

Differential Subject Marking in Pontic Greek spoken in Georgia

Abstract:

The paper presents an empirical study on contact-induced changes in the domain of definiteness in Pontic Greek spoken in Georgia. The research is based on the data obtained as a result of the original fieldwork, available to the research community via TLA, final version 2019. The paper is restricted to one grammatical phenomenon related to definiteness, namely the extension of the Differential Subject Marking (DMS) to feminine nouns. Generally, the use of definite articles in Pontic Greek spoken in Georgia is altered due to the contact with languages with no overt marking of definiteness. This is visible in (a) the selective retreat of definiteness marking in the polydefinite and possessive constructions, and (b) the extension of the Differential Subject Marking (DSM) use to feminine nouns. This paper merely focuses on this last phenomenon.

1 Introduction

Pontic (henceforth PNT) is a dialect of Greek, which was widespread in the region of Pontus, Asia Minor until the beginning of the 20th century. PNT in Georgia, also called Romeika¹ is an endangered variety spoken in the region of the Caucasus after the migration of Pontic Greeks from Anatolia in the 19th century. It is classified as belonging to the Trapezountian-Chaldiot group of Pontic sub-dialects (Berikashvili 2017: 102–109) and is altered by the impact of transformational processes that caused contact-induced changes. The Pontic community of Georgia includes Pontic and Urum speakers. Both of them are mentioned as Greeks and consist approximately of 15 200 speakers (2002 census).

The available publications and sources about PNT relate only to the varieties spoken in Turkey or by Pontic Greek speakers in Greece (see Dawkins 1931; Papadopoulos 1955; Oikonomidis 1958; Mackridge 1987; Tombaidis 1988; Argiriadis 1990; Andriotis 2005 [1995]; Drettas 1997, 1999; Kontosopoulos 2008 [1999]; Bortone 2009; Horrocks 2010; Revithiadou and Spyropoulos 2012; Sitaridou 2013, 2014a, 2014b, etc.). PNT in Georgia has been less systematically investigated (Lazarev 1950; Eloeva 1997; Mikaberidze and Shakhpazidi 2000; Berikashvili 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022).

Romeika exhibits Differential Subject Marking (henceforth DSM), which cross-linguistically does not constitute a unified phenomenon. In a broad sense DSM exists in a language “if some subjects have a different case, agree differently or occur in different position than others. In a narrower sense such differences are regarded as DSM effects only if they depend on the features of the subject in some way.” (Woolford 2008: 17). Subjects can be differentiated on several bases, and there are various ways of analyzing DSMs (including Functional, Optimality-based, Morphological and Syntactic approaches) (see Silverstein

¹ Henceforth the term Romeika will be used to indicate Pontic Greek spoken by the Pontic Greek community of Georgia. For the nomenclature of the term consult Berikashvili 2017: 16–17.

1976; Comrie 1989; Aissen 1999, 2003; Woolford 1997, 2008; de Hoop and de Swart 2008; Kornfilt 2008; Kalin 2018; Bárány and Kalin 2020, etc.). According to de Hoop and de Swart (2008: 1), “some languages differentiate their subjects on the basis of the form, such as being pronoun or not, others on the basis of semantic features such as being a real agent (volitional, in control) or not, and still others distinguish their subjects on the basis of clausal features, such as tense/aspect/mood or the main/dependent clause distinction”. Although much is known about DSM cross-linguistically, relatively little attempt has been made to study that issue in PNT.

PNT, though nominative-accusative language, differentiates its subjects on the basis of definiteness specification. This differentiation does not occur either in Modern Greek or in the mainland Greece dialect. It has been mentioned that nominative-accusative languages tend to be rare in exhibiting DSM (see Spyropoulos 2020). In PNT this differentiation does not happen outside the DPs and that causes additional questions should these putative cases be regarded as DSM or not? The phenomenon is characteristic to PNT in general and attested in all Pontic varieties (see Drettas 1997; Janse 2002, 2004; Revithiadou and Spyropoulos 2012; Spyropoulos 2016, 2020, see also Berikashvili 2022 for additional references). DSM in Romeika has not been investigated at all.

The main purpose of the current study is to fill this gap and to provide empirical evidence for the existence of DSM in the endangered variety of PNT spoken by the Pontic Greek Community of Georgia. This understudied variety has undergone a lot of transformational processes caused by contact with other languages and has a lot of properties that are not attested in other varieties. The research question addressed in the article is whether DSM in the understudied variety has some peculiar effects different from what has been stated in the literature for other Pontic varieties.

