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PATTERNS OF CODE-ALTERNATION IN THE BILINGUAL IN GREEK AND TURKISH MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF RHODES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines aspects of the linguistic repertoire of the bilingual in Greek and Turkish Muslim community of Rhodes. It is based on research conducted in an ethnographic framework and aims at exploring patterns of code alternation in everyday bilingual conversations among members of the community networks, as well as issues of identity as these can be approached based on the choices speakers of different social and age groups make during interaction. Based on the analysis, it will be shown that, a) aspects of the overall and sequential organization of bilingual conversations point to a micro-macro link between conversational practices and ethnographically documented structures of the community, namely community networks (Gumperz 1982; Milroy and Wei 1995; Georgalidou et al. 2011), and b) code alternation practices reflect not only aspects of the politics and management of the identity of the speakers as members of the same ethnic category, but also broader issues concerning the construction of youth identities as opposed to those of older generations.

1. Introduction

Firstly seen as a marginal social phenomenon, code-alternation has proven a rather universal aspect of the linguistic reality of most speech communities in the world and has become a major issue especially in what is defined as the socio-pragmatic approaches to bilingualism. Either as a consequence of the historical coexistence of dominant and minority ethnic communities and emigration, or even as a phenomenon that is connected to the teaching and use of languages that are defined as "foreign", the systematic contact of different linguistic systems produces structural and communicative implications that only in the recent years of linguistic studies have been extensively studied. More specifically, in contemporary linguistics, and in particular in the context of the sociolinguistic and pragmatic approaches to actual language use, the study of bilingual conversation has altered the way we approach and evaluate phenomena such as the use of two (or more) languages by participants in the same communicative event, i.e. talk-in-interaction. Firstly seen as a non-systematic and rather problematic phenomenon concerning the communicative competence of bilinguals- or the lack of it- (Gafaranga 2007b), talk in more than one language has now gained a prominent place within socio- and pragmatic approaches to everyday talk (Georgalidou et al. 2010: 316). Prototypically defined as "a relationship of contiguous juxtaposition of semiotic systems, such that the appropriate recipients of the resulting complex sign are in a position to interpret the juxtaposition as such" (Auer 1995: 116), code-alternation has been examined for both the organizational parameters of bilingual talk-in-interaction and its impact on identity construction processes (Wei 1998; Auer 2005).

Based on Auer (1984, 1995), four patterns of conversational code alternation have been proposed that can be further seen as discourse related and participant related alternations. Pattern I concerns switching from code A to code B between utterances or in the same utterance and is considered the discourse related alternation or code alternation as a contextualisation cue (also see Gumperz 1982). Pattern II is considered the language preference related switching that activates the process of language

negotiation which leads to the prevalence of one language over another. Participants switch from code A to code B repeatedly until consensus is reached over the medium of conversation. Pattern III does not always permit the identification of any of the languages used as the base language of the interaction. It is a rather debatable case of alternation as it raises the question of a single bilingual medium as part of the overall organisation of the interaction over the juxtaposition of two distinct linguistic systems. Pattern IV, the intrasentential momentary switching that does not change the language of the interaction, is defined as transfer and is considered a participant related alternation pattern.

Gafaranga (2007), and Torres and Gafaranga (2002) have proposed a revised model of bilingual talk-in-interaction and code alternation patterns that sees alternation as an aspect of the overall organization of bilingual conversation. The more significant contribution of the model to the present discussion is the shift from the entity language to that of medium, be it monolingual or bilingual, as the central unit against which the discussion of code alternation practices can be placed. The shift of attention from the juxtaposition of two languages to the overall conversational organization, and the potential of the bilingual medium of being part of this organization, permits a more synthetic view of code alternation within a continuum of prototypical to less prototypical code alternation patterns (Georgalidou et al. 2010).

Seeing both models as complementary, we analyze conversations recorded during ethnographic research in the bilingual in Greek and Turkish Muslim community of Rhodes within a Conversation Analysis framework (Wei 2005). We examine aspects of the overall and sequential organization of bilingual conversations attempting a micro-macro link between conversational practices and ethnographically documented structures of the community, namely community networks (Gumperz 1982; Milroy and Wei 1995; Georgalidou et al. 2008). Also, we examine issues of identity as these can be approached based on the code alternation choices speakers of different age groups make during interaction.

