Article

Towards the elaboration of a diastratic model in historical analyses of koineization

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Abstract

The paper argues for further development of models of koineization in a historical perspective. The four processes inherent in koineization reported in Britain (2012a) are taken as a starting point to show how the question of discerning these phenomena in the past is inherently problematic, but not impossible. After discussing some issues in identifying these processes in a medieval context, the paper moves to previous analyses of diastratic variation in studies of koineization. Using the data available for late medieval Italy, emphasis is placed on how diastratic variation is discernible in three parameters of verb morphology arising in the resultant koine, focussing on medieval Milanese. These observations, in turn, lead to further elaboration of a diastratic component in order to broaden our understanding of language change.

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1 Introduction

Ever since the publication of Uriel Weinreich's *Languages in Contact* of 1953, linguists have attempted to understand further the processes at both macro and micro levels of language when different varieties are brought into contact, as well as the effects of such contact. Different methodologies, qualitative and quantitative analyses, reworking of old models, and new explanations have been applied to various language varieties and various types of data.[1] More recently, new fields of enquiry such as historical sociolinguistics have attempted to apply such models to contact phenomena in the past. Winford (2003:6) notes how the major impetus for the concern with language contact among historical linguists 'arose from disagreement about the part played by contact-induced change in the history of languages' (see also Thomason, 2001). Koineization is one example of language contact, leading to a new language variety (known as the 'koine').[2] While different types of dialect contact have been identified (cf. Trudgill's 1986 and Siegel's 1985 models), koineization is among the most important of these (Tuten, 2001:325). Dialect contact has long been advanced by language historians in investigations of language change, but 'only recently has it come to be seen as potentially significant for the explanation of more regular changes' (2001:325).[3] Previous work has argued that koineization can lead to the introduction of novel features not found in any of the established contributing dialects – leading, in turn, to a questioning of the widely held view of koineization as a mere reduction to a 'least common denominator'. This paper aims to refine this view, by demonstrating how diastratic factors can play a crucial role in the selection mechanism of variants in the resultant koine.[4] I conclude that, when a proper assessment of the diastratic level of contributing variants is incorporated into the model, a more nuanced picture of dialect contact emerges at the micro level. Understanding how these dynamics operate is essential if one is to assess how koines form in general. In short, I argue that the new elements arising in the koine are best explained in terms of a diastratic patterning.

Part of the aim of Tuten's work was to respond to the challenge of defining koineization itself, and of 'distilling a simplified theoretical model from very complex cases of real change' (2001:328). More recent work has furthered this objective, either by refining the methodological framework (Britain, 2012a; Matsumoto and Okumura, 2020), providing overviews of koineization from different perspectives such as in studies of language variation more generally (Kerswill, 2013, 2018), historical sociolinguistics (Tuten, 2010; Tuten and Tejedo-Herrero, 2011; Britain, 2012b; Neteland, 2017), the interplay between koines and standards (Brown, 2020; Lodge, 2010, 2011), or some combination of these.

The main geographical area with which this paper will be concerned is north Italy, during the late Middle Ages. Specifically, the focus will be on the area defined by the contemporary political boundary of the region of Lombardy, whose capital is Milan. The linguistic make-up of Lombardy at the beginning of the 14th century was a picture of fragmentation, with every city-state having its own local, municipal *scripta*. In the following two centuries, the rapid expansion of certain centres of power with new political structures, such as courts and chanceries, led to the formation of a pan-Lombard, supra-regional language, or what has been called a 'literary or semi-literary koine' (Vitale, 1953:36).[5] The question of how to characterize the northern koine dates back at least to Mussafia (1864), who described it as a 'way of speaking that was not without refinement, with no few Latin reminiscences, with a large number of those elegancies that were not exclusively Tuscan nor Provençal nor French, which in the Middle Ages arrived at a literary development' (p. 229).[6] Bongrani and Morgana (1992:96) prefer to speak of multiple koine, calling them 'instruments endowed with a wider validity and diffusion than those of the old municipal vernaculars'. Due to a lack of documents from the 14th century in Lombardy, and from Milan especially, these two authors highlight the difficulty in tracing the histories of particular centres, but nevertheless canvass the evidence available from Mantua, Milan, and Cremona. On the other hand, Stella's approach (1994) is to survey the available documents from major Lombard cities such as Cremona, Mantua, Milan, Brescia, Bergamo, and Pavia. The most locally marked dialectal features of the vernaculars were progressively abandoned during the 14th and 15th centuries in favour of linguistic forms common to Lombardy. Vitale (1953:36) explains that the koine was itself a fragmented language, with much internal variation, tending towards 'a literary and Latinizing mixture'. It acquired a non-local, unprovincial nature.

The most evolved form of the koine appears in the late 15th century, when the language becomes diatopically 'neutral' and difficult to ascribe to any one single geographical area simply based on linguistic factors. While most studies stress that inherent variety and lack of cohesion are primary features of the koine for the entire north, Maraschio's results (1976) from a heterogeneous corpus of diaries and letters from astrologers, doctors, and engineers of the Duke of Mantua, as well as armourers and embroiderers, present a significant degree of homogeneity of forms.[7] In short, the main linguistic process which Lombardy underwent during the 14th and 15th centuries was an evolution from 'linguistic municipalism' to 'supra-municipal formations' or to a koine.

