

[Μελέτες]

Modern Greek Dialects

Peter Trudgill: Modern Greek Dialects

Greek is the only surviving member of the Hellenic branch of the Indo-European language family. It is not known if there ever were any other members, although scholars have variously speculated that the original language of the ancient Macedonians, before they became assimilated into mainstream ancient Greek culture, was (a) a dialect of Ancient Greek, (b) a Hellenic language related to but distinct from Ancient Greek, © not Hellenic at all but some other language altogether, such as Illyrian (which may or may not have been the ancestor of modern Albanian). In historical times, the Ancient Greek dialects were subject to levelling, leading to the formation of an interdialectal koiné, which almost all modern Greek varieties are descended from (Browning 1969).

Unlike Latin, Ancient Greek did not give rise to a number of different daughter languages. The only descendant of Ancient Greek is Modern Greek. However, there are some varieties of Greek that are radically different from all others. One is Tsakonian (see Newton 1972), a Hellenic variety spoken in the eastern Peloponnese which is descended from ancient Greek but *not* by way of the koiné. Although Tsakonian is reported to be dying out, some schools in the area have acknowledged the degree of difference between it and other forms of Greek by providing pupils with teaching materials written in this variety.

Another aberrant variety is Pontic - Black Sea dialects of Greek spoken mainly in Georgia and northern Turkey. This is generally distinguished from varieties of Greek originating in central areas of Turkey, which are known as Cappadocian (see Dawkins 1916; Sikkenga 1992; Janse 2005). These Asia Minor varieties are very different from other dialects of Greek because of their long separation, and because of considerable influence from other languages, notably much heavier influence from Turkish than is apparent in other forms of Greek.

Tzitzilis (2000, 2001) divides the history of the study of Greek dialects into three chronological phases. First, there was work on individual dialects with a historical linguistic orientation focussing mainly on phonological features. The second period saw the development of structural dialectology focussing not only on phonology but also on the lexicon. Thirdly, he cites the move into generative dialectology signalled by Newton's pioneering book (1972). Tzitzilis also indicates that there has been very little research on social variation, or on syntax; and no linguistic atlases except for the one produced for Crete by Kontosopoulos (1988).

Also, while there are many publications on individual dialects of the three types outlined by Tzitzilis, there are very few works dealing with the dialects of Greek as a whole, and very few maps attempting to portray the major divisions and sub-divisions of these dialects. There are no generally agreed categorisations, and no widely published maps such as one can find in works on many other languages. And, unlike in most other European countries, there has been no organised dialect atlas work. Triandafyllidis' complaint about this (1938, 66) is repeated sixty years later by Delveroudi (1999, 562). In some cases it is now too late, the dialects in question, such as Old Athenian, having been replaced by Standard Greek (Delveroudi 1999). In other cases, even if it is actually not too late at the moment, it soon will be, since the dialects in question are undergoing contraction (Malikouti-Drachman, 1999, 2000).

Greece became an independent nation in 1830, but the modern borders were fixed only in 1947. During the first three decades of the 20th century, large exchanges of populations took place, so that many areas of what is now Turkey which used to be Greek dialect-speaking no longer are, a fact which has eventually led, in most cases to dialect death. An exception is Pontic, which, far from its Black Sea coastal homeland, still has 300,000 speakers in Greece today (Drettas 1999, 91). There is also a small community of modern Cappadocian speakers living in Thessaly.

There are also a number of areas of Greece which were not originally Greek-speaking and therefore have no truly local dialects, including areas which have, or had, speakers of Arvanitika (Albanian) in Attica, Biotia and the Peloponnese; and speakers of Vlach (Romance), Turkish, and Slavic in northern Greece (Trudgill, 2000). Many of these areas have now received Greek-speaking populations, mainly from Asia Minor and Bulgaria, but this has led to dialect-mixture and koinéisation and the development of somewhat uniform near-standard forms of Greek, and they are therefore not considered in this article.