The used nomenclature in the paper covers such terms as DSM, gender, Inflectional Class (henceforth IC) and definiteness specification. DSM is understood in a narrower sense, namely, the semantic feature of the subject’s definiteness triggers the DSM effect in terms of subject case marking. DSM is not realized outside a DP and applies only to definite DPs which contain a definite article. In other words, in the presence of the definite article the noun head of the DP appears in the accusative case (1a), while in the presence of the indefinite article or bare DP it appears in the nominative case (1b):

		DSM instances in PNT		
(1)	a.	<i>o</i> DEF:M.SG.NOM 'the uncle said...'	<i>θίον</i> M.SG.ACC	<i>ίpen</i> say:PFV.PST:3.SG
	b.	<i>(ίnas)</i> INDEF:M.SG.NOM '(an) uncle said...'	<i>θίος</i> M.SG.NOM	<i>ίpen</i> say:PFV.PST:3.SG

However, the case of the whole DP is not affected, DP subjects are marked with nominative, irrespective of the construction (transitive, unaccusative, unergative) and the theta role they realize (see Spyropoulos 2016, 2020 for the whole picture of the Pontic DSM).

The main factors that matter in the case of DPs are gender and the IC of the noun head. Gender is defined as a grammatical feature, which applies to all nominal phrases and is visible in agreement, namely in nominal concord. ICs in PNT, as proposed by Berikashvili (2017, 2022) following the principles of the Modern Greek declension classification of Ralli

(2000: 201–228, 2012 [2005]: 118–122), are based on (a) systematic diversity of allomorphic stems, (b) different inflectional formatives and (c) inflectionally active animacy feature. According to this approach, there are eight ICs in PNT (see Berikashvili 2022: 4, in particular Tables 1 and 2 for examples of all ICs). ICs used for the purposes of the current research are IC1 – masculine nouns ending in *-os*, IC2 – masculine nouns ending in *-as*, *-is*, *-es*, *-us*, IC3 – feminine nouns ending in *-i*, *-a*, *-e*, *-u* and IC6 – neuter nouns ending in *-in*.

The research is based on corpus data collected from native-speaking informants. The corpus of Pontic Data contains 435 media files of spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech. The PNT in Georgia is an endangered variety, so the whole collection is based on the recordings of 57 native-speaking informants (24 male and 33 female, the age range: 22-88): the average word count per speaker is 935 words, approximately the corpus contains 53 295 words. All the informants reproduced narratives on the various topics, translated different sentences, described pictures and gave spontaneous interviews.

The collected data are based on different stages of the Pontic Greeks' migration process in/from Georgia: Stage A: Homeland (original settlement areas in Georgia, recorded data in Georgian villages), Stage B: Internal migration (urban centers in Georgia, mostly to the capital of Georgia – Tbilisi, recorded data in cities: Batumi and Tbilisi) and Stage C: Emigration (countries of the European Union, recorded data in Thessaloniki, Greece). The age range of informants as stated above varies from 22 to 88, so that language changes between stages and different generations can be easily observed.

The purpose of this data collection was on one hand to document the language and create text collection that can be used for the study of language and for observation of language changes, and on the other hand to clarify the use of different linguistic phenomena in the understudied variety of PNT.

The whole corpus data were collected through several fieldwork periods in the Pontic-speaking community of Georgia either in Georgia or in Greece, by Kotanidi, Berikashvili and Skopeteas 2005, 2014-2016, 2019. All the data have been glossed by Berikashvili according to the existing standards in Field Linguistics, following Leipzig Glossing Rules,² using Toolbox³ and ELAN⁴ software, and are available to the academic community via The Language Archive (TLA) of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (Nijmegen, Netherlands).⁵

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the methodology used in the study and provides empirical data on DSM. Section 3 analyses the results of the research. Section 4 is a discussion and Section 5 draws concluding remarks.

2 Methods

This section provides empirical data on DSM, based on the original material collected in the process of fieldwork. Methods used for the current study are (a) elicitation from the corpus and (b) judgment experiments. These methods were chosen, as they help to shed light on different effects of DSM and its use in an understudied variety of PNT. Thus, elicitation of the data from the corpus gives the possibility to check the DSM use in a natural language

² <https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>

³ <https://software.sil.org/toolbox/>

⁴ <https://archive.mpi.nl/tla/elan>

⁵ <https://tla.mpi.nl/resources/data-archive/>

environment (i.e. spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech), while experiments implemented to rate the acceptability of the sentences with DSM help to measure whether some constructions are acceptable or not, and how native-speaking consultants feel about these instances.

The procedure of analyzing data included different stages: (a) the first stage (after the compilation of the sustainable data collection) was eliciting and observing the material from the corpus; (b) the second stage was comparing the elicited material with other varieties of PNT based on the available sources (Drettas 1997; Janse 2002, 2004; Revithiadou and Spyropoulos 2012; Spyropoulos 2016); (c) next stage was identifying DSM peculiarities in Romeika and following that three experiments with acceptability rate have been implemented to examine if DSM constructions are acceptable with feminine and neuter gender. In order to get comparable data each experiment contained three main factors: definiteness, gender and number. The [\pm human] specification and some of the ICs have been ignored this time, due to the non-productive use of DSM.⁶

