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VARIATION AND CHANGE IN GREEK AND LATIN

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Introduction: Variation with Multiple Faces

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Introduction

In linguistics – apart from those studies that focus on "corpus languages", such as Latin and Greek – a term "language" has been notoriously difficult to define as an everyday system of communication as well as in terms of differences in the continuum of areal linguistic varieties. What is an accent, a dialect, a language? The task of defining language is difficult, because the concept of "a language" is a political and ideological, and of course, epistemic, entity rather than an accurate description of one separate unit, e.g., "English".[1] Despite the temporal distance and the limited data at our disposal, it is likely that a political and ideological definition seems to be valid for Greek and Latin as well as modern languages. Even Greek and Latin have to be considered as containing various fractions of a social system called language.[2] In this book we use the terms "a language" and "the language" to refer to all the various parts that form a certain definable entity that its speakers can mutually understand in a given geographical area or, on a smaller scale, in a given theoretically-defined context or speech community. Thus, this book deals with different fractions of Greek and Latin, from the 4th century BCE to the 6th century CE, and studies, both conceptually and practically, variation within these fractions using data taken from papyri (Evans, Vierros), inscriptions, (Galdi, Poccetti, Solin) graffiti (Solin), and texts from manuscripts (Dickey, Ferri, Haverling).[3] This is achieved by using various methodological approaches for a common goal: what kind of variation existed and what were the social and/or stylistic reasons for this variation (Halla-aho, Leiwo)?

Use-related and user-related variation

Variation is the essence of language. It is present in all linguistic productivity, and it usually has social and contextual reasons. R.L. Trask in his *Dictionary of historical and comparative linguistics* (2000 *s.v.* 'variation') defines variation as "the existence of competing linguistic forms within a single speech community or language". Thus, variation as a linguistic concept usually refers to the relationship between linguistic structures and social variables. Sociolinguists use the term "variety" for these various socially or contextually defined fractions of language. In *The Oxford Companion to the*

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[1] The determiner-specific expressions "the language", "a language" refer to one or more of the kinds of socio-historical formations that are ordinarily referred to as Spanish, Arabic, Chinese etc., see Agha 2007, 219.

[2] Agha is discussing "problems that emerge when a certain kind of object that exists in our world – an everyday, social fact called "language" – is epistemically reconstituted by disciplinary agendas that focus on a select number of its features as extractable fractions, and, by taking them as objects of study, seek performatively to constitute themselves as unified disciplines", see Agha 2007, 218. For our purposes the concept "a fraction of language" is plausible.

[3] All references which use the author's name only signify a contribution contained within this volume.

English Language (1992), Tom McArthur identifies two broad types of variety: "(1) *user-related varieties*, which are associated with particular people and, often, specific places and (2) *use-related varieties*, which are associated with function, such as *legal English* (the language of courts, contracts, etc.) and *literary English* (the typical usage of literary texts, conversations, etc.)." In this respect, both user-related and use-related varieties are evident in the corpus of Greek and Latin literary and non-literary texts.

At times, certain variants become popular and consistent among all the language users and thus create permanent linguistic changes in the linguistic system of the language. Some permanent changes are rather small, particular differences between old and new, but some are big, structural changes, such as the birth of the article and the loss of the infinitive forms in Greek, or the loss of cases in Latin. When deep structural changes take place, there is much synchronic variation and many competing variants. In Haverling's article, the great differences between Late Latin writers are discussed. Some writers were rooted in traditional written Latin, whereas others were at ease with variation and contemporary language.

Many syntactic structures and single words in the Greek and Latin corpus are due to the genre of the document and thus they are use-related. The usual phraseology of a certain genre typifies the forms used. Some variation is also due to the different writing systems. For example, familiarity with only Greek alphabet may cause difficulties in choosing letters from the alphabet to correspond to phonemes of another language.

