Processes of Spread for Syntactic Constructions in the Balkans

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Abstract: Although scholarly attention concerning the spread of linguistic features in the Balkans has generally been focused on their spread from one language into another, there is another important dimension to consider, namely how innovative features spread within speech communities. In fact, such internal spread is crucial to understanding the general processes by which Sprachbünde arise, for if a feature of external origin finds no extension within a potential receiving language, there really is no innovation to speak of. Thus, three examples are discussed here which illustrate different dimensions of the spread of syntactic constructions within one Balkan speech community, that of the Greek-speaking world. The "parachuting" type of spread is illustrated by the loss of the infinitive in Greek, with special attention to the realization of that feature in Constantinople Jewish Greek, and internal spread is exemplified by two cases, in Bulgarian and in Greek, of analogical generalization of a pattern that may have originated through language contact.

I. Introduction

A key distinction in Balkan linguistics is the one made by Schaller 1975, differentiating between the purely geographic label of "language of the Balkans" and the more interesting designation of "Balkan language", referring to just those languages of the Balkans which participate in the Balkan Sprachbund. Thus, Slovenian and Hungarian each count as a language of the Balkans but neither one is a Balkan language, whereas both Bulgarian and Greek are both languages of the Balkans and Balkan languages.

One of the most salient features of the Balkan Sprachbund, and indeed what characterizes it as a linguistic convergence area, as a Sprachbund, is the fact that the numerous similarities that have been observed as holding among various "languages of the Balkans" and linking them as "Balkan languages" are, at least in part, due to language contact. Therefore, in discussing the

Balkan Sprachbund, it is crucial to understand the spread of linguistic features from one speech community to another, and to be sure, much scholarly interest in the Balkans has been focused on just that point.

Nonetheless, at the same time, there is another important dimension of linguistic spread to consider, namely how innovative features spread within speech communities. Both types of spread are critical for the formation of a Sprachbund. Without the former, i.e. without the introduction of innovations from an external source through contact among speakers, there would be no Sprachbund effect, but rather only a set of accidental convergences that languages happen to show; however, without the latter, without the generalization of these innovations within a speech community, there would be no real evidence that an external innovation had taken hold at all and had become part of the borrowing language. If a feature of external origin finds no extension among speakers within a potential receiving language, then in a sense, there really is no innovation to speak of, only a mutation, as it were, that stumbles into a dead end in linguistic evolution.

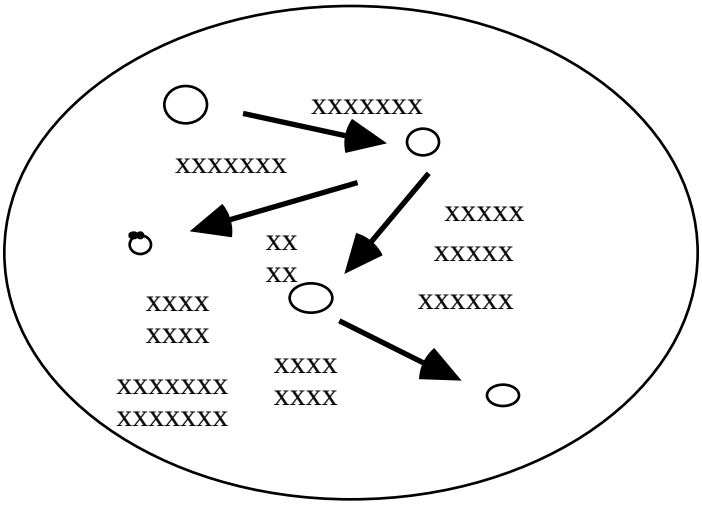
Accordingly, an examination is undertaken here of the spread of features in two Balkan speech communities, Greek and Bulgarian, by focusing on three examples, and in each case examining a syntactic construction-type whose origin has some connection with language contact in the Balkans and which has been noted and discussed in the literature on Balkan linguistics.

