Phonological and morphological aspects of Rhodian Greek: A corpus-based study

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1. Introduction

Rhodian Greek (henceforth RhoGr) is a Dodecanesian variety that belongs to the south-eastern dialectal zone, presenting all the typical phonological and morphosyntactic features associated with this area. Cypriot (Trudgill 2003), the dialects of Chios (Kontossopoulos 2001; Newton 1972) and Ikaria (Pantelidis 1929; Tsopanakis 1940, 1992) are also included in the southeastern dialectal group. With respect to RhoGr, its special dialectal features are most easily found in the villages of the island. In the present study we examine the phonological and morphological phenomena of present day RhoGr that are not attested in Standard Modern Greek (henceforth SMG), drawing on authentic speech data collected in three villages of the western part of the island (see Figure 1). For the purpose of this study, we have designed and compiled a dialectal corpus¹ based on fieldwork recordings elicited from a group of elderly speakers. In order to explore the frequency of occurrence of dialectal features, we have applied corpus linguistic techniques for the semi-automatic extraction of the structures under investigation. These features include, for example, the deletion of intervocalic voiced fricatives (1), the palatalization and affrication of velar consonants before the front vowels /i/ and /e/ (2), the presence of geminates either word-internally (3a) or across word boundaries (3b), the retention of the final –n in the nouns, adjectives and verb forms (4), the preservation of the archaic third person plural verbal inflectional suffixes -usi(n) and -asi(n) (5), the use of the syllabic augment e- in the formation of past tenses (2b, 5b). All data below are taken from the dialectal corpus.

	RhoGr	SMG	Gloss
(1) a. b.	eléame aerfós	léyame aðerfós	'say-PAST.1PL' 'brother'
(2) a. b.	yalatátci etcérðizes	yalatáci cérðizes	'milk- diminutive' 'win-past.2sg'
(3) a. b.	níffí ennomízo	nífi ðe nomízo	'bride' 'NEG think-PRES.1SG'

¹ The dialectal corpus used in this study is part of the Corpus of Rhodian Language Variety (CRhoLaV), that is currently being developed by the Laboratory of Informatics, Department of Mediterranean Studies, School of Humanities, University of the Aegean. CRhoLaV is a dynamic corpus of spoken language material from native speakers of various villages on the island of Rhodes. It currently contains dialectal material from 11 Rhodian villages and is constantly being updated.

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	RhoGr	SMG	Gloss
(4)			
a.	íçen	íçe	'have-PAST.3SG'
b.	krasín	krasí	'wine'
(5)			
a.	kámnusi	kánun	'do-PRES.3PL'
b.	efitévasi	fitevan	'plant-PAST.3PL'

In this study we focus on three phenomena that characterize RhoGr, namely velar palatalization and affrication, gemination of the lateral /l/ and suffixation of the archaic verbal endings – usi(n) and -asi(n). The aim of a synchronic investigation of the reported dialectal features is twofold. It is interesting from the descriptive view in order to determine the actual state of the contemporary RhoGr dialect. From a methodological point of view, corpus-based studies provide the systematic and efficient analysis of real language ensuring higher degrees of precision and completeness (McEnery & Wilson 2001; O'Keeffe & McCarthy 2012). Specifically, this study applies the corpus-based methodology to the study of dialects and geographical varieties² (Kolbe 2012).

1.1 The Rhodian varieties

Rhodes, the biggest of the Dodecanese islands, numbers 45 villages. In fact, the varieties spoken in the various villages of the island together make up what has been called here 'RhoGr'. In particular, the Rhodian varieties, although they share a lot of common features, present interesting variabilities as well (Kontossopoulos 2001; Tsopanakis 1940, 1992). Tsopanakis (1940) was the first to document the existence of linguistic variability within the island of Rhodes. According to his *Essai*, a reference work on the phonological phenomena of RhoGr, Rhodes is divided into two major dialectal zones: the south-west zone and the northeast zone. This division, which is further divided into seven subgroups (Tsopanakis 1992: 32-33), was proposed mainly based on phonological criteria.

Given the existence of inter-dialectal differences, the present study focuses on the varieties spoken in three villages of the west side of Rhodes island, namely Ialyssos, Damatria and Messanagros. Ialyssos⁴ is the largest village in Rhodes, with a population of more than 11,000 people. It is coastal and located 8 km from the city of Rhodes, north-west. Damatria is an inland small village of 600 people, also at the north-west part of the island. It is located 20 km from the city of Rhodes. Messanagros is the smallest village of the three, of only 150 people. Messanagros is in inland Rhodes, 75 km from the city of Rhodes at the south-west part of the island. The three villages are marked with a black oval shape in Figure 1 which shows a map of the island of Rhodes.