Beginning with Britain's (2012a) identification of the four processes involved in the formation of a koine, and using evidence from medieval Italian, I argue that koineization can also lead to a differentiated process where mixing, reallocation,

and simplification are more advanced at higher diastratic levels than at lower levels. In other words, texts of relatively greater prestige evidence such processes more than relatively less prestigious ones. The incorporation of a diastratic element recalls Tuten's comments that, in order to provide a useful explanatory framework in historical sociolinguistics, models of koineization need 'to be elaborated with further specification of the social conditions' (2001:329, see also Siegel, 1993:116). It is only recently that more attention has been paid to language variation in contact situations, despite the fact that 'sociolinguistic research on variation has from its very beginning mostly focused on monolingual populations even if the speech communities under consideration were heterogeneous and socially and linguistically diverse' (Léglise and Chamoreau, 2013:2). The paper is further motivated by Kabatek's (2013:143) observation that 'increasing use of corpus-linguistic methods and the possibility of working with extensive data-sources have enabled historical hypotheses to be refined' but that 'in recent years, they have also led to an unfortunate neglect of theoretical understanding of linguistic variation'. This paper, then, aims to contribute towards a further refined model, in the spirit of Neteland's (2017:52) observation that our understanding 'needs to take into account that the process [of koine formation] occurs within a sociocultural context'.

2 Koineization in historical contexts

Britain (2012a:224) identifies four processes inherent in koineization: (1) levelling; (2) simplification; (3) interdialect formation; and (4) reallocation. The definitions he provides are given below.

(1) *levelling*: the eradication of marked linguistic features, marked in the sense of being in a minority in the ambient linguistic environment after the contact 'event', marked in the sense of being overtly stereotyped, or marked in the sense of being found rarely in the languages of the world and/or acquired late in first language acquisition;

(2) *simplification*: the process by which a contact variety becomes more regular, having fewer categories, fewer person/number inflections, or fewer complex constraints on variation than the dialects in the original mix;

(3) *interdialect formation*: the emergence of forms which were not present at all in the input dialect, but which emerged as the result of the imperfect convergence of two or more such inputs;

(4) *reallocation*: the refunctionalization of two or more input forms to perform new linguistic or social duties as part of the new dialect repertoire.

Britain notes that 'studying how new dialects formed well after the event, however, has thrown up a vast number of methodological problems'. He applies the analogy of cake baking to the problems faced by researchers.[8] One such problem involves several *ad hoc* approaches, or to put it plainly, 'we know what the cake tastes like, but what were the ingredients and what was the recipe?' (Britain, 2012a:224). This question leads to a series of further calls for evidence about the backgrounds and dialects of groups which come into contact; the ethnographic setting of the groups; their language ideologies; and the so-called 'ecology' – the nature of social life – of early post-contact societies. The two examples highlighted in his contribution focus on New Zealand English (Britain, 2008) and on the formation of Taiwanese Mandarin (Kuo, 2005). In a recent paper on dialect formation and change in the Industrial Revolution in Britain, Kerswill (2018:33) has also focussed attention on the importance of looking at 'social class in an early capitalist society'. In this way, the power disparities of the linguistic groups in contact come to the fore, showing how these ties can restrict 'certain kinds of intergroup and interpersonal contacts, and promote others' (p. 33), implying that it is the automatic effect of face-to-face accommodation that is central.

Several issues present themselves immediately if one is to apply such a model to situations of contact even further in the past, such as the Middle Ages, and particularly in situations for which the historical record is particularly fragmentary.

First, the so-called 'bad data' problem means that the evidence must per force be select (written) testimonies, produced in a certain time and place. The identification of any one element which may have undergone processes of levelling, simplification etc. can only be investigated in a few texts and in periods where language is in a constant state of flux. In other words, what Milroy and Milroy (1985) call innovations – rather than changes – must have been introduced hesitantly at first, and then gradually spread. As Wright (2013:111) notes, such states of variation 'can last for centuries, and the variation can last for centuries' and 'need not even simplify out in the same way everywhere'.[9]

Second, the model itself lacks space for any one process which may be co-occurring, or even induced, by any other process. That is, a stage-based approach precludes the possibility that, say, levelling and simplification could be happening at the same time. The asynchronicity implicit in this model seems unlikely for most situations of language contact during the Middle Ages, particularly when a linguistic feature may take some time to appear in writing, if at all. The various 'phases' identified in koineization cannot have sharp chronological limits, since philological editions of texts are often replete with multiple variants for the same

morpheme. It is only in a secondary moment, once the koine has been formed, that such processes can be judged in a diachronic sense, or to have been co-occurring.

