Performing dialectal talk:
Differentiating gender roles via direct speech representation[*]

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Abstract

In this paper we argue that dialectal variation should not only be approached as a geographical reflex, but also as an interactional resource for various communicative objectives, in line with recent discourse analytic approaches. Our analysis concentrates on the performative strategies via which an old dialectophone stylizes her father and her mother in a constructed story. We argue that our informant, by manipulating the narratives she produces in terms of both dialectal and discoursal features, she adopts the discourse identity of performer.

1. Introduction

Research within the framework of dialect geography and traditional dialectology was mainly based on the assumption that region acts as the cause for a particular kind of linguistic variation called dialectal variation. This assumption includes the beliefs that dialects are spoken by homogeneous, non-mobile and often rural social groups living in a situation of communicative isolation within a particular region. However, in our modern, or post-modern, world, we scarcely meet this sort of homogeneous and stable local groupings. Rather, the contemporary world is characterized by heterogeneous communities consisting of mobile people who spend periods of their life in different places and who quite often change occupations and life styles (see Johnstone 1999: 506-507, 515).

Taking into account this new diverse population composition in contemporary country-sides, modern approaches to dialect analysis are not constrained to pose research questions of the type what a dialect is, i.e. what are its defining and differentiating features in all or some levels of linguistic analysis, but, from a discourse analytic perspective, they are also interested in how dialectal features can be used so that a bidialectal speaker can attain various communicative goals in various contexts of communication. This means that regional dialectal differences are not so much approached as situational reflexes, but also as indices of symbolic values, being one of the speakers' strategic means for activating meaning potential relevant at different points of their interactions (Rickford & Eckert 2001: 4-6, Coupland 2001: 209).

In this paper our aim is to discuss certain performative functions of a northern Greek dialect, namely the Lesbian Dialect. For this purpose we have chosen to analyse one conversational narrative produced by an old Greek woman throughout her conversation with a researcher (see also Archakis et al 2009). The Greek woman, whose name from now on will be Matoula, was an immigrant for more than twenty years in Athens and has returned back home at the village, Afalonas, in the island of Lesbos. She had accepted to talk her dialect and about her dialect with the researcher. We will analyse the instances of dialectal features she produced in the selected story, mainly identified within narrative direct speech. We will show that her switching from the standard Modern Greek to the production of dialectal features is closely related to the discourse identity she adopts.

More particularly, we will show that when she is asked to use the dialect, she does not code switch and speak it, but acting as a performer she presents it under specific conditions. Special attention will be given to the way she stylizes two main characters in the story under investigation, namely her father and her mother.

2. Key – concepts
2.1. Time, place and direct speech in conversational narratives

As we have already pointed out, in the narrative under consideration the dialectal features are identified in direct speech instances. However, it is not in every narrative with direct speech produced by Matoula, that we find dialectal features. A crucial presupposition is that the time and place of the represented sequence of events should belong to the remote past, when her parents and their relatives and neighbors were alive. After all, it is the voice of these people that Matoula animates in order to present the dialect. Thus, in what follows we will elaborate on these basic concepts of narrative analysis, i.e. *time, place and direct speech*.

Narrowing down our focus on physical setting we introduce a distinction, proposed by cultural geographers, between *physical spaces* and *cultural places*. Johnstone (1999: 516) points out that "[p]hysically delimited areas -spaces- are not places unless they have meaning for people as distinct from other places". As we shall see in the analysis of the selected narrative that follows, it seems that Matoula perceives the dialect as part and parcel of a foretime cultural place when it was inhabited by people with a different value system than the current one. Thus, the dialect can only be spoken by- and through-them and not directly by her.

In connection with the roles of *narrative time* and *place* in the development of a story, Georgakopoulou (2003: 415) stresses their exploitation as interactive resources in the here and now of a storytelling situation. She explains that different places in their interaction with time "create affordances" for "different sets of expectations about what sorts of action and interaction with what sorts of participants can take place where and when" (ibid: 424). Based on this observation, we shall show that Matoula discursively constructs and locates the narrative time and place in the remote past so that her story participants can afford speaking the dialect.

If, as we maintained, the dialect, according to Matoula's practice, can mainly be spoken by people of a cultural past, then a possible way for Matoula to comply with the request of the researcher and speak the dialect is to animate the voices of these people via *direct speech*. Thus, our focus is placed on direct speech, namely the report of voices that were uttered in anterior context from the current one. We could point out that direct speech, due to its grammatical characteristics, gives the impression of a verbatim reenactment of the original utterance (Holt 2000). In view of this property, direct speech, appearing mostly at the climax points of narratives, can be seen as an internal evaluative device (Labov 1972) contributing to the vividness and dramatization of the reporting utterances and to interpersonal involvement (see among others Tannen 1989).

