Special collection: Language Change from Above and from Below in Greek and Latin

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Sources and methods for detecting language change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek and Latin

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Abstract: A crucial challenge in documenting the histories of languages of the past is accessing sources of language change from 'above' as well as 'below'. In this methodological paper, I critically discuss potential problems and solutions for investigating language change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek (III BCE – VI CE) and Post-Classical Latin (III – X CE). I detail and dissect the three main challenges to such investigations: (i) the representativity of the sources, (ii) tracing the motivations for change, and (iii) incorporating the social and societal processes involved in change from above and below. By means of a critical review of existing research, I argue that we can overcome these challenges if we arm ourselves with recent insights from the field of historical sociolinguistics. Finally, I discuss three cases of Post-Classical Greek innovations that, based on their later diffusion, can only partially be explained as change from above or below.

Keywords: change from above and below; actuation; prestige; register; Ancient Greek and Latin

1 Language change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek and Latin

One of the prejudices that the field of historical sociolinguistics has had to defend itself against is summarized by Labov's now-infamous quote that historical linguistics can "be thought of as the art of making the best use of bad data" (Labov

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1994, 11). Though there are of course certain limitations to the insights into the relationships between language and society which can be gleaned from written texts of the past (see Clackson 2015a for a concise overview for ancient languages), historical sociolinguists have time and again shown that we should rather rephrase this adage more optimistically, as making the best possible use of 'bad' data available (Nevalainen 1999; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2017, 26).[1] An area of linguistic analysis where the accessibility of the past poses particular problems is the detection of language change, since one simply has fewer clues to determine the exact sources, motivations and diffusion patterns of specific changes. For example, it is commonly assumed that the source from which most language change stems is *from below* rather than *from above*: "Change from above is driven by high prestige groups, often takes place with full awareness, and occurs more frequently in formal styles. Change from below, on the other hand, begins in the vernacular, may be introduced by any social class (although Labov argues that the highest-status social groups have not been shown to act as innovators), and is barely noticed until it nears completion." (Sairio and Palander-Collin 2012, 630–31). This brief quote illustrates the three relevant dimensions of language change from above and below: (1) the level of consciousness of change, (2) the hierarchical social class of the speaker/group, and (3) the social prestige of innovations or lack thereof. Yet, for ancient and medieval languages we do not have the same access to information about (1) the consciousness of change or (2) the specific social class of the speaker(s) as for modern languages, but we can access (3) the social prestige of innovations by contrastively examining different diachronic sources of information. Even though for (1) we do, for example, have evidence from spelling variation (for which see Section 2.1), our corpus evidence for Post-Classical Greek and Latin contains many texts that were written by individuals higher up on the social ladder (2) and texts written in higher registers that make use of language deemed socially prestigious at the time (3), which partially explains why these texts have come down to us through transmission later. In order to deal with change from above or below in Ancient Greek and Latin, we thus need to determine which type of above or below our sources give evidence for and what the driving factors behind those different types of innovations are.[2]

Also, we do not have exactly the same access to those varieties with lower social prestige in which such changes from below occur for the first time, especially spoken varieties (although we of course have sources that 'mimic' spoken language in different ways, see Section 2). In fact, it has been suggested that our histories of

1 A recent overview of the field and fruits of historical sociolinguistics can be found in Hernández Campoy and Conde Silvestre (2012).

2 In line with a remark by a reviewer, I would like to stress that the above vs. below distinction should only be seen as an interpretative tool to understand the processes behind innovations, rather than an interpretative straight-jacked that divides change into only two neat groups. See below and Section 3 for more discussion of potential limitiations.

languages have therefore long been tainted with language ideology as well, since histories of languages such as German and French have long taken literary texts written in higher registers with social prestige as main measure for change in the language (Elspass 2007, 4). In the same vein, Elspass remarks that "Generations of scholars and teachers have viewed language history as the inexorable march towards a uniform standard and, by narrowing their view on standard varieties, presented a "tunnel vision version" of language history (Trudgill and Watts 2002, 1)", thereby neglecting the large degree of substandard variations and varieties which have long existed alongside standard varieties. A better alternative would consequently seem to be to aim for language histories from below, that is, for historical sociolinguists of the past to consider texts which come closest to informal, every day and, especially, spoken language.

At the same time, completely disregarding texts that display language varieties with higher social prestige would to my mind be an overcorrection. After all, there is continued discussion about the precise division of labor for both directions in the spread of innovations, as summarized neatly by James Milroy: "the fact that language change does not usually come from elite varieties has been a stumbling block in historical linguistics" (Milroy 2012, 574).[3] Moreover, language change from above seems to be intimately related to language change from below, as the changes may seep through to the top or, alternatively, may trickle down from above. On the other hand, some studies have explicitly concluded that change from below is represented *more* in data from ancient languages too. Indeed, Jim Adams concluded his large book on social variation in Latin with the observation that most of the changes observed were changes from below (Adams 2011, 862).

In this methodological paper, I critically discuss the challenges that we face when searching for language change from above and below in Ancient Greek and Latin and I offer a range of ways in which histories from below and above can be written. I pay particular attention to the factors behind the different types of language change from above or below that can be found in the corpus evidence, i.e. (1) above or below the level of consciousness, (2) from above or below in a hierarchical social class and (3) with high social prestige from above or lack thereof from below. Rather than taking a more defeatist stance that we lack spoken data, I argue that, with the necessary precautions, we can and should maximize the data that we do have, not only for tracing language change from below but also from above. In fact, there has been a recent growth in studies on Ancient Greek and Latin with a synchronic sociolinguistic (see Janse 2020 for an overview) and, less often, a historical sociolinguistic aim (e.g. Adams 2011; Clackson 2015a; Cuomo and Trapp 2017). Yet, very few have explicitly addressed the stumbling blocks that we encounter when attempting to write histories of language change from above and below

3 In fact, Labov too noted how higher prestige groups can be unexpected innovators (Labov 1994, 574).

for Ancient Greek and Latin. Therefore, I critically examine the following three theoretical questions which are crucial to answer in order to move forward in this underexplored area.

1. How can language change from above and below in available sources be traced in available source?
2. How do we trace the motivations for those changes?
3. How do we incorporate the social and societal processes involved in the different changes?

Question one crucially addresses the representativity of our sources for language change from above and below. This question covers sub-questions such as which Ancient Greek and Latin sources represent which varieties and social groups and how we could combine different source types to maximize representation. Question two directs our attention to the complex issue of why changes happen where and when they happen, i.e. the well-known problem of *actuation* (see Walkden 2017 for a brief overview of this thorny issue). Finally, question three takes a more comparative perspective and considers how we can incorporate the different roles played by social and societal processes for changes from above and below in our ancient corpus data. In Sections 2.1 to 2.3, I discuss the problems and solutions to these issues by providing exemplifications from the corpus of Post-Classical Greek (III BCE – VI CE) and Post-Classical Latin (III – X CE) texts. In Section 3, I provide three brief case studies of morphosyntactic innovations in Post-Classical Greek which, due to their later diffusion, can only partially be explained as change from above or below, thereby illustrating some limits of the concept of change from above and below as an interpretative tool. Section 4 offers concluding remarks and Section 5 briefly introduces the papers in this special issue.