- (2) Experiment 1: Sentences with masculine DPs
 - a) with [\pm definite] specification
 - b) in the different syntactic environments:
the same DPs as subjects in NOM/ACC and as objects in ACC.
 - c) in SG and PL number
 - d) in different inflectional classes: IC1, IC2

- (3) Experiment 2: Sentences with feminine DPs
 - a) with [\pm definite] specification
 - b) in the different syntactic environments:
the same DPs as subjects in NOM/ACC and as objects in ACC.
 - c) in SG and PL number
 - d) in inflectional class: IC3 with different endings *-a, -i*

- (4) Experiment 3: Sentences with neuter DPs
 - a) with [\pm definite] specification
 - b) in the different syntactic environments:
the same DPs as subjects in NOM/ACC and as objects in ACC.
 - c) in SG and PL number
 - e) in inflectional class: IC6

Seven native-speaking informants were asked to rate the acceptability of the items on a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 to 5 (i.e. 1=completely unacceptable, 5=completely acceptable). Since PNT in Georgia is a spoken variety and there is hardly any writing system accepted for PNT,⁷ questionnaires were presented acoustically (previously recorded material), while informants had printed versions with transliterated instances, which they filled in. An additional task based on the native-speaker consultants' answers following conditional logic was to fill in the explanation when the answer was: not very natural for the language, but still acceptable (i.e. point 3 on the Likert Scale). The difficulties might have occurred with

⁶ DSM is mostly characteristic to [+human] or [-human] animate nouns and to the productive ICs: IC1, IC2, IC3 and IC6.

⁷ The alphabetical system used for PNT spoken in Georgia has been changed in different historical periods from Greek alphabet to Cyrillic, but no system has been accepted as such.

Experiment 3, as neuter DPs morphologically do not show the difference between NOM and ACC cases, so the expectation was that the results could be checked only on syntactic and not morphological level. However, there were some interesting results on the morphological level as well, see Section 3.

The last stage of the study was to make generalizations based on the obtained results. The rationale was that the observation of the DSM in one particular variety combined with what happens with this effect cross-linguistically can lead to some valuable generalizations in a broader perspective.

3 Results

This section summarizes the empirical findings on DSM use in Romeika, based on (a) data elicitation from the corpus and (b) three experiments that were designed to test the acceptability of DSM use with DPs containing nouns with different grammatical gender.

In general DSM in PNT is associated with [±definite] specification, but only inside DPs, in other words, an article on the surface level is realized as NOM, while the head noun itself is as ACC. The syntactic function of the whole DP however remains that of an abstract NOM Case. If any adjectival modifier is added to DP it gets an ACC marker, while a quantifier as a determiner used in place of the article gets as expected a NOM marker. In all PNT varieties this phenomenon is restricted to masculine nouns and one inflectional class, namely IC1. Moreover, it is used only in SG, not PL DPs.

What makes the variety spoken by the Pontic Greek community of Georgia peculiar is that restrictions characteristic generally to PNT, do not appear in the understudied variety. The general overview of the results based on the data collection can be presented as follows: first the elicited material reveals that DSM may occur not only with masculine nouns, IC1 as stated for other Pontic varieties (see Drettas 1997; Janse 2002, 2004; Revithiadou and Spyropoulos 2012; Spyropoulos 2016), but with feminines, IC3 as well, see (5) and (6) for the examples in masculine and feminine respectively.

- (5)
- | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>o</i> | <i>jéron</i> | <i>erúksen</i> |
| DEF:M.SG.NOM | old_man:M.SG.ACC | fell_down:PFV.PST:3SG |
| <i>ti</i> | <i>yréan</i> | <i>ekúksen.</i> |
| DEF:F.SG.ACC | old_woman:F.SG.ACC | call:PFV.PST:3SG |
- ‘Old man fell and called old woman.’
(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-CL-00000-C10)

- (6)
- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| <i>ke</i> | <i>araéts</i> | <i>erúksene</i> |
| and | so | fell_down:PFV.PST:3.SG |
| <i>i</i> | <i>yarín.</i> | |
| DEF:F.SG.NOM | woman:F.SG.ACC | |
- ‘And so woman came.’
(Berikashvili 2019: PNT-TXT-AN-2-000-B25)

Neuter nouns in SG are excluded because there is no morphological exponent that distinguishes NOM from ACC. Moreover, it can occur with [+human], [-human] animate and

inanimate, so it is not either restricted by animacy. See (5) for [+human], (7) for [-human] animate and (8) for inanimate nouns respectively.

(7)

<i>o</i>	<i>petinón</i>	<i>en</i>
DEF:M.SG.NOM	cock:M.SG.ACC	be:3SG
<i>s=áloyon</i>	<i>apán.</i>	
LOC=horse:N.SG.NGEN	above	

'The cock is above the horse.'