The classification of traditional Greek dialects which follows therefore aims at summarising the full extent of our knowledge of the geographical configuration of dialects as they existed between 1820 and 1920, when they were at their fullest extent, before the population movements. It includes two areas with significant indigenous Greek-speaking populations, Cyprus and southern Albania, which remain outside the borders of Greece. On the other hand, it does not include the Greek-speaking enclaves of southern Italy, Corsica, Bulgaria, the Bosphorus, the Black Sea coastline, Istanbul, Syria, Egypt, or the Cappadocian dialects of central Asia Minor (see Christidis et al. 1999; Arapoglou 2001; Janse forthcoming).

The classification is based on the work of Kontosopoulos and Newton, and a number of different phonological features discussed by Newton and Kontosopoulos have been employed. Unfortunately there are relatively few features for which we have full geographical information, so some well-known features have had to be rejected, such as the important feature of many Aegean dialects, *voiced fricative deletion*, i.e. the loss of intervocalic /v, ð, ɣ/ so that, for example, /meːˈalo/ 'big' is /meːˈalo/ (Newton, 1972: 60-1).

The features used are:

1. High vowel loss

A well-known feature associated with northern Greek dialects (see Newton 1972, 182 ff). These dialects are divided by Kontosopoulos (1994) into three subgroups. *Extreme Northern* dialects delete all unstressed /i, u/ and raise unstressed /e, o/ to /i, u/, respectively. This gives pronunciations such as 'Thessaloniki' /θesalonˈiki/ > /θisalonˈnik/. *Northern* dialects delete only word-final unstressed /i, u/ and raise unstressed /e, o/. *Semi-northern* dialects also delete only unstressed word-final /i, u/ but do not raise unstressed /e, o/. High vowel loss is clearly a dialectal innovation which is shared by the northern areas and which has not reached other areas further south.

2. Ypsilon > /u/

Ancient Greek υ and οι have become /i/ in nearly all varieties of modern Greek (Newton, 1972: 16). However, a number of areas have /u/. They are: the four "oasis" dialects on the edges of or surrounded by the Arvanitika-speaking area around Athens: Kimi, Aegina, Megara and Old Athenian; the Mani peninsula of the southern Peloponnese; and Tsakonian. Tsakonian is the only modern dialect which is not descended from the Ancient Greek Koiné and is aberrant in very many respects. One obvious conclusion from the geographical configuration is that the four, now extinct, "oasis" dialects are the last remnants of a large, single area over all of which this feature was once found, before the penetration of Arvanitika (Karatzas, 1940) had the effect of dividing and separating these four relic areas from one another.

3. Palatalisation of velars

All varieties of Modern Greek front velar consonants in the environment before front vowels and /j/. However, a well-known feature associated with southern Greek dialects is the extreme palatalisation and affrication of velar consonants in this same position. Specifically, /k, g, x, ŋ/ are fronted before /i, e, j/ to [t͡ʃ, d͡ʒ, ʃ, ʒ] or to [t͡ʃ, d͡ʒ, ʃ, ʒ]. According to Newton (1972) and Kontosopoulos (1994), this feature is also found in Mani, a dialect which has other affinities with Cretan; on Kithira and Antikithira; and on some of the southern Cyclades and Dodecanese

islands. Note that the Kimi area of Evia also has velar palatalisation.

4. Tsitakismos

In a region to the immediate north of the velar palatalisation area, we find a feature known to Greek linguists as *tsitakismos*. This involves the further fronting of original /k/ before /i, e, j/ to /ts/. This may lead (Newton, 1972: 133) to a merger of /k/ and /ts/. In some places this extends also to /x, g/ > /s, dz/. The area includes most of the Cyclades islands which do not have velar palatalisation. Tsitakismos is also found in three of the "oasis" dialects of Aegina, Old Athenian, and Megara (but not in Kimi). Both velar palatalisation and tsitakismos are clearly dialectal innovations.

