

5.10.2015

Handout: Grammatical Gender in Pontic Greek

Outline

- Animacy hierarchy and case syncretism
- Animacy-based distinction in the nominals agreement and predicate-argument domain
- Differential Subject Marking (DSM)

Questions to consider

Contact languages/varieties:

- with concatenative morphology (Turkish, Georgian);
- with non-concatenative morphology (Russian, Standard Greek)

Changes during transference process:

- assigning grammatical gender to singly occurring words;
- metaplasm of the gender in the plural;
- animacy-based distinction in the nominals agreement

Data

- Multimedia corpus, uploaded to the TLA archive;
- Narratives on the different (8) topics;
- Quantity of analyzed data: The average word count per speaker is 936 words, 29 informants

Main claim

The claim is that the assigning of feminine gender to transferred nouns is decisive for keeping grammatical gender active in PG spoken in Georgia. Mostly this process is stimulated by Russian language and it triggers three processes:

- increasing the amount of feminine nouns;
- increasing examples of the use of the modifier in corresponding gender with inanimate nouns;
- increasing cases of DSM

Animacy hierarchy and case syncretism

CASE SYNCRETISM¹

Pontic is characterized by the tripartite gender distinction (masculine, feminine and neuter). The main feature that distinguishes Pontic from SG is the animacy hierarchy, which is inflectionally active and triggers case syncretism in plural.

In some other Asia Minor Greek dialects, namely in Cappadocian the [\pm human] feature has undertaken the role of gender. In Pontic both features: grammatical gender and the animacy hierarchy are active.

Standard Greek	Pontic Greek	Cappadocian Greek
GENDER	GENDER + ANIMACY HIERARCHY	ANIMACY HIERARCHY

Case syncretism applies to all [-human] noun of masculine and feminine gender, see (3) & (4)

	Masc.		Fem.	
	-os	-as	-i	-a
NOM	<i>γámus</i>	<i>mínas</i>	<i>vreshás</i>	<i>kosáras</i>
ACC	<i>γámus</i>	<i>mínas</i>	<i>vreshás</i>	<i>kosáras</i>

In feminine nouns case syncretism of nominative and accusative takes place with [+human] nouns as well, but it is distinguished by the use of formatives in plural, *-es* (initial formative of nominative case) is used with human nouns, and *-as* (initial formative of accusative case) with non-human ones, see (5) & (6)

	Fem.	
	[+human]	[-human]
NOM	<i>i jajáðes</i>	<i>ta jortás</i>
ACC	<i>tis jajáðes</i>	<i>ta jortás</i>

METAPLASM OF THE GENDER IN PLURAL

An interesting phenomenon attested in PG is metaplasma of the gender in the plural, it is evident by the choice of the neuter form of the determiners (articles, quantifiers) or sometimes even by the change of the formatives.

Two cases of metaplasma, see (8), (9) & (10)

	Fem.	
	neuter article	neuter formatives
NOM	<i>ta óras</i>	<i>ta pshía</i>
ACC	<i>ta óras</i>	<i>ta pshía</i>

There can be distinguished two subclasses in the inflectional class of masculine and feminine nouns with *a* stem (ending in *-as*, *-is*, *-es* and in *-a*, *-i*, *-e* respectively), so called 'first declension': 1) for

¹ On the case syncretism in Cappadocian and Pontic see SPYROPOULOS & KAKARIKOS 2009.

[+human] entities with *-es* formative in plural, and 2) for [-human] entities with *-as* formative in plural.

M. [+HUMAN]		M. [-HUMAN]		
	SG.	PL.	PL.	
NOM.	<i>o ándras</i>	<i>i ándres</i>	<i>o mínas</i>	ta mínas
GEN.	<i>tu ándra/andrós</i>	<i>ton andrón</i>	<i>tu minós/mína</i>	<i>ton minón</i>
ACC.	<i>ton ándran</i>	<i>tus ándres</i>	<i>ton mína</i>	ta mínas

F. [+HUMAN]		F. [-HUMAN]		
	SG.	PL.	PL.	
NOM.	<i>i θεγatéρα</i>	<i>i θεγatéρες</i>	<i>i kosára</i>	ta kosáras
GEN.	<i>ti θεγatéρας</i>	<i>ton θεγatéριον</i>	<i>ti kosáras</i>	<i>ton kosaríon</i>
ACC.	<i>tin θεγatéραν</i>	<i>ti θεγatéρες</i>	<i>tin kosáran</i>	ta kosáras