2.   The community

Muslims of Rhodes are Greek citizens of Turkish origin who have lived on Rhodes since 1522. In 1912, during the Italian occupation, and then again after the annexation of Dodecanese islands to Greece in 1947, the community underwent a major shift as far as power distribution is concerned. After being the dominant group during Ottoman times, they acquired the unofficial status of a minority community. Today's estimated population is 2500-3000 people on the island of Rhodes. Muslim students of Turkish origin attend public schools and the Turkish language is mainly used within the community, as it is not formally taught or used in transactions with the Greek-speaking majority neither in formal or informal contexts. As a consequence, in the last 60 years almost the entire Muslim community has shifted from near monolingualism in Turkish to bilingualism in Turkish and Greek.

As far as the linguistic repertoire of the community is concerned, older speakers use a Greek *contact vernacular* based on the local Greek dialect of Rhodes with substantial interference from Turkish. Later generations use a variety of Greek with less interference. This interference is gradually fading away to the near or completely native varieties of younger generations (Georgalidou et al. 2011). There are different proficiency levels in Turkish as well. Most members of the grandparent and parent generation are fluent in a local variety of Turkish, whereas contact with standard Turkish is mainly accomplished through television and occasional visits to Turkey. The local variety of Turkish also exhibits substantial interference from Greek (Kaili et al. 2009).

3.   The research

We examine two subgroups of the community, one residing in the city of Rhodes and the other in a suburban settlement a few kilometers away from the city. We use ethnographic data collection procedures which allow us to obtain a realistic picture of patterns of language use and the informal social organization, i.e. networks operating in the community (Gumperz 1982; Milroy and Wei 1995; Georgalidou et al. 2011). Research has been going on for almost ten years. Linguistic data used for the present study were recorded during three family gatherings. They were recorded by one of the family members without the presence of the researchers. The aim was to collect linguistic data that would allow the analysis of code-choice and code-alternation patterns as exhibited by community members

who belong to different networks and age groups. The excerpts analyzed comprise of 31 hours of talk among members of three different families, two residing in the city and one in a suburban settlement.

4. The participants

Examples 1, 4 & 5 comprise of excerpts of conversations among members of two different families in the urban network. In the first family (FAM 1), the speakers belong to the grandparent (two speakers in their mid-sixties) and parent (one male speaker aged 30, the son of the couple) generations. In the second family (FAM 2), the speakers belong to the parent (the father aged 48-50 and the mother aged 45) and the children (one speaker in his early twenties, the son of the couple) generations. All examples involve mother/ wife (M/W)- father/ husband (F/H)- son (S) talk.

Examples 2, 3 & 6 comprise of excerpts of conversations among members of the suburban network who belong to the parent (the mother-M and the father-F, between 40 and 45) and children (three sisters aged 16-D3, 18-D2 and 20-D1, and Ercan, a 15 year old boy, distant relative of the family- FR) generations. They are all members of a close-knit neighborhood community network (FAM 3).

5. The analysis[2]

We analyze our data within a Conversation Analysis framework in examining the sequential development of interaction. We organize our examples based on the four patterns of code alternation as proposed by Auer (1995, 1998). We also refer to the overall/ medium approach as proposed by Gafaranga (2007). Taking the emic perspective as our point of departure, we attempt a link between the conversational strategies applied by the speakers, the management of the community linguistic resources and issues of identity. More specifically, we discuss the microstructures of code-alternation in connection to aspects of the identity of the speakers, such as their age and social status, as these are locally constructed in interaction.

Pattern I: The prototypical case of discourse organizational alternation. From code A to code B, between utterances or in the same utterance; code-alternation as a contextualisation cue (Gumperz 1982; Auer 1995, 1998).

Example 1 is a prototypical instance of Pattern I discourse organizational code alternation in order to mark a dispreferred sequence. It is part of a conversation conducted during a city family dinner event, the participants being an elderly couple and their 30 year old son (FAM 1, city dwellers). Mother and Son negotiate over the choice of the television program they are going to watch in Greek (turns 1 & 2). The alternation of codes by Mother marks the dispreferred sequence of rejecting the indirect request by her son to switch to a different television channel (turn 02), in turn 03.