² There have been worthy efforts towards the systematic and organized digitization of Greek dialectal material. Indicatively: Baltazani et al. (2013), Karasimos et al. (2008), Karasimos et al. (2016).

³ With respect to the variety used in the city of Rhodes, it should be noted that most of the dialect-specific features are fading away.

⁴ Another (less formal) name used for this village is Trianda.



Figure 1: Map of Rhodes showing the location of the villages Ialyssos, Damatria and Messanagros

2. Methodology

2.1 Fieldwork

The language material was collected during fieldwork trips in the three villages of Rhodes in February 2016. Two female and two male native speakers of the varieties in question, aged 67-85 years old, participated in our study. The current data come from recordings of spontaneous conversations (free interviews) between each dialectal speaker and the fieldworker. Each conversation revolved around informants' childhood, everyday life in the village, family life, work, memories of the World War II and the Italian occupation of the island, etc. The field recordings were held at the informants' houses. The informants were aware that they would take part in a university research and that their speech would be recorded. The fieldworker's participation was minimal in order to allow the informants to speak freely and for most of the recording time. Two recordings took place in Ialyssos, one in Damatria and one in Messanagros (see Table 1 below).

2.2 Corpus description

Fieldwork recordings have been transcribed orthographically, with only minor changes to show dialectal pronunciation, and organized into a corpus. The total size of the dialectal corpus is of 17.523 words. Table 1 gives more details of the overall dialectal data. The first column lists the villages where the speech data were collected. The second column gives the number of the informants recorded in each village, the third column shows the gender of the informants, and the fourth column contains the size of the spoken language material collected in terms of the number of words.

Village	Number of Informants	Gender	Age	Size
Ialyssos	2	Female	76	
Damatria	1	Male Female	85 67	5,316 4,237
Messanagros	1	Male	70	7,970
Total				17,523

Table 1: The dialectal material of RhoGr

The corpus is organized in folders according the villages under examination. Within each such folder there are sub-folders for the audio material, i.e. the interviews as recorded, for the transcription of the recordings that contains all the language material of the interview, that is, both the fieldworker's and informants' words and for the "clean" language material, that is, only the words of the informants. The files of the written material are held in plain text format as well for processing purposes. A sample of sentence materials extracted from the corpus data of the variety of Ialyssos is provided in Table 6 (Section 3.3).

3. Results

3.1 Velar palatalization and affrication

Palatalization of velar consonants is a common phonological phenomenon that is found in all Greek varieties, including SMG (Arvaniti 2007; Holton et al. 1997; Newton 1972; Trudgill 2003). Greek velar palatalization is a process that turns the velar obstruents /k, g, x, y/ into palatals when followed by the front vowels /i, e/ and the high glide. In southern Greek dialects palatalized consonants typically emerge affricated (Trudgill 2003). Subtypes can be distinguished that have either palato-alveolar ($[t[], [d_3])$ or alveolo-palatal sounds ($[te], [d_2]$). The former are reported for Cyprus, the latter for Crete⁵ (Trudgill 2003; Manolessou & Pantelidis 2013). Similarly, RhoGr also displays velar palatalization and affrication with the voiceless stop /k/ being most affected. More specifically, /k/ becomes an alveolo-palatal affricate, which, according to Tsopanakis (1940: 111) resembles the Cretan one, but it is produced at a more front position in the oral cavity. This affricate sound, which we transcribe here as [tc] for the sake of convenience, shows variability with respect to its exact phonetic realization. In particular, we have noticed that the variable production of underlying /k/ is related to both inter-dialectal differences and linguistic context. However, this is an impression that requires further investigation, including an instrumental analysis of the dialectal realizations of /k/ attested in the corpus. We leave this issue as future work.

The palatalization and affrication of /k/ applies both in underived (6a) and morphologically derived environments (6b). We illustrate this distribution with a pair of examples from the variety of Messanagros.

(6)		
a. /kivérnisi/	[tcivérnisi]	'government'
b./saki+a/	[sat¢á]	'poke-PL'

⁵ However, more recent work on Western Cretan dialect by Lengeris and Kappa (2016) revealed two dialectal realizations of the voiceless velar stop /k/: a palatal $[c^{\varsigma}]$ and an alveolo-palatal $[t^{\varepsilon}]$ affricate.

