The synchrony and diachrony of gender agreement in the Pontic branch of Asia Minor Greek

Romeyka and Asia Minor Greek Workshop
Queens’ College, Cambridge

1 April 2012

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The Asia Minor Greek dialect group
The Asia Minor Greek dialect group

ASIA MINOR GREEK

Proto-Cappadocian

Silliot

Cappadocian/Pontic

Pharasiot

Pontic  Cappadocian

(Karatsareas 2011; revised from Dawkins 1916 and Janse 2008)
The Asia Minor Greek dialect group

• All dialects of the group present

  i. numerous **archaisms** reminiscent of earlier stages in the history of Greek, particularly the Late Medieval period (1100–1500 CE)

  ii. a significant number of linguistic **innovations** that distinguish the AMGr dialects from other MGr dialects

☞ extensive use of **neuter forms** in gender agreement targets controlled by masculine and feminine nouns
The Asia Minor Greek dialect group

(1)  a.  Phloïtá Cappadocian (Costakis 1962: 114)
     s’ ena orfano neklifa (cf. SMGr mia, orfani)
     in a.N deserted.N church.*F

     b.  Óphis Pontic (Lianidis 2007 [1962]: 238)
     kan tria liras (cf. SMGr tris)
     around three.N liras.F

     c.  Pharasiot (Dawkins 1916: 550-551)
     adžino o fovês (cf. SMGr ecinos)
     that.N the.M coward.M
(1) a. Phloïtá Cappadocian (Costakis 1962: 114)
   s’ ena orfano neklísa (cf. SMGr mia, orfani)
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that.N the.M coward.M
Gender in Modern Greek
• MGr makes a tripartite gender distinction:
  i. masculine
  ii. feminine
  iii. neuter.
• Nouns are distributed in the three genders on the basis of a formal assignment system that has a semantic core defined primarily by animacy and secondarily by sex.
Gender in Modern Greek: assignment

(2)  
MGr, semantic assignment rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANIMATE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>γatos ‘male cat’</td>
<td>γata ‘female cat’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MASCULINE</td>
<td>FEMININE</td>
<td>NEUTER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Nouns belonging to the semantic residue (Corbett 1991: 13; Dahl 2000: 102) are assigned to the three genders on the basis of a set of morphological assignment rules.

• These rules are based on the correlation between gender and inflectional class (Coker 2009: 38; Matasović 2004: 48; Morpurgo-Davies 1968: 14-16, 31).
### MGr, morphological assignment rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASCULINE</strong></td>
<td>IC1</td>
<td><em>faros</em> ‘lighthouse’, <em>payos</em> ‘ice’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IC2</td>
<td><em>kanonas</em> ‘rule’, <em>mezes</em> ‘meze’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMININE</strong></td>
<td>IC3</td>
<td><em>ora</em> ‘hour’, <em>avli</em> ‘yard’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEUTER</strong></td>
<td>IC5</td>
<td><em>vuno</em> ‘mountain’, <em>ðendro</em> ‘tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IC6</td>
<td><em>spiti</em> ‘house’, <em>koritsi</em> ‘girl’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IC7</td>
<td><em>onoma</em> ‘name’, <em>ýrapsimo</em> ‘writing’, <em>kreas</em> ‘meat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IC8</td>
<td><em>ðasos</em> ‘forest’, <em>mikos</em> ‘length’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ralli 2005)
### Gender in Modern Greek: assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Semantic/Formal</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASCULINE</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEMANTIC/FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>aðelfos</em> ‘brother’, <em>ɣatos</em> ‘male cat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>faros</em> ‘lighthouse’, <em>mezes</em> ‘meze’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMININE</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEMANTIC/FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>aðelfi</em> ‘sister’, <em>ɣata</em> ‘female cat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>bukla</em> ‘curl’, <em>avli</em> ‘yard’, <em>trexala</em> ‘scamper’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEUTER</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEMANTIC/FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>spiti</em> ‘house’, <em>vuno</em> ‘mountain’, <em>onoma</em> ‘name’, <em>ɣrapsimo</em> ‘writing’, <em>kreas</em> ‘meat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>ayori</em> ‘boy’, <em>koritsi</em> ‘girl’, <em>mezeðaki</em> ‘meze.DIM’, <em>buklaki</em> ‘curl.DIM’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender in Modern Greek: agreement

• Agreement in MGr is strictly syntactic.

• Targets (adjectives, articles, some numerals, participles, pronouns) agree with the morphological gender of their controllers:

(4) SMGr

\[ \text{Afti } i \text{ tris } tiçi \text{ ine vameni kocini.} \]

these.M the.M three.M walls.M are painted.M red.M

‘These four walls have been painted red.’
• Semantic agreement is ungrammatical.

