



Variation in word formation in situations of language contact: the case of Cappadocian Greek



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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with variation in word-formation, i.e. derivational prefixation and suffixation, in situations of language contact and uses as a starting point dialectal innovations attested in Cappadocian Greek. The analysis involves both social and linguistic explanatory parameters, in order to offer further insights into contact-induced morphological change. Our data show that a unified account, whether primarily intra-linguistic or primarily extra-linguistic, cannot provide an adequate overall interpretation of the phenomena we investigate. Only a combined account, which addresses both internal and external developments, offers a perspective wide enough to offer an adequate explanation for variation in word-formation patterns in language contact situations. Moreover, we attempt to account for morphological subcomponents that are to varying degrees susceptible to contact-induced change. Our study thereby provides further support, derived this time from the domain of word-formation, for the claim that change involves two factors. These are, first, a small typological distance between subsystems in contact and, second, the relative markedness or status of the structures involved, which together may, while not actually of themselves causing change, still facilitate or enhance it, a phenomenon which in different circumstances (language-pairs) would be less likely to occur.

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1. Introduction

Increasing numbers of contact-based explanations for linguistic variation and change have been offered over the past few decades. They compete with the language-internal accounts of historical linguistics that were hitherto popular and whose proponents were reluctant to admit contact explanations for structural changes. Variation and change in inflectional morphology as a contact-induced phenomenon has been treated recently and various claims have been put forward (see among others, [Gardani, 2008](#); [Hickey, 2010](#) and references therein). There are, however, few studies dealing with grammatical replication in the domain of word formation, and more specifically, in the derivational processes of prefixation and suffixation.

This paper focuses on the issue of variation in word formation, i.e. derivational prefixation and suffixation. It examines dialectal innovations attested in Cappadocian Greek in terms of both social and linguistic explanatory parameters (cf. [Sapir, 1921](#); [Weinreich, 1953](#); [Joseph, 1983](#)), in the hope of offering further insights into contact-induced morphological change.

The data we investigate here are taken from various written sources (inter alia [Dawkins, 1916](#); [Sakkaris, 1940](#); [Kesisoglou, 1951](#); [Papadopoulos, 1955, 1958–1961](#); [Oikonomides, 1958](#); [Mavrochalyvidis and Kesisoglou, 1960](#); [Topcharas, 1998 \[1932\]](#);

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Janse, forthcoming; Ralli, forthcoming etc.) and from the oral corpora of the Laboratory of Modern Greek dialects (www.lmgd.philology.upatras.gr) at the University of Patras.

The paper is structured as follows: we first summarise the basic premises and assumptions that we make regarding internal vs. external explanations of language variation and change. We follow this with a brief sketch of Cappadocian (Section 3), laying emphasis on its word-formation processes against the background of the dominant Turkish language. Dialectal data are analysed in Section 4, while in the next section (Discussion), specific claims and proposals are put forward in order to account for the observed divergence. The paper ends with a recapitulation of the major conclusions.

2. Premises and assumptions

As Poplack and Levey (2009: 397–398) correctly point out, the claim that linguistic differences that occur in bilingual contexts are necessarily contact-induced lacks foundation. To employ Thomason's (2010: 32) definition, a linguistic change is to be regarded as contact-induced, if it is less likely that it could have taken place outside a specific contact situation. Indeed, in several cases a linguistic change cannot be safely attributed either to language-internal developments or to the effect of contact. When substantial evidence is lacking either way, both parameters can be assumed to have influenced the outcome (cf. Hickey, 2010: 15).

Contact-induced changes can be conceived of as transfer phenomena of both a direct and an indirect nature. In direct transfer, what is borrowed from the donor and taken to the recipient language is linguistic material (e.g. phonemes, morphemes), whilst in cases of indirect transfer what is borrowed is structure, i.e. patterns that result in the rearrangement of the structure of the recipient language under the influence of the donor language (*model replica language* resulting into *grammatical pattern replication*, cf. Matras and Sakel, 2007)¹. Grammatical replication may involve a single lexical or grammatical item (*item extension*), a cluster of several items (*pattern extension*), or a natural class of items (*category extension* cf. Heine and Kuteva, 2010: 89). It may result in reorganization of structure either in the form of loss of features or categories (i.e. negative transfer, e.g. breakdown of case systems resulting in the simplification of paradigms etc.) or in the form of addition, or replacement (which may serve to compensate for a corresponding loss in the recipient language)².

In recent language-contact studies, it is commonly assumed that transfer of structure is heavily conditioned by the intensity and the duration of contact, the social settings, i.e. the socio-economic power and authority exerted from the one group upon the other, and the degree of bilingualism among the members of the community (see among others, Thomason and Kaufman, 1988; Thomason, 2001; Aikhenvald, 2007; Matras, 2009; Hickey, 2010 and references therein).

As regards intra-linguistic parameters, Thomason (2010: 39) asserts that the most important linguistic predictors of contact-induced change are typological distance, universal markedness (with its ultimate appeal to learnability), and the degree of integration within a linguistic system.

Admittedly, the safest methodological approach, with respect to causes and triggers of language change, would be the diachronic study of the observed innovations. One would focus on the linguistic ancestor that predated language contact, which would then allow comparisons among different stages of development. Unfortunately, Cappadocian suffers from a complete lack of historical sources prior to the 19th century. To compensate for this lacuna, we will compare the innovations that were made in Cappadocian Greek at the time with corresponding phenomena attested in other Greek dialects of Asia Minor, namely Pontic, Pharasiot and Silliot³. The reasoning behind this choice lies in the fact that dialectal variation often depicts different developmental stages of a linguistic change, depending of course on how conservative each different dialectal system happens to be, which therefore helps both in reconstructing the evolutionary paths the various systems followed and in tracing the mechanisms of change.

3. A brief description of the dialect

3.1. Sociolinguistic background

Turkish influence in Cappadocia starts during the late Byzantine period, occurring for the first time after the Seljuk invasion (cf. Vryonis, 1971: 448–452) in the 11th century⁴, and continues in the 14th century after the conquest of Asia Minor by the Ottoman Turks. From this period on, Cappadocian Greek was spoken in the area under conditions of regressive bilingualism, since Turkish was the dominant language of the political authorities and was spoken by the overwhelming

¹ The second type of change is often referred to in the literature as *syntactic borrowing*, *loan-syntax*, *calquing* or *indirect diffusion* (see among others Clyne, 1987; Silva-Corvalán, 1995).

² As noted by Gardani (2008: 22), replacement is thought to be more common in morphology and syntax than the other two processes.

³ Cappadocian, Pontic, Pharasiot and Silliot are considered members of the Asia Minor Greek dialectal group from a genetic viewpoint, on the basis of their early linguistic separation from the rest of the Greek-speaking world, as evidenced by a number of shared innovations and archaisms. The dialectal varieties spoken in the western coast of Asia Minor, e.g. the varieties spoken at Kydonies and Moschonisia, or the variety spoken at Livisi, are grouped with the Asia Minor dialects in the geographic, although not in the genetic sense, since they do not share the same linguistic features (for relevant discussion see Andriotis (1995: 100–107); Arapopoulou (2001: 175); Drettas (1999: 15); Horrocks (2010: 398–404); Karatsareas (2011: 40–48)).

⁴ By the mid-11th century and in particular after the battle of Mantzikert in 1071, when the Byzantine Empire was defeated by the Seljuk Turks and permanently lost control of Asia Minor.

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