2 Challenges and solutions

2.1 Representativity of the sources for changes from above and below

> Historical sociolinguistics has often been considered to suffer, perhaps inevitably, from lack of representativeness and validity of its findings. This is because the sociolinguistic study of historical language forms must rely on linguistic records from previous periods – most of which will be incomplete or non-representative in some way – as well as on knowledge and understanding of past sociocultural situations that can only be reconstructed rather than directly observed or experienced by the researcher. (Hernández-Campoy and Schilling 2012, 63)

As shown by this introductory quote, historical sociolinguists are well aware of the gaps that they are attempting to bridge. For the gaps with the ancient languages of

Greek and Latin in particular, I argue that the issue of representativity for the description of language change from above and below may be split into three main issues:

Representativity	1. The representativeness of above and below 2. The generalizability of linguistic findings 3. The paradox of textual authenticity

As for the first issue, we must ask whether the linguistic sources available to us provide a representative picture of lower and higher social classes, on the one hand, and varieties of language with higher and lower forms of social prestige, on the other hand. In other words, do we have sources from lower, middle and higher social classes and from lower, middle, and higher registers? With respect to social classes, we currently lack much information on the specific social hierarchies in which writers were situated (though the evidence from papyri in Egypt is a rich source for social information, see Section 2.2) and the way that these hierarchies were maintained (cf. Section 2.3 below on social and societal processes). In terms of varieties of language with higher and lower forms of social prestige, though, we do seem to have the linguistic sources for Post-Classical Greek, since we have a rich variety of sources from different periods which are commonly associated with high registers (e.g. epics or poetry), middle registers (e.g. the New Testament and chronicles such as that by Diodorus Siculus), and lower registers, such as private letters from Egypt on papyri or ostraca (cf. O'Donnell 2000; Adrados 2005; Horrocks 2010; Bentein 2013 for different overviews). For Post-Classical Latin, we similarly possess texts which are usually linked to higher registers (e.g. classicizing post-classical authors), middle registers (e.g. so-called Christian Latin works), and lower register texts (e.g. texts on wooden tablets or papyri from the Roman provinces).[4] At the same time, it should remain clear that categorizing a text as having a high, middle, or lower register can only really be taken as a rough approximation of its potential role as source for different types of language varieties (cf. similarly Bentein 2013, 13). After all, a notable challenge to such a neat system are those clear representatives of *multi-register* texts: (i) we have texts which deliberately represent different registers in order to represent language with different forms of social prestige, such as the Latin author Petronius who incorporates low register features of the language of the lower social classes (Clackson 2015a, 114–16), and (ii) historiographers of supposedly lower register texts such as the chronicler Diodorus Siculus (I CE) that deliberately upgraded the language of important characters in reported speech to attribute social prestige (la Roi 2021, 22–23, forthc.b and, in this contribution, the third case study in Section 3).

4 This overview is based on the data available in Clackson (2011) and Adams (2011; 2016).

Another challenge, from both a theoretical and a descriptive standpoint, is that scholars are not in full agreement on the broad register classifications of texts. To illustrate with Post-Classical Greek, we have older, markedly evaluative classifications of the available texts such as 'vulgar', 'literary', 'non-literary', and 'atticistic' (e.g. O'Donnell 2000) which are only very partially 'translated' into the register framework of low, middle and high. The two main reasons for that are that (i) scholars *implicitly* disagree on the classifications of certain texts (e.g. whether the historian Polybius had a middle or low register, cf. Adrados 2005, 201; and Bentein 2013, 13) and that (ii) classifications are hardly ever quantified linguistically. A notable exception to the latter point is the recent work by Seržant and Rafiyenko (2022) who use a quantitative study of prepositions to determine the effects of linguistic register on diachrony, an avenue of investigation which would serve other dimensions of linguistic variation as well.

A final challenge is metatheoretical and concerns competing ideologies of scholars both concerning the textual data and the research that ought to be conducted on it. As briefly noted above, scholars are increasingly unsatisfied with traditional descriptions of texts such as 'vulgar', 'colloquial', or 'literary' which have been passed down to us and are hence consciously replace them with less evaluative terminology such as register (cf. Dickey 2010). Still, ideology of the field of research also codetermines our investigations. For example, in tracing morphosyntactic changes in Post-Classical Greek, scholars have chosen to only include a subset of lower register sources, influenced by developments in the field of (historical) sociolinguistics to focus on change from below (e.g. Markopoulos 2009, 14–18 on his investigation of future constructions). Yet, it has rightly been pointed out that middle and higher registers in the history of Greek are by no means unaffected by language change (Horrocks 2010, 4 and passim). Thus, as the present overview shows, excluding higher register resources is an overcorrection, not only due to the possibility of changes from above that we may observe there, but also to be able to determine in what way changes from below may be incorporated in higher registers. Similar problems occur at the lower end of the spectrum, where the ideology of scholars may *flatten* the degree of variation that we find in lower registers; this point has been summarized well by Leiwo (2012, 19), who, commenting on a supposedly "Vulgar Latin"[5] papyrus with non-standard features, states the following:

> adhering to the term vulgar Latin inevitably leads to problems when we try to apply it to actual linguistic phenomena, and classify these into vulgar and not vulgar. The same is even more true of individual texts. The point in criticizing the Classical vs. vulgar distinction is that in it we are

5 The term "Vulgar Latin" has a complex history which cannot be discussed in full detail here (but see Versteegh 2021). Also, its different associations with text types, periods and social classes have given it a controversial position in the field of Latin linguistics (Adams 2012, 263–65).

> not comparing like with like. In any language, if we take a literary work of art of some Classic period and a private letter of an ordinary and less educated person, these are bound to look as if they belonged to two different (even diglossic) varieties of the same language, the Classical/standard and the vulgar. It is however clear to everybody that the scope of variation in the particular language is a much more complicated phenomenon than looking at these two 'extremes' would suggest. Linguistic variation is a continuum where it is difficult to posit exact boundaries.

The second sub-issue of representativity concerns the *generalizability of linguistic findings*; this refers to the principle in the field of historical sociolinguistics of producing "results that can accurately be generalized to the behavior of the entire population, or speech community" (Hernández-Campoy and Schilling 2012, 65). This issue amounts to more than just using textual data that could potentially be an indicative source of language change from above and below (as discussed in the previous paragraphs), because scholars should equally aim to cover the patterns of linguistic variation across text types regardless of register. Unfortunately, for various reasons (including of course the expected limits to scientific papers) scholars do not do both these things, but we should be wary of self-reinforcing patterns in the scholarly description of diachronic data. To illustrate, it has been noted by la Roi (2020, forthc.a, forthc.b) that some generalizations for the Post-Classical period as a whole found in histories of Greek (esp. Horrocks 2010) which are based on older outdated data collections (e.g. grammars of the New Testament or a selection of papyri) continue to be passed on in current research. For example, based predominantly on the data from the New Testament, scholars have reinforced older ideas that the optative mood is lost in Post-Classical Greek and that the apodoses of counterfactual conditionals (e.g. 'If I had grabbed an umbrella, I would have stayed dry') had already lost the previously necessary modal particle in the apodosis, thus allegedly anticipating a change in Medieval and Modern Greek (e.g. Horrocks 1995, 2010). Yet, once one looks outside of the New Testament, these generalizations can be refuted and, instead, reveal deeper problems in the description of the history of Post-Classical Greek. As for the optative, la Roi (forthc.a, forthc.b) demonstrates that the optative not only occurs throughout the different periods of Post-Classical Greek and in different text types (e.g. both the papyri from Egypt and literary texts, all of different registers) but also shows remarkable continuity and even develops innovative usages (cf. the innovative χαίροις greeting discussed as case study 1 in Section 3). With regard to the supposed loss of the modal particle in counterfactual apodoses, this innovative pattern is limited to the Septuagint and the New Testament, and explainable as a contact-induced feature which is transmitted as one of the many linguistic features that the New Testament incorporates from the Septuagint (la Roi forthc.a, forthc.b. and see the comparable case study 2 in Section 3).