The corpus processing revealed that all the varieties under investigation exhibit the affricate realization of /k/, but not to the same extend. Table 2 illustrates the number of [tc] -realizations by the dialectal speakers of each village. Note that the third column of the table gives the percentage of the dialectal forms in the total corpus material.

Village	$/k/ \rightarrow [tc]$	percentage
Ialyssos	51	0.3
Damatria	264	1.51
Messanagros	212	1.21
Average		1,007

Table 2: Frequency of /k/- palatalization and affrication

As it can be seen, the higher percentage of alveolo-palatal realizations of /k/ is achieved by the speakers of the villages Damatria and Messanagros. More specifically, the results show an almost equal distribution of dialectal realizations in these two varieties. In the variety of Ialyssos, on the other hand, this phenomenon seems to be quite limited in the speech of our informants. However, a closer look at the data reveals that most [tc] realizations in Damatria and Messanagros correspond in fact to the pronunciation of the conjunction $\kappa\alpha i$ (/ke/) 'and', one of the most frequently used word. In particular, out of 212 instances, where the underlying /k/ appeared as [te] before the front vowels /i, e/ in the data from Messanagros, 145 (68,40% of instances) occurred in the word [tce]/ [tci]. Out of 264 instances of [tc] realizations in the corpus data from Damatria, 156 (59,09% of instances) occurred in the word [tce]/ [tci]. Therefore, the elevated percentage of affricated realizations is due to the frequent occurrence of the word και (/ke/) 'and' in the corpus, as shown in Table 3. Similarly, almost half of the total [tc] realizations (43,14% of instances) recorded in the data from Ialyssos involved the production of the conjunction $\kappa \alpha i$ (/ke/) 'and'. Consequently, these findings suggest that the phenomenon of /k/- palatalization and affrication is not so regular anymore in RhoGr, since it seems to be restricted to certain -high-frequency- lexical items.

Village	[tce]/[tci]	[tce]/ [tci] %
Ialyssos	22	43,14%
Damatria	156	59,09%
Messanagros	212	68,40%
Total	390	74,01%

Table 3: Frequency of [tce]/[tci] realizations

3.2 Gemination of /l/

The gemination of consonants in RhoGr is perhaps what sounds more striking to the ears of SMG speakers. Apart from the dialects of Dodecanese, this special phonological feature inherited from Ancient Greek is also preserved in Cypriot, in Italiot, in certain Cycladic dialects (e.g. Seriphos, Siphnos, Kimolos) and in the dialects of Chios and Ikaria

⁶ The geminate consonants of Cypriot Greek have been investigated in detail in the literature. See Armosti (2011), Arvaniti (1999, 2010), Malikouti-Drachman (2003) among others, and references cited therein.

(Kontossopoulos 2001; Newton 1972; Pantelidis 1929; Trudgill 2003). According to Tsopanakis (1940: 153-161), the consonants that undergo gemination are the nasals /n, m/, the liquids /r, 1/, the sibilants /s, z/, the voiceless stops /k, p, t/ and the voiceless fricatives /f, x, θ/. As mentioned in the Introduction, gemination occurs both lexically and post-lexically. Postlexical geminates are created by the total assimilation of the word-final coronal /-n/ to the following consonant, as it was exemplified in (3b). Total assimilation is a widespread process in RhoGr mostly triggered by the retention of the final /-n/ in various word classes, e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc., which is obviously another archaic remnant that has been preserved in the south-eastern dialectal group (Browning 1969; Kontossopoulos 2001; Newton 1972; Trudgill 2003).

Of particular interest in the study of RhoGr geminates is the split behavior of the lateral /l/. This means that /l/ emerges as geminate in some cases and as sequence of two segments in others. Specifically, when word-final /n/ precedes the singleton /l/, it fully assimilates to it, thus giving rise to a post-lexical geminate [1:], as illustrated in (7c). In contrast, as reported by Tsopanakis (1940: 157) and confirmed by the data in (7a, b), the underlying /l:/ does not surface as geminate word-internally; it is pronounced as a singleton lateral [1] followed by the homorganic alveolo-dental stop [d]. This phenomenon seems to be lexical, since [ld] derivations are enforced within the word¹⁰ and not across words.