Example 1 (FAM 1)

---

   01 M Ti tha kanun afti?
   02 S Ego pali leo na dume ligo ti ginete ston kozmo.
→03 M *Dur bakalım bu lahanayı ne açıyor böyle, içine ne dolduracak?*

   01 M What are they going to do? (watching a magazino on Turkish tv)
   02 S I, on the other hand, say that we'd better see what is going on in the world. (indirectly requesting a switch to a Greek channel to watch the news)
→03 M *Wait a minute. Let us see why he is opening this cabbage like this, what is he going to stuff it with?*

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[1] Altogether, we have so far analyzed material based on more than 20 hours of conversations with and among 17 speakers at the urban setting, members of 4 partially overlapping exchange networks and 20 speakers at the suburban setting, all of them members of an overlapping kinship network.
[2] The English translation of the Greek/ Turkish conversations is only approximate.
Symbols used in the transcription: /: self-repair, //: interruption, (.): pause, (()): extralinguistic information, underlined segments: high pitch, =: latching, []: simultaneous speech, <x>: unintelligible segment

Code-choice in example 2 is also pragmatically relevant as it marks dispreferred sequences. Contrary to example 1, to reject the offer of food by both his host and hostess (turns 03, 04), Ercan uses their preferred language- not his- a choice that functions as redressive action (turns 07, 11). The older daughter of the couple on the other hand, switches to Greek, the overall preferred language by the younger members of the group, to reject her father's request for bread (turns 08, 10). In this example, the use of *same language* by the young guest of the family to mark the dispreffered sequence is in contrast to the choice made in the previous example. However, as opposition and disagreement are not necessarily dispreferred choices in conversations among family members (Kakava 2002), the marking of disagreement and rejection as non-dispreferred sequences by the younger daughter of the couple is done through switching to Greek. Choice of medium also constructs the variable status of the speakers, young guest versus family member.

Example 2- FAM 3

---

01 F: Ercan!
02 FR: Hm?
03 F: Bak. Şu mezeden acık al. Kokumluk. Dene len dene.
04 M: Utanma bak utanma.
05 F: Hani sofrada ekmek?
06 M: Ekmek nerde?
→07 FR: *Aka* istemiyom ekmek.
08 D1: *A signomi exume patates den kani.*
09 F: Kızım iki dilim kesin ekmek.
10 D1: *ohi.*
→11 FR: Bişey olmaz tamam.

01 F: Ercan!
02 FR: Hm?
03 F: Look. Take some of this delicacy. Take a bite. Just try it you.
04 M: Don't be shy, don't be shy.
05 F: Where is the bread on the table?
06 M: Where is the bread?
→07 FR: Nop I don't want bread.
08 D1: *A, I'm sorry, we are having potatoes, it's not right.*
09 F: My daughter cut two slices of bread.
10 D1: *No.*
→11 FR: It's ok, no problem.

Though structurally similar to Pattern II medium negotiation switching in terms of the organization of turn-taking and the continuous switching of languages (see example 4 below), example 3 is another instance of Pattern I discourse organizational switching. Mother switches to Greek to mark her disagreement to D2's evaluative rhetoric question as to the insignificance of a small amount of money (turn 08) by echoing D1's contribution in turn 06[3]. An important aspect of this excerpt is the lack of a base language as its overall organizational scheme (Auer 2000). Speakers of different age groups maintain their preferred languages throughout the episode as Mother's switching to Greek is only momentary, a fact established by the use of the Turkish epistemic copular -Dir at the end of her final contribution (turn 8). Language choice convergence or consensus does not seem to be an issue in this excerpt. Juxtaposition of codes however, is significant per se as the use of Greek in turns 02, 04, 06 & 07 by the younger members of the family does not form departure from Turkish as the established base language of the interaction. Rather, bilingual speakers of younger generation groups maintain Greek (or the bilingual medium as in examples 4 & 6) as their chosen medium, in contrast to speakers of the grandparent and parent generations who exhibit preference for the use of Turkish marked by their choice to initiate conversational episodes in it (examples 2, 3, 4, 6). Divergent language preference patterns form part of identity construction processes as they are means of claiming participation to different age groups and social roles, i.e. young versus old, child versus parent.

