Introduction

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1. *Moving towards historical sociolinguistics*

The journal *Studi e Saggi Linguistici* has a long tradition within the field of classical languages as well as historical linguistics, in symbiosis with open-mindedness to contemporary theoretical linguistics. This special issue is perfectly in line with the scope of the journal, combining as it does the study of ancient Indo-European languages with the critical application of some cardinal notions and methods of sociolinguistic analysis. The focus is on the complex interplay of variation and norm as mirrored in the texts available for corpus-closed systems. Especially in the case of classical languages, the large amount of materials, of different age and register, allows the observation, description and even a reasonable interpretation of the data according to a sociolinguistic key.

The starting point shared by the Authors of this volume is the acknowledgment of linguistic variation as belonging to all levels of the grammar of the ancient languages. For instance, if Latin is viewed not only as a written and literary language, but also as a spoken language, it necessarily has to encompass linguistic variation according to the pragmatic contexts as well as to education and social status of the speakers/writers. Since variation is a keyword introducing sociolinguistic analysis, the application of notions and methods of modern sociolinguistics becomes a necessity more than an option in the case of closed-corpus languages too.

The studies collected in this volume can be inserted within the quite wide line of research of the so-called historical sociolinguistics, starting from the Seventies of the last century (e.g. Labov, 1972; 1994; Romaine, 1982) till the most recent contributions of this millennium (Müller, 2000; Adams, 2003; 2007; 2013; Conde Silvestre, 2007; Clackson, 2011; Hernández Campoy and Conde Silvestre, 2012; Hernández Campoy and Schilling, 2012, among the others).

Scholars are perfectly aware that combining sociolinguistics and written ancient texts is not an easy task. In the case of 'dead' languages, not only

are the speakers to ask or record unavailable, but also sociolinguistic cues occurring in the sources are often scarce and ambiguous. The distance between ancient and present-day situations can be measured by considering how difficult it is to reconstruct the attitudinal judgments about accents in the ancient world. Although some cues of social stereotypes or even prejudices associated with a certain language variety are available in Greek and Latin texts, the matched-guise technique extensively used in contemporary studies of language attitudes (see Calamai's article) is obviously impossible.

In the ancient world the notion of linguistic norm had a much more cogent meaning than in contemporary times. Therefore, variation was viewed essentially as a deviation, a sort of mistake to be punished. Notwithstanding variable degrees of literacy of the speakers/writers, in Greek society and even more so in the Roman one public power, as well as the schools, worked for a strict supervision of all the written documents. And the grammarians were true guardians of the language. The standardization of Greek and Latin inscriptions represents clear evidence of such a socio-cultural trend.

Nevertheless, to conceive ancient languages as diasystemic entities is still possible. And general linguistics together with sociolinguistic analysis may allow us to enlarge our slants and to draw a multifaceted picture more similar to that of an alive and contemporary language, *multis variatis variandis*, of course. In our opinion, this new point of view can legitimately be taken up, although notions and methods developed for contemporary societies should always be applied to ancient languages with awareness and caution. In particular, the reconstruction of the linguistic repertoires may be considered a realistic target, at least for languages with a sufficiently rich corpus of data.

The studies in this issue of *Studi e Saggi Linguistici* show how variation and norm did coexist and contrast even in the classical world. The different sections find their pivot on the notion of variation, viewed in its relations with language contact and linguistic identity. Besides Ancient Greek and Latin (Sections I and II), Italic languages as well as other ancient Indo-European languages (Sections III and V) settle the empirical domain. The material investigated ranges from literary texts to tablets, inscriptions and other non-literary texts. The relevant patterns of linguistic variation emerge from an in-depth analysis of graphemic, morpho-phonological, syntactic and lexical markers. The grammatical tradition, especially rich in the case of Greek and Latin, makes up a supplementary as well as strong evidence for the study of linguistic variation (Section IV).