Serious study on variation started in the 1960s.[4] Since then, quantitative analysis has been the tool for studying variation. A large corpus of material is analyzed, and its results reveal certain aspects of variation in the whole speech community. In relation to the analysis of variation in ancient corpus languages, however, quantitative analysis has not been easy because of the lack of adequate linguistically-annotated corpora. Nevertheless, quantitative analysis is the foundation for understanding language change and for observing sociolinguistic variation in a speech community. It is not a good method, however, when analyzing variation from small data. More subtle methods are necessary for the analysis of individual language use, and then qualitative analysis forms the starting point.[5] Qualitative analysis takes account of every context where an individual uses language, and thus discourse-related goals and pragmatic factors also play a significant role in the analysis. In short, both paradigms complement each other. By following the same speech community for years it has even been possible to study real time changes,[6] but this kind of study has been considered impossible with regard to written corpora. It is possible, however, to approach real time change when the written corpus is representative enough. Consequently, it is promising that Nevalainen et al. were able to provide positive results of real time change from their corpus of letters.[7] It is also possible to trace real time changes in some geographical areas, if the examples are representative enough.[8] Campania, for example, is a promising region for areal linguistic studies, though the interpretation of onomastics, inscriptions and *graffiti* is demanding. Solin offers an up to

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[4] It started, more or less, with W. Labov's MA thesis, *Martha's Vineyard* (1963).

[5] See the important paper by Nevalainen et al. 2011, 1–43.

[6] See Labov 1994 and 2001.

[7] Nevalainen et al. 2011, 1–43.

[8] Adams 2007, 719–720

date approach which focuses mainly on Pompei and its *graffiti*. The amount of variation in Latin at all linguistic levels is high, and also the reasons behind choosing Greek or Latin are manifold. Again, his examples show the importance of qualitative analysis. Every piece of evidence has to be interpreted in its own context. The research is time-consuming, but it is the only way to get reliable results.

This book will focus on qualitative analysis that is always combined with a firm knowledge of the data being studied. Geographical context and local inhabitants in their social setting are carefully dealt with in many chapters in order to obtain results with a deeper comprehension of linguistic variation and linguistic attitudes (see Evans, Vierros, Poccetti, Solin).

Classification of texts and spoken language

A persistent tradition, especially in Latin and Romance philology, has confused variation with the classification of texts. According to this tradition, texts or documents that are not written in the normative literary Latin are representative of another kind of Latin, "vulgar Latin", as if this were a different linguistic entity. The notorious definition of "vulgar Latin" has generally been "the spoken language of the uneducated". Unfortunately, it is neither a spoken language nor even a fraction of the written Latin language (see Halla-aho's contribution). Thus, the long tradition has produced inappropriate approaches to studying Latin language, and under the label of "vulgar Latin" both user-related and use-related variation have lived together in great mishmash. To get some logic to this mess even those scholars who definitely are and were aware that it is a *cul-de-sac*, have tried to define "vulgar Latin" without much success, and this term is still used in this book. I am, however, convinced that the study of Latin language does not need this term, and that the exact nature of any given variation can be explained without it.

In fact, it also seems to be quite common among Classical and Romance philologists to claim that a given linguistic feature belongs to the spoken language, even if it is written. As it is, philologists and general linguists infer "spoken" language differently. The symbols of written text, such as letters and graphs, cannot logically be but approximate counterparts of the structural features of spoken language. Additionally, the prosodic features and the non-verbal signals have almost no correspondence within writing.[9] In the strictest sense, this means that, by definition, only written language can be studied when we study corpus languages, but sometimes elements from speech infiltrate written language.[10] For example, it seems evident that the nominative plural ending *–as,* of the Latin first declension, was common in speech. Morphologically rich languages like Greek and Latin probably had a great amount of morphological variation that cannot be identified in our corpus of literary texts.[11] Galdi presents a comprehensive analysis of the use of the nominative plural *-as* of the first declension nouns, and suggests that its usage

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[9] See the discussion by Linell 2005, 30–37.

[10] See also Halla-aho.

[11] Haverling 157–158.

was not only due to its popularity in speech, but also to its larger transparency in the idiomatical funerary inscriptions.[12]

In a modern spoken language, individual variation is commonplace: for example, in Finnish, which is extremely rich in nominal morphology, competing and idiolectically chosen morphological variants abound in the dialects and standard language. In standard language it is possible to say and write *vuohea* or *vuohta* (partitive sing. of *vuohi* 'goat') as well as *nukkejen* or *nukkien* (gen. plural of *nukke* 'doll') without an accurate social or dialectal stance, and similar variation exists throughout the nominal morphology of some declension types. Sometimes, one of the possible variants has become more popular than the others, and has turned out to be the only form in usage. On other occasions, especially with homonyms that belong to different declension paradigms, a form which has been borrowed from the other paradigm becomes popular and spreads into common use.[13] It is highly probable that similar variation existed in Greek and Latin, and that it had multiple causes: language internal variation, language contacts, imperfect learning, jokes. In the strongly standardized Latin corpus, such variation is usually invisible in literary texts, but it may occur in inscriptions, graffiti, ostraca, papyri and writing tablets.[14] Variation as such can easily be detected, but we cannot usually identify the functional dimensions of existing variants. Sometimes, however, it is possible, as in case of the *-as* nominative explained by Galdi below.