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[3] For a more detailed analysis see Georgalidou et al. 2010: 327-328.

Example 3- FAM 3

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01 M: Sizde ne kadar eczanede?
02 D1*: Ena trianda.*
03 M: Biz ne kadar aldık şimdi?
04 D1: *Ena peninda.*
05 M: Sizde daha ucuz yani?
06 D1: *İkosi lepta.*
07 D2: *Mono?*
→08 M: Eh!   *İkosi lepta ikosi lepta*dır.

01 M: How much is it at your pharmacy?
02 D1*: One thirty.*
03 M: How much have we bought it now?
04 D1: *One fifty.*
05 M: Is it cheaper at you ((your pharmacy)) that is?
06 D1: *Twenty pence.*
07 D2: *Only?*
→08 M: Eh!   *Twenty pence* is *twenty pence.*

Pattern II. From code A to code B repeatedly, until consensus is reached as on the medium of the exchange; the language preference related switching.

Example 4 is part of a young city family conversation (FAM 2, city dwellers). Unlike example 3, it is a typical case of pattern II code alternation in which consensus is sought and finally achieved over the medium of the interaction. Despite the fact that father initiates this conversational episode by means of Turkish, the son, a graduate of a Greek university in his early twenties, finally prevails in the language negotiation process and the father switches to Greek (turn 07). Yet, similarly to example 3, this is another instance of an identity construction process and language politics by an older speaker, who constructs parenthood via exhibiting preference for the we-code of the community. Irrespective of the outcome of the negotiation process, whenever one can be shown to be at work within talk-in-interaction, the contrast between younger and older generations of speakers is still constructed through their divergent choice of medium of talk.

Example 4- FAM 2

---

01 F Orda sivrisinek mi var olan?
02 S *Ne*
03 F Git elinne vuruver.
04 S *Ooh. Fere mia pandofla*
05 F Gı, elinne vur da, git elini yıkıver. (7'') Hiç sillogodan, hiç geçmiyon mu?
06 S *An vrune kati, tha mu pun afti.*
→07 F *Perna ke si pes kalimera, de hanis tipota, afto mu ipe ke o Ali., 'na lei' lei 'kalimera, otan ke me vlepi' lei 'a mu pi, a rti konda mu' lei 'na sizitisume'.*
08 S *Pios to pe afto?*
09 F *Aftos, to pedaki 'Thelo' lei 'Etsi na anihti' lei*
10 S *Pu me xeri ma aftos?*

01 F Is this a mosquito over there?
02 S *Yes*
03 F Go and hit it with your hand.
04 S *Ooh. Go get a slipper.*
05 F Hit it with your hands, then go, wash your hands (7''). Don't you ever stop by the association?
06 S *If they find out something, they will let me know.*
→07 F *Just stop by and say "good morning". You have nothing to lose. This is what Ali told me.*
08 S *Who said this?*
09 F *Him, this guy, he says 'I want him to open up'.*
10 S *How come that he knows me?*

Pattern III: Turn internal switching between languages so that no single language can be identified as the base language; keeping language choice open or the choice of a bilingual medium as part of the overall organization of talk (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998, Auer 2000, Gafaranga 2007).

In example 5, an elderly female member of the community (FAM 1, city dwellers) constructs an extensive narrative contribution (turn 2) by means of the bilingual medium. In this excerpt, the alternation between languages has clear discourse functions. The direction of the switches is irrelevant, but the contiguous juxtaposition of languages contextualizes shifts in topic (a-1), the introduction/ continuation of narrative (b- 2/4/8/12), evaluative comments (c- 3/6/7/11), reiteration for emphasis (d-5/10), as well as different types of semantic contrasts (e- 9/11). The structure of the bilingual medium in this example is indicative of language choice patterns exhibited by older speakers who mostly alternate between codes to organize discourse. Every one of the switches in turn 2 (12 in total) has clear discourse functions. This is not always the case in the mixing modes exhibited by younger speakers (see example 6), which is a preliminary observation that calls for further research.