TRANSFERRED WORDS

The same phenomenon of metaplasm and case syncretism is observed in the case of embedded words. From the elicited data, there is a subset of loan-nouns integrated in the inflectional system of PG with distinction of [\pm human] in plural,

- (a) nouns of Russian origin, all non-humans

baráshkas 'lamb', *cháshkas* 'cup', *famíliás* 'surname', *kaféτας* 'sweets', *salfétkas* 'napkin', *vótkas* 'vodka', *vísilkas* 'deportation', *semiáðas* 'family'

- (b) nouns of Turkish origin, two for human entities and two for non-human with corresponding endings of PG

γariðes 'woman', *mesháðas* 'forest', *pachiðes* 'sister', *paráðas* 'money'

- (c) nouns of Georgian origin, both non-humans

lóbias 'haricot beans', *churchélas* 'churchkhela'

Animacy-based distinction in the nominals agreement and predicate-argument domain

ANIMACY-BASED DISTINCTION IN THE NOMINALS AGREEMENT²

The grammatical gender of the agreeing nominal (adjectives and pronouns) depends on the animacy of the noun. Thus, the modifiers of the animate [+human] nouns agree with their head noun in grammatical gender, see (18), (19) & (20) of the animate [-human] nouns can be used either in neuter gender or in corresponding gender of the head noun (21) & (22) of the inanimate nouns are by default neuters, see (23), (24) & (25).

animate [+human]	animate [-human]	inanimate
corresponding gender of the noun	corresponding gender of the noun or neuter gender	neuter gender
<i>ekínos ánthropos</i> <i>i áli aðelfí</i> <i>polí roméi</i>	<i>meýálo kámbala</i> <i>túti kámbala</i>	<i>to kalón to xoríon</i> <i>to pondiakón i díálektos</i> <i>aftó yámos</i>

The same tendency, namely neuter agreement with inanimate nouns, is attested with transferred words, see (26) & (27)

Russian	Turkish
<i>tamózhnan elinikón</i>	<i>to tranón odá</i>
<i>polá vótkas</i>	<i>émorfa mesháðas</i>

It is evident that PG loses the morphosyntactic role of the grammatical gender due to the animacy based distinction, but in the case of Pontic Greek spoken in Georgia one thing that reduces the tendency of Gender loss is the transference of feminine nouns from Russian to Pontic Greek, furthermore the use of the modifier in neuter gender with inanimate nouns is reduced by examples where feminine loan-nouns from Russian are used, see (22) & (28). Such phenomenon is never attested with the loan-nouns transferred from Turkish, regardless of the fact that the nouns ending in *-a* in the Source Language (i.e. Turkish) are assigned feminine gender in PG, see (29) & (30).

ANIMACY-BASED DISTINCTION IN PREDICATE-ARGUMENT DOMAIN

In predicate-argument domain the agreement depends also on animacy of the noun. Thus, animate [+human] nouns trigger agreement in the grammatical gender, while inanimate nouns have neuter agreement, see (31), (32) & (33)

animate [+human]	inanimate
<i>i póndii íne pio ðeméni</i>	<i>politía éton émorfon</i>
	<i>pondiakó ítan o yámon</i>

² On the animacy-based distinction in the nominals agreement see KARATSAREAS 2009.

Differential Subject Marking (DSM)³

One of the features characterized to PG is Differential Subject Marking (DSM), which is usually compared with Differential Object Marking (DOM) of other Asia Minor Greek dialects, where this phenomenon is assumed to be due to the contact with Turkish. In Pontic Greek spoken in Georgia, DSM is not only with the nouns of masculine gender, see (33), (35) & (36) but with the feminine nouns as well, see (37), (38) & (39)

M.	F.
<i>o θίον ίpen</i>	<i>i διαforán en polá</i>
<i>o γambrón pái</i>	<i>o jéros ke i γréan porpatún varéan</i>
<i>pondiakó ítan o γámon</i>	<i>en ató i fotían</i>

DSM WITH TRANSFERRED WORDS

The same phenomenon is attested with loan-words as well, see (40), (41) & (42)

Russian (F.)	Turkish (F.)
<i>teméteron i familian étone</i>	<i>to roméikon i kalachín ken...</i>

³ On Differential Subject Marking see DRETTAS 1997, JANSE 2002, JANSE 2004, REVITHIADOU & SPYROPOULOS 2012.