Scribes and private people

Ordinary people often had difficulties with written language but the same can be said of many scribes. Also, these difficulties usually have multiple causes, which we have to investigate qualitatively, one by one. At times, some forms or structures can even tell us about the actual speech, but they are still represented by the written medium. This written fraction of a language can, however, be very idiolectic. In fact, it is important to bear in mind that the linguistic discrepancies that appear, for example, in the original documents written by non-professionals were composed by the people themselves. It is their language, and it provides us with information on individual variation outside literary genres.[15] This is an important difference when compared to literary texts that have been preserved through manuscripts. The scribes after the Carolingian Renaissance were capable of changing the original texts to a more standardized form, but we cannot be sure about the nature of the changes. In opposition to this some scribes copied the texts without much knowledge and care, thus causing variation that did not exist before.[16] On the other hand, many inscriptions that were written by professional letter-cutters reflect standardized forms of language without much variation.

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[12] Galdi 147.

[13] For example, the Finnish partitive singular *viintä* pro *viiniä* 'of wine' from *viini* 'quiver' and *viini* 'wine'. The use of the first variant probably started as a joke, but has become a real variant without an obvious knowledge of its incorrectness in the above meaning 'of wine'. It helps, of course, that quivers are not used very much anymore. The same has happened with other homonyms as well (e.g. *vuori* 'mountain' and *vuori* 'lining').

[14] For the problem in terms of local variation, see the introduction of Adams 2007, 1–36.

[15] Leiwo 2010, 114–118.

[16] Haverling 153–154.

The language of the papyri and ostraca still has an additional problem, as it is evident that the majority of the documents were written by scribes (see Evans, Vierros), but the influence of scribes on the language is difficult to determine.[17] Some documents were dictated, but some were composed by the scribes from models. Occasionally we can, however, get good results. Evans, for example, notes that from the six documents belonging to Iason, four documents and a total of 101 lines of text which were written by the same hand contain 39 non-standard spellings, whereas in the 30 lines written by other hands there are two nonstandard spellings.[18] Though the ratio is not statistically significant, it can, nevertheless, provide us with an approximation of the influence of different writers on the written linguistic output.

As previously mentioned, variation usually has multiple causes and the same linguistic feature may have separate causes and different origins in different geographical or social settings.[19] The cause of variation is, at times, due to language-internal reasons, sometimes it is contact-induced, but variation may also be caused by both factors occurring at the same time. The multicausality can be clearly noted if we compare the nonstandard features of the Zenon archive, found near the village of Philadelphia in the Fayum, with those of the agoranomic contracts of Pathyris in the Upper Egypt.[20] Pathyris was never very Hellenized, and relatively few people were bilingual.[21] The notaries, however, were bilingual, and transfer from their native language, Egyptian, to Greek is evident and caused contact-induced variation, as shown by Vierros.[22] The Fayum area, however, was more Greek in nature, and the variation studied by Evans in his chapter is basically language-internal Greek.[23] Practically, this means that every variation must be defined in its own social setting, and generalizations are plausible only after the documental analysis has been completed.

Taxonomies and generalizations

Unfortunately, some basic Greek grammars and linguistic studies are restricted since they do not deal with the study of variation, but rather the taxonomy of variation that, additionally, focuses heavily on morpho-phonology.[24] This means that we can easily see what kind of morpho-phonological variation existed in the data, but we are usually left in the dark about the reasons and the chronology of this variation. Generalizations are sometimes deduced from the statistics, but when they are analyzed contextually, they prove to be false, or at least misleading. For example, B. Mandilaras[25] correctly stated

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[17] Many features can be studied, however, see Halla-aho 2003, 251, Evans and Vierros.

[18] Evans 38–39.

[19] As regards Latin, see the conclusion of Adams 2007, 701.

[20] The dates are 261–229 BCE and the 2nd century – 88 BCE, respectively.