Third, although we may have some understanding of the ethnographic setting of migratory groups, we are much less likely to have many details of their language ideologies or their broader social attitudes to the rapid pace of migratory change. Recently, more emphasis has been lent to the various aspects of social cohesion and language attitudes in koineization studies (Pooley and Kasstan, 2016; Neteland, 2017). If language attitudes are indeed a key element in establishing whether a process of koineization is occurring, the model will need to be adjusted accordingly to reflect the sociohistorical and linguistic record it is purporting to describe. Trudgill's volume (2004) on New Zealand English, for example, argued for a non-social, non-ideological model, proposing purely 'deterministic' criteria. In this model, frequency of use and accommodation are the sole mechanisms necessary to account for new-dialect formation (see also Gordon, Campbell, Hay, Maclagan, Sudbury and Trudgill, 2004; Baxter, Blythe, Croft, and McKane, 2009). However, as Baxter, Blythe, Croft and McKane (2009:262) point out, Trudgill's model 'is intended to apply only to a very specific type of language change: new-dialect formation as a result of dialect mixture in a community isolated from other speakers of the same language'. While a large part of Trudgill's book 'is devoted to identifying the linguistic variants of the input dialects in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Britain', the focus is clearly *not* placed on identifying the social stratification of these inputs. The linguistic parameters discussed below, and which ultimately *do* end up forming part of the koine in north Italy, enter it according to some selection mechanism, largely based on diastratic factors.

Fourth, a sorely lacking feature for studies of historical sociolinguistics is the creation (where possible) of large corpora which would allow us to investigate levelling, simplification, diffusion etc. at the societal level. Oftentimes we are presented with philological editions described as being 'representative' of broader linguistic developments occurring within a particular period. Researchers who work with data from the medieval period are therefore forced to extrapolate (effectively speculating) about what the extralinguistic features of any one text or writer can tell us about the kind of language produced in the text itself.[10] Further research areas combining analyses from historical sociolinguistics and digital humanities, for example, will help to shed light on these problems more generally (for useful discussions, see Nevalainen, 2015; Säily, Nurmi, Palander-Collin and Auer, 2017).

Fifth, Tuten (2001) shows how koineization can also lead to the introduction of novel features not found in any of the contributing dialects. In critiquing Siegel's 1985 stage-based model, he notes that the inclusion of standardization within the model is not 'entirely unwarranted'. This inclusion is due to the observation that koines 'tend to be selected as standards, since standards also require the decrease in variation that characterizes koines'. But since 'standardization is (…) the very antithesis of the variation and change that is apparent in all natural human languages' (Pountain, 2016:635), historical koines which are not selected as standards may continue to exhibit features of previous variation, or develop new variants, as the language continues to evolve. This is precisely the case for the many regional varieties of language which have been characterized as koines in late medieval Italy, since the standard as defined in the Renaissance was based on a form of 14th-century Florentine. Referring specifically to the Middle Ages, Kabatek (2013:145) notes that 'we must adopt a dynamic conception of language and accept the possibility that several languages and/or varieties are present within a single text'.

Siegel's 1985 model proposed that there is no way of identifying a koine without taking historical developments into consideration. He defines a model which is in turn based on Mühlhäusler's (1980) stage-based model of pidginization. In this model, each stage neatly parallels those of pidginization (illustrated in Table 1 below, taken from Siegel, 1985:374).

Table 1. Developmental continua of pidgins and koines.

Process	Stage of development	
	Pidgnization	Koineization
Initial Contact	prepidgin (jargon)	prekoine
Stabilization	stabilized pidgin	stabilized koine
Expansion	expanded pidgin	expanded koine
Nativization	creole	nativized koine

Although there is insufficient space to delve into a full explanation of this model here, Tuten (2001:326) has remarked that there are 'good reasons to question the close association between pidgnization and koineization'. He makes the following points: the varieties which contribute to the creation of pidgins are typologically distant, but koines result from contact between linguistic subsystems that are to some degree mutually comprehensible; pidginization/creolization speaker-learners are deprived of contact with native speakers of the language and/or input for learning, while in cases of koineization, speakers have frequent contact with each other, allowing for highly variable input.

Tuten's 2001 analysis has shown how certain groups of changes were linked to koineization, while others were not (or only indirectly). While koineization 'is often considered to be an example of linguistic convergence', it can only be taken so in the broad sense of the term, since convergence as a technical term is often used to refer to 'the effects of stable bilingualism or multilingualism on the structures of clearly distinct languages' (Tuten, 2003:88). This situation refers back to Milroy's (1992:200) earlier idea that, when speakers of different varieties come into contact but also maintain strong social networks, stable bilingualism may result. The mixing of speakers of different varieties with the breakdown of social networks, as we would expect in koineization, 'will strongly favor linguistic change, since the number, frequency and relative proportion of weak ties increase dramatically' (Tuten, 2003:51). These processes may well be at work in the formation of a koine. What is lacking is an acknowledgement that the new variety is itself highly variable in a diastratic sense – that is, in terms of variation and its study across different classes, or strata, in society. In his article on the terms *koinè dialettale* and *dialetto di koinè*, Regis (2012:7) points out the two similar but divergent aspects inherent in definitions provided by Meillet (1920:179–182). On the one hand, there exists a 'written koine, highly codified, which would become the language of imperial and Helenistic literature'. On the other hand, there is 'an oral koine, subject to notable diatopic and distratic variation, of which, obviously, there exists only indirect evidence' (Regis, 2012:7). It is curious that Meillet makes a diastratic distinction only in regard to spoken language, since phenomena for such variation are certainly not limited to speech. Although features of the koine are most likely to surface in speech first, once the initial mixing of various speech communities takes place, there is no reason to preclude these elements from appearing also in written form, or indeed first in writing.[11] Still, most research on koineization is concerned precisely with speech. But it is the diastratic variation in written (historical) texts that most interests us here, and that appears to have escaped attention in the available models. For example, in none of the definitions of koine studied by Regis (2012) for Italo-Romance dialects does a diastratic component appear. This may be one reason why 'the social context of koineization is often taken for granted' (Tuten, 2001:330).