II. "Parachuting" and the Loss of the Infinitive

One type of spread of a linguistic innovation is the spread of a feature into discontinuous urban areas, what has been called "parachuting", a venerable idea in traditional dialectology more recently associated with the work of Peter Trudgill (e.g., Chambers & Trudgill 1980), though "leapfrogging" might be a better term. In such a model for spread, an innovation that begins in an urban center spreads by "hopping" from one urban center to another, not necessarily taking in all the speakers within the newly affected areas (i.e. ordinary social conditions

promoting spread in local areas will ultimately be crucial); eventually, as the sphere of influence of each urban area is extended in its domain, taking in a greater and greater amount of once-rural areas, the innovation spreads to the spaces between the urban centers so that eventually entire regions are affected. The diagram in (1) gives a picture of how this model might be schematized:

(1) Sketch of Trudgillian "parachuting" model [O = urban center, xxxx = intervening nonurban areas, arrows indicate path of spread]



An example in the Balkans is the spread within Greek of the innovation whereby infinitival complementation at one stage of the language was replaced by finite complementation in the Medieval period. This process is illustrated in (2), by earlier (H: Copenhagen, 14th century) and later (P: Paris, 15th century) manuscript versions of a text, the *Chronicle of Morea*, which is usually dated to the first half of the 14th century:

(2) a. (H) καὶ δύνομαι ποιῆσαι
and can/1SG do/INF

vs. (P) δύνομαι καὶ νὰ ποίσω (l. 4266)
can/1SG and SUBJUNC do/1SG
'(which) I can do'

b. (H) ἄρχασαν ... και λέγειν
began/3PL and say/INF
vs. (P) ἄρχισαν ... να λέγουν (l. 5261)
began/3PL SUBJUNC say/3PL
'they began to say'

My concern here is the spread of this feature within Greek only, not throughout the Balkans in general, even though it is a pan-Balkan feature; presumably, the spread within each language needs to be studied, each in its own right.

In the account given in Joseph 1983 of the origin of this feature in the Balkans, the focus was on northern Greece in the Medieval period, covering approximately 1000 - 1600, and in particular a multi-lingual urban center such as Thessaloniki, for it was there that speakers of Greek, Slavic (i.e. emerging Macedo-Bulgarian), and Albanian would have come in sustained and close contact with one another on a daily basis, providing opportunities for the effects of language shift, imperfect learning, inter-speaker accommodation, etc., as well as exposure to new variants, all of which could have contributed to this innovation and to convergence among these languages in general. This is the exact social context for contact that Thomason & Kaufman 1988 have pointed to as essential to the development of a Sprachbund, namely with the relevant speech communities each maintaining their own linguistic identity in spite of the extensive and intimate contact, and thus some members of the groups of necessity being bi- or multi-lingual. Similar conditions are evident in a "mini-Sprachbund" contact situation such as that in Kupwar village in India, as described by Gumperz & Wilson 1971, where intense contact with multi-lingualism has led to structural convergences among Urdu, Kannada, and Marathi.

Still, whatever the locus may have been for the original innovative use of finite replacements in place of infinitives or for the impetus that propelled it into the various languages of the Balkans, it is crucial to recognize that it had to spread within each language. This spread within Greek provides an illustration within the Balkans of the parachuting type of spread. The point of origin for the finite-clause innovation can be seen as the area in and

around Thessaloniki, in the central region of Balkans. Subsequently, there was robust spread of this innovation to other parts of the Greek world: for instance, outlying areas with urban centers, e.g. Cyprus and Venice, which had "a large Greek community [and] was an important centre of Greek commercial, religious and cultural activity" during the period of Ottoman rule in Greece (Clogg 1992:16), are affected by the replacement of the infinitive to the fullest degree. Within Greece it spread from Thessaloniki, the largest city at that time in what is now Greece, to Athens, which was not then the urban center it is today but in the medieval period was perhaps the second largest city in Greece, and the site of an orthodox metropolitan see, to other sizable cities such as Argos (in the Peloponnesos) and Candia (i.e., Heraklion, in Crete), which were both on major medieval sea-trade routes, as were also Venice, Thessaloniki, and Argos-Nepaktos, to judge from the maps in Magocsi 1993, and then to the intervening, more rural, areas, some of which had orthodox metropolitan sees, e.g. Larissa and Ioannina. Significantly, there was less robust spread to peripheral areas without urban centers, e.g. Southern Italy, where even now there are somewhat systematic traces of infinitival usage, and the Black Sea coast, where although the evidence is ambiguous as to the status of the infinitive in present-day Pontic (as discussed by Tombaidis 1977), there is every reason to believe that infinitives persisted in that dialect at least into the 18th century, several centuries later than in other dialects of Greek.