More generally, these problems reveal:

(i) a reliance on stepping stones for infelicitous generalization across periods (e.g. the New Testament for nearly a millennium!),[6]
(ii) a lack of application of the historical sociolinguistic *principle of accountability* whereby the non-occurrence of a variant should also be explained (Trudgill 2003, 3), i.e. the non-occurrence of the contact variant outside the Septuagint and the New Testament, and
(iii) the danger of teleology to the description of the history of Post-Classical Greek due to the possibility of comparison to later stages, with especially Modern Greek being perceived as the end stage in development.

Concerning teleology, a similar danger awaits the description of language change from below in Post-Classical Latin, since Post-Classical or 'Vulgar Latin', as the alleged chronological precursor, has been viewed as the source for the Romance languages.[7] Nevertheless, Clackson and Horrocks (2007) seem to have been aware of these issues in their history of Latin; they describe Post-Classical Latin features that turn up in the Romance languages but state that they cannot be traced back to one period or one (uniform) variety, thus demonstrating that these issues can be avoided.

> However, it should be noted that the features presented here do not describe a single linguistic variety, to be placed in opposition to the written standard (the 'Vulgar Latin' of some handbooks). Rather they collect together developments which took place to a greater or lesser degree across the whole speech area in the period under consideration. As we shall see, the starting points of some of these innovations can be found in texts from the early Roman Empire, but the innovatory and the original variants in many cases co-existed for centuries. (Clackson and Horrocks 2007, 272)

The third and final issue may be summarized as the *paradox of textual authenticity*. Scholars working on Post-Classical Greek have often adopted a defeatist standpoint on the possibility of reconstructing "real" language usage from the texts transmitted (Bentein 2013, 5–6 for a solid overview of the received views). They have in particular lamented the absence of spoken language, focusing on spoken-like texts exclusively or even suggested that the bulk of the textual material from the Post-Classical (and Medieval) period is "of little, if any, help" for an investigation of language change (Markopoulos 2009, 15–16). In other words, when it comes to reconstructing the language usage of Post-Classical Greek varieties, the glass is thought to be half empty

6 A related problem is the use of the New Testament in modern diachronic studies of the history of Greek as main representative for Post-Classical Greek, as for example done by Chatzopoulou (2019).
7 See Banniard (2013) for extensive discussion with references.

at best.[8] Yet, I would again argue that a glass-half-full approach does not only do more justice to the available data but it also facilitates the best use possible of the data available, both for Post-Classical Greek and Post-Classical Latin. First of all, spoken and written language cannot be compared as easily as commonly thought (Biber and Conrad 2019), since both show demonstrable differences in vocabulary (e.g. specialized or technical vocabulary occurs more often in written texts), syntax (cf. the freedom of syntax in oral speech versus its more rigid rules in written texts) and interpersonal orientation (e.g. spoken language being more commonly interactively oriented, or having a higher degree of communicative immediacy). In other words, the usual comparison by scholars of any written variety to an idealized spoken language which supposedly would be revealing of changes with low social prestige is problematic too. Second, for Post-Classical Greek and Latin we are, of course, dealing with only a large selection of texts, written by a selection of authors, and available to us through different direct[9] and indirect textual transmissions, but that does not necessarily mean that such textual data provides an inaccurate representation of language change from above or below. For instance, some ancient manuscripts such as the *Codex Bezae* (V-VI CE) provide more innovative representations of the New Testament (I CE) than the standard text that we have now (see Bentein 2013); this would suggest that the manuscript represents its time more than the original New Testament and, as such, represents a type of language change from below time machine, since the variants with low social prestige at the time of the New Testament are transported back from a later time via the manuscript medium, when these variants likely had lost this specific prestige connotation. Similarly, the analysis of the spelling of texts can yield impressive evidence of ongoing phonological change that is not reflected in the writing system yet (cf. Papini 2017 on Latin inscriptional evidence; and Crespo 2021 on Greek papyri).[10] Third and finally, there is suggestive evidence that the degree of variation across Post-Classical Greek and Latin literary texts may more accurately reflect the ubiquitous nature of linguistic variation: we possess speeches attributed to speakers with different backgrounds that seem to directly indicate sociolinguistic variation, such as the non-standard language and idiolect of the freedmen in Petronius' *Cena Trimalchionis* which shows parallels to innovations in other non-literary material (Clackson 2015a, 116) or the earliest innovative use of *ubi* 'where' instead of the case-inflected relative in a speech

8 See the edited volume by Bentein and Janse (2021) for a large set of studies that, more optimistically, use different textual sources to shed light on non-standard varieties of Post-Classical Greek.

9 For example, many (but certainly not all) papyri are documents written by the author and directly transmitted to us through preservation in the Egyptian desert.

10 Stolk (2021a, 2021b) lists a host of additional factors of a cognitive and social nature that play an important role in the spelling outcomes in Post-Classical Greek papyri, such as general frequency, probability of spelling pattern, and local scribal conventions.

attributed to a soldier by the author Apuleius (Adams 2011, 335). Equally important are those instances of metalinguistic commentary in our texts, which provide insights into the social attribution of higher or lower prestige to variants. We can refer to the overt prestige patterns from above that are encoded in prescriptive lexica (e.g. 'X is stupid, use Y'; 'you should have used X, not Y', see Section 2.3 below) and grammarians (see la Roi 2022b for an overview of documents for Post-Classical Greek; and Adams 2011 for Latin). Another illustrative example is discussed by Adams (2011, 747–73) in his discussion of the diachronic substitution of subjunctives by indicatives in dependent questions. By combining the evidence from different text types and registers and contrasting that to prescriptive commentaries from grammarians, he conclusively demonstrates that the pattern is an innovation from below that manages to seep through eventually to texts that document language varieties with higher social prestige (e.g. the grammatical treatise of Pompeius, V CE).

To sum up, I have discussed the three sub-issues which can be regarded as impacting our ability to trace language change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek and Latin: (i) the representativeness of the sources, (ii) the generalizability of findings, and (iii) the paradox of textual authenticity. Thus, despite the necessary caveats, there are many insights to gain when taking the language change from above and below perspective on the textual data from Post-Classical Greek and Latin.

2.2 Tracing the motivations for the actuation of changes

The next issue that needs to be considered lies at the heart of changes from above as well as below, namely the who-, what-, when-, and why-questions for the genesis and diffusion of innovations (Milroy 2003, 148). The actuation problem may be approached in different ways, for example by pointing to the role of the internal language system, or of external forces such as language contact, or, as is increasingly done in historical sociolinguistics, to the agency of the speaker as a crucial factor of change (Croft 2000; Milroy 2003). Some have gone as far as suggesting that the "actuation of change must be triggered by external factors. If change were purely internal and determined by preferred structural properties of language or developmental tendencies (to establish these properties), it would be difficult to account for why certain internally-motivated changes take place when they do and not at other times and in other languages" (Hickey 2012, 394–95). Milroy (2003, 148) is more cautious and states that "Linguistic change is multi-causal and the etiology of a change may include social, communicative and cognitive, as well as linguistic, factors." Most importantly, then, tracing the motivations for changes from above and below in Post-Classical Greek and Latin revolves around determining why and how

speakers can manage to change the history of a language. Here it is crucial to distinguish between those cases where speakers seem to *initiate* changes (whether from below or above) and those cases where they act as the intermediary *diffusing* of previous changes.