(7)			
a. /skíllus /	[scíldus]	'dog-ACC.PL'	(Ialyssos)
b. /mallóname/	[maldóname]	'fight-PAST.1PL'	(Damatria)
c. /en íxen leftá/	[en íçel leftá]	'NEG have-PAST.3SG money'	(Damatria)

The realization of underlying /l:/ as [ld] has proven a common phonological feature shared by all three Rhodian varieties as revealed by the corpus analysis. The table that follows displays the frequencies of [ld] realizations by the dialectal speakers of each village.

Village	/ll/ → [ld]	percentage
Ialyssos	110	0.63
Damatria	77	0.44
Messanagros	64	0.37
Average		0,72

Table 4: Frequency of [ld] realizations

As obvious from above, the use of double articulation of the underlying /l:/ is much more extended in the variety of Ialyssos, where [ld] appeared 110 times compared to the varieties of

⁷ See also Manolessou & Bassea-Bezantakou (2012) for a detailed report on the geographical distribution of geminate consonants in Modern Greek dialects.

We should note that, as in Cypriot Greek, the production of double voiceless stops /k, p, t/ is accompanied by aspiration, e.g. bakkháliko 'grocery store'. However, as Phillips (1957: 19) notes, this phenomenon is quite limited in RhoGr, since the aspirated stops seem to appear more frequently in loanwords.

⁹ Double voiced fricatives /v, y, ð/ do not appear word-internally due to the application of intervocalic voiced fricative deletion (Pantelidis 1929; see the examples given in (1)). They are therefore created only post-lexically as a result of the total /n/-assimilation.

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that [Id] sequences can also be found in word-initial position. More specifically, we recorded two instances of word-initial [ld] derivations, one in Damatria and one in Messanagros, both involved in the realization of the word /llío/ [ldío] 'a little'.

Damatria and Messanagros, where [ld] surfaced 77 times and 64 times, respectively. It is important to note though that most [ld] realizations in Damatria and Messanagros occurred in relatively high-frequency words, such as [aldá] 'but', [áldos] 'other', [óldi] 'all', [poldá] 'many', etc. suggesting that the phenomenon is quite constrained. On the other hand, [ld] productions recorded in the variety of Ialyssos had a wider distribution with respect to the lexical contexts in which they occurred. This finding is therefore consistent with Tsopanakis (1940: 156-157) who has observed that this dialectal feature is mostly attested in the villages surrounding the city of Rhodes, i.e. in the northern part of the island.

3.3 Archaic verbal suffixes

A characteristic morphological feature of RhoGr having an archaic flavor is the use of the third person plural inflectional suffixes –usi(n) and –asi(n). To be more concrete, the ancient suffix -usi(n) in non-past verbal forms is preserved in RhoGr (e.g. vrázusi 'boil. PPES.3PL', vjénusi 'go-PRES.3PL out'). This verb ending has spread by analogy in the formation of past (Phillips 1957: 21). Thus, the past forms are dialectally indicated by the suffix -asi(n), e.g. ixasin 'have-PAST.3PL', nikjásasi 'rent-PAST.3PL'. Under the influence of SMG, the two archaic verbal endings co-occur with the standard ones, -un and -an (see Nikolou & Frantzi 2016), e.g. epaénan~epaénasi 'go-PAST.3PL'.

With respect to their use in contemporary RhoGr, the archaic suffixes differ in frequency from one another. In particular, the quantitative analysis of the corpus data revealed that the use of the suffix -asi(n) is more widespread than that of -usi(n). Overall, the suffix -asi(n) appeared 116 times in the current corpus, whereas the suffix –usi(n) only 15 times. The suffixes also vary in terms of how frequently they appear in each variety. The following table depicts the distribution of the archaic suffixes in the varieties under investigation.

Village	Ialyssos	Damatria	Messanagros	All three villages	Percentage
-usi(n)	10	5	0	15	0.09
-asi(n)	42	60	4	116	0.66
Average	26	32.5	2	65.5	0.374

Table 5: Frequency of the archaic verbal suffixes –usi(n) and –asi(n)

As illustrated in Table 5, the set of archaic endings appears more frequently in the speech of the speakers of Ialyssos and Damatria. On the other hand, the two suffixes are severely underrepresented in the data that come from Messanagros. In this variety, the suffix -asi(n) was used only 4 times, whereas the suffix -usi(n) did not appear in the data at all. This distribution suggests that the suffixation of the archaic verbal endings is still preserved in contemporary RhoGr, but it seems to be mostly attested in the varieties of the northern part of the island. Table 6 demonstrates examples of past verbal forms in –asi(n) drawn from the variety spoken in the village of Ialyssos. Boldface is used to highlight the dialectal forms under discussion.

