

Contact-induced diachronic change in intonation: Greek non-standard varieties

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1. Introduction

Language contact affects the lexicon and grammar [1]. Historical phonetics usually focuses on segmental features [2].

To date, little work done on the role of language contact in the *diachronic* change of intonation.

Cretan and Venetian speakers interacted for four centuries during the Venetian occupation of Crete (13th - 17th century).



2. Research questions

Broader: How does long-term language contact of Greek with Italian and Turkish shape intonation?

Here: To compare the 'declarative' tune in Cretan Greek (CG) with Italian and Standard Modern Greek (SMG).

3. Method

- Natural speech corpus: audio recordings of SMG, CG and Italian (~ 18 h)
- Phonological analysis within the standard AM model [3, 4]
- Capture patterns and variability of f_0 contours with Functional Data Analysis (FDA) [5, 6]

4. Preliminary illustrative results from a short pilot project

Comparison of declarative falls (arrows show the accentual syllable): relative to the accentual vowel, there is an early peak in Cretan and Italian [7], but a late peak in SMG.











The L tone (top) and the H tone (bottom) of the fall are earlier in Cretan than in SMG (shown here relative to the start of accentual vowel in red line).

Cretan [e'sfazame 'firo]

SMG [peristeri[']ônas]

FDA confirms the AM comparison. Left: The Cretan (**) and Italian (••) fall starts earlier and is much steeper than in SMG (°°). Right: The slope and curvature of CG pattern with Italian and have a higher quadratic curvature than SMG.



5. Discussion

The AM and FDA analyses consistent (cf. [6]), promising less labour intensive/costly and more reliable analyses of large datasets.

Impossible to demonstrate that Venetian spoken 400 years ago had the same intonation as modern Italian, but

the declarative fall pattern found in geographically separate contemporary varieties could be due to daily contact of Cretans with Italian speakers during the past Venetian rule of Crete.

6. Future plans

3½ year project: 4 Greek dialects - 2 historically in contact with Turkish, 2 with Italian — compared along chronological and socio-cultural axes.

Develop a model of diachronic change of intonation by comparing contemporary and older archival recordings from the middle and the beginning of the 20th century.

How a donor language (e.g. Italian) affected different dialects (e.g. Cretan and Corfiot): Different temporal and sociocultural characteristics of contact. Correlate the differences with intonational variability in each dialect.

References

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