As a final point, the fact that dialect mixing takes place before the beginning of written documentation, as in the studies of Lodge (2004) or Tuten (2003), diminishes the possibility for new forms to occur solely in writing. In late medieval Romance – a time when vernaculars are starting to be written down for the first time – literacy is continually spreading and written materials are being circulated with increasing frequency. Linguistic accommodation may indeed

introduce new forms into the pre-koine pool firstly in writing. It is precisely these written varieties in northern Italy (*scriptae*) that Frank-Job and Selig (2016:33) invoke when they point out that 'it is not necessary to restrict accommodation processes to oral communication, nor to restrict hybridization to a momentary effort at language planning'.[12]

The problem of identifying whether historical phenomena also occurred in speech is a familiar one to historical linguists, and the case of late medieval Italy is no different. Whether the northern koine was only ever a written variety is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, Richardson (2002:9–12) provides convincing examples from 16th-century treatises on language which point to evidence of koine forms also being used in speech. The northern koine was 'the type of Italian to be used in the social interaction of elites, in polite conversation and day-to-day writing: here sociolinguistic convention made it desirable to steer a middle course between "low" (dialectal) and "high" (literary Tuscan) usage' (Richardson, 2002:10).[13] In any case, historical (written) data, including the parameters discussed below, are not a direct reflection of the spoken dialects 'because authors and scribes created hybrid linguistic forms adapted to the new supra-local aims of their texts' (Frank-Job and Selig, 2016:33).

3 Koineization and diastratic variation

Diastratic phenomena are rarely discussed *directly* throughout the literature on koineization. Although some notion of diastratic variation appears in some definitions, there is a noticeable lack of proper treatment of how diastratic variation and koineization relate to each other.[14] The term 'diastratic' itself is not often used, and it is absent in Britain (2012a), Kerswill (2002, 2003, 2010), Kerswill and Williams (2005), as well as studies of variation in historical contexts, as in Lodge (1999, 2013), Neteland (2017), and Schneider (2013). It appears only once (and briefly) in Tuten (2003). Nor does it appear in Ayres-Bennett (2004).[15] While many researchers *do* include a strong recognition of social factors (class, gender, status etc.), the degree of emphasis depends largely on the nature of the resultant koine, and not on the degree of social prestige of the *contributing* varieties. This lack of direct attention is somewhat surprising, particularly in light of the traditional focus placed on group cohesion and dynamics and which mix the contributing varieties in the first place. It is precisely in these contributing varieties where we must look if we are to have any hope of tracing where variants in the resultant koine have come from. Instead, emphasis has traditionally been placed on how mixed varieties end up looking, rather than on how the koine may be representative of the social variation inherent in the

contributing dialects. It does not seem illogical to conceive that the contributing dialects already exhibit such variation themselves, and that they may (partly) transfer such variation to the resultant koine.

Even if we define mixing as the survival of features from different contributing varieties (Trudgill, 1986:97), and simplification as an increase in regularity or an increase in morphological and lexical transparency (Trudgill, 1986:103), we may still find koines with a reduced number of variants compared to the contributing varieties. These varieties, then, may exhibit new features distributed unevenly according to social groupings. Milroy (1992) has pointed out that if a mixed community maintains closeknit social networks, norm enforcement within groups will remain strong as well (discussed in Tuten, 2003:330). Thus, the result will not be koineization, but stable multilingualism or multidialectalism.

Neither stable multilingualism nor multidialectalism can be said to apply to any part of medieval Italy when the varieties in use are in a constant state of change. If mixing and simplification are going to inform our understanding of koineization in the past, then it is here where a diastratic distinction might be useful. The multilingual strata of society – the literate class, the clergy, members of the chancery, and so on – is already a diastratic distinction, in as much as the educated classes were often the only strata with access to an additional language of high prestige (Latin), and to literacy. This multilingualism is far removed from the rest of society and social groupings without access to Latin. It is an unhelpful distinction if our aim is to understand how the (spoken) vernacular was evolving with respect to (written) Latin. Multidialectalism, on the other hand, is a more apt descriptor of the potential for language mixing in historical situations when different speech communities came into contact over an extended period of time. This would allow for the initial processes of accommodation to take place. It is only in a subsequent moment, once social networks break down and 'weak ties' predominate, that koineization can begin to occur (Tuten, 2003:303).