(Berikashvili and Skopeteas 2019: PNT-PC-00000-B21)

(8)

<i>to</i>	<i>pondiakó</i>	<i>ítan</i>
DEF:N.SG.NGEN	Pontic:N.SG.NGEN	be:PST:3SG
<i>o</i>	<i>yámon.</i>	
DEF:M.SG.NOM	wedding:M.SG.ACC	

'Wedding was Pontic'

(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-MR-00000-C10)

Second, the results show, that the use of DSM is not restricted by inflectional class, it is attested with masculines both in IC1 and IC2, see (9) for the example in masculine, IC2.

(9)

<i>o</i>	<i>ílen</i>	<i>pái</i>
DEF:M.SG.NOM	sun:M.SG.ACC	go:3SG
<i>s=i</i>	<i>mánan=at.</i>	
LOC=DEF:F.SG.ACC	mother:F.SG.ACC=3M.SG.GEN	

'The sun goes to its mother.'

(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-CL-00000-C16)

Third, DSM can be observed in PL as well, see (11) for example in PL, IC1.

(11)

<i>eftakósia</i>	<i>anθrópus</i>	<i>borún</i>	<i>na</i>
seven_hundred	man:M.PL.ACC	can:3PL	to
<i>rθun</i>	<i>s=tin</i>	<i>xarán.</i>	
come:DEP:PFV:3PL	LOC=DEF:F.SG.ACC	wedding:F.SG.ACC	

'Seven hundred people can come to the wedding.'

(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-MR-00000-C11)

Moreover, examples of the DSM use without restrictions can be attested with loanwords. This is very important because some native words may reveal the influence of Standard Modern Greek (ELL), while loanwords do not appear in ELL, they are characteristic only to understudied variety and do not seem to have that impact, see (12) for the loanword from Turkish (TUR) and (13) for the loanword from Russian (RUS)

(12)

<i>to</i>	<i>romeikón</i>	<i>i</i>
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DEF:N.SG.NGEN Pontic:N.SG.NGEN DEF:F.SG.NOM
kalachín [...] *k=en*
 conversation:F.SG.ACC NEG=be:3SG
 'Pontic conversation is not [...]'
 (Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-LG-00000-C14)

(13)
t=eméteron *i* *famílian*
 DEF:N.SG.NGEN=POSS.1PL:N.SG DEF:F.SG.NOM surname:F.SG.ACC
étone *tosunánd*
 be:PST:3.SG Tosunidis:PL.NOM
 'Our surname was Tosunidis.'
 (Berikashvili 2019: PNT-TXT-FM-00000-B23)

For experiments designed to test the acceptability of DSM according to grammatical gender, several factors have been chosen, namely: (a) gender, (b) definiteness, (c) number, (d) inflectional class and (e) different argument structure. As already mentioned in Section 2, [±human] specification has been neglected this time. The examples of mostly productive nouns have been taken on a random basis. In masculines [+human] nouns are prioritized as they show overt NOM-ACC opposition on a morphological level both in SG and PL. To compare the data the same principle was taken in feminines as well (i.e. priority of [+human] nouns), though in feminines morphological NOM-ACC opposition is not visible in PL.

The seven respondents filled in the questionnaire, and after the analysis of the results, their responses provided enough information to answer several research questions. In particular: On what rate (a) is DSM acceptable with DPs containing feminine nouns; (b) is DSM acceptable with other inflectional classes, besides IC1; (c) is DSM acceptable in plural formation?

Several examples were produced to examine whether DSM is acceptable with the masculine nouns in different inflectional classes, namely IC1 and IC2, SG and PL. The design of one example is illustrated in Table 1

Table 1. Example of testing DSM in M, IC1

N	example	completely unacceptable	unacceptable	not very natural, but still acceptable	acceptable	completely acceptable
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	<i>O ánthropon pái sin eklesían.</i> 'The man.ACC goes to the church.'					√
2.	<i>O ánthropos pái sin eklesían</i> 'The man.NOM goes to the church.'				√	
3.	<i>Elépo ton ánthropon pu pái sin eklesían.</i> 'I see a man.ACC who goes to the church.'					√
4.	<i>I ánthrops páne sin eklesían.</i> 'The men.PL.ACC go to the church.'					√
5.	<i>I ánthrop páne sin eklesían.</i> 'The men.PL.NOM go to the church.'				√	
6.	<i>Elépo tus (tis, ti) ánthrops pu páne sin eklesían.</i>					√

'I see men.PL.ACC who go to the church.'

The analogous test was designed for feminines as well, see Table 2 for one example, but test results were measured just for SG patterns, not for PL.

Table 2. Example of testing DSM in F, IC3

N	example	completely unacceptable	unacceptable	not very natural, but still acceptable	acceptable	completely acceptable
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	<i>I yarín ki kalachév roméika.</i> 'The woman.ACC does not speak Romeika.'					√
2.	<i>I yari ki kalachév roméika.</i> 'The woman.NOM does not speak Romeika.'			√		
3.	<i>Eksérts tin yarín pu ki kalachév roméika.</i> 'Do you know the womanACC, who does not speak Romeika?'				√	
4.	<i>I yarídes ki kalachévne roméika</i> 'The women.PL.NGEN do not speak Romeika.'				√	
5.	<i>Elépo tis (tus, ti) yarídes pu ki kalachévne roméika.</i> 'I see women.PL.NGEN who do not speak Romeika'				√	

The two experiments were designed in such a way as to answer the main question: To what rate DEF article + ACC case marker in the subject position in IC1, IC2 and IC3 is acceptable? Figure 1 represents the answer to this particular question, it shows the acceptability rate of the DEF article with ACC case markers versus the DEF article with NOM case markers to denote subjects. The acceptance rate is given in %s.

