

# Preface

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.57.02pre>

Pages xiii–xv of

**Hellenistic and Roman Greece as a Sociolinguistic Area**

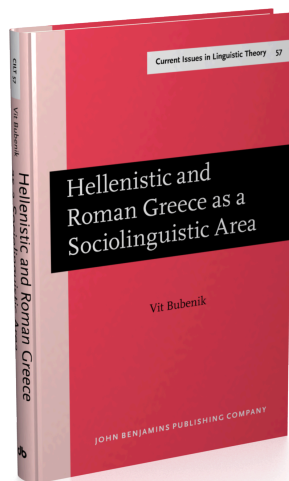
**Vit Bubenik**

[*Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 57] 1989. xv, 331 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)).

For further information, please contact [rights@benjamins.nl](mailto:rights@benjamins.nl) or consult our website at [benjamins.com/rights](http://benjamins.com/rights)



## Preface

The aim of my previous study of the phonology of Ancient Greek dialects *The Phonological Interpretation of Ancient Greek* (Toronto, 1983) was a systematic presentation of the most likely historical processes that were responsible for the variation found at subsequent stages of the development of the major dialectal groups of Ancient Greek. I tried to account for the changes that have affected the sound structure of Ancient Greek dialects over the period of approximately one thousand years in all areas where Greek was spoken. My methodology was basically that used by comparative linguistics for the reconstruction of a proto-language. This method was applied to the dialects of a single language (= a pandialectal analysis). Furthermore, I tried to demonstrate that the description of inter-dialectal variations in terms of the sequence of actual events can be formalized by labelling each change a 'rule'. The sequential character of historical sound changes can then be represented by the formal descriptive device of linear rule ordering where the establishing of the rules accounting for dialectal variants means the specification of sound changes in time and space.

However, during my work on the post-Classical periods (Hellenistic and Roman) it soon became quite clear that such an overly formal approach is not particularly illuminating. The main problems of these two periods are of a sociolinguistic nature — namely, a decline of Classical dialects on the one hand, and the growth of various supradialectal formations and the spatial diffusion of the Attic-Ionic Koine on the other. These problems cannot be approached in the strait jacket of the ordered set of rules if we want to view linguistic history as a history of language in society. Thus it became necessary to draw on recent methodological achievements of sociolinguistics (especially those dealing with lexical and social diffusion of linguistic change), statistical analysis and research into bilingualism and diglossia. The two dimensional investigation into the history of Ancient Greek (= the Classical dialects in space and time) had to be revamped into a three dimen-

sional investigation of Hellenistic Greek (i.e. the decline of Classical dialects and the advancement of the Hellenistic Koine as documented by scribal practices in Hellenistic and Roman times).

The present study concentrates on two periods in the history of the Greek language: Hellenistic (300-150 B.C.) and Roman (150 B.C.-300 A.D.). Its aim is to describe and map the gradual contamination of Classical dialects by the Hellenistic Koine, their ultimate disappearance on the one hand, and the range of intraregional variation in Hellenistic Greece and the process of 'koinization' from the angle of interregional adjustments on the other. It is hoped that the contrastive study of linguistic variation (found in a variety of public and private inscriptions) in a diatopical and diachronic framework will add to our understanding of the mechanism of linguistic innovations in general.

The present monograph could not have been written without the generous support of the Canada Council, whose Sabbatical Leave Fellowship enabled me to spend six months at the German Archeological Institute and the American School for Classical Studies in Athens (March-August, 1980). There I was able to start sifting through the corpus of post-Classical inscriptions and organizing my data. Four grants from the Vice-President of Memorial University of Newfoundland (in the academic years 1980-84) enabled me to proceed with the analysis of my data and to hire research assistants. Finally, a research grant from the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung tenable at the Seminar für Klassische Philologie, Universität Heidelberg (April-November, 1982 and May-August, 1984) gave me the opportunity to take some of my problems to German experts in Koineforschung, epigraphy and prosopography. In Heidelberg I was able to enlarge my data base, availing myself of the excellent holdings of the libraries of the Seminars für Klassische Philologie and Alte Geschichte. It is my pleasant duty to express my thanks to Prof. Dr. H. Petersmann (Klassische Philologie) and Prof. Dr. R. Schmitt-Brandt (Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft und Indogermanistik) for various stimulating suggestions regarding the Hellenistic Koine and Ancient Greek dialects. Furthermore, I am especially obliged to two experts in Greek epigraphy and prosopography, Prof. Dr. F. Gschnitzer and Dr. H. Solin (Alte Geschichte), for their help with the dating and reading of various problematic inscriptions.

I am indebted to my research assistants at Memorial University, D. Liberakis, J. Collins, B. Kavanagh, A.M. Follett and C. van Nostrand, for their patience in computing and tabulating the occurrences of individual lin-

guistic features in Laconian, Messenian, Cretan, Rhodian and Delphian inscriptions.

I also express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. J. Hewson (Memorial University) who read the whole manuscript and improved my English in style and clarity. I wish to thank my typists, Mrs. J. Meyer and Miss A.-M. White, for their excellent work, and to the staff of John Benjamins B.V. for their editorial assistance.

And finally, I am particularly grateful to the General Editor of Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Professor Konrad Koerner (Ottawa), for accepting this book into the series Current Issues in Linguistic Theory.

Vít Bubeník  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
St. John's, Canada

June 1986