A diastratic distinction can be useful in contact situations, particularly if language acquisition is an integral feature in definitions of koine (cf. Kerswill, 1996). Since we are unlikely to find traces of children's language in most documents from the Middle Ages, the way children play a key role in the selection and the stabilization of features in the new koine can be difficult to ascertain. The forms of language we are dealing with, at least in non-literary documents but often in literary ones too, rarely follow clear, prescriptive linguistic models, if ever. A diastratic distinction is therefore crucial in distinguishing those linguistic elements that are most susceptible to change from more conservative literary elements. An exemplum of such a situation from late medieval Italy demonstrates this distinction well.

4 Koineization in late medieval Italy

Vincent (2006) provides a useful overview of the various interpretations that have been advanced in the literature to assess whether one can ascertain the presence of a koine throughout the peninsula. He plausibly shows how 'the case for supra-regional effects that may suffice to give a sense of an "abstract notion" of the Italian language gets stronger' when morphosyntactic variables are taken into account (2006:24). Importantly, the 'traditional and ongoing debate about koineization in medieval Italy has been misstated, because linguists, philologists and literary and cultural historians have chosen to concentrate on only a subset of the available data' (2006:24). With regard to north Italy, he points to Grignani's (1991) useful contribution about the existence of the koine. In an important paragraph, and crucial to our purposes here, she introduces a diastratic distinction when referring to the donor varieties. Grignani alludes to the question of social prestige, and the reallocation of variants which can occur when literary texts are circulating over a large geographical area:

> non c'è nemmeno competitività tra i singoli municipi e quindi il rapporto d'integrazione non sta tra due termini, la realtà locale e una precisa lingua o norma egemone, ma varia da centro a centro, da livello a livello di scrittura verso una convergenza promossa dai tratti *letterariamente* concordanti a scapito di quelli distintivi. (Grignani, 1991:38; emphasis mine)

> [there is not even competition between individual city-states, and therefore the integration is not between two poles – the local reality and a defined language or hegemonic norm – but varies from centre to centre, from one level of writing to another, towards a convergence which is induced by traits that are similar *in a literary sense*, at the expense of local ones.]

Grignani's description, her reference to 'levels' of writing, and to a literary vs. local distinction all highlight a recognition that diastratic elements are already present during the ongoing process of koine formation. Conversely, Sobrero's analysis (1996) introduces a different set of oppositions and criteria for defining koines, seeking, as it does, typologies of standard / dialect repertoires in the modern context of urbanized Italy. These oppositions (*'active'* vs. *'passive' koiné*, *dialectal koiné* vs. *dialect of koiné*, etc.) are partly introduced by him and partly discussed throughout the literature (for a useful overview, see Regis, 2012). In a brief discussion of Milan, Sobrero notes that the spread of Milanese as an active koine – corresponding to the 'traditional historical meaning of koine' (but the author does not specify further) – goes well beyond the administrative limits of the Milan municipality (Sobrero, 1996:107). These terminologies, distinctions, and oppositions are not easily applied to situations of language contact in the past, and not to medieval Italy. Nevertheless, the argument presented below finds a

serendipitous parallel when the modern variety used in Milan is described by Sobrero as an 'intermediate dialect' and 'deprived of the most clearly local (and socially stigmatized) characters' (p. 109).[16]

With regard to north Italy more specifically, koines can be said to characterize large swathes of territory, particularly during the 14th and 15th centuries, when these varieties find their most elaborate expression in courts and chanceries (Bongrani and Morgana, 1992:96). For the region of Lombardy and the city-state of Milan, Stella sees the formation of a koine as the most salient feature of language change:

> la storia linguistica della Lombardia, dalla metà del secolo XIII alla *signoria* sforzesca, è tra le più esemplari, se non *la* più esemplare, nel comune processo, prima di formazione di coinè municipali, e poi di convergenza, dalle aree laterali, verso un modello cortigiano da una parte, fiorentina dall'altra. (Stella, 1994:153)

> [the linguistic history of Lombardy, from the middle of the thirteenth century to the Sforza *signoria*, is among the best examples, if not *the* best example, of the common process which involved the formation of municipal koines first, and then convergence, from outer areas, towards a chancery model on the one hand, and a Florentine model on the other.]

What the formation of these municipal varieties looked like, and how they varied diastratically, can be seen in the analysis of the three parameters discussed below.[17] The first concerns the voicing of certain phonological variants, the second deals with the outcomes for first person plural verbs, while the third relates to infinitives.

