

## **Dialect use in a time of crisis: a report from a rural community in Northern Greece**

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One of the biggest effects of the economic crisis that has been plaguing Greek society for the past five years is youth unemployment, which was recently measured at 51% for people aged 15-29 years old (Hellenic Republic 2014). The situation is especially dire in major urban centres, which no longer attract young people from rural areas at the same rate as they used to before the crisis, bucking a 50-year trend that led to the urbanization of Greece, where 80% of the population resides in two cities (Athens and Thessaloniki, cf. Shorto 2012). Not only are young people hesitant to move to larger cities, many of those who had moved are now choosing to return to their home villages because of financial difficulties. The project that I will report on in this presentation investigates whether this demographic change is also affecting the use and perception of the local dialect in a small rural community of Northern Greece.

Specifically, I will present a sociolinguistic analysis of two phonological variables that have been identified as stereotypes of the Northern Greek variety: the raising of unstressed mid and high vowels, and the palatalization of the dental sonorants /l/ and /n/ (Newton 1972). In the first instance, when the mid vowels /e/ and /o/ appear in unstressed syllables, they are raised and become /i/ and /u/ respectively, while the high vowels /i/ and /u/ are deleted in the same environment. The two processes are in counter-feeding order, so that mid vowels that are raised do not become deleted. The palatalization of /l/ and /n/ that is marked as dialectal occurs in syllables in which they are followed by the vowel /i/ and, optionally, a consonant (/li(C)/ and /ni(C)/). Although both patterns are stigmatized, only the pattern of palatalization has been analyzed from a sociolinguistic perspective, and that only for the area of southwestern Greece (Papazachariou 2004; 2006, Pappas 2006; 2008).

The dataset of 2,880 tokens is constructed from recorded interviews with 24 speakers between the ages of 20 and 35, both male and female, and of two different educational levels: Those who have a high school diploma and those who have pursued at least two years of post secondary education. The participants have also been categorized according to their residence in the community: 12 of the speakers have only lived in the community, while the other 12 have lived in large cities for at least 3 years, and have returned because of the crisis.

The tokens were collected and analyzed using Praat 5.2.17 (Boersma & Weenink 2012) and the data were quantitatively analyzed using Goldvarb X (Sankoff et al. 2012). The results of the analysis show that gender and residence are the two most important factor groups for both variables, with local men using the rural variants the most, and returning women using them the least. For the other two groups, local women and returning men, the pattern of variation is more complex, as local women avoid the stigmatized variants more than returning men, but they also exhibit a wider range of variation.

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