There are many different social motivations that may cause a speaker or writer to use a variant in an innovative way, as can be seen from many different cases where the choice for individual variation leads to innovative patterns as apposed to older or existing patterns. Again, the evidence from the Greek papyri from Egypt provides some insights into the reasons for individual innovation. Vierros (2021) has conducted a contrastive analysis of the language and spelling of two brothers in the so-called Katochoi archive from the second century BCE, Apollonius and Ptolemaios. In addition to being able to contrast the idiolects of close family members, the papyri in this archive give us information about the copying and drafting process. Vierros (2021, 71–72) concludes that the brothers Apollonius and Ptolemaios not only use phonological spellings which attest to ongoing sound changes (likely a change from below the level of consciousness), but they also have their own idiolectal features- features which they do not share. For example, she notes that "Apollonios' predisposition in petition writing gave him the advantage to adopt some features of legal formulaic language even if it did not lead him in using, for example, discourse connectors to a greater extent in his private writing." Thus, Apollonius' innovations based on varieties with higher social prestige (i.e. the features of legal formulaic language) and lack of using such innovations in his private writing are the result of a complex set of motivations such as stylistic choice, orthographic precision due to his education, and language contact. A similar case has been recorded for Post-Classical Latin by Adams (1977, 197), who analyzed the letters from Claudius Terentianus, an Egyptian in the Roman army. Adams similarly confirmed that changes in these texts more uniformly go beyond the influence of scribes, with innovations in the phonological, morphological, and syntactic domains (see Clackson and Horrocks 2007, 249–56 for a brief overview and Adams 2011, *passim* for detailed comparisons). As these two cases illustrate, language contact thus may also serve as an important motivation for speakers to change the input language that they are given by others into something else. The corpus evidence from Egypt provides a particularly fruitful area of research for the creation of such innovative tendencies.[11] An equally relevant environment for the study of the motivations of changes is the Septuagint, as we can directly compare ancient translators' choices to synchronic alternatives and their respective diachronic trajectories. For example, we find innovative phrases which

11 See e.g. Clarysse (1993) on scribal habits of Greek by Egyptian scribes or; Leiwo (2017) on ways that the contact setting causes writing confusion and change in the writing of moods; Dahlgren et al. (2022) for an overview of this research area.

represent typically Hebrew phrases (אָמֵן ׀ אָמֵן amen amen), such as Γένοιτο, γένοιτο 'may it be so, may it be so' (LXX Num. 5.21), thereby unconsciously adding contact-induced phrases to the repository of the Greek language. At the same time, we know that even in such contact settings, translators may adopt innovations with higher forms of synchronic social prestige, as it were, as the translator of the poetic book of Job purposely incorporates a set of high register Greek features for stylistic upgrading (see Dhont 2018, 142–79). To conclude, the motivations for speakers of Post-Classical Greek and Latin to change their language are not one-sided, since factors such as education level, stylistic preference and setting, language contact as well as ongoing changes are complimentary motivations for a speaker to introduce a linguistic feature with lower or higher social prestige.

At the same time, we also find many different contexts of evidence where individuals act as replicators of a previous innovation, which gives us the necessary context from which we can deduce *why* ancient speakers propagated certain innovations. De Mol (2023) has for example shown convincingly that the hypercorrect orthography of the Greek number 8, viz. as ὀκτώι with an additional iota (instead of ὀκτώ) due to the loss of phonological difference between <ω> and <ωι>, has an important social motivation in Post-Classical Greek papyri. The hypercorrect forms are predominantly found in formal genres (e.g. contracts, orders, and (tax) receipts) and are even often used by superordinates to address subordinates. I would add that the latter point indicates testimony to a linguistic norm which pushes down as change from above (i.e. an innovation with social prestige), supported for example by the fact that subordinates use hypercorrect spellings as well. Similarly, it is well known that certain authors propagated "older" usages that were actually not in use anymore but had social prestige in being linked to high registers such as poetry or prescriptive treatises, thus showing that lack of change can also be motivated by social prestige. For Post-Classical Latin, it has for example been argued that the future and conditional uses of the *habeo*-periphrasis, which takes up a dominant position in the Romance languages, turn up as innovation in high register sources from around the third century CE (Adams 2011, 672), but, interestingly, they were avoided three centuries later in some high register sources (cf. Lavie-Driver 2023). In other words, the language of higher registers is not immune to changes while at the same time it does not remain static itself, even in specialized genres.[12]

Furthermore, in some cases we are able to directly map innovative contact-induced variants to more specific speech communities. In a recent paper, Dahlgren et al. (2022) mapped spelling variants in Post-Classical Greek papyri to their

12 Note that Adams (2011, 569–70) similarly records an instance where a Latin epic poet of the first century, probably unknowingly, incorporates a diminutive expression which was only used in low-register texts in a high register epic.

respective geographical and chronological distribution, pointing out geographical hotspots for Egyptian contact-induced variables: "Most Egyptian variables (i.e., the ones in the first and second group) are rather infrequent in Lower Egypt and frequent in Upper Egypt. Based on the geography of Egypt this is to be expected, as the location of Lower Egypt in the north would have been exposed to more non-Egyptian influences than the areas further south at a larger distance from the Mediterranean Sea, and had relatively fewer Hellenized cities" (Dahlgren et al. 2022, 347). Also, their contrastive analysis of Egyptian-related variables in different periods points to the diachronic propagation of innovations, since most variables become conventionalized in later centuries, viz. the Byzantine period (IV – VII CE).

To sum up, a complex picture of competing and complimentary motivations for changes from below and above in Post-Classical Greek and Latin emerges. Hickey (2012, 403) draws a comparable picture and succinctly summarizes the different factors involved in determining the social motivations of change: "The actuation, propagation, and conclusion of change is determined by social factors, but its linguistic course is connected with structural properties and developmental preferences which exist across languages and which ultimately have to do with language production and processing. Again, social considerations may be at work here and promote irregularity and disturb symmetry and patterning, especially if there is strong social motivation for this disturbance arising and being maintained. Lastly, it should be emphasized that change should be seen in the context of non – change, that is, what is altered and what is maintained in a language are of equal significance, and depend ultimately on how speakers react to inherent variation in their speech community". Consistent comparisons of the contexts in which innovations emerge in Post-Classical Greek and Latin have shown us similar motivations for changes from above and below: (i) speakers of Post-Classical Greek and Latin varieties introduce linguistic innovations from below for various reasons (e.g. from below the level of consciousness due to ongoing phonological changes or language contact), (ii) speaker intentionally use innovative forms due to their high social prestige as change from above, e.g. due to educational prescripts or for stylistic upgrading with higher register source language, and (iii) considerable evidence exists for the propagation of certain innovations across periods and communities, due to the long attestation of Post-Classical Greek and Latin. At the same time, there may be comparable contexts of change in both languages, such as stylistic upgrading in higher register poetry or the complex interplay of change from above and below in Greek and Latin private letters from Egypt.[13]

13 The latter point underlines again that classifications of private letters as having lower social prestige run into trouble from a descriptive and theoretical standpoint.