4.1 Voicing of intervocalic obstruents

Voicing of intervocalic obstruents is one characteristic common to all Gallo-Italic dialects, the subgroup of Romance to which Milanese belongs (Bongrani and Morgana, 1992:86). In general, the outcomes which continue the plosive of the Latin past participle -ATU(M) are, at an early stage, > *ado*, and then > *au (ao)* 'in large areas of northern Italy' (Rohlfs, 1966–1969:§203). If we want a more refined version of events, and are seeking to understand how the Latin desinence evolved in text types that are aligned diastratically, we may discover a different picture. For example, Domokos has recorded *-d-*, *-dh-*, and *-th-* in Milanese literary writing from the late 13th century (2007:274), thus showing no disappearance of the plosive in high registers at all. In other texts, the plosive *does* disappear (i.e. the desinence becomes *-ao*). A century later, precisely when the koine is said to have reached its most elaborate expression (c. 1350–1500), the dominant ending shows a patterned variation in a diastratic sense. For example,

the three variants from the late 13th century are replaced by the literary, and more prestigious, Tuscan variant -*ato* in chancery documents (Vitale, 1953). In documents of the late 1400s, -*ato* then becomes the only ending present (Morgana, 1983:359), which is then never voiced or reduced. Recent studies of medieval Milanese have revealed that, in fact, the outcomes are even more numerous than these. If we look at non-literary writing, and at texts which are on a diastratically less prestigious level than chancery writing, we find that Colombo (2016) only records the stronger dialectal outcome -*ao*, yet Brown (2017) records variation between both -*t*- and -*d*-. The Tuscan variant -*ato* is eventually established as the new standard in writing, leading to a reduction in the number of features in the koine, as new models of linguistic production become diffused. Milanese therefore adopts marked features not present in any of the contributing regional varieties filtering into Milan. In short, the koine *does* adopt features which are not Gallo-Italic. That is, the -*ato* variant is a new outcome that becomes incorporated into the variety once koineization has taken place. This variant was used in writing over a long time, as the standard language (based on Tuscan) continued to develop during the Renaissance. The use of -*ato* in the northern koine, therefore, may be linked to diastratic variables to do with prestige, as well as economic and cultural factors related to medieval Tuscan, allowing for a new variant to emerge.

4.2 1pl. present indicative

A similar patterning can be seen with regard to endings of the first person plural in verbs which continue the first conjugation in Latin (present infinitive ending -ARE). In some of the earliest evidence of Milanese, literary writing from the 13th century shows a dual outcome, represented graphically by -*am* and -*amo* (Domokos, 2007:263). This writing has been described as representing a 'grammar which is phonetically and morphologically compact and rigid, where oscillations are minimal' (Stella, 1994:165). In most instances of northern writing, the -*amo* ending is dominant (Morgana, 1983:351; 1985:259; Degli Innocenti, 1984:73), and survives at least until the late 15th century. In a study of the language of the poet Matteo Maria Boiardo, for example, this ending only appears once (Mengaldo, 1963:119). As scribes begin to circulate linguistic forms much more widely and formal structures in society are becoming solidified, the introduction of prestigious Tuscan -*iamo* begins to take hold also in literary writing, including in Boiardo, as new forms are introduced, such as -*ian*, -*amo* (Mengaldo, 1963:119). At the other end of the continuuum, the -*iamo* desinence is still 'rare' in the non-literary writing (edicts and technical documents) from the late Sforza period studied by Morgana (1983:352) as well as in the chancery (Vitale, 1953:92). In the non-literary writing of a nun from just a few decades

before, however, the -*iamo* ending is not present at all (Brown, 2019). In other words, the -*iamo* desinence is a clearly identifiable Tuscan form that has been introduced into texts that are representative of the northern koine. The main point to be considered is that the introduction and distribution of the form does not occcur randomly, nor is it introduced in a diastratically haphazard way. This patterning is largely due to the sociolinguistic prestige associated with Tuscan, and with the different social strata of language users themselves. The -*iamo* ending is a distinctive form compared to the more 'dialectal', northern variants evinced in earlier koine writing. As with the forms described by voicing of intervocalic obstruents in section 4.1 above, the contact between the northern koine and Tuscan varieties also leads to novel features in the koine pool. In a previous study of contact-induced change, Ghinassi (2006:85) also found cases of -*om* for first person plural verbs; in short, a variant is introduced that is not found in the earliest corpora available for either of these varieties.[18]

4.3 Infinitives

The third parameter investigated here, infinitives, similarly shows a patterned distribution in a diastratic sense. Considering only those continuants from the first conjugation of Latin -ARE verbs, we see how literary writing from Milan from the late 13th century shows a bipartite division between -*ar* and -*a* (Domokos, 2007:273). Extending our analysis to other varieties which contributed to the developing koine, we find that -*ar* is also present in non-literary texts (Grignani, 1980:65; Bertoletti, 2000:244), as well as from those texts more subject to outside influences such as Tuscan. These texts more clearly show a non-Milanese form, such as -*are* (Brown, 2017:203). In the mid-15th century, however, no dominant outcome can be said to have yet emerged if we look at the data of non-literary writing. In verbs of the first conjugation, -*are* is clearly dominant over cases of -*ar*. Similarly, the second conjugation (Lat. < -ERE) shows an almost equal distribution of both the koine and Tuscan forms, with four cases of -*ere* and three of -*re* (e.g. *intende* 'to understand', see Brown, 2019:67). While other conjugations show similar variation, the distributional pattern of these variants is crucial in tracing how certain forms are selected in the resultant koine over others.[19] Rather than contradicting Trudgill's results that frequency is the sole determiner in selecting linguistic variants in the evolution of koines, his model seems to confirm these findings. Similarly to the data presented in Baxter, Blythe, Croft and McKane (2009:259), medieval Milanese also points to the necessity in situations of language change of requiring some selection mechanism to promote certain variants over others. Indeed, the question of prestige, as well as an imbalance of cultural and economic factors between medieval Tuscany and

Milan, were found to be essential factors in Brown's work (2013, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) when looking at linguistic accommodation in merchant and religious texts sent from Milan in the late 1300s and early 1400s.

