postnominal adjectives are available in Greek, typically in the polydefinite construction (*to vivlio to kalo*, Alexiadou et al 2007 a.o., cf. also Manzini and Savoia 2019 for a crosslinguistic analysis). However, they also occur in indefinite DPs - including bare nouns - without being introduced by an article, exactly mimicking, on the surface, the Romance construction (*ena vivlio kalo = un libro bello/buono*, lit. ‘a book nice’). The lack of interference in (II) can instead be due to the fact that Italiot Greek, like most other Greek varieties, has never had any string with the distribution of Romance free genitive, neither of a prepositional type nor, since the Hellenistic *Koiné* (Guardiano 2003, 2011; Guardiano and Longobardi 2018), even of a free inflectional type. In Asia Minor, we propose that the extended prenominal modification (III) is due to a generalization of the complementary fact about adjectival modification in Greek nominals: Greek has always been like Germanic or Slavic in that all types of adjectives can be prenominal (*ilektriko sistima* lit. ‘electric system’). We hypothesize that this kind of interference would have been utterly impossible in languages in which most or all prenominal adjectival modification is ungrammatical (e.g. Semitic, Romance, Celtic). On the contrary (IV) is an impossible interference effect in a language like Greek by the intrinsic nature of GenS: in all European languages GenS either controls some form of agreement morphology on the head noun (Altaic, Finno-Ugric) or it alternates, formally and functionally, with an overt determiner (Germanic Saxon genitive). In Asia Minor Greek, even if genitives may occur prenominally, *Genitive-Noun* sequences never exhibit phi-features of the genitive on the head noun (a possible consequence of the fusional, rather than agglutinative morphology of Indo-European languages), and always co-occur in definite interpretations with the definite morphemes which normally play determiner function. Hence no string *Genitive-Noun* can be mistaken for a case of GenS.

The conclusion seems to be that the two diaspora varieties of Greek are undergoing or resisting change according to the (mis)matching of their internal features with Turkic and Italo-Romance, respectively. The general hypothesis is that interference is necessarily the result of reanalysis and generalization of fragments of extensional language already weakly generated in the targeted grammar (though insufficient on their own to trigger changes). This conjecture was called *Resistance Principle* in Guardiano et al. (2016) and is fundamentally in line with Weinreich’s (1954) original observation that interference is the more probable the closer two languages in contact are to each other. *Resistance* is thus meant to complement conditions hypothesized for constraining primitive diachronic change, such as aforementioned *Inertia*.