We believe that models developed from the description and interpretation of contemporary realities may support the reconstruction of the socio-historical contexts where ancient languages were used. The study of data derived from written sources may considerably benefit from the integration of the more traditional philological analysis with contemporary sociolinguistics and theoretical linguistics. Such an integrated methodology might even overcome some inconsistency of the textual data available.

In our wishes, the collection of studies in this issue of *Studi e Saggi Linguistici* should represent an adequate example of how modern and ancient notions, both theoretical and methodological, may proceed hand in hand.

2. *Contents of the volume*

As anticipated above, the nineteen papers collected in the volume cover a wide range of contexts and situations in the Classical world, in which the sociolinguistic categories of identity, variation, and norm play a role either in the interaction among the varieties of a single language, or in the contact between different languages. The contents are divided into 5 Sections, as summarised here.

Section 1 ('Linguistic norm and variation in Latin') focuses on phenomena of sociolinguistic variation in the Latin language, and on their correlations with language change. M. Donati ('Variazione e tipologia testuale nel corpus epigrafico *CLaSSES I*) carries out quantitative analyses on the distribution of non-classical variants in a representative corpus of archaic Latin inscriptions. Available data show that the occurrence of non-classical features cannot be directly correlated with any specific typology of inscriptions. Rather, epigraphic evidence suggests that, in the 3rd century BC, the process of standardisation of the epigraphic language and orthography was still far from being consistently accomplished. The paper by G. Marotta ('Talking Stones. Phonology in Latin Inscriptions?') focuses on the graphemic alternations between <I> and <E> and between <U> and <O> within a corpus of archaic and early Latin inscriptions. Such variation in spelling, which is interpreted in the light of a diasystemic view of the Latin language, is acknowledged as evidence for a socio-phonetic process that was sensitive to both lexical and prosodic constraints. This case study is also the starting point for a methodological discussion on the reliability of epigraphic texts for socio-phonetic investigation in historical linguistics. In a more socio-

pragmatic perspective, P. Molinelli ('Plural pronouns and social deixis in Latin: a pragmatic development') illustrates the diachronic evolution of the system of address in Latin, with particular reference to the emergence of the so called *pluralis maiestatis* and *reverentiae*. The phenomenon is described as a progressive change from Early Latin, in which social deixis was encoded in the language by means of lexical strategies, to Late Latin, in which morphological and syntactic strategies became more and more prominent.

In Section 2 ('Language variation and contact in Italy and Greece'), a number of both literary and epigraphic texts are presented, in which Latin and its varieties came into contact with other Italic languages and Greek. C. Fedriani ('L'uso del greco in Plauto: un tassello sociolinguistico nella rappresentazione dell'identità') highlights the role of contextual, pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors in the use of lexical Graecisms in Plautus' plays. A corpus-based research reveals not only that Greek is used by Plautus to modulate his characters' identities, but also that such identities may be constantly reshaped and renegotiated in view of the different communicative situations, which is in line with a more general representation of identity as a dynamic and context-sensitive construct. Building on onomastic material drawn from epigraphic texts, E. Middei ('L'onomastica peligna tra variazione, identità e contatto') discusses the expression of local identity in the land inhabited by the Paeligni during the process of Romanisation. This area is particularly open to influences from both Northern and Southern Sabellian languages and dialectal Latin, but a detailed examination of the structure of the onomastic *formulae* and their variants, indicates the existence of specific features that are typical of Paelignan onomastics. In his paper, P. Poccetti ('Strategie di 'alternanza di codice' nel latino letterario repubblicano tra 'polifonia' e 'discorso riferito''') studies the distribution of code-switching and code-mixing in fragmentary texts of early Latin literature, with peculiar focus on the occurrences of Oscan, Greek, and Latin varieties in Lucilius' fragments. These strategies are exploited by Lucilius as a linguistic resource to represent polyphony, and, in reported speech, they contribute to characterising either individual or collective linguistic behaviour. In a methodological perspective, it is worth noting that this approach can cast new light on a number of passages whose interpretation is traditionally controversial. F. Rovai ('Notes on the inscriptions of Delos: The Greek transliteration of Latin names') investigates some aspects of the accommodation of the Latin language in the multilingual environment of Delos during the 2nd and 1st century BC, paying particular attention to the transliteration of the Latin