The presence of many different variants from c. 1350–1500 in Milan raises several questions about how best to explain such outcomes in terms of the ongoing development of the northern koine. The parameters identified above form part of a continuum, where the most dialectal features are present in the lowest strata of texts. At the other end of the spectrum, the non-dialectal variants occur only in texts from the chancery. At the macro-level, this situation appears to reflect the stages identified by Tuten (2001:333) where, in order to establish whether koineization is occurring, the following factors must be present:

1. the changes reflect mixing or reduction;
2. several such changes co-occur, and
3. the features are selected and stabilize rapidly, probably over the course of just two or three generations.

What is implicit in all these stages is the diastratic variation inherent in the speech community more generally. The distribution of the variants in the examples above shows that, while different text types exhibit a varied pattern, these variants can best be explained when they are placed along a continuum of diastratic variation, from least prestigious to most. Polis (2017:68) has noted that, for his corpus of Ancient Egyptian texts, 'the mastering of the linguistic norm attached to each conventionalized register was indexical of their belonging to the upper class'. He devises the following figure (see Figure 1) to represent the various continua, which demonstrate well the variation inherent in the examples described also for Milanese.

Figure 1 depicts variation in a situation where writing was in the grip of a closed group of individuals at the top of the social hierarchy, which led, in linguistic terms, to a 'limitation of the space for socially motivated variation' (Polis, 2017:69). Assuming four ideal registers, a scale showing the conventionalization of registers from greater vernacularity to greater formality is represented by the four rectangles above along the horizontal axis (with broken lines to show the 'leaky' borders of each register). The vertical axis shows a continuum that ranges from greater variation to greater standardization, demonstrating how 'the mastering of the linguistic norm attached to each conventionalized register was indexical of their belonging to the upper class'. In short, the figure provides an idealized yet useful way of mapping how diastratic patterning can be incorporated into a broader picture of variation.

Although the parameters discussed above are described in texts almost all having a 'practical' nature, the penetration of the unvoiced, Tuscan, and high-status obstruent appears to have remained confined to those strata whose writing is socially motivated by a desire to adopt koine elements which are most socially prestigious. The same can be said for endings of the first person plural, as well as the various forms which continue Latin -ARE infinitives in texts of the north.
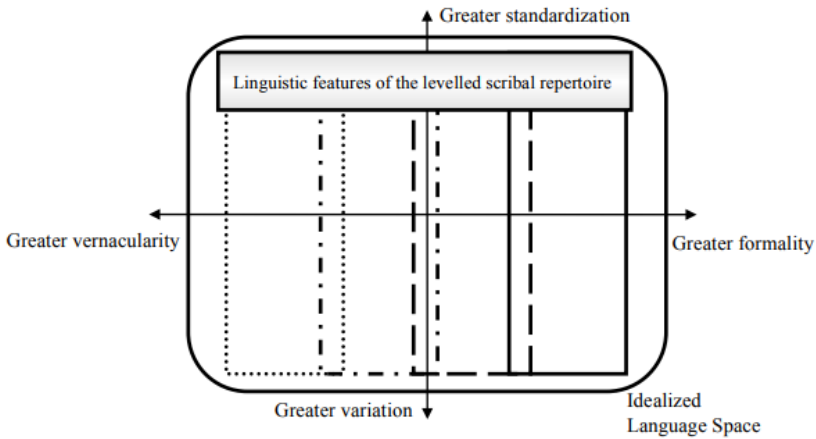

Figure 1. The linguistic features of the scribal repertoire (Polis, 2017:68).

5 Conclusion: towards an elaborated model

The aim of this paper has been to argue for a refinement of the processes leading to koineization identified by Britain (2012a). What is needed in explaining language change for historical texts, at least in the Middle Ages, is greater recognition of the *social* in *historical sociolinguistics*. This is especially true when we consider the particular data and features which characterize this period. All texts which have come down to us can only be representative of a particular fragment of society, and must be placed within their sociolinguistic context. The current models of koineization (rightly) focus on the linguistic outcomes of new dialect formation, and the dialects of the 'donor' communities (Britain, 2012a). In their study of diastratic variation for specific purposes, Picton and Dury (2017:77) highlight the 'different phenomena of diastratic variation at work between different communities', while pointing out the relative lack of interest in analysing diastratic variation throughout the literature more generally.

While previous studies have often provided acute analyses of how koines vary according to a host of social variables, further research into the variation of the contributing varieties will help to provide greater insights. To return to Britain's

cake baking analogy, 'it is still important for us to put painstaking effort in to understand what the correct ingredients are if we want to learn how that cake was baked' (Britain, 2012a:233).