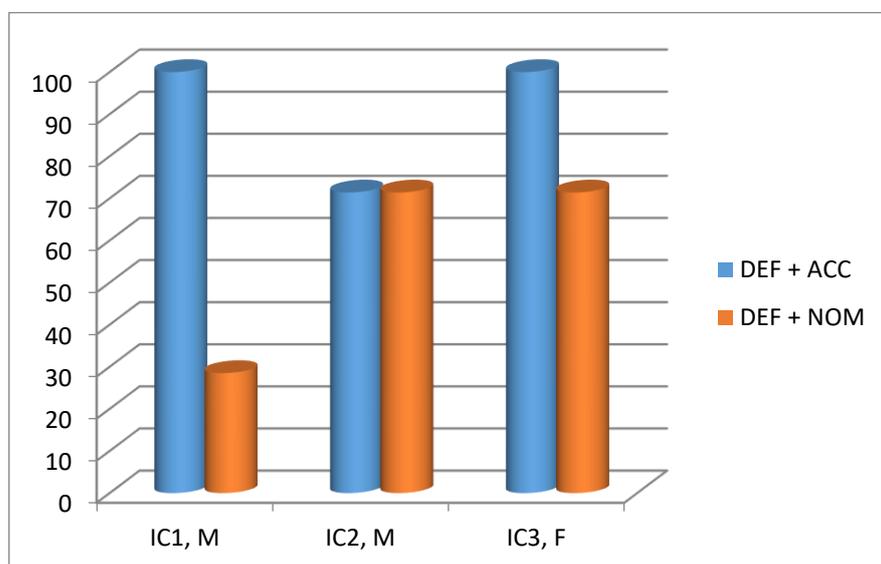


Figure 1. Results for DEF + ACC and DEF + NOM

According to Figure 1, DPs with a definite determiner and ACC case marker, are more likely to be acceptable for native-speaking consultants when DPs contain IC1 and IC3 nouns. So, the first question was answered positively, DSM is acceptable with DPs containing feminine nouns. The exact percentage for DEF + ACC in IC1 and IC3 is 100 %=7 informants (the answers included mostly: acceptable and completely acceptable).

The results for IC2 on the other hand show that subject nominals with both patterns: DEF + ACC and DEF + NOM are accepted, though mean acceptance rates ($M = 71,4\%$) are significantly lower than those for IC1 or IC3. Despite this, the second research question is also answered positively, because it demonstrates that DSM is acceptable with other inflectional classes, besides IC1.

Figure 2⁸ illustrates the same patterns (i.e. DEF + ACC and DEF + NOM) for PL forms. The exact percentage is as follows: DEF + ACC = 71,4% for IC1 and 64,28% for IC2, while DEF + NOM both 85,71% for IC1 and IC2.

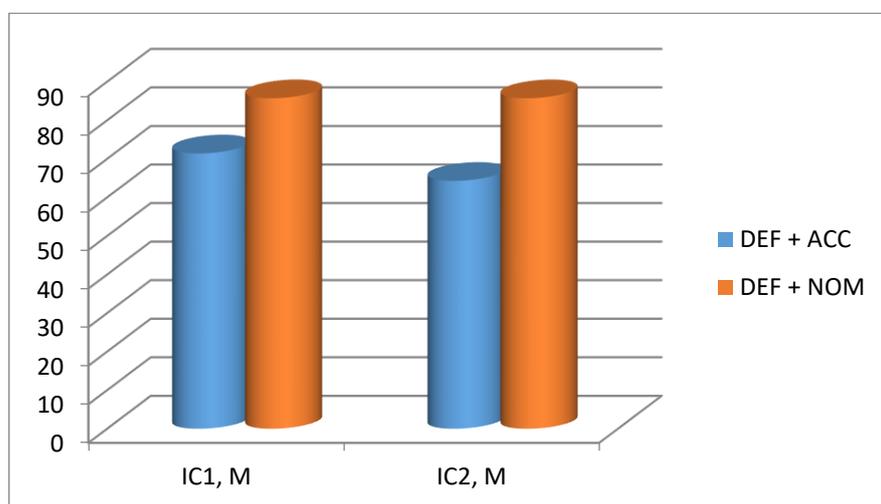


Figure 2. Results for DEF + ACC and DEF + NOM, PL

Plural formation shows that both forms are acceptable for IC1 and IC2. However, the acceptance rate shows that canonical marked subjects are preferable in these cases. Besides, the last research question is also answered positively, because DSM occurs and is accepted with IC1 and IC2 nominals in PL. Comparing Figs. 1 and 2 it can be stated that IC2 is not very “comfortable” with DSM use, both in SG and PL.