2.3 Social factors, societal processes, and the uniformitarian principle

The last issue that we should address is how to incorporate the various social and societal processes connected to change from above and below for Post-Classical Greek and Latin. Methodologically, this question is intimately connected to the question of the *uniformitarian principle*. This principle contends that social and societal processes and changes which took place in the past can be inferred from their observation in the present. Despite the law-like effects that this principle had in the field of geology where it emerged (Bergs 2012, 81), it has become clear that this principle comes with its own set of challenges in the field of historical sociolinguistics. As detailed by Bergs (2012), the uniformitarian principle may provide an initial approach to aspects such as social class, gender, and social networks, but the languages and contexts of the past do not allow an easy one-to-one mapping from the present to the past. For example, social classes were structured and maintained very differently in the past. Also, the types of close-knit social networks that are studied in modern-day sociolinguistics as nexus of linguistic change presuppose the existence of strong linguistic norms and standards as we know them today. Thus, we should exercise caution so as to avoid potential social anachronisms. Nevertheless, there are at least two social dimensions that seem to have had a direct impact on change from above and below in the Post-Classical Greek and Latin corpora: (1) social networks and communities of practice, and (2) norms and standards of language use.

Most research on ancient social networks has been conducted either by archaeologists or historians (e.g. Foxhall 2021; Taylor and Vlassopoulos 2015; Tambs 2022) or focused on certain classical authors, such as Cicero (see Marley 2018 and Hilmarsdóttir this volume). Much more work is needed in this area for Post-Classical Greek and Latin, however, which is why I will sketch out some paths that we could follow to determine the impact of networks on language change. First of all, we possess large amounts of Greek and – less so – Latin papyri from Egypt that have been preserved in archives. These were kept and collected by officials, families, or a private person in antiquity (see Vandorpe 2011 for the differences). In fact, some ancient collectors of archives are so famous that they have, according to Vandorpe, become somewhat of a celebrity in the field of papyrology, such as the Zenon archive from the third century BCE. Since the papyri in such archives can often be dated and attributed to specific people, they allow us to trace, relatively directly, the changes which may be part of a social network. On the one hand, such archives allow us to detect the language of the individual (e.g. Evans 2010 on the Zenon archive; Vierros 2021 on the two brothers discussed above). On the other hand, such archives can

prove to be hotspots for forms of shared language or communities of practice (Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013), consisting either of shared language features (e.g. Nachtergaele 2023, 144–46) or of shared innovations within the network. Indeed, several instances have been documented where innovations can be situated within the context of an archive: Nachtergaele notes the innovative use of the middle voice in a *proskynema* formula in the Saturnila archive from the end of the second century BCE (Nachtergaele 2023, 214) and the unique innovation of a rhetorical litotes in this formula in the Apollonius *strategos* archive of the first and second century (Nachtergaele 2023, 225). Matters become decidedly more complex when innovations are primarily connected to one archive but have a slightly wider spread, thereby prompting the question whether this reflects the diachronic spread of an innovation. It is well known that Greek letter writers in ancient Egypt used a large variety of request formulae to mark their requests. One well-known formulaic type is the type 'you would do well to X', which could be formulated with different mood forms (Leiwo 2010). What is not well known is that the use of this formula with the potential optative has a strong diachronic concentration in the third century BCE, with 203 of its total of 204 occurrences in Early Post-Classical Greek (III – I BCE) in only that century. What is more, 178 of the 203 occurrences (=88 %) from that century can be linked to one writer, Zenon, and are found across different text types (e.g. private letters, official letters, registers and petitions). The majority of the occurrences outside of this group belong to archives or people with which he has been in contact such as Kleon and Theodorus (cf. P.Zen.Pestm.B) or are found in the same area of Middle Egypt (Arsinoites or Herakleopolites) which is near Philadelphia where Zenon was based. Put together, this evidence could potentially suggest that Zenon's network functioned as a catalyst of innovation in the third century BCE, not only due to Zenon's role in the distributional evidence, but also because this innovative usage of the formula is found only once in a later century of Early Post-Classical Greek and a connection cannot be completely excluded there either.[14] Thus, networks and communities of practice may have had a stronger role in the spread of language change in Post-Classical Greek and Latin than has been assumed this far (cf. the case studies in Section 3).

Next, we should assess the potential impact of language standards and norms on change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek and Latin. On the one hand, Post-Classical Greek did not have a formalized variety that was treated as the

14 I refer here to P.Berl.Zill.1 from 155 BCE which concerns a letter from the strategos Ptolemaios from Herakleopolites to the king. He may have taken this 'officialese' formula either from earlier documentation, since Zenon managed the estate of Apollonios, a high ranking official for the royalty, or from the local repository of formulae, since the example comes from the same region as the earlier ones.

(written) standard. Despite some attempts at codifying a type of koine Greek which, as a dialect, developed out of a variety of Post-Classical Attic (Bubenik 1989), such as in education in Egypt[15] (see Cribiore 2001), a specific standard did not reach the level of *acceptance* (Clackson 2015a, 56). Instead, I would argue, Post-Classical Greek provides a treasure-trove for research on the *development* of linguistic norms and standards, especially given what we know of the state of extreme polarization between vernacular and high register varieties that had arisen by the time of Medieval Greek (cf. Manolessou 2008). Particularly relevant here is that we possess different lexica from the second century CE which are rife with prescriptivist patterns (cf. Kim 2010 for a brief overview). Lexica such as that of Phrynichus or Moeris presented the language usage of predominantly Classical Greek authors as a prescriptive guide for the language to use in Post-Classical times as well, covering not only matters of pronunciation (Vessella 2018) but also of vocabulary and morphosyntax (la Roi 2022b). In other words, these Atticist lexica contain negotations of the overt prestige of forms belonging to a particular variety (la Roi and Roumanis 2024), exemplifying a constructed pressure from above. Due to their aim of prescribing an older variety, the lexica reject vocabulary and morphosyntax that have undergone or are currently undergoing change in Post-Classical Greek (see la Roi 2022b for an overview). As such, the pressure from varieties of language use with high social prestige, which the lexica negotiate, influences the comparative degree of language use with low social prestige that we find in later Post-Classical Greek texts (cf. Horrocks 2010 passim on the 'Atticism' of certain literary authors). At the same time, we should be aware that we need further corpus-based testing of the long-term effects of these codifications on Post-Classical Greek, as suggested in part by the assessment by Luiselli (1999, 142), who concludes that there is little influence from these lexica on the language found in the papyri.

On the other hand, Post-Classical Latin had a more (but not fully) accepted standard of Classical Latin to rely on (Clackson 2015b), as testified by the large variety of grammars codifying the 'correct' language to use (cf. Clackson and Horrocks 2007, 130–82; Adams 2011, 7) and different forms of 'policy' in the non-formal sense from those in power (Rochette 2023). It has been noted by many that the Romans did not impose their language on the different parts of their empire which spoke other languages (e.g. Adams 2003, 545), but grammarians did impose linguistic norms from above (i.e. from the perspective of a variety with high social prestige) in a similar way

15 Clackson (2015a, 56) classifies the grammar of Dionysius Thrax as a codification attempt of this variety as well, but I would argue that this misconstrues the context in which this specific grammar was created. It was created for the purpose of understanding and decoding the language of poetry and prose writers (cf. its idea that the criticism of poetry is the highest aim in the art of grammar, κρίσις ποιημάτων, ὃ δὴ κάλλιστόν ἐστι πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ.)

as the Atticist lexica to stop changes from below; even so, it would be equally short-sighted to interpret the attitudes of grammarians all in the same manner; once more, Adams (2011, 864–65) provides a more balanced assessment of the connection between the codification of language and language change from below:

> Their motives [i.e. of grammarians, ELR] in recommending or castigating certain usages were variable, and it is a mistake to see them merely as commenting on usages that were generally considered socially substandard. They did to be sure have a certain interest in drawing attention to stigmatised usages current among the lower classes (…). We have, however, stressed throughout that that is only part of the story, because their main interest was in the language of those whom they were instructing. Their obsessions were often divorced from reality, and we cannot arrive at features of stigmatised lower social varieties merely by listing usages that they condemned. (Adams 2011, 864–65)

To conclude, the societal and social processes involved in language change in modern languages cannot be mapped back onto ancient languages in a one-to-one manner; nonetheless, I hope to have illustrated that the rich yet still underexplored textual evidence from Post-Classical Greek and Latin does suggest that networks of shared language have played pivotal roles in the diachronic spread of language changes. Especially the contrastive examination of texts associated with higher and lower registers and metalinguistic sources allows us to reevaluate the effects of social and societal processes on change from above and below for Post-Classical Greek and Latin.