Especially interesting is the situation in the largest of Greek cities (though it was not in what is now Greece), namely Constantinople. For the most part, Constantinople Greek, at least in its colloquial variety in medieval times, was not particularly different from other northern dialects of Greek spoken at that time, and this holds as well for the use of the infinitive, which, by the 1400s, would have been highly restricted and limited to a few contexts, most notably in a future tense formation. This situation is in keeping with the model of spread of the infinitive replacement innovation by parachuting into urban centers, and it should be noted as well that many Greeks left Constantinople, e.g. for Venice, with the coming of the Ottoman Turks in the 14th and 15th centuries, and that

exodus would have provided another path for the spread of the innovation.

In this context, a 1547 translation of the Old Testament into Greek that was written in Constantinople by a Greek-speaking Jew, using Hebrew characters, is of particular interest. This work seems by all accounts (e.g. Bellili 1890, Hesseling 1897) to reflect 16th century colloquial spoken Greek of Constantinople, as is suggested by the fact that it has some fine phonetic detail marked that is characteristic of the spoken language. For instance, the word for 'one' is spelled so as to indicate a pronunciation [mnjá] for what canonically, and earlier, would have been [mía] or [mjá] — the epenthetic [-n-] in the transition from [m] to the glide [j], found still in current usage in some dialects (Thumb 1964:29), reflects not only the accent shift found in the colloquial Greek pronunciation of this word but also a phonetic detail that suggests a keen ear on the part of the translator for what speakers were actually saying.

Despite this colloquial character to the translation, infinitives in this text occur in greater numbers and in a wider range of uses than can generally be found in Greek in that period. These uses are illustrated in (3) and they include nominalized infinitives as the object of prepositions, infinitives as complement to perception verbs, a future formation with θέλω, and an entirely novel use in a rendering of a Hebraism (e.g. "And God spoke, saying..."). Admittedly, these infinitives have the same form as third person singular finite verbs, but the use of the generalized subordinator τοῦ in (3a) and (3d) that was common with the infinitive in early Post-Classical Greek (Kesselring 1906, Joseph 1983) and with νά plus subjunctive complements in later stages (e.g. in the *Chronicle of Morea*), but not generally found with a "bare" finite verb, suggests δέρει and εἰπεῖ are indeed nonfinite verbs. Moreover, the absence in (3b) of a subordinating element such as νά that typically occurs with finite complements, and the fact that an accusative noun (τὸν ἄγγελο) controls the subject of the complement verb together indicate that στέκει is an infinitive.

(3) Unusual Infinitives in 1547 OT Translation

a. Infinitive as object of preposition:

ἐστράφην ἀπὸ τοῦ δέρει
returned/3SG from CONJUNCTN slay/INF
'He returned from the slaying ...' (Gen. 14.17)

b. Infinitive as perception verb complement:

εἶδιεν τὸν ἄγγελο τοῦ κυρίου στέκει
saw/3SG the-angel of-the-lord stand/INF
'He saw the angel of the lord
standing' (Num. 22.31)

c. Infinitive in future tense (only once in whole text):

δέ θέλει ἐμποδιθεί
not will/3SG deter/INF.PASS
'He will not be deterred' (Gen.11.6)

d. Infinitive in innovative Hebraistic usage:

ἐσύντυχεν μετ' ἐκεῖνον ὁ θέος
conversed with him/ACC the-god/NOM
τοῦ εἰπεῖ
CONJUNCTN say/INF
'God spoke with him saying ...' (literally: "spoke ... to say") (Gen. 17.3)