The third experiment for neuter nouns was problematic because neuters in PNT have syncretic forms for NOM and ACC, so DSM could not be observed at least on a morphological level, neither in SG nor in PL. However, the data in the corpus revealed some unexpected results, namely instances in PL, which except for the canonical syncretic inflectional

⁸ As already mentioned in Section 3 feminines do not have overt exponent for morphological NOM-ACC opposition that is why the figure illustrates only masculine forms.

What do all these findings indicate? First of all, they show that DSM is not restricted by IC, number or gender features. This is what makes the understudied variety peculiar in comparison with other Pontic varieties, in which (as already indicated in Section 3) DSM occurs only with DPs containing nouns of IC1, SG. The question, therefore, is what causes this difference and why is it significant? In this section, this issue is addressed and a possible explanation for the unexpected results is provided. The existence of DSM in PNT, nominative-accusative language from one side seems to be a rare phenomenon from the typological perspective, as nominative-accusative languages generally do not exhibit differentiated marking of arguments (if we exclude non-canonically dative marked subjects as for instance in Icelandic, see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, 2012, see also Barðdal 2011 and references therein). On the other side, differentiated marking can be treated as a result not only of the language-external but also of the language-internal factors.

PNT belongs to the AMG group of Greek dialects which have common grammatical features like a breakdown of the grammatical gender distinction, a declension system based on animacy, etc. One of these features is also the use of the accusative to denote subject definiteness in IC1⁹ (see Dawkins 1916, 1931; Janse 2004; Karatsareas 2009, 2011; Horrocks 2010; Revithiadou and Spyropoulos 2012). Dawkins even suggests on the basis of the affinities among AMG varieties that once in the region a single linguistic area must have existed (Dawkins 1916: 205–206, 1931: 399; see also Sitaridou 2014a: 29–30 about regional koine Greek spoken in Asia Minor). So, it can be observed that differentiated marking of arguments is characteristic of all AMG dialects.

Moreover, PNT is known for the preservation of the old features, which were characteristic of the Ancient Ionic dialect, the Koine (Greek of Hellenistic and Roman times) and Medieval Greek. One of the properties of Medieval Greek, as outlined by Lavidas (2020), was also the non-canonically use of ACC to denote subjects. Lavidas (2020) examines the ACC case marking for subjects of finite verbs found in papyri of the Byzantine period and relates the ACC case marking to the development of voice from Ancient to Modern Greek. One of the examples found in papyri of the Byzantine period, provided by Lavidas (2020) is reprinted in (15).

(15)

<i>táftin</i>	<i>tin</i>	<i>epistolín</i>	<i>eghráfi</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>Thmui</i>
this.ACC	the.ACC	letter.ACC	write.MP.PST.PFV.3SG	in	Thmui

‘This letter was written in Thmui’
(P.Par. XVIII, ii, 18, 12, 3 (Iip); Byzantine Greek)

The example shows that Byzantine Greek had DSM, and this trait is kept by PNT as well. However, the difference is that PNT has differentiation only inside DPs, the determiner in PNT is NOM, while in Byzantine Greek both determiner and head-noun assign ACC case.

The existence of the phenomenon in AMG dialects and diachronic examples from Byzantine Greek indicate that there is a language-internal factor that triggers DSM use in PNT. The use of DSM was accelerated by language external factors as well. PNT has always been in a multilingual environment having extensive contact with Turkish, Armenian and

⁹ In traditional grammars nouns which belong to IC1 are called second declension nouns.

also with Kartvelian languages, especially Laz (see Janse 2002: 205). The interesting thing is that Turkish exhibits DOM: the opposite of DSM, while Laz, like all Kartvelian languages, has DSM. Pontic DSM is believed by many scholars to be a contact-induced phenomenon from Turkish and is associated with Turkish DOM, also present in other AMG dialects (see Kornfilt 1997, 2008, 2020; Lewis 2000; Göksel and Kerslake 2005 for Turkish phenomenon and Drettas 1997; Janse 2002, 2004; Revithiadou and Spyropoulos 2012; Spyropoulos 2016, 2020; Karatsareas 2020 for Differential Argument Marking (DAM) in AMG dialects).

Romeika has also always been in a multilingual environment. In comparison with other varieties, it was used within a different language situation and was in contact with new languages, namely it has a lot of embedded elements from RUS and Georgian (KAT), besides it preserves a lot of loans from TUR that are already integrated into the patterns of the understudied variety. After the emigration to Greece (second half of 20th century), the significant impact is also from ELL and Pontic multilingual environment. However, till that stage, this variety is unaffected concerning ELL influence.

