Syntactic variation in the urban linguistic community of Greece: the case of Focus.

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This paper presents the results of research of syntactic variation in the Cypriot Greek community and more specifically studies the Focus Phrase (FP) variability in the Cypriot Greek-speaking urban community through analyzing a spectrum of different styles of speech found in this community.

While in standard Modern Greek (SMG) the FP will be placed before the phrase like in (1):

(1) to jorγο iða xtes
George.ACC saw.1s yesterday
It's George that I saw yesterday.

In Cypriot urban dialect the Focus seems to be originally expressed with the help of the construction 'en...pu' like in (2):

(2) en toj jorγo pu iða extes
is George.ACC that saw.1s yesterday
It's George that I saw yesterday.

In the situation of dialectal continuum found in Cypriot urban community (Karyolemou 1992) the Cypriot FP variant is expected to be used in informal speech, while the SMG FP in more official situations when Cypriot Modern Greek (Arvaniti 2002) is used. In this way, the Focus phenomenon for the Cypriot urban community could be treated as a variable with two possible variants, high variant of SMG and low Cypriot variant.

Nevertheless, the situation appears to be more complicated since the SMG variant seems to be used by speakers not only in formal but also in informal and semi-formal speech. This seems to provide evidence of a SMG form seeping into the dialect. In formal situations, the Cypriot variant is usually accommodated phonetically and morphologically but not syntactically to SMG. Its syntactic accommodation often leads to hybrid forms. For example the construction 'en...pu' could be replaced by 'en...oti'.

References

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