2.2. Discourse identity

Our analysis draws upon a dynamic approach to identity construction. According to this approach, identities are not static and stable properties that reside in peoples' minds but emerge through discourse, where they are dynamically recreated. To this end, people project different aspects of their identities, depending on different contexts on the basis of various and different forms of verbal behaviour (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998).

In our attempt to trace Matoula's shifts from the Modern Greek Koine to the dialect and vice-versa, we will apply the concept of *discourse identity* proposed by Zimmerman (1998), who treats identity as "an element of context for the talk-in-interaction" (ibid: 87). According to Zimmerman, discourse identities emerge from the sequential organization of talk and "are integral to the moment-by-moment organisation of the interaction" (ibid:

90). Thus, participants assume discourse identities which orient them to certain activity types and their respective interactional roles within them, such as the roles of current speaker, listener, story teller, story recipient, questioner, and answerer.

In the analysis of the selected narrative that follows, we will claim that Matoula adopts a specific discourse identity, namely that of the performer, in order to assign different voices to the represented characters of her stories, i.e. her father and mother, who are the foretime inhabitants of her village and presumed authentic speakers of the dialect. According to Bauman (1986: 3), *performance* is a mode of communication that highlights "the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content". Georgakopoulou (1997: 144), concentrating in particular on the main purpose of Greek performances, maintains that it purports to "create an immediate, empathetic narration. It is by staging a multi-media show (auditory and visual) that storytellers aim at creating an internal emotional connection with the narration and the audience".

What is important for our study is to elaborate on the "auditory element" that accompanies the direct speech sequences, i.e. the main loci of dialectal talk production in our data. More particularly, we will demonstrate how Matoula performs, rather than speaks, the dialect. Based on Rampton's (1995) notion of *crossing*, special attention will be given to Matoula's *crossing practices*, that is to the fact that she selects the appropriate dialectal features in order, not only to construct herself as capable of switching from Koine to the dialect and vice versa, but also in order to assign different identities to the represented voices. In other words, we will show how she performs different dialectal and prosodic features in order to represent the voices of her father and her mother, *styling* them in different ways (Rampton 1999).

3. The data of the study

The recording of Matoula's conversation was part of a bigger project, under the supervision of Prof. Ralli, aiming to record and analyse the dialect of Eastern Lesbos.[19] This particular informant, having lived for more than twenty years at the capital of Greece and being capable of using the Standard Modern Greek, presented a very interesting behavioural and speech pattern. In particular, she communicated with the field-worker mainly in Standard Modern Greek Koine, although she knew beforehand that the researcher was interested in recording the dialect. To a straightforward request from the field-worker to speak the dialect, she replied that she would do so only in particular contexts.

Careful study of her recorded dialogues with the field-worker reveals that Matoula's dialectal talk mainly lies in 11 occurring conversational narratives that were inspired by topics referring to the cultural past of her village. More specifically, dialectal features appear in the 80 direct speech instances that are identified within these narratives. In this paper, we will particularly concentrate on the analysis of the performative strategies through which Matoula stylizes her father and her mother in a selected story.

4. Analysis

In the narrative episode under examination we will demonstrate a recurrent shift in the presentational mode of Matoula's stories. According to Bauman (1986: 66), "there is a need for ways of marking the difference between the voice of the narrator in the present storytelling context and the reported speech of the actors in the original event being reported". Matoula systematically distinguishes the way she recounts circumstances and actions from the way she replays interactions. In particular, the diegesis mode is carried

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[19]The name of the research project is *Documentation and Description of the Dialect of Easter Lesbos. Comparison with the Asia Minor Dialect of Aivali and Moschonisia* which is funded by the EU and the Greek Ministry of Education (Program EPEAEK-PYTHAGORAS), under the supervision of Prof. Ralli. The recorded material became part of the *Greek Dialects' Corpus*, which is hosted at the Linguistics Lab of Modern Greek dialects at the University of Patras, Greece.

out mainly in the standard Modern Greek Koine, whereas the mimesis mode draws upon dialectal recourses. It is through this shift from telling to showing and reenacting that Matoula acquires the discourse identity of the performer.

In order to underpin this claim, we will provide one narrative extract where Matoula represents events of a past spatiotemporal context, including the representation of utterances that were produced in anterior context. These are events that deal with the everyday life of her family in the village when Matoula was very young, i.e. approximately sixty years ago (in relation to the time of the recording).