Except for the Hebraism, these uses themselves are not surprising in the overall historical context of Greek, but they are unusual for colloquial Greek of the 16th century. For instance, as noted above, the use of τοῦ was quite common in early Post-Classical Greek, especially in the Hellenistic period, but it was not so common later on, and is actually somewhat unusual occurring as late as the 16th century. Similarly, the use of an articular infinitive nominalization after a preposition was common in New Testament Greek (Blass-Debrunner 1961) but is quite rare in the Medieval period (Joseph 1983:59). Finally, the infinitive in a future formation in (3c) is unusual not in the particular combination it shows, since this is perhaps the most common use of the infinitive in most of Medieval Greek, but rather in the fact that it is the only such example found in this long text; it may well have been the case, however, that this future formation was not particularly common in the eastern Greek-speaking areas, as suggested

by the absence in some dialects of Pontic Greek (Mackridge 1987:130) of θα, the future marker ultimately derived from and thus associated with the θέλω ('want')-based infinitival futures.

Overall, then, the infinitival usage in this text seems to be somewhat conservative in nature compared to the rest of colloquial Greek of the period.

Some of these infinitives could of course reflect Septuagint usage or Hebrew usage via translation effects, for the text is indeed a translation. That fact could then mean that these infinitives are not reflecting colloquial usage of the time. Even so, however, one would have to reconcile the colloquial nature of the text from a phonological standpoint with the use of these otherwise archaic elements; moreover, one can argue that deliberately translating a text into a linguistic form that is not current among the likely users of the translation is self-defeating. Thus it seems best to take the evidence of the text at face-value, so that if the text is colloquial, then the conclusion to draw is that these uses of the infinitive are colloquial. Indeed, Hatzidakis (1905:585) interpreted the occurrence of these infinitives in this way, taking them as evidence for the survival of the infinitive into the 16th century in the Greek-speaking world. Still, compared to other 16th century Greek texts, the infinitival usage seen here is unusual in its frequency, and thus somewhat conservative. Accordingly, some explanation needs to be sought for the indications this text provides of conservative usage of the infinitive in the 16th century.

Moreover, the evidence of this text taken at face-value would suggest that Constantinople was a peripheral area with regard to the spread of the innovative replacement of the infinitive. This interpretation, however, is at odds with the parachuting model as applied to the spread of the loss of the infinitive, given the preeminence of Constantinople as the leading Greek urban center in that period, and thus it too demands an explanation.

A solution to these dilemmas concerning conservative usage in the text and the potential counterevidence to the parachuting model for the innovative spread of finite

complementation may lie in the fact that the translation into Greek was made by a member of the Jewish Greek community of Constantinople, someone who apparently spoke Greek natively but did not have any knowledge of Classical Greek. It can be hypothesized, therefore, that the Jewish Greek speech of Constantinople was distinguished from the Greek of Orthodox Christians and that the differences in infinitival usage evident here are a function of the text reflecting an apparently more conservative Jewish Constantinople Greek as opposed to the more innovative and more mainstream Orthodox Christian Constantinople Greek. While building a case to definitively prove this hypothesis would require much more research, there are several suggestive points to note which provide support for it.

First, some features of infinitival use in this Old Testament translation echo New Testament Greek usage As noted above, the use of τοῦ and of the infinitive as the object of prepositions, both found in this text, are also quite common constructions in New Testament Greek. Also, though, the use of the imperfect of 'be' plus a present participle for a past progressive, as in (4a), is reminiscent of the ἦν διδάσκων progressive construction of New Testament Greek, and the infinitive of purpose with subordinating τοῦ, as in (4b), parallels the Greek of the New Testament, where the infinitive of purpose (as Blass-Debrunner 1961:197 describe it) is only common after verbs of motion, δίδοναι 'to give', and ἀποστέλλω 'to send'; interestingly, ἀποστέλλω just happens to be the verb in the 1547 example, making the link in usage that much stronger.