1	οι γερμαναράδες τους σκύλντους εν ντους εσφάζασι μόνο εκρύβαν
2	τηάνιζεν ντους και αυτοί πιο εμο εμοσκομυρίζζασι γιατί επειδή
3	στο πατζί μέσα και τρώαν ντο μέχρι τομ Μάρτιο είχασιν να φαν
4	ντα και κάμναμ μπιλάβι και καθούνταν κι ετρώασι κι ύστερα πιο

¹¹ According to Kontossopoulos (2001), these verbal endings also occur in Cypriot Greek, Italiot Greek, West Cretan dialect (e.g. in the village of Sfakia) and the dialect of Mani (see also Vagiakakos 1994).

5	με τα δόντια τους κι εψωφούσασι τους σποργίτους που πιάνα που
6	μπάλι άλλους που σου που εσκοτώνασι αυτό ελέαμέν ντο
7	αυτοί την νύχτα επαρακολουθούσασι τηντην γκλωσσαριά και
8	και αυτές εγεννούσασι και όταν ήτα και θέλαν να γεννήσουν

Table 6: The suffix –asi(n) (Ialyssos)

As a result of the total assimilation of the final-suffix /n/, the dialectal past ending also appears as [-asim] when the following consonant is the labial [m]. The data in (8) show two representative examples of the [-asim] allomorph attested in the dialectal corpus.

(8) a. /váldasin mésa/	[váldasim mésa]	'put-PAST.3PL into' (Ialyssos)
b. /ekámnasin máθima/	[ekánnasim máθima]	'teach-PAST.3PL courses' (Damatria)

4. Conclusions and future plans

In this paper we presented an overview of three typical dialectal features of RhoGr, namely /k/palatalization and affrication, gemination of the lateral /l/ and suffixation of the archaic verbal endings -usi(n) and -asi(n), based on novel data collected from speakers of the villages Ialyssos, Damatria and Messanagros (west side of the island).

The results clearly showed that contemporary RhoGr still preserves a number of its distinctive features. Focusing on the frequency of occurrence of /k/-palatalization and affrication, we found that speakers of Damatria and Messanagros used the affricated forms much more often in their speech compared to speakers of Ialyssos. However, the high occurrence of the conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$ (/ke/) 'and' in the corpus data was proven a significant factor that influenced the shaping of the final results, since most (i.e. 74,01%) of the [te] realizations recorded in the corpus were associated with this high-frequency word.

With respect to geminate consonants occurring in RhoGr, we restricted our study to the lateral /l/. As reported by Tsopanakis (1940) and confirmed by our data, /l/ emerges as geminate only post-lexically, whereas underlying [1:] surfaces as a sequence of homorganic lateral + alveolo-dental consonant ([ld]) word-internally. In addition, the results showed inter-dialectal differences in the frequency of occurrence of [ld] realizations. As revealed, the speakers of Ialyssos show a strong preference for [ld] productions which is not shared so fervently by the speakers of the other two varieties.

At the morphological level, the process of suffixation of the archaic inflectional endings, – usi(n) and –asi(n), was found to be still active in RhoGr. As regards the distribution of the two verbal suffixes, the results of the quantitative analysis give a significant advantage to the suffix -asi(n). On the other hand, the non-past verbal ending -usi(n) seems to loses ground under the strong influence of SMG. Moreover, the results indicated that the presence of the archaic suffixes in the variety of Messanagros was almost negligible.

In this study we presented the initial results of a corpus-based study in progress focusing on the phonological and morphological phenomena of present day RhoGr. Regarding future work we aim at the following directions. First, more well-known features of the dialect, such as those mentioned in the Introduction, will be explored in terms of their frequency of occurrence in the corpus. Second, the similarities and differences among the varieties of RhoGr will be examined not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Moreover, as already mentioned, future work could instrumentally examine the dialectal realization of velar stop /k/ in RhoGr, as well as determine its phonological distribution. Finally, more research needs to be conducted with respect to the southern dialectal subgroup. A larger study with more speakers is necessary in order to gain a more complete picture of the dialect-specific features of the southern varieties. This line of research is part of our direct future plans, since the corpus is continuously being updated with new spoken material from various villages on the island of Rhodes.

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