3 Beyond change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek diachrony

In what follows, I discuss three diachronic case studies of innovations in Post-Classical Greek that can only partially be explained as change from above or below due to their diffusion patterns. As such, these cases make us aware of the possible limitations of viewing innovations from this vertical dimension as well as how we can refine this approach. In the discussion of the different distributional patterns, I use 'maintenance' as term for stability of existing patterns, 'innovation' for adaptations to existing patterns and 'diffusion' for the spread of innovations across contexts and time. The concept of innovation not only allows us to note those alterations to patterns from previous periods but also forces us to determine the source(s) of such innovations, whereas we can trace the subsequent spread of innovations with the concept of diffusion. In addition, the concept of maintenance helps us map the often overlooked diachronic *stability* which inevitably comes along

with change, since, of course, not every language feature or pattern can change all at once all the time (cf. also la Roi forthc. b on this issue).

First of all, there are innovative patterns that seem to have been socially prestiguous from the outset but become more explicitly socially prestigious by diachronically spreading from the initial context of elevated poetry to private letters. A case in point is the use of the optative form χαίροις, originally a wish optative expressing that the addressee may be well, but during the Middle Post-Classical Greek period (I – III CE) it comes to be used as a markedly polite greeting in the papyri, as in example 1 below from a private letter (hence my translation as "the very best of greetings"). Note how this greeting form is part of a sandwich strategy, as it were, as it is combined with a host of other politeness strategies which demonstrate the asymmetrical relationship between the writer and addressee:[16] affective terms of address (my lord Apollonius, my lord), superlative (most honoured one), hedging (if you deem it worthy) and the positive politeness wishes (I pray for your good health). Also, the papyrus shows visual signs of deference[17] as well, since χαίροις (and κύριέ) is written much bigger than the rest of the line and the writing is relatively neat (see the image in Appendix 1).

(1) **χαίροις**, κύριέ μου Ἀπολλώνιε. περὶ οὗ σε παρεκάλεσα κατ' ὄψιν, τειμιώτατε(=τιμιώτατε), καὶ ἐκ τύχης Ἁρπ[ο-]κρατίωνος ἐλθόντος πρὸς Δεῖον, συνέβαλ\ον/(= corr. ex) \αὐ/[τῷ] καὶ ὑπερεθέμεθα εἰς τ[ὴν] σὴν διάγνωσιν, ἵνα(=ἵνα papyrus), ὃ ἐπιδικαιώσῃς, τοῦτο γένηται. τὸ μὲν φανέν σοι, κύριε, δηλώσεις [μο]ι. (hand 2) ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι, Ἀπολλώνιε τιμιώτατε.[18]
(P.Brem.19, 1–12, AD 113–120, private letter)[19]
The very best of greetings, my lord Apollonius. Regarding what I requested of you in person, most honoured one, and with the arrival of Harprokration by chance before Deion, I have discussed with him and we have agreed to present it to your judgement, so that, if you deem it worthy, it may come to pass. The visible matter, my lord, you will reveal to me. (hand 2) I pray for your good health, Apollonius, most honoured one.[20]

16 There are further indications that this structure is marked, as it were, for politeness, since most of its occurrences are in asymmetric contexts and its linguistic signals, e.g. κύριέ 'lord' (cf. P.Oxy.6.933) or superlatives such as τιμιώτατε (cf. P.Princ.2.71).

17 See Amory (2022) for an overview of visual types of deference in later Post-Classical Greek papyri.

18 The texts used in this contribution are those that can be found on papyri.info for the papyri and, for the literary texts, the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/.

19 I cite papyri according the checklist of papyrological editions maintained on papyri.info, https://papyri.info/docs/checklist#Papyri.

20 The translations of the papyri are my own, but the translations of literary texts are based on the latest ones Loeb classical library: https://www.loebclassics.com/.

The use of this optatival greeting is new to the Post-Classical Greek papyri, since it was introduced to papyri in the Middle Post-Classical period (I – III CE). Yet, we are not just dealing with an innovation in example 1, but with diffusion, since the first attestations of this innovative pattern in Early Post-Classical Greek come from high-register poetry. In that period, we find the wish greeting in the author Herodas, to greet a host of gods (example 2) and in Theocritus to greet the lucky bride and groom (example 3). These addressees are construed as higher.

(2) **χαίροις**, ἄναξ Παίηον, ὃς μέδεις Τρίκκης
καὶ Κῶν γλυκεῖαν κἠπίδαυρον ὤικηκας,
σὺν καὶ Κορωνὶς ἥ σ' ἔτικτε κώπόλλων
χαίροιεν, ἧς τε χειρὶ δεξιῆι ψαύεις
Ὑγίεια, κῶνπερ οἴδε τίμιοι βωμοί
Πανάκη τε κἠπιώ τε κἰησὼ **χαίροι**,
κοὶ Λεωμέδοντος οἰκίην τε καὶ τείχεα
πέρσαντες, ἰητῆρες ἀγρίων νούσων, Ποδαλείριός τε καὶ Μαχάων χαιρόντων,
κῶσοι θεοὶ σὴν ἐστίην κατοικεῦσιν
καὶ θεαί, πάτερ Παίηον· (Her. 4.1–11)
Greetings, Lord Paeeon, who rulest Tricca and hast settled sweet Cos and Epidaurus, and also **may** Coronis who gave thee birth and Apollo **be greeted**, and she whom thou touchest with thy right hand Hygieia, and those to whom belong these honoured altars, Panace and Epio and Ieso **be greeted**, and the sackers of Laomedon's house and walls, curers of cruel diseases, Podalirios and Machaon **be greeted**, and whatsoever gods and goddesses live at thy hearth, father Paeeon:

(3) **Χαίροις, ὦ νύμφα· χαίροις, εὐπένθερε γαμβρέ.**
Λατὼ μὲν δοίη, Λατὼ κουροτρόφος, ὔμμιν
εὐτεκνίαν, Κύπρις δέ, θεὰ Κύπρις, ἶσον ἔρασθαι
ἀλλάλων, Ζεὺς δέ, Κρονίδας Ζεύς, ἄφθιτον ὄλβον, ὡς ἐξ εὐπατριδᾶν εἰς
εὐπατρίδας πάλιν ἔνθῃ. (Theoc. 18.49–53)
Greetings, bride; Greetings, groom, fortunate in your wife's father. May Leto – that good mother Leto – grant to you both fine children, Cypris – the goddess Cypris – mutual love, and Zeus – Zeus the son of Cronus – endless prosperity, and that it may pass again from noble fathers to noble sons.