(4) New Testament Greek Constructions in Medieval Constantinople (1547) Old Testament Translation

a. 'be' + PRES.ACT.PPL for progressive:

τα νερά ήτον πγαίνοντα (Gen. 8.5)
the-waters were/3PL going/NOM.PL.ACT.PPL
'The water was running...'

b. Infinitive of purpose after ἀποστέλλω 'send':

ἀπέστειλέ τον... ὁ θεός ...
sent/3SG him/ACC the-god/NOM

τοῦ δουλέψει τήν ἠγή (Gen. 3.23)
CONJUNXN work/INF the-land/ACC
'God sent him off to work the land'

These constructions, therefore, provide direct evidence of an apparent link between Constantinople Jewish Greek and the primarily Jewish Greek of the early Christian era.

Second, as Wexler (1981:102n.5) has noted, it is often claimed that Jewish languages in general tend to be conservative (though he doubts this is always so), and indeed, the segregation of Jewish communities would certainly created situations in which Jewish speakers might have less access to linguistic innovations found in the usage of coterritorial non-Jewish speakers. Thus, finding archaic Greek usage in Constantinople Jewish Greek would not at all be unexpected.

And, to be sure, there are some typological parallels for a separate Jewish Greek with greater infinitival use and for religion being a relevant sociolinguistic factor. For example, modern-day Judeo-Spanish (Judezmo) of Thessaloniki still has an infinitive (Joseph 1983:252ff.), despite the fact that its speakers are (now, at least) bilingual in infinitive-less Standard Greek and are (now, at least) in constant contact with monolingual speakers of Standard Greek, which is, after all, essentially Orthodox Christian Greek. Moreover, the fact that the early Spanish starting point for Judezmo had an infinitive (as modern Spanish continues to) is no guarantee in and of itself that the infinitive would persist, for Rohlfs 1958 reports that Italian dialects in the south of Italy show reduced infinitival usage as opposed to the rest of Italian, possibly because of sustained contact with Southern Italy Greek, which admittedly has an infinitive to a greater degree than the rest of Greek but much less so than a "standard" Romance language.

As a further parallel, there is the case of Tsakonika, of the Peloponnesos, sometimes called a dialect of Modern Greek but perhaps better viewed as a separate language; Tsakonika has no infinitive, despite stemming from a different source from rest of the Modern Greek world, deriving instead directly from the ancient Doric dialect,

which had the infinitive quite productively, rather than the Hellenistic Koine, in which the infinitive was beginning to recede; presumably, Tsakonika has lost its infinitive through contact with Standard Greek and while it is important that most Tsakonika speakers also speak standard Greek, more relevant perhaps is the fact that Tsakonians are virtually all Greek Orthodox and moreover show "allegiance to the greater Greek culture" (Vlamis 1996). Thus, the sociologically relevant factors of religion and degree of assimilation into mainstream Greek culture and society seem to have had linguistic consequences for Tsakonika and its loss of the infinitive paralleling that of standard Modern Greek.

Although more research is needed into the nature of Jewish Greek, especially in the medieval period, to resolve these issues concerning the spread of the replacement of the infinitive throughout the Greek world, it does seem that the Trudgillian "parachuting" model is appropriate here, to this aspect of the spread of a Balkanism within Greek, and that the challenge to it that the 1547 Constantinople Old Testament translation poses can be resolved by a recognition of religiously-defined sociolects of Greek in the medieval period.

III. What is borrowed? Another Dimension of Internal Spread

Another crucial dimension of spread with regard to syntactic constructions is the way in which a borrowed construction takes hold in a language. The discussion here takes as its starting point what might be thought to be a prior question in considering language contact, namely just what is borrowed in the borrowing of a construction.

It is claimed here that what is borrowed when a syntactic pattern is found to have diffused across language boundaries is individual examples of the pattern rather than the pattern *per se*. The pattern is then induced by speakers from those examples, so that the emergence of a pattern within a language, i.e. the spread of a pattern into a language, is really a matter, therefore, of language-internal analogy, even if the original impetus for the introduction of

the exemplar for the pattern was external, via language contact.