The following episode describes a habitual event that occurred when Matoula's father came back home after work (see also Archakis *et al.* 2009). In particular, it includes a small quarrel he occasionally had with her mother concerning lunch, as part of the father's bad mood due to hard work.

1. MT: *Τη διάλεκτο να σου πω τώρα πώς μιλάγαμε στο σπίτι τον καιρό που ζούσε η μάνα μ η γιαγιά μου πριν και πριν μάθουμε τα γράμματα τελοσπάντων και αυτά ε;[20]*
As for the dialect, I will now tell you how we were speaking at home when my mom and my grandmom were alive and before, before we learnt how to read and write and so on

2. Fw: Αυτό ακριβώς
Exactly

3. MT: Ναι. Ε να σας πω μόλις ερχόταν ο πατέρας μ και ήταν λίγο θυμωμένος άρχιζε
1a.[21] **Μωρή Φθυμίγια** ((γέλιο)) **που είσαι μωρή τσι σ' έχασα**; Η μάνα μ ήταν η Φθυμίγια
[mo'ri fθi'mi:ʝa::: … ((laugh)) 'pu 'ise mo'ri tsi 'sexasa?]
Yes, let me tell you, when my dad was coming home and he was a bit angry he was starting 1a. **mori**[22] **Fthimigia** ((laughing)) **where have you been and I've lost you**? Fthimigia was my mom

4. Fw: Μμ
 Hmm

5. MT: 2b. **Ναι Γιάννη, έδγιω είμαι, ούι, ούι, τι κάνς;**
['ne ʝani'eðʝo ime 'ui 'ui 'ti 'ka:ns?]
Yianni I'm here no no **how are you?**

3a. **καλά, εσύ τι γίνεσαι**. **Ε τι φαγί έκανες σήμερα**; Λέει
[ka'la: e'si ti 'ʝinese.. Ε: 'ti fa'ʝi 'ekanes 'simera?]
Fine, and you? Um **what kind of food have you made for today** she says

4b. **φασούλες**.
[fa'sules]
Beans

5a. **Πάλι φασούλες** λεγ' **θα φάμε**; **Άντε μωρ' τσε δε μπορώ να τρώγ' όλ μέρα**

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[21] Direct speech instances appear in bold and are numbered. In order to facilitate the tagging of the turn-taking instances, we include a letter which stands for a different represented voice, just after the serial numbers: *a* stands for the father's voice and *b* for the mother.

According to Prof. Ralli, who is a native speaker of the Lesbian dialect, Matoula's direct speech instances are not representative of the system of the Lesbian Dialect. There are cases where dialectal features appear even in environments where they shouldn't appear and cases which are neither dialectal nor of Standard Modern Greek. Due to these inconsistencies, Matoula's talk, although including various and different dialectal features, cannot be considered as representative of a Northern Greek dialect. This observation corroborates our approach relating to the performative aspect of her speech.

[22] *Mori* is an untranslatable Greek discourse marker that signals intimacy.

φασούλς.
 ['pali fa'sules   θa 'fame?] ['ade 'mor tse ðe bo'ro na 'troɣ 'ol
 'mera fa'su:ls]
 will we have beans again? I can't be eating beans all days.

Τον πιάναν και τα νεύρα. **Να πάρ η διάολος ς φασούλς τσι σένα κι το κεφάλ σ.**
                        [na 'par i 'ðaolos s fa'suls tsi 'sena ci to ce'fal s]
 He was starting pissing off. **Damn the beans and you and your head.**

6b. **Αχ τι πάθαμ.**
 ['ax ti 'paθam]
 Oh my goodness.

7a. **Θα πά να φάου έξω** ((γέλιο))
 [θa 'pa na 'fau 'ekso]
 I'll eat out ((laughing))

8b. **ε που θα πας βρε άθρουπε, έχεις φαγί, μα έχς παράδες για θα πας να φας έξ**
 ((γέλιο))
 [e 'pu θa 'pas vre 'aθrupe .. 'eçis fa'ʝi ma . 'exs par'aðes 'ʝa θa 'pas na
 'fas 'eks]
 but where will you go man, there is food, and do you have money in order to go out? ((laughing))

λοιπόν γινόταν ένα καβγαδάκι τελικά
Well there was a small quarrel and finally

9a. **άντε φασουλάδα μι ελιές είναι μια χαρά. Φάγαν τα μωρά**;
 ['ade fasu'laða mi e'ʎes 'ine 'mja xa'ra .. 'faɣan ta mo'ra?]
 ok beans with olives are fine did the kids eat?