Thus, this optatival greeting pattern started out in Early Post-Classical Greek poetry but in Middle Post-Classical Greek papyri became more explicitly marked for social prestige, when it got used as politeness formula in letters in (especially) assymetric

contexts.[21] Interpreting this change only as change from a higher to a lower register would miss the similarity in social context and change in usage context. So, the letter writers in the papyri have repurposed an innovation from Early Post-Classical Greek for a specific politeness purpose, illustrating the diachronic connections between prestige, register and pragmatics.

Second, there are innovations in the New Testament from Middle Post-Classical Greek that are only directly related to the Septuagint from Early Post-Classical Greek and hence do not fit in the change from above or below frame. Though it is well known that writers of New Testament texts often quoted the Septuagint (e.g. to 'confirm' prophecies from prophetic books such as Isaiah), their language reveals other connections with the Septuagint too in that the New Testament is the only text that reproduces innovative patterns that are only found in the Septuagint in Post-Classical Greek. An example in the domain of morphosyntax is the innovative use of the modal particle and the past indicative to express past genericity (i.e. an event always took place, e.g. *Church was/is on Sundays*); see example 4 from the Septuagint and example 5 from the New Testament:

(4) **ἡνίκα δ᾽ ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο Μωυσῆς εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς**, εἱστήκει πᾶς ὁ λαὸς σκοπεύοντες ἕκαστος παρὰ τὰς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ (LXX *Ex* 33.8) "**Whenever Moses went out to the tent without the camp**, all the people rose and stood, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watched Moses"

(5) καὶ τὰ κτήματα καὶ τὰς ὑπάρξεις ἐπίπρασκον καὶ διεμέριζον αὐτὰ **πᾶσιν καθότι ἄν τις χρείαν εἶχεν**· (NT. *Act. Ap.* 2.45–46)
They sold property and possessions to give **to anyone who had need.**

As detailed by la Roi (2022a, 128–29; 2023, 104), this construction is the end point of a larger pathway which the modal particle with the past indicative follows: it expresses past counterfactuality from Archaic Greek onwards,past habituality as well from Classical Greek onwards, and, finally, past genericity from Early Post-Classical Greek onwards. This innovation, however, is found only in the Septuagint (6 times, e.g. LXX *Ex.* 40.36, *Num.* 9.17) and the New Testament. There are several motivations for both the innovative construction in the Septuagint and its limited diffusion to only the New Testament: (i) this construction is a Septuagint translator's solution for a construction in the Hebrew which is foreign to Greek, the so-called infinitive construct (cf. LXX *Ex*. 33.8, 40.36, *Num*. 9.17), (ii) the generic use of the optative mood was in decline in Post-Classical Greek, which is what this alternative construction replaces, and other new alternatives were created such as

21 In literary texts of this period we also find support for this, since the address is used for higher addressees such as the holy spirit (Test. Abr. B. 13.12) or the cross (Act. Andr. 54.5).

subordinators which had fossilized the modal particle, e.g. ὅταν +past indicative as generic construction as in NT *Ev. Marc.* 11.19 (la Roi forthc.a, b), and (iii) the maintenance of this pattern by only New Testament authors is a result of transfer of a contact-induced variant within a Jewish-Greek community of practice. The history of this construction, on the one hand, illustrates the connections that may exist between writers from different periods when they transfer contact-induced features, and, on the other hand, shows that not all changes can usefully explained in a vertical way as change from above or below.

Third and finally, I would like to illustrate another possible scenario where determining the source of a change only partly explains its later diffusion patterns. Below we find another innovative pattern in literary texts from the Early Post-Classical Greek period, one which like χαίροις has its origins in high register poetry; this innovative wish pattern, viz. εἴθε γὰρ with an optative mood, first occurred in the higher registers of Early Post-Classical Greek poetry (e.g. Callimachus or Apollonius Rhodius). It is the result of the fusion of two different insubordinate wish clause markers αἴ/εἴθε 'if only' and α/εἰ γάρ 'if only' (la Roi 2021, 22–23). The occurrence in example 6, however, occurs later, at the end of the Early Post-Classical Greek period. Diodorus Siculus here rewrites a passage spoken by the Lydian king Croesus from the Classical Greek historiographical work by Herodotus, who used the wish form common to his Ionic (literary) dialect to represent Croesus' wish: Hdt. 1.27 αἴ γὰρ τοῦτο θεοὶ ποιήσειαν ἐπὶ νόον νησιώτῃσι, ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ Λυδῶν παῖδας σὺν ἵπποισι 'Would that the gods may put it in the minds of the island men to come on horseback against the sons of the Lydians!'. La Roi (2021, 22–23) has suggested that Diodorus intentionally diastratically "upgrades" the language of king Croesus, by incorporating a construction with a high register connotation from Early Post-Classical Greek that Croesus simply could not have used.

(6) **Εἴθε γάρ** τις **πείσειε** νησιώτας σὺν ἵπποις παρατάξασθαι Λυδοῖς. (Diod.Sic. 9.25.1)
[Croesus:] **Would that** someone **could persuade** the islanders to fight against the Lydians on horseback!

In Middle Post-Classical Greek (as discussed in la Roi forthc.b), we find further support that εἴθε γάρ occurs in 'marked', upgrading contexts such as example 7 from Plutarch where the wish represents someone's more archaic form of speech (in the view of the author of course), viz. Seleucus.

(7) καὶ τὸν Σέλευκον „**εἴθε γὰρ** ἑταῖρε" εἰπεῖν „ταχὺ **μεταστρέψαι** τις ἐπὶ ταῦτα καὶ μεταβάλοι θεῶν ἢ ἀνθρώπων τὸ πάθος· (Plut. *Dem.* 38.8.1)
"My friend," said Seleucus, "**would that** someone in heaven or on earth **might** speedily **convert** and turn his passion in this direction;

Further examples support this view: (i) the orator Dio Chrysostom uses εἴθε γάρ with the optative once, but only when he makes a wish in his own voice (D. Chr. 37.43.8), (ii) the historian Cassius Dio ascribes it to someone who addresses an emporer (Cass. Dio H.R. 64.11.1), (iii) Athenaeus and Diogenes Laertius use εἴθε γάρ to ascribe philosophical words to a reproach of Demetrius of Phalerum by a Cynic philosopher (Atheneaus Deipn. 10.19.25 and D. L. 6.90.65). This pattern does occur once outside literary texts, in the papyri, but it is an official papyrus about liturgical duties which is addressed to one of the highest superiors possible, the epistrategos, thus motivating its usage (Psi.10.1103, 15–16, IIAD). Finally, we have important metalinguistic evidence from the prescriptivist lexica of Moeris that εἴθε γάρ was common to Post-Classical Greek varieties: (ε 60) εἰ γάρ Ἀττικοί· εἴθε γάρ κοινόν 'if only "Attic"; if only "common". I put the labels between quotation marks since they are pre-theoretical terms without clear boundaries. After all, concerning εἴθε γάρ, κοινόν cannot refer to the contemporary spoken language (pace Thumb 1901) or a form common to Attic and Koiné Greek (Monaco 2021, 38), but, based on its distribution, likely refers to a variant that was sufficiently common to be used in texts of different registers as register upgrade (as detailed above). In sum, what started out as an innovation in high register poetry seems to have become more overtly socially prestiguous only by the way that the innovation was reused in later periods and registers, when this innovative pattern has taken its place in the stylistic repertoire of authors to upgrade their language, so much so that metalinguistic sources mark the construction as 'common' to Post-Classical Greek suggesting it may eventually have lost its overt prestige.