What can be summarized so far is, that PNT as a dialect of Greek has an internal structure that allows the existence of DSM (the examples from Byzantine Greek indicate that), and as a dialect which belongs to a group of AMG it shares the grammatical feature of differentiated argument marking inside DPs. Being in a multilingual environment with TUR as a dominant language, PNT is influenced by another grammatical feature characteristic of TUR, namely DOM. Romeika preserved 'this result' from the stage when PNT was spoken on the territory of Asia Minor and developed it further.

So, the main questions now are: (a) why the use of DSM in understudied variety is extended to other ICs and genders as well; (b) how this can be explained, and (c) is DSM affected by other languages in contact or not, in other words, are there some further developments that apply to DSM and took place after Pontic people left Anatolia and settled in the Caucasus. The expected language external factors could be either influence of KAT, which possesses DSM or of RUS, which caused gender shift and subsequently increased DSM cases with feminine nouns as well.

The results presented in Section 3 can be explained in two ways: one from language-internal factors and the other from language external factors. All the results should be considered in turn. Examples with IC1 in SG were predictably acceptable, they did not change the picture of PNT in general, thus showing that language-internal structure is the same as it was in the PNT variety in Asia Minor. What made this class different from other PNT varieties are instances with PL forms. Examples with IC2 forms on the other hand, both in SG and PL, indicated almost parallel interchangeable use with DEF + ACC and DEF + NOM, prioritizing the canonical use. The existence of these forms could be regarded as the main result because it shows the peculiarity of the understudied variety. However, this use was not productive, and the mean acceptance rates were low.

The explanation may be presented as follows: in IC1 both SG and PL forms in [+human] nouns have different morphological markers: *-os* for NOM and *-on* for ACC in SG and *-(i)* for NOM and *-(u)s* for ACC in PL, while in IC2 [+human] nouns different morphological markers are obligatory in SG: *-s* for NOM and *-n* for ACC (forming subsequently affixes *-as*, *-is*, *-es* for NOM and *-an*, *-in*, *-en* for ACC), but optional in PL: *-∅* for NOM and *-(s)* for ACC or syncretic form *-es* both for NOM and ACC. This explains why IC2 use is not so productive. Moreover, it leads us to the conclusion that overt morphological exponents trigger more productive use of DSM. The generalization of productivity in DSM use can be presented as follows: DSM exists on structural i.e. syntax level, but after impoverishment rules, the result on the spell-

out level (post-syntactic morphological level) is syncretic morphological form which is used both in NOM and ACC, so-called NGEN. This syncretic form causes interchangeable use in DPs of DEF + ACC and DEF + NOM.

More interesting results were those of feminine nouns, IC3 which indicated that when head-noun was of IC3, the use of DSM was as productive as with IC1. Moreover, examples with IC3 were attested with loanwords as well. This underlines the following points: (a) DSM with IC3 is characteristic only to the understudied variety because these borrowings (at least those from RUS) are not attested in other varieties; (b) DSM exists on a structural level in grammar (this is a language-internal factor) because PNT tends to incorporate all loanwords and its use to the system of Recipient Language (RL) (see Berikashvili 2016, 2018 for the integration of loan nouns and verbs into patterns of PNT).

One of the external factors is contact with RUS which caused a numerical increase of feminine nouns in Romeika due to the incorporation of Russian loans. Romeika has a lot of borrowings, which are assigned to different ICs. The most productive classes are: IC6 for neuters, IC3 for feminines and IC2 for masculines for all contact languages (i.e. TUR, RUS and KAT), some rare exceptions of masculines are adapted to IC1 (a more frequent option for RUS) (see Berikashvili 2017: 110–111, 2022: 13, in particular, Table 15 for statistics from the corpus about the assignment of borrowings to the inflectional classes).

Most loan nouns are from RUS, these are feminines ending in *-a* and *-ya* in the Source Language (SL), and all of them are integrated into IC3. This integration stimulated three processes in the understudied variety, namely: (a) the assigning of feminine gender to loans kept the grammatical category of gender active, (b) the increasing number of feminine loans caused a tendency of default gender shift towards feminine, (c) the borrowing of feminine RUS loans increased the modifier distribution in the corresponding gender with inanimate nouns (see Berikashvili 2022 for discussion). The structural innovation of the DSM extension to the IC3 feminine nouns could be also introduced indirectly through lexical borrowings from Russian which resulted in an increase of the feminine gender in the understudied variety. The fact that it is not attested in other PNT varieties indicates that this alternation happened because of contact with other languages in the Caucasus. If the change had happened earlier, it should be found in other PNT varieties as well.