10b. **Φάγαν.** τα παιρνε.
 ['faɣan]
 They did, he took them

11a. **Για έλα βρε μορέλι, έφερα τσι μιντούδις, τσι καραμιλούδις, τσι πραματέλια να φάτε**.
 ['ʝa 'ela vre mo'reʎi 'efera tsi mi'nduðis tsi karami'luðis, tsi
 praɣma'teʎa na 'fate]
 come here my baby I've brought candies and stuff to eat.

Τρώγαμε τον φλούσαμε τον πατέρα, τον αγκαλιάζαμε, τα κάναμε όλα αυτά.
We were eating we were kissing dad we were hugging we did all these.

What is particularly interesting in the above story is the fact that the information on orientation, i.e. the information related to the physical and temporal setting of the story is mainly produced in Koine (turn 1: *Τη διάλεκτο να σου πω τώρα πώς μιλάγαμε στο σπίτι* (...) ["as for the dialect, I will now tell you how we were speaking at home"]), whereas the direct speech quotations are produced by Matoula using a lot of dialectal features (lines 1a-11a).

In what follows, we will show that she employs different dialectal features in the direct speech instances of the narrative episode under examination in order to represent the voices of her father and her mother.

In terms of dialect use, we observe that both genders employ a variety of dialectal features throughout all the narratives. Nevertheless, Matoula seems to allocate different dialectal features to her father's voice and different to her mother's mimicry. In particular, we focus on the dialectal features of a) raising of the unstressed middle vowels, b) the

deletion of the unstressed high vowels, c) tsitacism, d) local diminutive suffixes, as well as e) local masculine article.

As to the raising of the unstressed middle vowels /e/ and /o/ to [i] and [u] in father's voice, according to table 1, in thirty eight possible locations of raising –marked in italics-, we observe fourteen raised realizations –marked in bold letters:

Table 1: *Raising of unstressed middle vowels in father's voice*

Possible locations of raising	Actual realizations of raising
1a. [m*o*'ri,'is*e*, m*o*'ri, ts*i*] 3a. [*e*'si, 'ɟin*ese*,ekan*es*, 'sim*e*ra?] 5a. [fa'sul*es*,'fam*e*? 'ad*e*, 'm*o*r, ts*i*, b*o*'ro, 'ð*a*ol*o*s ts*i* c*i* t*o* c*e*'fal] 7a. ['fa*u*, 'eks*o*] 9a. ['ad*e*, fas*u*'laða, m*i*, e'ʎes, 'in*e*, m*o*'ra?] 11a.[m*u*'reʎi, 'ef*e*ra, ts*i*, mi'nduð*is*, ts*i*, karami'luð*is*, ts*i*, 'fat*e*]	1a. [ts**i**] 5a. [ts**i**, ts**i** c**i**] 7a. ['fa**u**,] 9a. [fas**u**'laða, m**i**] 11a.[m**u**'reʎi, ts**i**, mi'nduð**is**, ts**i**, karami'luð**is**, ts**i**,]

On the other hand, in mother's voice, there is only one occasion of a raised middle vowel, out of seven possible ones, as can be observed in table 2.

Table 2: *Raising of unstressed middle vowels in mother's voice*

Possible locations of raising	Actual realizations of raising
2b. [eð*j*o im*e*] 4b. [fa'sul*es*] 8b. [vr*e*, 'aθr*u*pe, par'aδ*es*]	8b. ['aθr**u**pe]

In relation to the deletion of the unstressed high vowels /i/ and /u/ in father's voice, in the line 5a we can see five possible locations for deletion (in table 3), where actually the deletion did occur. Interestingly, vowel deletion occurred in two more cases, where the vowel is not a high, but a middle one, indicated by bold empty brackets in table 3.

Table 3: *Deletion of unstressed high vowels in father's voice*

Deleted unstressed high vowels	Deleted unstressed middle vowels
5a. ['mor[ ], 'ol[ ], 'par[ ], s[ ], ce'fal[ ]s]	5a. [fa'su:l**[ ]**s, fa'sul**[ ]**s]

On the other hand, in mother's speech, high vowel deletion appears in two out of four possible locations (indicated by brackets in table 4)

Table 4: *Deletion of unstressed high vowels in mother's voice*

Deleted unstressed high vowels	Undeleted unstressed high vowels
2b. 'ka:n[ ]s 8b. 'ex[ ]	2b. ['ɟan[i]] 8b. ['eç[i]s]

Another phonological phenomenon of the dialect of Lesbos is the transformation of the palatal voiceless obstruent [c] to +delayed release [ts], before front vowel [i], known also as tsitakism. Interestingly, in father's voice, tsitakism appears almost in every possible case -that is in seven out of eight instances- (see table 5), but not even once in mother's voice, not only in this particular extract, but in the other narratives as well.