Example 5- FAM 1

---

01 S *Ti ekane aftos? Elia evale mesa.*
02 M Şe ezmesi kodu galiba (.) Dur bakalım ne kodu. (5') ((1-a)) *Pu les ke* ((2-b)) acık geçti arası kadının, kadıncık ölüverdi genç başınla. ((3-c)) *Pos lipithikame tote.* ((4-b)) Çocukları ufak ufak bıraktı. ((5-d)) *Mikra mikra ta fise orfana ta pedakia i gineka.* ((6-c)) Çocukların şeyini görmedi, mürvetini kadıncık. ((7-c)) *Lipithika para poli gi'afti ti gineka yiati itan poli kali gineka.* ((8-b)) Sonra adam kaldı; Bedri. ((9-e)) *İtane ki' i siheromeni i mana tis, i yiayia tus.* ((10-d)) Anneanneleri çocukların. O kadın büyüttü o çocukları, ((11-e/c)) *me ton patera mazi. Kalos kakos.* ((12-b)) E sonra kadıncık yaşlıdı da, zaten daha çok yaşlandı sonra bu Selim'ı artık, yengeleri mi oluyodu? Yengeleri oluyodu evlatlık aldı, Selma 'anım.
03 F *Ine, afti ine tis miteras tus adelfi ine.*

---

01 S *What did he do? He has put olives in it.*
02 M She seems to have used some pate (.) Let us see what she has stuffed it with. (5') ((1-a)) *You see* ((2-b)) after a short while, that poor woman died so young. ((3-c)) *How sorry we felt then.* ((4-b)) *She left her children ((and they were)) too young.* ((5-d)) The poor woman left the little children orphans. ((6-c)) The poor woman never saw her children's weddings. ((7-c)) *I was very sad about this woman because she was a very good woman.* ((8-b)) Then, he was left alone, Bedri. ((9-e)) *Her old mother, the children's grandmother was with them as well.* ((10-d)) The children's grandmother. That woman brought them up, ((11-e/c)) *together with the father. Somehow.* ((12-b)) And then, she was already an old woman, she grew older, then this Selim, wasn't she their aunt-in-law? Yes, she was, she adopted him, Selma. ((Selma adopted Selim))
03 F *She is, yes, she is their mother's sister.*

In example 6, the alternation between languages does not always serve discourse functions (Auer 2000). What is more, it is non-consequential on the level of language choice; instead, it results in an "open state of language choice" and can be seen as forming a continuum from discourse functional code-switching into a bilingual mode of interaction. Additionally, while switches by Mother (M) and Father (F) mostly pertain to Pattern IV intrasentential momentary switches that are not consequential for their choice of medium (turns 6, 8 & 11; also see example 3, turn 8), speakers of the children generation seem to have developed different ways of mixing and switching (Auer 2005: 406), that do not always serve the local organization of discourse. The continuous alternation of languages (24 in total, 20 of which done by the younger speakers of the group) mostly creates the effect of a single bilingual medium (Meeuwis and Blommaert 1998; Torras and Gafaranga 2002), which seem to be one of the preferred choices by younger speakers in their interaction with older community members.

Example 6- FAM 3

---

01 F: Ercan kuru kuru içilmez. Bi tane çatalla azcık yemek //
02 M: Yemek koyem.
03 FR: Aa.. istemiyom, istemiyom. Yidim ben.

04 M: Ne Yidin?
05 FR: Evde *pitsa* yidim//
06 M: *Pitsa*yı kim yapıyo?=
07 FR: =*Kafe ipia.*
08 F: Len annem yemek yapmıyo mu? Oluyo mu böyle *pitsa bira, pitsa bira*?
09 FR: *Ma ksero go!* Şey, *edo ke mia vdomada pitsa* yiyok.
All: ((laughing))
10 FR: *Ihame kolisi sto*/ şey *st'avga. Tora*/ Yani, *omeleta*la, hani şe oluyo/ *Ohi omeleta*/ Nası? İçine //
11 M: *Krepa* mı?
12 FR: Hayır.
13 D2: *Me lahanika?* Kabaklan?
14 FR: *Lukaniko* gibi hani bişe.
15 D2:Sucuk?
16 FR: Ha sucuk
17 D2: Eee, ondan mı?
18 FR: Ondan. *Ihame kolisi safto. Kathe ke mia mera* sucuk. *E: leo, den pai allo, as alaksume.*