4 Concluding remarks

I hope to have demonstrated that the evidence for language change from above and below in Post-Classical Greek (III BCE – VI CE) and Post-Classical Latin (III CE – X CE) not only has many more insights to offer historical sociolinguists but also that we can overcome the challenges which the ancient textual material pose to us with the help of insights from the field of historical sociolinguistics. On the one hand, I have detailed and dissected the main challenges to research on language change from above and below (in its three dimensions) in Post-Classical Greek and Post-Classical Latin: (i) *the representativity of the sources* (i.e. how to deal with their limited representativeness, how to generalize findings across periods and communities, and how to conceptualize the textual authenticity of sources), (ii) *tracing the motivations for changes from above and below*, and (iii) *incorporating the social and societal processes involved in change from above and below*. In addition, I have demonstrated that the textual evidence can indeed provide answers: (i) different types of language

change, both from above and below, can be found across registers and text types, e.g. in private letters from Egypt or translations affected by language contact and ongoing change, but also in multi-register texts in which other registers, lower or higher, are represented, (ii) language change often has competing motivations from below (e.g. due to ongoing changes or language contact) as well as above (e.g. educational prescripts, stylistic upgrading with higher register source language), including differences in the later trajectories of these innovations, and (iii) there may be comparable social and societal processes at play in both the onset and the diffusion of change, such as the role of networks of change (cf. the role of archives in Egypt) and the pressures from agents who seek to codify the overt prestige of language usages (cf. the role of metalinguistic sources and ancient language 'policies').

Additionally, I have discussed cases of innovations in Post-Classical Greek that can only partially be explained as change from above or below due to their later diffusion. As such, these cases make us aware of the possible limitations of viewing innovations from this vertical dimension for longer diachronic periods. Each change in each case study had different motivations and diachronic patterns of diffusion which a change from above or below could not explain in a complete way: (i) an innovative greeting from Early Post-Classical Greek poetry was repurposed for politeness functions in the papyri from Egypt in the Middle Post-Classical Greek period, (ii) a past generic construction which was an innovation specific to the translation context of the Septuagint in Early Post-Classical Greek was taken over only by New Testament writers in a later period as a type of shared community of practice, and (iii) a novel insubordinate wish strategy from Early Post-Classical Greek poetry came to be used by prose writers to attribute speakers with prestige language, a process which would ultimately actually lead to this construction's loss of prestige. Finally, I have argued that more insights could be gleaned from comparative studies of Post-Classical Greek and Latin, since there are important similarities in how language change from below spread across texts (e.g. in private letters from Egypt), how prestige is awarded to certain forms of language use (e.g. by grammarians and lexicographers) and how changes diffuse through societies in different ways across time (e.g. via networks or depending on factors such as the type of text and its innovative nature).

5 This volume

In this volume, we offer three further case studies of language change from above and below, all of which seek to answer the following question: *How to*

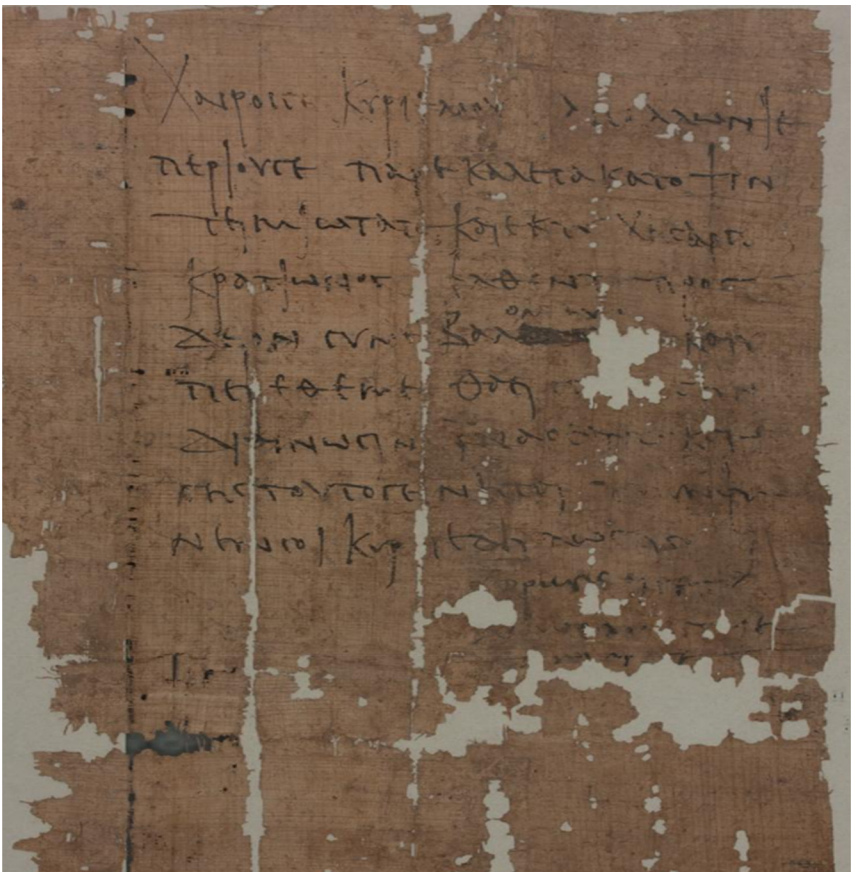
trace language change from above and below in Ancient Greek and Latin primary and metalinguistic sources? The papers focus on primary and metalinguistic sources in both Ancient Greek and Latin, covering a wide chronological span.

The first two papers will focus on primary sources for language change from above and below, with Dalia Pratali Maffei examining Ancient Greek inscriptions and Sólveig Hilmarsdóttir examining Latin private letters from Cicero. Pratali Maffei provides a detailed assessment of the interplay of supra-regional poetic and regional dialectal features in inscribed epigrams in the Doric dialect. By comparing not only the dialectal features and the linguistic levels they relate to but also, crucially, the interrelation of features with the concept of implicational scales, Pratali Maffei demonstrates that supra-regional forms have 'overt' and regional dialectal have 'covert' prestige, with the latter being used to allude to the local context. Hilmarsdóttir discusses the different motivations behind referring to a letter by means of different words in the corpus of Ciceronian epistolography, resp. *litterae* and *epistula.* The distribution among letter writers shows that we are not exclusively dealing with free variation, but rather with distributional change *in apparent time*, as there is a tendency for younger writers to use *epistula* whereas older writers use *litterae*. Similarly, Hilmarsdóttir connects the tendency of older writers to use *epistula* to ongoing language debates in which the use of Greek words, which *epistula* was originally (viz. ἐπιστολή), was explicitly discouraged, thus illustrating change from above. The last paper focuses on metalinguistic sources and the role of prescriptivism in Post-Classical Greek lexica (Chiara Monaco). Monaco details the social mechanisms that are behind the construction of a prescribed language from above by the Atticist lexicographers. In particular, it is shown that the Atticist lexicographers make use of different semiotic processes to divide language users on ideological grounds, such as iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure.

To conclude this issue, a reflective epilogue is offered by one of the main scholars in the historical sociolinguistics of Latin and Greek, Klaas Bentein. Bentein ties together the various challenges and opportunities for further research offered in the papers and points to some further areas in which historical sociolinguistic approaches to Ancient Greek and Latin could or should progress.

Appendix

Image 1: P.Brem 19. Link to image in public domain: https://brema.suub.uni-bremen.de/papyri/content/titleinfo/770780.



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