Table 5: *Tsitakism in father's voice*

Possible locations of tsitakism	Actual realizations of tsitakism
1a. [tsi] 5a. [tsi, ts, tsi, ci] 11a.[tsi, tsi, tsi]	1a. [tsi] 5a. [tsi, ts, tsi] 11a.[tsi, tsi, tsi]

The same pattern appears with the other two morphological dialectal features, that is a) the local diminutives suffixes /-eli/, /-elia/ and/-uδi/, /uδes/, and b) the masculine article /i/. In particular, we can find the local variants in father's voice (table 6, in bold), but nowhere in mother's speech.

Table 6: *Morphological dialectal features in father's voice*

Local diminutives suffixes	The masculine article as [i]
11a. [ˈɟa ˈela vre moˈreʎi ˈefera tsi miˈnduðes tsi karamiˈluðes, tsi praymaˈteʎa na ˈfate]	5a. [na ˈpar **i** ˈðaolos s faˈsuls tsi ˈsena ci to ceˈfal s]

Based on the above observations, we could argue that Matoula seems to assign different identities to the different voices she presents as speaking. In particular, the father is presented as employing more frequently the features that have been stereotypically associated with the local dialect. On the other hand, the mother, when she is represented to talk to her husband, does not seem to employ the stereotypical dialectal features that frequently; actually, in some cases she does not employ them at all. Taking into consideration the constructed nature of direct speech, namely that the narrator-animator eventually reserves for herself the authorial and principal rights (Goffman 1981), and, thus, direct speech representation is constructed on the basis of narrator's communicative goals, we could argue that Matoula constructs her father and her mother in different ways. Gender identity seems to play an important role in this construction.

In particular, it seems that identities like masculinity and femininity come into play and are related to stereotypical assumptions concerning gender and dialect. Drawing on Rampton's remarks (1999: 421), we could point out that Matoula uses dialectal features in the discursive practices of direct speech to appropriate and reproduce influential images and stereotypes of gender groups that she does not herself straightforwardly belong to. More specifically, the way Matoula stylizes her father with regionally marked variety deviates from the linguistic norm that, in this case, is Koine. On the other hand, the mother seems to be represented much more aligned with the norm, as the ellipsis of many dialectal features result in her speech approaching Koine and, in a way, distancing herself from the dialect (see Georgakopoulou 2005: 175). The association of femininity with normative linguistic behavior and of masculinity with more deviant, in a way, linguistic behavior is a sociolinguistic pattern that has been observed by many researchers (see Trudgill 1974, Labov 1990). On this basis, we assume that through her discursive constructions, Matoula seems to exploit the sociolinguistic stereotypes in order to construct contrastively gender identities.

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

In this paper, we have presented a narrative episode produced by a dialectophone who, throughout the conversation with the researcher, switched between the use of Koine and the production of dialectal features. We pointed out that Matoula considers the dialect as part and parcel of a distant cultural past. Thus, she speaks it out mainly through the performance of voices that belong to this past. The main vehicle for this performance is direct speech representation. We therefore argued that Matoula, when representing the voices of other people, extracts the dialect from a distant past, as if she performs a role in a play. To this end, Matoula adopts the discourse identity of the performer.

Particular emphasis was put to the fact that Matoula, by adopting the discourse identity of the performer, is able to assign different identities to the represented voices. In a selected story we observed that the identities attributed to her father and mother seem to correspond to gender stereotypes. We therefore argued that the (represented) dialect may consist of a vehicle that reflects and sustains socio-cultural values and (stereotyped) assumptions regarding gender. Following Rampton's claims (1999: 423), instead of simply concentrating on the functioning of the dialect of Afalonas within a context, we paid particular attention to "the complex (…) sociolinguistic processes involved in moving it **across** from one context to another".

Within this framework of analysis, our main finding lies in the fact that the old dialectophone uses the dialectal features on the precondition that she guides her audience

to her socio-cultural past. For this purpose, she discursively constructs this socio-cultural past and its foretime characters. In this way, she creates the affordances for the dialect to be spoken. It is the people who belong to this past that, according to her discursive practice, have the right to speak the dialect, at least in front of an out-group. Thus she is able to invoke and index their tradition and its symbolic value that is attempted to be preserved in the current geographical space of her village.

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