(4’) SMGr

* Afta ta tria tici ine vamena kokina.
these.N the.N three.N walls.M are painted.N red.N
‘These four walls have been painted red.’

• Except in...
• ... conjoined nouns denoting inanimate entities.

(5) SMGr

O tixos ce i karekla ine vamena kocina.

‘These four walls have been painted red.’
Gender in Pontic
## Gender in Pontic: assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Semantic/Formal</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASCULINE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>vasileas</em> ‘king’, <em>josmas</em> ‘young man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>ʃimos</em> ‘winter’, <em>ceros</em> ‘time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMININE</strong></td>
<td><strong>FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><em>nifæ</em> ‘bride’, <em>ɣari</em> ‘woman’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender in Pontic: agreement

(6) Argyroúpolis Pontic (Papadopoulos 1955: 194)
   a. erθan s’ enan tranon mayaran (...)  
      they.came to a.N big.N cave.F  
      ki ekin’(o) i mayara  
      and that.N the.F cave.F  
   b. sa prota ta cerus  
      in.the.N first.N the.N times.M

(7) Chaldía Pontic (Drettas 1997: 531)
   i Turc (...) ta yariðas epernane  
   the Turks the.N women.F they.took
Gender in Pontic: previous accounts

• Early accounts (Oeconomides 1890: 236-239) focused on the co-occurrence of neuter definite articles with feminine, non-human controllers.

• The phenomenon was interpreted as the result of a reanalysis of the accusative form of the feminine definite article *tas* that was triggered by phonetic simplification:

(8) \( tas \text{ } stratas \) ‘the.F ways.F’ > \( tas\text{-}stratas \) > \( ta \text{ } stratas \) (= ta ‘the.N’)

\( ta \text{ } stratas :: ta \text{ } imeras \) ‘the.N days.F’, \( ta \text{ } nixtas \) ‘the.N nights.F’
Gender in Pontic: previous accounts

• This account does not explain
  (a) agreement in the neuter on attributive modifiers or adjectival predicates

(9) Kotýora Pontic (Anastasiadis 1995: 86)

\begin{align*}
i & \quad \text{sevta-s} \quad \text{en} \quad \text{pola} \quad \text{tranon} \\
\text{the.F} & \quad \text{love.F-your} \quad \text{is} \quad \text{very} \quad \text{big.N}
\end{align*}

(b) agreement in the neuter with masculine controllers
Gender in Pontic: previous accounts

- To overcome Oeconomides’s shortcomings, Papadopoulos (1955: 45-46; 1958: 191-194) resorted to various types of analogy.

- In his approach, the use of the neuter form of the definite article with inanimate nouns is due to analogy to morphologically neuter nouns:

\[(10)\]

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>(ta , \ddeldra , \text{‘the.}N \text{trees.}N)</td>
<td>(\neq)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>(ta , \ddeldra , \text{‘the.}N \text{trees.}N)</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>(ta , \stratas , \text{‘the.}N \text{ways.}N)</td>
<td>(\neq)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>(ta , \stratas , \text{‘the.}N \text{ways.}N)</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender in Pontic: previous accounts

• Neuter attributive modifiers are accounted for by a series of analogical reanalyses operating on the sentence level:

(11) a. eçi  lalian  amon  koðonin
s/he.has voice.ʃ like bell.N

b. eçi  lalian  koðonin

b. eçi  koðonin  lalian

d. eçi  emorfon  lalian
s/he.has beautiful.N voice.ʃ (Papadopoulos 1955: 163)
A synchronic analysis of gender agreement in Pontic
Gender in Pontic: synchronic analysis

- Gender agreement in Pontic can be:
  i. syntactic
  ii. semantic
  iii. neuter.

- The distribution of the three agreement patterns is conditioned by a variety of factors:
  i. animacy
  ii. morphological gender
  iii. controller type
  iv. number
Gender in Pontic: Synchronic analysis

1. Animacy Hierarchy (adapted from Dahl 2000: 99)
   HUMAN  >  NON-HUMAN ANIMATE  >  INANIMATE

2. Morphological gender
   {MASCULINE, FEMININE, NEUTER}

3. Agreement Hierarchy (adapted from Corbett 1991, 2006)
   ATTRIBUTIVE  >  PREDICATE  >  PERSONAL PRONOUN

4. Number
   {SINGULAR, PLURAL}
A. Human nouns generally exhibit syntactic/semantic agreement:


i mikresa i nifæ eton
the. F young. F the. F daughter-in-law. F she. was
c’ allo poniresa
more crafty. F

13. (Drettas 1997: 531, 684)

i Turc (...) ta yariðas epernane
the Turks the. N women. F they. took
B. Inanimate nouns trigger predominantly semantic agreement on all targets except the definite article in the singular when it immediately precedes the noun:

(14) Oenóe Pontic (Lianidis 2007 [1962]: 228)
    t’(o) asimenion o mastrapas pali kremete
    the.N silver.N the.M tankard.M again it.is.hanging

(15) Argyroúpolis Pontic (Papadopoulos 1955: 194)
    i porta_i mono imson oran esteknen anixton_i
    the.F door.F only half.N hour.F it.stayed open.N
C. The agreement patterns triggered by non-human animate nouns illustrate the combined effect of animacy and morphological gender:

a. masculine nouns of this type trigger syntactic agreement

(16) Soúrmena Pontic (Papadopoulos 1955: 226)

epire  ton  petino  ke  ksomoloγa-tona
he.took  the.M  cockerel.M  and  he.shroves-him

ke  lei-atonan    ke  efajen-aton
and  he.says-him  and  he.ate-him
C. The agreement patterns triggered by non-human animate nouns illustrate the combined effect of animacy and morphological gender:

b. feminine nouns of this type trigger semantic agreement

(17) Soúrmena Pontic (Papadopoulos 1955: 226)

\[
\begin{align*}
epire & \quad tin & \quad papi & \quad ke & \quad ksomoloγa-to \\
he.took & \quad the.F & \quad duck.F & \quad and & \quad he.shroves\text{-it} \\
ke & \quad lei-ato & \quad ke & \quad efajen-ato & \\
and & \quad he.says\text{-it} & \quad and & \quad he.ate\text{-it}
\end{align*}
\]
Gender in Pontic: synchronic analysis

- The distribution of agreement patterns wrt gender and animacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>human</td>
<td>non-human animate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syntactic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>human</td>
<td>non-human animate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syntactic/neuter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender in Pontic: synchronic analysis

- The distribution of syntactic and semantic agreement wrt targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Hierarchy</th>
<th>attributive</th>
<th>predicate</th>
<th>personal pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prenominal definite article</td>
<td>adjectival modifiers</td>
<td>pre-adjectival definite article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG: syntactic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>semantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL: semantic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A diachronic analysis of gender agreement in Pontic
Gender in Pontic: diachronic analysis

• When novel semantic distinctions are introduced into an existing gender agreement system, they are first expressed on the personal pronoun.

• After their introduction, their subsequent development follows the path defined by the Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1991, 2006):

  ATTRIBUTIVE > PREDICATE > PERSONAL PRONOUN

• When a novel distinction is expressed on all possible targets for a given noun, then that noun undergoes gender shift.
• Novel distinctions that are most often introduced to existing gender systems generally refer to common semantic oppositions (human vs. non-human, animate vs. inanimate, count vs. mass).

• In languages with formal assignment systems, such as MGr, oppositions of this type normally play no role in gender agreement that is typically syntactic.
Gender in Pontic: diachronic analysis

- Cross-linguistic evidence supporting this trajectory of developments is very robust:
  - i. English dialects (Siemund 2002a, b, 2005, 2008)
  - iii. Swedish (Enger 2004)
  - iv. Danish (Fernández-Ordóñez 2009)
  - v. Spanish dialects (Fernández-Ordóñez 2006, 2007a, b, 2009)
  - vi. Bantu languages (Wald 1975)
In the case of languages that have a neuter gender (Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Spanish), it is the one that is always associated with the part of the novel semantic opposition found at the lowest end of the animacy hierarchy (see Matasović 2004: 134).

(18) South Cantabrian Spanish (Fernández-Ordóñez 2006: 89)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{salía} & \quad \text{la} \quad \text{miel} \quad \text{pero} \quad \text{ahora} \quad \text{sale} \\
\text{it.came.up} & \quad \text{the.}\text{F} \quad \text{honey.}\text{F} \quad \text{but} \quad \text{now} \quad \text{it.comes.up} \\
\text{limpio,} & \quad \text{una} \quad \text{miel} \quad \text{buenísimo,} \quad \text{buenísimo} \\
\text{clean.}\text{N} & \quad \text{a.}\text{F} \quad \text{honey.}\text{F} \quad \text{very.good.}\text{N} \quad \text{very.good.}\text{N}
\end{align*}
\]
Gender in Pontic: diachronic analysis

- Synchronic evidence in Pontic suggests that the development of semantic agreement in the dialect followed this cross-linguistically common path:

(a) the only target to preserve syntactic agreement with inanimate nouns is the singular definite article when it immediately precedes the noun

(19) Matsoúka Pontic

piason tin akran ti scini, ḏeson-ato sa mesa-s you.grab the.F end.F the rope you.tie-it at.the waist-
(b) the only target with which semantic agreement is most commonly possible when controlled by a masculine noun denoting a non-human animate entity is the personal pronoun

(20) Nikópolis Pontic (Lianidis 2007 [1962]: 208)

eskotsen  ton  skorpon  (...)  eksiven
he.killed  this.M  scorpion.M  it.came.out

all’  enan,  eino  pa  eskotsen
another  one.N  that.N  PART  he.killed
The distribution of agreement patterns in nouns denoting animals suggests that the semantic distinction that first became operative in agreement was animate *versus* inanimate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>non-human animate</td>
<td>inanimate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>syntactic</em></td>
<td><em>semantic</em></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>non-human animate</td>
<td>inanimate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>syntactic/neuter</em></td>
<td><em>semantic</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender in Pontic: diachronic analysis

• Semantic agreement emerged when the animate versus inanimate distinction was extended from the gender assignment to the gender agreement system in Pontic.

