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## **Analogical leveling as optimization: Evidence from Greek dialectal variation**

### Abstract

Undoubtedly, analogy or analogical reasoning plays an important role in accounting for linguistic change (cf. Hock 1991, Mc Mahon 1994 and references therein). In the Structuralist and the Neogrammarian tradition, analogy is viewed as a purely proportional process, constituting along with sound change and borrowing the main mechanisms of language change. On the other hand, within the generative spirit, several attempts have been made in order to account for analogical phenomena and their role in leading to grammar simplification (cf. Kiparsky 1982, 2000) involving both competence and performance (cf. among others Dressler 1976 and Vincent 1974 for relevant discussion). With respect to morphology, a variety of terms has been subsumed under the notion analogical change, like (non-)proportional analogy, analogical extension, four part analogy, analogical leveling, back-formation to name just a few.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the process of analogical leveling as a tendency towards grammar optimization in the light of evidence provided by Greek dialectal variation. More specifically, investigating the inflectional paradigm of plural masculine nouns on a cross-dialectal basis, what can be seen is that different varieties show different types - stages of analogical leveling. Greek masculine nouns are inflected for number and case according to two different inflectional classes (cf. Ralli 2000). Inflectional class I includes masculine nouns in *-os* displaying no allomorphic stems (e.g. *anθrop-* 'man' PLURAL: '*anθrop-i*.NOM *an'θrop-on*.GEN *an'θrop-us*.ACC '*anθrop-i*.VOC). Inflectional class II includes masculine nouns in *-s* displaying allomorphic stems either via the addition of a vowel (e.g. *korak~koraka* 'raven' PLURAL: '*korak-es*.NOM *ko'rak-on*.GEN '*korak-es*.ACC '*korak-es*.VOC) or via the addition of the formative *-δ-* (*psara~psaraδ* 'fisherman' PLURAL: *psa'rad-es*.NOM *psa'rad-on*.GEN *psa'rad-es*.ACC *psa'rad-es*.VOC). Standard Modern Greek displays no analogical leveling, since all masculine nouns inflect according to these two inflection classes. On the other hand, the dialectal varieties of Lesviot and Aivaliot (cf. Papadopoulos 1927, Ralli in preparation) have undergone a cross-paradigmatic leveling in the plural forms resulting in the reduction of the difference between the two classes in favor of the inflectional paradigm of class I nouns (e.g. *korak~koraka* 'raven' is inflected according to class I, namely, PLURAL: *ko'rak*'.NOM/ACC/VOC (<*korak-i*) instead of '*korak-es*). However, masculine nouns displaying an allomorphic variant with *-δ-*, resist cross-paradigmatic leveling (e.g. *psara~psaraδ* 'fisherman' PLURAL: *psa'rad-is*.NOM/ACC/VOC (<*psa'rad-es*) and not \**psa'ri* or \**psa'rad-i*). In this case, resistance to paradigmatic leveling is ascribed to the presence of allomorphy as a factor contributing to structure preservation (cf. Ralli, Melissaropoulou & Tsiamas 2004). Moreover, in other dialectal varieties, like the one of Livisi (cf. Andriotis 1961) paradigmatic leveling is extended even in those nouns which in the former dialects resisted leveling, leading to the formation of one unified inflectional subparadigm for the plural (e.g. *korak~koraka* 'raven' PLURAL: '*korak-i*.NOM *ko'rak-on*.GEN *ko'rak-us*.ACC '*korak-i*.VOC instead of \*'*korak-es* etc. and *psara~psaraδ* 'fisherman' PLURAL: *psa'rad-i*.NOM *psa'rad-on*.GEN *psa'rad-us*.ACC *psa'rad-i*.VOC instead of \**psa'rad-is*<*es*).

Our discussion will revolve around the question whether the observed cross-dialectal variation could be best interpreted as representing different stages or directions in the process of leveling as a tendency towards grammar optimization (cf. Kiparsky 1982, 2000, 2005). Moreover, the special factors favouring or disfavouring analogical leveling will be addressed focusing on the cross-dialectal role of allomorphy, case-syncretism and markedness (cf. Kiparsky 1982 and references therein, Lahiri 2000 and references therein, Ralli et al. 2004, Ralli 2006). The above discussion is intended as a contribution towards the central issue of paradigmatic relationships, or analogy in the organization of grammars, and thus as an integral part of linguistic theory.

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