names into the Greek-written inscriptions. Albeit heterogeneous and often inconsistent, the criteria of transcriptions do allow some inferences about several features that may be regarded as characterising spoken Latin, spoken Greek, and Greek-Latin bilingual speech.

The papers included in Section 3 ('Language variation at the boundaries of the Graeco-Roman world') analyse Latin and Greek documents that come from peripheral areas of the Classical world. The texts are considered with reference to both inner-language variation and their relationship with other languages. The writing tablets from the Roman fort at Vindolanda in Britannia are examined by F. Cotugno ('*I longa* in iato nel *Corpus Vindolandense*'), who explores the distribution of the so-called *I longa*, i.e. a graphic device that was used to mark not only the vowel *i*, but also the palatal glide in hiatus. A detailed examination of the occurrences of the *I longae* permits regarding the gliding of *i* in hiatus as a feature of the spoken language, whose distribution is sensitive to both diaphasic and diastratic factors. Moving from an analysis of both private and official inscriptions from Lycia, in which Lycian and Greek coexist, P. Dardano ('Le iscrizioni bilingui licio-greche nel loro contesto socio-storico: tipi e funzioni a confronto') addresses a number of issues that are raised by multilingual texts. Alongside phenomena of interference that are strictly linguistic and surface in the order of the clause constituents and in the topicalization structures, the relationship between the two languages is illustrated in the light of a holistic approach to the bilingual document, which takes into account the different dislocation of the two languages on the monuments. F. Logozzo ('Register variation and personal interaction in the Zenon Archive') displays the role of pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors as underlying linguistic and stylistic variation in the Zenon archive, an epistolary corpus that depict the everyday life of public administration in the 3rd-century Ptolemaic Egypt. Opening greetings, expressions of requests and closing formulas are examined and put in relation with socio-pragmatic factors such as the sender's purpose and the social relationship or gap, between the sender and the recipient. M.C. Benvenuto, F. Pompeo and M. Pozza ('The multilingual urban environment of Achaemenid Sardis') aim at reconstructing the linguistic repertoire that was current in Achaemenid Sardis, a multilingual environment where Lydians, Greeks, Persians and, possibly, Carians and Aramaic-speaking peoples cohabited during the 5th and 4th centuries BC. Such an aim has to deal with data that are scarce and fragmentary, but a reliable socio-linguistic scenario can nevertheless be built by means of a multi-modal approach that takes into

consideration the historical, archaeological, social, and cultural context.