• It was first expressed on personal pronouns, the targets found farther away from their controllers.

• It was gradually extended to other controllers that were found closer to their controllers (predicate, attributive modifiers) without ever reaching immediately prenominal definite articles.
The advancement of semantic agreement was not uniform:

(a) **ANIMACY**
   - inanimate > non-human animate (> human)

(b) **GENDER**
   - feminine > masculine

(c) **NUMBER**
   - plural > singular
Gender in Pontic: diachronic analysis

- The trigger for the emergence of semantic agreement were non-prototypical masculine and feminine nouns denoting inanimate entities, nouns that were found in the right gender for their morphology but the wrong gender for their semantics (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis & Chila-Markopoulou 2003; see also Audring 2009: 156, Corbett 1991: 256).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORPHOLOGY</th>
<th>SEMANTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>fimos</strong> ‘winter’, <strong>ceros</strong> ‘time’</td>
<td><strong>laistera</strong> ‘hammock’, **læœ’stain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASCULINE</td>
<td>FEMININE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)
Gender in Pontic: diachronic analysis

Τα γένη ινε τρια λοεν: αρνικον, θελκον κε υδετερον (...) Παντα το γενος κι ανταποκρινετε χο πραματικον τιν φισιν τοντιον λ.χ. ο υρανον εν αρνικον, εκι πυ πρεπ να εν υδετερον· ι πετρα εν θελκον, εκι πυ πρεπ να εν κιατο υδετερον.

‘The genders are of three kinds: masculine, feminine and neuter (...) Gender does not always correspond to the nature of beings, for example ο υρανον [the sky] is masculine when it should be neuter; ι πετρα [the stone] is feminine when it too should be neuter.’

(Topcharas 1998 [1932]: 12)
The research reported here was conducted with the financial support of the Greek State Scholarships Foundation (Ιδρυμα Κρατικών Υποτροφιών), of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, and of the George and Marie Vergottis Fund of the Cambridge European Trust, all of which are hereby gratefully acknowledged.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Director of the Research Centre for Modern Greek Dialects of the Academy of Athens, Dr Christina Basea-Bezantakou, for granting me access to the Centre’s manuscript archive.

Romeyka data derive from British Academy, #SRG-102639, “Continuity, contact and change: Documenting the morphosyntax of the Greek varieties in Pontus”, 2011-2013, PI: Dr Ioanna Sitaridou; visit www.romeyka.org.
Appendix A

• The *Trebizond Almanac*, written in Trebizond in 1336 (Lamprou 1916)

(21) a. ἔσται υγρὸν καὶ χαροποιὸν καιρὸς
it.will.be wet.N and gladdening.N weather.M

b. φῆμαι δὲ τινὰ ἀληθεῖ
rumours.F and some.N true.N
• The progression of the change in Romeyka.

(22) Romeyka (Sitaridou 2012)

a. masculine
   
   *ta papuðes*  
   ‘the.N grandfathers.M’
   
   *ta tʃiriðæs*  
   ‘the.N fathers.M’

b. feminine
   
   *ta aðelfæs*  
   ‘the.N sisters.F’
   
   *ta manaðæs*  
   ‘the.N mothers.F’
• The completion of the change in the Pontic variety of Ukraine.

(23) Rumeic (Symeonidis & Tompaidis 1999: 54)

\[tu\ ko\ mas\ to\ \textit{fumos} \ en\ \textit{xlitsku}\]
the.N\ our.N\ our\ the.N\ winter.M\ is\ tepid.N\]
• The connection with the total loss of grammatical gender distinctions and agreement in Cappadocian.

(24) a. Chaldía Pontic (Papadopoulos 1928: 196)
\[ e\delta e\nu a \ \chi r o n \acute{\alpha} \ \epsilon \ \zeta e \ \zeta e r u s \] (cf. SMGr they.passed years and times.NOM cerus ‘times.ACC’)

b. Axó Cappadocian (Mavrochalyvidis & Kesisoglou 1960)
\[ t a \ d i x u s \ \epsilon x n e \ \alpha f t \zeta a \] (cf. SMGr tixus the walls.NOM they.have ears ‘walls.ACC’)
References


References


References

Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 55-68.


References