[21] Vierros 44.

[22] Vierros 2012.

[23] Evans 39.

[24] Basically Gignac 1976 and 1981, Teodorsson 1977 and 1978.

[25] Mandilaras 1973, §771 [p. 320.].

that in certain constructions the Greek complementary infinitive is clearly final. He then attempted to generalize and claims that the construction where the definite article in the genitive is used with the infinitive was popular as the argument of the idiom μὴ ἀμελήσῃς or similar. He gives as examples[26] (835 [337]) μὴ δόξῃς με ἀμελεῖν με τοῦ γράφειν σοι (B.G.U. 665 (iii), 11-13, 1st CE); μὴ ἀμελήσῃς τοῦ ἐνοχλῆσαι (P.Oxy. 1159, 11-13, late 3rd CE); μὴ οὖν ἀμελήσεις τοῦ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι (P.Amh. 144, 14-16, 5th CE); μέλει [ἡ]μῖν τοῦ γνῶναι (P.Grenf. II 92,3-4 (6th or 7th CE)).

The examples are dated between the first and seventh century CE and originate from different places. The generalization, however, does not seem to fit in with the abundant data from the ostraca of Mons Claudianus (100-170 CE) or the long letters on papyri from Kellis (4-5th centuries CE). Combined with this idiom, we can attest almost all other possible arguments, except the one emphasized by Mandilaras.[27] In the data which I studied, there are seven different arguments combined with μὴ ἀμελήσῃς.[28] The idiom μὴ ἀμελήσῃς or similar is followed or preceded by:[29]

1) The plain infinitive

O.Claud. 260, 7-8: μὴ ἀμελῖτέ μυ γράφιν περὶ τῆς σοτηρίας ἡμῶν.

'Don't forget to write about your well-being.'

2) The imperative

O.Claud. 270, 12: μὴ ἀμέλη ποίσόν μοι ταῦτα.

'Don't forget to do this for me.'

3) A complement clause with ἵνα

O.Claud. 239, 4-6: ἵνα οὖν πέμψῃ<ς> μοι μίκκον χαρτάριον καὶ στημόνιν μὴ ἀμελήσῃς.

'Don't forget to send me some paper and thread.'

4) The preposition περὶ + the genitive plus a complement clause with ἵνα.

O.Claud. 279, 17-20: μὴ ἀμελήσῃς περὶ ζμηλιμαχαίριον ἵνα τὸ κεφάλιν αὐτοῦ ᾖι ὁλοχάλκινεν.

'Don't forget to take care that the blade of the chisel is made totally of bronze.'

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[26] The emphasis is mine.

[27] O.Claud. I-IV, P.Kellis. I will publish a full analysis of these constructions elswhere..

[28] Leiwo 2011.

[29] I provide one reference to each construction.

5) The future indicative

O.Claud. 255, 7-9: μὲ ἀμελήσις γράψες μοι περὶ τῆς σοτηρείας [σου].

'Don't forget to tell me about your well-being.'

6) The aorist subjunctive

P.Kell. 65, 31-34: ἔγραψά σοι ὅτι πέμψῃς τὸ μαρφόρτιόν μου καὶ ⟦ουκε⟧ τὸ χιτώνιον, καὶ οὐκ ἠμέλησέ σοι πέμψῃς μοι.

'I wrote to you that "Send my cape and my tunic" and you did not bother to send them to me.'

7) The definite article in the genitive with a prepositional phrase

P.Kell. 68, 20: μὴ ἀμελή[σῃς] τῶν ἐν τοῖς ν̣ο̣τ̣ί̣ν̣ο̣[ις π]ρ̣άγμασι.

'Don't forget about what is in the Southern property'

There is also a completely altered construction, where we have an imperatival clause with an otherwise asyndetic ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀμελήσῃς 'but don't forget':

P.Kell. 11, 4-11: τὰς δύο ἀρτάβας κριθῶν τὰ<ς> παρὰ σοὶ παράσχου τῷ πατρὶ Δημοσθένει ἢ τὴν τιμὴν αὐτῶν ἐν ταλάντοις τετρακισχιλείοις ἢ τὴν ἀρτάβην σιζύφου κατὰ τὴν συνταγήν ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀμελήσῃς.