Section 4 ('Metalinguistic awareness of identity and variation') contains five papers that testify how a linguistic norm can be overtly acknowledged and stated by speakers (in most cases, obviously, grammarians), and how they perceive some relevant features of non-standard varieties and other languages. M. Benedetti (*'De verborum greci et Latini differentiis vel societatibus.* La diatesi media e il punto di vista latino') reviews the problem of the two different interpretations that were traditionally given by the Greek grammarians of the category of 'mediality', and brings a new voice into such a debated issue. A different perspective can in fact be opened, if one takes into account Macrobius' peculiar point of view on this question, as stated in a passage of his treatise *De differentiis*, where a systematic comparison is carried out between Greek and Latin grammatical categories. S. Calamai ('Between linguistics and social psychology of language: the perception of non-native accents') introduces a methodological reflection on language attitudes and language as a marker of group identity. The starting point is a pilot study on differences in how Standard Italian and three varieties of foreign accented speech (Albanian, Romanian and General American) are perceived by a sample of high school students from a medium-sized city in contemporary Central Italy. J. Clackson ('*Latinitas*, Ἑλληνισμός and Standard Languages') discusses the possibility of comparing the Classical metalinguistic categories of *Latinitas* and *Hellenismós* with the modern concept of 'standard language'. Actually, the Greek *Hellenismós* is recognized as having covered a wider range of linguistic varieties than encompassed under modern standard languages, and the study of variant orthographic practices in Latin legal inscriptions, suggests that also *Latinitas* was a similarly elastic concept. R. Ferri ('Linguistic Variation in Patristic Commentaries of Biblical Texts') presents a detailed survey of passages from the Church Fathers, where they explicitly state that the language of both the Latin and the Greek version of the Bible, was very distant from the Classical literary language. The study is devoted, in particular, to underlining their consciousness of the existence of a 'popular' register of Latin, and to describing the metalanguage they used to account for social, regional, and pragmatic variation in Biblical Latin. In his contribution, M. Mancini ('Ricerche sulla prosodia del latino d'Africa') tackles the debated issue of the *Quantitätskollaps* in the so called Vulgar Latin. The research is based on an exhaustive and punctual investigation of two kinds of sources: on the one hand, the metalinguistic *testimonia* of the late Roman grammarians, together with several texts from the metricists;

on the other hand, the metrical funerary inscriptions from Northern Africa and the two poems by Commodian. In the light of these texts, Vulgar Latin can be characterised by the collapse and neutralisation of vowel quantity, which surfaced as a generalised lengthening of stressed vowels, and, conversely, as a generalised shortening of unstressed ones – regardless of the syllabic structure.

Finally, Section 5 ('Language variation and Indo-European perspectives') shows how the investigation of language variation and language contact can bring a significant contribution to the knowledge of the prehistoric and Indo-European inheritance. C. Fabrizio ('Il caso curioso dell'infinito soggetto in latino') illustrates the syntactico-semantic constraints that account for the use of infinitives in subject function in Latin. Their syntactic behaviour and other features as well (lack of case marking, neuter gender, availability as direct objects) speak in favour of their status of non-canonical subjects that reflect a semantically-oriented argument structure. Such a pattern is inconsistent with the canonical alignment of the Latin clause, but consistently surfaces in a number of syntactic constructions that are attested elsewhere in Latin and in other ancient Indo-European languages. R. Lazzeroni ('Divagazioni sulla legge degli appellativi in greco e in vedico') points out that, in Greek and in Sanskrit, the change in the position of stress in a word which changes its Part-of-Speech, is not limited to the so called 'law of appellatives' (noun *vs* adjective), but it encodes a number of other both lexical and morphological oppositions (agent noun *vs* action noun, common noun *vs* proper name, nominative case *vs* vocative case, etc.). The hypothesis is put forward that such phenomena of transcategorisation can be more properly described and better understood in terms of markedness and scalar representation of the linguistic categories. D. Romagno ('The Greek-Anatolian area in the 2nd millennium BC: between language contact, Indo-European inheritance and typologically natural tendencies') discusses some alleged areal features in the Greek-Anatolian domain in the 2nd millennium BC. Genuine and false isoglosses are therefore disentangled, distinguishing language contact phenomena from socioculturally-dependent traits, from inherited aspects, and from properties that appear to have a strong cross-linguistic validity.

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Languages between Variation, Identity and Norm, held in Pisa last Fe-
bruary (*http://www.fileli.unipi.it/prin2015/*). The meeting was organized
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The valid collaboration of the participants has allowed for the publica-
tion of the essays in less than one year. The Editors and the Direction of the
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current year.

Although the combining of the study of ancient Indo-European langua-
ges with some of the sociolinguistic tenets could be considered to be a chal-
lenge, we claim that the results of the studies published in this volume show
how such a challenge is not only valid but also leads, while totally respecting
the textual tradition, to conclusive findings.

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