5. Geminates

Another feature which is well-known to exist in Cypriot Greek is the preservation of Ancient Greek geminates. This feature obviously represents a retention as compared to Standard Greek. However, Cypriot also demonstrates the development of new geminates, including in word-initial position. In the case of fricatives, nasals, and approximants, this gemination takes the form of simple length, e.g. *nai* 'yes' as /nne/. In the case of voiceless plosives, however, it is manifested as not only length (which would be inaudible in absolute initial position), but also as aspiration. Cypriot minimal pairs (Newton, 1972: 91) include /filla/ 'leaves' vs. /fila/ 'kiss!'; and /mmatin/ 'eye' vs. /matin/ coat. The presence of geminates is not confined to Cyprus but extends to many of the other islands of the southeast.

6. Final /n/ retention

Also typical of Cyprus is the retention of original word-final /n/. Again this feature actually extends well beyond Cyprus: "One of the characteristic features of the southeastern dialect complex is the retention of an ancient final nasal in various groups of words. For instance, 'he said' appears as [ipen] before a pause" (Newton 1972, 99). This area, too, clearly represents a zone with a shared retention as compared to Standard Greek.

These features permit us to divide the contiguous Greek dialect-speaking area in the period up to the early 20th century into fourteen areas, as follows:

1. Central

Western Epirus, Corfu, Cephalonia, Zakynthos, the Peloponnese. This area has none of the six features we are employing as criteria. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the Ionian islands and the Peloponnese are generally agreed to have supplied most of the input into Standard Greek (Horrocks 1997, 300).

2. Northern

The northern area is characterised by high vowel loss and consists of: the northern mainland (except for Western Epirus), Lefkada, northern Evia, Thassos, Samothraki, Imbros, Lesbos, Limnos, Skiros, Skiathos, Skopelos, Alonissos (and the other smaller northern Sporades). There is considerable regional variation within this area in the extent to which this rule is carried through.

2a. Samos

Samos also has high vowel loss. This is classed as a separate sub-area solely because of its geographical separation from area 2.

3. Mani

Mani has /u/ from ypsilon plus velar palatalisation.

4. Tsakonian.

This dialect is very different from all other Greek dialects in that it does not descend from the Koiné.

5. Old Athenian

This extinct dialect is represented by three separate areas: Aegina, Megara and the Old Athenian proper of Athens itself. These areas have /u/ from ypsilon and tsitakismos.

6. Kimi

Kimi has /u/ from ypsilon plus velar palatalisation, like Mani.

7. Southern

This area has velar palatalisation as the only one of the six features: Crete, Kithira, Antikithira and Santorini (Thira), plus, probably, Anaphi and Milos.

8. Southeastern

Cyprus, Rhodes, Karpathos, Kasos, Kastellorizo, Kos, Leros, Patmos. These islands have velar palatalisation and geminates as well as final /n/ retention.

9. Eastern

Simi, Tilos, Nissiros, Kalimnos, Ikaria, Astipalea, Chios, and adjacent areas of the Asia Minor mainland. This area has geminates and final /n/ retention, but not velar palatalisation.

10. Smyrna

The Smyrna area of Asia Minor, according to Kontosopoulos, had a number of distinguishing features, but not any of the selected six (1994, 113-4). In this respect it is like area 1.

11. Central Cyclades

Amorgos, Iraklia, Schinoussa, Keros, Kouphonisi, and Donoussa. These islands have final /n/ retention, geminates, and tsitakismos.

12. Western Cyclades

Sifnos, Kimolos and Serifos have geminates and velar palatalisation, but not tsitakismos.

13. Mykonos

Mykonos is alone in having northern high vowel loss and central Cycladean tsitakismos.

14. Northern Cyclades

Andros, Tinos, Kea, Kithnos, Siros, Naxos, Paros, Antiparos, Ios, Sikinos, and Folegandros. Of the six features, these islands have only tsitakismos.

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