Further work will undoubtedly be able to develop the various methodologies used to measure dialect contact and koineization in particular. As far as it is possible, historical work should consider how linguistic variants can be 'weighted' in a diastratic sense, and what this weighting implies in the resultant variety. Can such variants be placed on a lower or higher register of writing in the first place? Do they carry different prestige indices when used in speech versus writing? What genre or genres do they most appear in before the koine can be said to exist? While answers to these questions may not always be possible to ascertain based on the data available, raising them in the first place seems to be a logical step in the methodological process if a proper assessment of koine formation is to be made.

Koineization is but one example of the type of linguistic phenomena that can emerge when dialects come into contact. In order to provide a full account of such a phenomenon, it is important to assess the current models in the light of what they can tell us about language change more generally. The results discussed above highlight the importance of considering diastratic variation when accounting for emerging koines. As the current models of koineization are continually developed and applied to various situations of language contact in both the present and the past, a more refined model will provide us with a nuanced picture of language change.

Notes

1.   For a fascinating account of the vicissitudes of our understanding of languages in contact since the appearance of Weinreich's volume until today, see Matthews, 2006.
2.   The bibliography on language contact and grammatical change is vast. To quote but a few studies, see for example, Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Heine and Kuteva (2005), Braunmüller and House (2009), Léglise and Chamoreau (2013), and Cerruti (2014).
3.   'Diastratic variation' is defined here simply to mean the 'social characteristics of speakers' (following Coseriu, 1969). For further terminological distinctions on the term 'diastratic', and its relationship to other types of variation, see Picton and Dury (2017). They note that 'the phenomenon may even be referred to by another name as some terminologists seem to be reluctant to use the term "diastratic variation" preferring for example, "sociological variation" which is felt to be more transparent, as is the case for Auger (2001:205)'.
4.   On the northern koine more generally, see the collection of essays in Sanga (1991), as well as the essay by Persico (1949).
5.   On the complex question of when the koine can be said to have started, see Grignani (1991).

6. One example, to represent the whole, from Maraschio's 1976 corpus is the second person plural of the present and future indicative which, apart from a few cases, all present the koine desinence in *-i,* e.g., *intendeti*, *sapeti*, *hareti*, *voltareti* (p. 38). On the other hand, Lurati describes the geographical domain over which the koine was used as a 'kingdom of free variation' (1988:509).

7. Similar problems of methodology have recently been expressed by Vietti (2017:178): 'Mixing and levelling are two broad categories implying different linguistic mechanisms whose reciprocal temporal and structural contribution to the development of a koine is not very clear'.

8. The so-called 'bad data' problem was discussed also in Labov (1994). See also the section 'Representativeness' in Schneider (2013).

9. For example, the language of the late 13th-century writer from Milan, Bonvesin dra Riva, is consistently described as *not* being Milanese dialect, but as a *scripta* which is, rather, 'a municipal purism, expunged of the contaminations from the emerging but not yet illustrious northern koine' [un purismo municipale, espunte le contaminazioni della affiorante ma non illustre coinè padana] (Stella, 1994:166).

10. Cf. Kabatek (2013:149): 'specific written discourse traditions may emerge that are shaped by the particular possibilities which the written medium offers, and these may lead to the creation of specific styles linked to the written language'.

11. With regard to language contact and the history of English, Hendriks (2012:1668) has written likewise that 'we must also make do with data that is neither chronologically, nor geographically, representative of the varieties we seek to know more about, and it is likely that *spoken* contact varieties were in use in England which were simply not used in writing' (her emphasis).

12. Further detail on the linguistic nature of the northern koine can be found in Brown (2020). This paper transposes the notions of standard / koine onto the sociolinguistic landscape of Renaissance Italy. It aims to show how standardization and koineization are not mutually exclusive processes, but are best characterised by a 'top-down' vs. 'bottom-up' approach respectively.

13. Migge and Léglise (2011) make a similar observation with regard to creole studies.

14. Ayres-Bennett does make the point, however, that 'studies of variation in contemporary French generally seek to separate out the different parameters of variation' (2004:12). She cites Coseriu (1969), who distinguishes *diastratisch*, that is, 'variation according to the different sociocultural layers or groups in society' (Ayres-Bennett, 2004:12).

15. For further analysis on standard / dialect convergence, mixing, and models of language change in contemporary Italy, see Berruto (2005).

16. I should make mention here of Videsott's (2009) corpus, which contains a large database of non-literary documents from the origin of the Italian language up until 1525. While his goal was to observe diatopic and diachronic variation present in the various *scriptae* of northern Italy, he notes that, due to the heterogeneity of the corpus, 'diastratic and pragmatic, as well as other contexts of language use must be excluded' (2009:52).

17.   For an investigation of the first person plural present indicative see Škerlj, who notes that its study 'is probably as old as Italian historical morphology itself' (1971:3).
18.   See Brown (2017:203) for further details on infinitives and gerunds in non-literary texts. It should be noted that, while *-ari* is recorded as a desinence in Stella (1994:194), Borgogno (1972:92–93) records *-i* as a masc. pl. enclitic direct object, and should not be confused with an infinitive.
19.   Polis (2017:69 n. 56) notes that this description of written registers may be compared with Milroy's 'structured varieties' (1992:66).

Acknowledgments

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