As a case in point, consider the 'whether VERB or not' construction in the Balkans, signaled via verbal repetition sandwiched around the negative marker, thus VERB-'not'-VERB. This construction is noted in Banfi (1985:79) as among the Balkan Sprachbund features. Some examples are given in (5):

(5) a. Greek φύγει δε φύγει 'whether one leaves or not'
b. Bulgarian *pie ne pie* 'whether one drinks or not'
c. Romanian *spune nu spune* 'whether he says (so) or not'

In each of these languages, this pattern is fairly productive, since other examples of the construction could be put together and cited. Still, the starting point for this construction seems to be one specific token of it, namely, 'whether one wants or not', e.g. Greek θέλει δε θέλει, Bulgarian *ište ne ište,* Romanian *vrea nu vrea*, Albanian *donin s'donin* 'whether they want to or not', Turkish *ister istemez* 'willingly or not'.

There are a couple of reasons for focusing on 'want-not-want' as the starting point. First, that combination has the widest distribution in the Balkans in terms of languages represented and in terms of the specific verb, being found in this form in at least Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, and Romanian, as well as Turkish, where the expression has a meaning that parallels that found in the other languages but an irregularity in its form compared with other grammatically fixed verbal repetitions in Turkish itself; in particular, *ister istemez* is literally "want-AORIST.3SG want-NEG.AORIST.3SG", and thus is somewhat anomalous within Turkish, for the usual meaning of AORIST + NEG.AORIST is 'as soon as...', e.g. *gelir gelmez* 'as soon as (s)he comes'. Second, 'want-not-want' has non-Balkan parallels, e.g. English *willy-nilly*, Latin *velit nolit(ve)*, that suggest that 'want' is a particularly apt verb to occur in such a construction, and thus a good starting point to consider, for any language.

It is likely that Greek is the source of the basis for this pattern, at least as far as Bulgarian is concerned, since the Latin construction could very well be the basis for the Romanian. However, a prototype is attested in Greek of the 2nd century AD, in the form θέλει οὐ θέλει 'whether he wants to or not' in Arrianus (3.9.16, where οὐ is the then-current negative marker), meaning that there is a very early source for it in the Balkans. Moreover, there are positive indications that language contact is involved here, in some cases at least. For instance, the fact that the Turkish expression is synchronically irregular within Turkish is consistent with the phrase being a borrowing into Turkish, since the "transplanting" of a Greek expression via calquing would provide a reason for the anomalous character of the Turkish phrase in question.

Thus, one token shows a wide distribution, and there is as well some suggestion of borrowing to explain why that one token is anomalous in Turkish. Moreover, some of the languages, most notably Bulgarian, have a relatively productive use of a general pattern parallel to the widely distributed token. We can make sense of these facts by seeing the emergence of a VERB-'not'-VERB pattern in Bulgarian as a case of the spread of the construction internally from a single token, WANT-'not'-WANT, to other verbs and ultimately then to a more general pattern of VERB-'not'-VERB; in this way, then, the emergence of this pattern really is the result of language-internal analogy with WANT-'not'-WANT as the model. The fact that Greek and Romanian also use this construction somewhat productively also is coincidental, a matter of language-internal spread within each of those languages. In terms of what is borrowed, then, this account would mean that the pattern itself is not borrowed but rather what is borrowed is the material from which a pattern might be extracted, and the pattern is then deduced from it.

As a parallel to this type of language-internal extension from a single externally-inspired token to another token, thereby creating a pattern, an example from Greek suggests itself, involving the development of third person nominative weak pronouns in Modern Greek, e.g. the masculine singular τος. This form occurs in two and only two expressions, with the deictic νά in the meaning 'Here

is/are ...!' and with a locative interrogative πού'ν (made up of πού 'where' and a reduced form of είναι 'is/are') in the meaning 'Where is/are ...?', both exemplified in (6).

(6) a. νά τος 'Here he is!'
b. πού'ν τος 'Where is he?'