The most striking puzzle in the results was that with neuters, IC6, see (14a) and (14b). The results from the elicited material indicated productive use of such forms, however, native-speaking informants did not consider such forms acceptable. The explanation of these forms can be based on two scenarios: the first one is purely phonological, while the second one is morpho-syntactic. According to the phonological explanation, this *-n* could be a so-called “parasite”-*n* and not ACC marker. The use of word-final *-n* is generally characteristic of Romeika, as it belongs to the Trapezountian-Chaldiot group of Pontic varieties, which keeps word-final *-n* in different situations. Namely, the understudied variety except for the use of *-n* as a marker of ACC in SG retains it in neuter nouns SG with endings *-on*, *-ion*, *-in* and *-man*, and also in verbs in PFV.PST:3.SG (see Berikashvili 2017: 103–106), something that is not preserved in other Greek dialects. Moreover, the feature of inserting the euphonic *-n* to avoid hiatus is observed also in the dialect. Diachronically it is related to the Ancient Ionic dialect (see Gordeziani 2001: 28, Argiriadis 1990: 43), where *-n* was added to words if the next word started with a vowel. So, one possible explanation is that *-n* in PL is euphonic. The expectation, therefore, is that *-n* must be attested before a word or a clitic that starts with a vowel, see (14a) and (16) for the examples from the corpus.

(16)

Ke péren ta t=adérfian=ats.
and take:PFV.PST:3.SG DEF:N.PL.NGEN DEF:N.PL.NGEN=siblings:N.PL.ACC=3NN.PL.ACC
'So, they took their siblings'
(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-FM-00000-C08)

The next expectation is that word-final *-n* must not be used when the next word begins with a consonant, or when a word is used at the end of the clause, but this is not the case, see examples (14b) and (17) respectively.

(17)

Ejérasa ésprinan ta malían.
become_old:PFV.PST:1.SG whiten:IPFV.PST:3.PL DEF:N.PL.NGEN hair:N.PL.ACC
'I grew old, my hair turned grey.'
(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-CL-00000-C16)

So, the phonological explanation seems less plausible. The morpho-syntactic explanation is as follows: neuter nouns in PNT have syncretic forms both for NOM and ACC with endings *-on*, *-ion*, *-in* and *-man* in SG and *-ia/-ä* in PL. The differentiation of arguments by morphological markers is impossible. Inserting of ACC marker in SG is impossible as it already contains word-final *-n*, however in PL *-n* can be added to differentiate an object from the subject. According to this scenario, the expectation is that *-n* must be added to denote objects by analogy with masculine and feminine nouns, see (18) and that the forms with *-n* must be used with +DEF article to denote subjects, see (19).

(18)

Ayapúne ta skolían.
love:3.PL DEF:N.PL.NGEN school:N.PL.ACC
'They love schools.'
(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-PP-00000-B07)

(19)

En t=adátän do
be:3.SG DEF:N.PL.NGEN=tradition:N.PL.ACC what
éxume emís.
have:1.PL 1.PL:NOM
'Our traditions are what we have.'
(Kotanidi et al. 2019: PNT-TXT-PP-00000-C14)

This explanation seems more plausible, however, there are yet some points that need to be explored, in particular why native-speaking informants regard these forms as unaccepted.

Summarizing the main points on the pure morphological level the crucial is that the use of accusative head-noun with the DEF article in DPs to denote subjects is attested not only with masculine nouns of IC1, SG but also with feminines IC3, masculines IC2 and even PL. Instances with neuter nouns (as already mentioned) should be explored more precisely.

The status of DSM and its syntactic effects (including triggering factors) in particular variety remain to be identified, hopefully, future work will reveal them. At this moment, the empirical findings of current research validate the hypothesis that non-canonically marked subjects in nominative-accusative languages are acceptable as long as some morphological criteria are met.

5 Conclusion

The main purpose of the article was to reveal the peculiarity of DSM in the endangered variety of PNT spoken by the Pontic Greek Community of Georgia. The results of the research provided insight into differentiated argument marking in PNT, the key findings include: (a) the peculiar use of DSM in the understudied variety; (b) the explanation of language-internal and language external factors which cause/trigger the differentiation from other PNT varieties and (c) the exemplification of non-canonically used subjects in Romeika. The main assumption is that DSM is a general phenomenon attested in the grammar of Romeika, not restricted by any of inflectional classes, gender or number. The desiderata of the work are to check the functionality of the phenomenon in PNT spoken by the Pontic Greek community of Georgia and to test whether it reflects DSM effects on the syntactic level as well. Thus, providing more insight into the possible theoretical implications of the phenomenon.

List of Abbreviations

AMG – Asia Minor Greek
DAM – Differential Argument Marking
DOM – Differential Object Marking
DP – Determiner Phrase
DSM – Differential Subject Marking
ELL – Standard Modern Greek
IC – Inflectional Class
KAT – Georgian
PNT – Pontic Greek
RL – Recipient Language
RUS – Russian
SL – Source Language
TUR - Turkish

Glosses

ACC – Accusative
DEF – Definite
DEP - Dependent
F – Feminine
LOC – Locative
M – Masculine

MP - MedioPassive
N – Neuter
NEG - Negation
NGEN – NonGenitive
NN - NonNeuter
NOM – Nominative
PFV – Perfective
PL – Plural
POSS - Possessive
PST - Past
SG – Singular

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