'Send to father Demosthenes the two artabas of barley which are with you, or the price of them in four thousand talents, or the artaba of jujubes according to the arrangement; but don't forget.'

This distribution can only mean that the construction which uses the articular infinitive in the genitive was not popular in this context, but, instead, there was a great deal of syntactic variation within the arguments of μὴ ἀμελήσῃς. Thus, we have to come to the conclusion that reliable generalizations cannot be made before a thorough and detailed analysis of all available evidence.

Loanwords and foreign words, pragmatics

The complexity of causes can also be identified in the integration of Latin loanwords in Greek. When languages are in intense contact, there is a lot of transference in both directions.[30] In terms of vocabulary, some words of the one language become integrated in the vocabulary of the other. Until now, research on Latin loanwords in Greek has been rather elementary, and does not usually differentiate between real loanwords and foreign words in general. Dickey analyzes the methodology of earlier studies and provides a method for more reliable investigation. An integrated loanword is comprehensible to the

[30] The intense interference is studied, for example, by Sarhimaa 1999, Thomason 2001, Riionheimo 2007.

majority of, or even all, speakers of the language. Therefore, when we come across, for example, a great number of previously unattested Latin-based vocabulary in the Greek ostraca of Mons Claudianus and Mons Porphyritis from the Eastern Desert of Egypt during the 2nd century CE, it does not mean that these words were integrated loanwords. Some of them may have become integrated into Greek, but the majority are foreign words in Greek, code-switches which were mainly used in quarrying.[31]

Real, integrated loanwords can even show dialectal variation inside the recipient language, as for example the Finnish variants for 'window', *akkuna* (western dialects) and the standard *ikkuna,* both of which are borrowed from the Russian *oknó,* or its more ancient form *okuno*.[32] This kind of dialectal variation is traceable in Greek and Latin if we turn our attention to other languages of ancient Italy, and how they have transmitted Greek words into their own vocabulary. Poccetti shows how basic mythological and religious names in the ancient languages of Italy had different Greek dialectal sources. In addition to this, sometimes variants of the source language coexisted in the receiving language, though they could have had functional differences.[33] Poccetti's analysis makes it very clear that there is no obvious system of borrowing, but instead it can seem totally fortuitous, if social and historical contexts are left unstudied.

A loanword can also have sociolinguistic dimensions, and by choosing between a loanword and a domestic word a speaker can show his or her group affiliation. In Modern Greek every person can choose, without taking any social stance, the word δωρεάν 'for free' borrowed/derived from ancient Greek acc. sing δωρεάν (δωρεά 'gift, present'), but saying τζάμπα (< turkish *caba* 'free, for nothing') can signal various social attitudes, that could make 'better people' turn up their nose. This is an actual situation in Modern Greek with many other Turkish loans as well. If one wishes to express the phrase 'we live in a world full of lies' in Modern Greek, and says 'ζούμε σ'ένα ψευτικό ντουνιά' (ντουνιάς < Turkish *dünya* 'world) instead of 'ζούμε σ'ένα ψευτικό κόσμο', one obviously listens to a lot of Greek traditional urban music (*laikí* and *rebétiki*), where this is a popular line. It is complicated to grasp this kind of socially significant variation in corpus languages. Sometimes it is possible, however, especially when we turn our study to pragmatics and discourse analysis.

Above, the focus has been mainly on documentary material. Literary texts, while they are mostly uninformative on the subjects of social or geographical variation, can provide us with glimpses of other types of variation; for example, situational variation, as represented by Roman comedy. The variation in illocutionary acts in corpus languages is interesting and has also been studied to some extent.[34] Various discourse strategies form an important part of the linguistic variation. As Ferri illustrates, there were many ways to say "no" politely and save one's face. His examples are mostly from Roman comedy and the letters of Cicero and Roman grammatical writers. Although phatic movements that are typical of conversations in real life are not accessible in ancient texts, some hints of them nevertheless exist, especially in drama. With careful study, a surprisingly rich variety of expressions can be traced.

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[31] See Serafino 2007 for this terminology.

[32] Vilppula 2004.

[33] Poccetti 72.

[34] See, for example, Risselada 1993, De Melo 2007, Ferri 2008a and b, Hall 2009, Dickey 2010, and Leiwo 2010.

As a conclusion, I would like to underline the fact that variation is characteristic of whole language in its all aspects. This book offers some observations of it in Greek and Latin.

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