01 F: Ercan you cannot just drink. With a fork, some food//
02 M: Shall I serve?
03 FR: Ah, it's ok, it's ok. İ have already eaten.
04 M: What did you eat?
05 FR: I ate *pizza* at home//
06 M: Who made the *pizza*?=
07 FR: =*I had coffee.*
08 F: Hey, doesn't your mother cook? What is this *pizza beer, pizza beer*?
09 FR: *See!* Well, *for a week now* we have been eating *pizza.*
All: ((laughing))
10 FR: *We were stuck*/ well *to the eegs. Now*/ That is, with *omelet*, that is done/ *Not omelet*/ What do you call it? That inside ((you put something)) //
11 M: Was it *pancake*?
12 FR: No.
13 D2: *With vegetables?* With courgette?
14 FR: Something that looks like *sausage.*
15 D2: ((Turkish)) sausage?
16 FR: Ya ((Turkish)) sausage.
17 D2: E:, like this one?
18 FR: Like this one. *We were stuck to that. Every single day* ((Turkish)) sausage. *E: I said,enough is enough, let us change.*

Pattern IV: Intrasentential momentary switches that do not change the language of the interaction. Participant related transfers (Auer 1995)/ the Medium Repair and the Medium Suspension Pattern (Torras & Gafaranga 2002).

This is a code-alternation pattern that again raises the question of what counts as code/ medium as far as the language users are concerned. Contrasting cases, as momentary lapses of memory as to what a word is in the language of interaction, and systematic use of discourse markers or lexicon in the "other" language of the bilingual speaker have to be dealt with separately. The former has to do with either (lack of) competence or stylistics, whereas the latter with the potential of a single bilingual medium (Meeuwis and Blommaert 1998), as in the examples 3 (turn 8), 4 (turn 5), and 6 (turns 6, 8 and 11). The conditioning of Pattern IV alternations needs to be tackled both in terms of proportion and sentential structures, as well as in terms of textual structures and discourse functions, a discussion that exceeds the limits of the present study. What can be observed though, based on the examples that have been discussed so far, is that Pattern IV momentary switches that are placed within the boundaries of Turkish morphosyntactic structures are used by older speakers only, at least as far as our data are concerned.

6. Conclusions

Pattern I code-alternation within bilingual conversations has clear discourse functions. The languages of the speaker's repertoires are used to achieve "a contiguous juxtaposition of the semiotic systems" (Auer 1995), that contributes to the organization of discourse. It can be described as the *Discourse Oriented Pattern*. Patterns II, III & IV on the other hand, could be seen as more *Participant Oriented Cases* of code alternation. Pattern II, the negotiation over Medium Selection, is consequential for the overall organization of talk as it determines the medium of talk at least within the duration of a conversational episode. Pattern III is also consequential for the overall organization of talk as it seems to comprise the choice of a bilingual medium. Pattern IV alternations serve as momentary transfers from the medium of the interaction, as they do not alter the medium at least within the limits of a turn or an extended conversational episode. All four patterns often co-occur in longer conversational episodes, involving speakers of different orientations as to the politics of language as well as speakers of variable competences in the languages/ mediums of the interaction. Bilingual conversations seem to be moving along a continuum of prototypical code alternation, in which participants orient to a preference for one language-of-interaction and code-switch in order to organize discourse, towards code alternation of a less prototypical kind, i.e. the selection of a mixed code (Auer 1998, 2000) or a bilingual medium (Gafaranga 2007), in which locally operational discourse functions cannot always be identified (Georgalidou et al. 2010).

As far as the informal community organization and issues of identity are concerned, looking at the overall picture of the excerpts discussed, especially those of families 2 and 3 (FAM 2, FAM 3) in which younger members of the community exhibit their linguistic preferences, it becomes apparent that the alternating use of the community linguistic resources does not only serve discourse organization functions. There is a clear shift between *we* and *they* codes, as Greek and the Bilingual Medium are systematically used to construct youth identities, in contrast to the ones constructed by the adult members of close-knit community networks through consistent use of Turkish. Systematic use of Greek, as well as instances of code mixing, were also found in the discourse of adult speakers in the city networks, a fact that points to the shift towards a more extensive use of Greek in the more open community networks of the city[4]. Still, the generational distribution and the variable structures of Pattern III and IV code alternations are points in question that require further research.

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