The ultimate source of this construction in Greek is likely to be language contact, for it appears that νά is a borrowing from South Slavic (as argued by Joseph 1981), and that the original syntax in Greek with νά was deictic element + accusative, thus, with the weak accusative pronoun, νά τον 'Here he is'. This pattern is widespread in South Slavic (see Schaller 1975), as exemplified by Bulgarian *eto go* 'Here he is', where *go* is the accusative weak pronoun and *eto* is a deictic element.

What happened in Greek is that νά + ACCUSATIVE was reinterpreted as νά + NOMINATIVE, most likely through the medium of the neuter nouns and strong pronouns (e.g. αυτό 'this') where NOMINATIVE and ACCUSATIVE were identical in form. This reanalysis allowed for other strong nominative forms, nouns as well as strong pronouns such as the masculine αυτός he; this one', to occur with νά and cleared the way for an innovative third person weak nominative, answering to both the weak accusative τον and the strong nominative αυτός then possible with να. Thus νά τος ultimately arose as an innovative analogical creation based on the inherited strong forms of the 3rd person pronoun; the relevant proportional analogy involving the masculine strong and weak pronouns is sketched in (7):

(7) νά αυτόν : νά τον :: νά αυτός : νά τος
M.ACC.STR M.ACC.WK M.NOM.STR M.NOM.WK

Finally, this construction-type has spread, minimally to be sure but spread nonetheless, to πού'ν 'where is/are?' giving πού'ν τος. Thus a new pattern has arisen, that of **X τος**, where X ranges over the very small set of the deictic/locational elements νά and πού'ν, through the spread from one lexical token as starting point (one which

happened to have an external origin) to another, thus creating a construction-type, a syntactic pattern, out of what was just a single token at first.

IV. Lessons to be learned

By way of a conclusion, some threads that hold these examples together can be pointed out. In particular, these examples show that there is a purely speaker-internal type of spread to reckon with, even in cases and in areas where external contact among speakers of different languages is to be recognized, for instance the analogical extension that generalizes a construction-type from a single token of that construction, but also a speaker-external type of spread, namely the socially motivated spread of an innovation over a number of speakers.

In a sense, then, what this leads us to is the well-known dichotomy between the point of origination for an innovation and the spread of that innovation through a speech community. The speaker-internal type of spread is really a way of defining the original locus for various innovative elements or patterns whereas the speaker-external type of spread defines the extent of acceptance and positive evaluation of these innovative elements by members of a speech community. If we consider a change to have really taken place only when an innovation shows some degree of generalization over at least a nonsingleton subset of a speech community, as Labov has emphasized, then all change will involve the speaker-external type of spread, i.e. contact between and among speakers in some way or another.

In this way, changes that are externally motivated, i.e. those traditionally attributed to language contact, are not significantly different from those that are traditionally considered to be internally motivated, and that is surely a good result. In fact, if the path for the spread of any linguistic element is contact of some sort, then it should stand to reason that the difference between internal-motivated change and externally motivated change, as many scholars have noted, is a matter of degree and not a matter of kind.

Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) demonstration that there are no linguistic constraints on what can be borrowed is relevant here, because if there were such constraints, then one could say that there are thus some qualitative differences between internal and external change; that is, if it were the case, for example, that borrowing of inflectional morphology was impossible, then the fact that internal change involving inflectional morphology is quite possible would constitute a difference between internally-motivated and externally-motivated change — in the absence of such constraints, however, one need only talk simply in terms of one general pattern of change, as seen here, namely that involving an innovation that arises, somehow, and which spreads over a number of speakers.

The externally- and internally-motivated changes that characterize the Balkan Sprachbund, therefore, taken together mean that the Balkans differ from other areas or other individual languages in which change has occurred not in the kind of change that has occurred or the mechanisms of change that have occurred, but really only in the degree to which the changes have been involved with language contact and have spread. The special social circumstances in the Balkans have made them linguistically special, but the mechanisms of change involved are familiar ones to be found elsewhere and thus are nothing special. And that, it would seem, is a good outcome to reach.

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