

3. Analysis of the Sounds

a. Vowels

While the five basic vowels, *a e i o u*, may be somewhat

modified both in quality and quantity as a result of sentence phonetics, these variations will not be discussed here in detail. *A* is the *a* of Eng. *father*, phonetically [a] when unaccented, [a:] when accented, cf. *amál* 'friend' [ama:l]. *I* is the *ee* of Eng. *feet*, phonetically [i] when unaccented, [i:] when accented, cf. *i buki* 'the work' [ibuki:]. *U* is the *oo* of Eng. *boot*, phonetically [u] when unaccented, cf. the previous example, *i buki*, [u:] when accented, cf. *tu* 'you' second person singular, [tu:].

Unaccented *i* and *u* are perhaps more accurately described as half-long. *E* and *o* are usually open vowels, as in Greek, phonetically [ɛ] and [ɔ] respectively, and they lengthen somewhat when accented, cf. *pele* 'testicles' [pɛk:], *lolo* 'red' [lɔlɔ:]. A closer sound of *o* seems to occur [o], but whether in free distribution or not is not clear. The rising diphthongs *ay*, *ey*, *oy*, and *uy*, cf. *kay* 'where', *dey* 'mother', *roy* 'spoon', *muy* 'mouth' occur, but in some words the constituent vowels are left in hiatus, e.g. *paí* 'water' (here an original intervocalic -n- has been lost). Falling diphthongs *ya*, *ye*, *yo*, *yu* also occur, cf. *yak* 'eye', *yek* 'one', *Yoryos* 'Yorgos, George', the Greek (and Gypsy) name, *Yunano* 'Greece'. *Ya* is particularly common in the nominative plural of feminine nouns ending in -*i* in the singular, cf. *bukyá* 'business affairs', plural of *buki*.

Note that unaccented vowels do not tend, as in English, toward [ə] but retain their quality. Nasalization of vowels before a nasal is slight, cf. *tšank* 'leg' [tšank̄]; there are no nasal vowels as such.

b. Consonants

(i) The consonants *b*, *d*, *f*, *g*, *k*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *s*, *t*, *z* are pronounced approximately like the sounds represented by these same letters in English. Note however the following points.

Initial *p*, *t*, *k* are not to be strongly aspirated, as in English, unless such aspiration is indicated by a following (*h*). Younger speakers tend to diminish or even omit such aspiration which is contrary to Greek usage; it may be significant that *p(h)uro* 'old' turns up in Greek argot without aspiration.

Some speakers may slightly palatize *k* before a following front vowel, e.g. *buki* 'work' may be realized as *buk'i*. It is not clear whether the *k* in *buk'i* differs phonetically from the *ky* in the plural, *bukya*.

The *g* always has the sound of English *g* in *good*. *S* is always to be understood as the unvoiced sibilant of Eng. *son* while *z* is always its voiced counterpart, Eng. *z* in *zoo*. For some speakers, *n* apparently becomes [ŋ] before *k* or *g*, as in *ingya* 'finger nail', but other speakers never seem to use this positional variant.

There is some evidence that a rule once existed in this dialect by which a final voiced obstruent became unvoiced: the best example is *yak* 'fire' (plural, *yaga*); but cf. also *dat* 'father', plural *data* (Rum. Romany *dad*, plural *dada*), and *tšip* 'tongue, language', plural *tšipa* (Rum. Romany *tšib*, *tšiba*) where generalization has gone in both directions.

Final clusters are simplified: *gras* 'horse', but plural *grasta*.

(ii) The semivowels *v* and *y* are pronounced like the sounds represented by the same letters in English, *v* as labiodental and *y* as palatal. Both *v* and *y* are subject to occasional loss.

Initial *v-* is retained: *va* 'yes', *vov* 'he'. There are traces of an earlier loss in this position: *orba* 'word' comes from Rum. *vorbă*, but the loss here may reflect a general trait of Rum. Romany (*vov* 'he' appears as *ou* in Rum. Romany, see Serb. s.v.).

Intervocalic *-v-* is occasionally lost: *tšavo* 'boy, son' is often pronounced *tšao*; *savo*, *savi* 'which?' (masc. and fem. sing.) often become respectively *sao* and *sai*; but it is more generally retained.

Final *-v* has sometimes been lost: *šov* 'six' sometimes becomes *šo*. More commonly, however, final *-v* unvoices to *-f*: *ruv* 'wolf' can be pronounced *ruf* (plural *ruva*). In the common verbal ending *-av* of first person singular present tense, the *-v* is always retained and usually voiced (other dialects show *-ava* which may explain this retention.)

An initial *v-* appears in this dialect in the words *vudar* 'door' and *vurdon* 'wagon' where other dialects occasionally show *udar* and *urdon*.

Initial *y-* is often lost in *yek* 'one' which becomes *ek*, especially in rapid speech.

It is possible that an intervocalic *-n-* was palatalized before a front vowel, became *-y-* and was lost. I have mentioned *paï* 'water'; cf. also *peïnda* 'fifty' (from Gk. *πενήντα*); the plural of *Amerikano* 'American' is *Amerikaë* (R).

(iii) *L* and *r* are pronounced as in Greek. Thus *l* corresponds to an English "clear" *l* ("dark" *l* does not occur, although a final *l* may be slightly velarized); *r* is a flap, and the distinction made in

some Romany dialects between two varieties of *r* does not seem to occur here (cf. the interesting discussion of *r* sounds in Gj & Lj, para 15).

(iv) The aspiration *h* occurs only in initial position and seems to be limited to words of Turkish origin like *hayır* 'no'; it is pronounced like an English initial *h*- and is omitted by some speakers.

(v) The affricates, voiceless *tš* and voiced *dž*, correspond respectively to *ch* in Eng. *chap*, *rich* and *dg* or *j* in Eng. *edge*, *jump*. The symbol *š* represents *sh* in Eng. *shot* or *mash*. The sound represented by *x* is a velar spirant, the German *ach-Laut*. (The corresponding palatal spirant does not seem to occur in Romany words, though common in Greek where the two sounds are in complementary distribution, depending on the following vowel.) Initial *x*- does not seem to occur before *e* or *i*, and it is fairly rare in non-initial position (cf. however *xoxaipe* 'lie', *xoxaxay* 'Turk', *bax* 'luck', *bezex* 'too bad'). The symbol *x* will be used throughout with this value; the sound combination *ks* will be spelled *ks* throughout.

c. Variations in Pronunciation

As every student of Romany knows, there are likely to be many individual differences in the pronunciations of the sounds just described. Some of these variations may reflect original clan or tribal divisions. This is perhaps the case with *anro* 'egg' which sometimes becomes *arno*; similarly, *manro* 'bread' can be *marno*, and *punro* (or with parasitic *-d-*, *pundro*) 'leg' can be heard as *purno*.

Wavering between *s* and *š* is old in certain words. Paspati attests both *sukar* and *šukar* 'beautiful,' a particularly common alternation.

Among Greek Gypsies the variations sometimes form a pattern and perhaps occur mainly among younger speakers who substitute Greek phonemes for those which are non-Greek. Thus, *dž* is replaced by *dz*; *džav* 'I go' becomes *dzav*. Similarly, *tš* changes to *ts*: *tša(v)o* 'son, boy' is pronounced *tsa(v)o*. All instances of *š* are likely to change to *s*: *šoro* 'head' becomes *soro*. It might be predicted that Turkish initial *h*- could also sometimes shift to *x*, and I have found a few examples (see *xaliya*, *xurlisaráv*).

Some Greek speakers drop the nasal in *-nd-*, pronouncing e.g. Gk. πέντε 'five' as *pede*; it is likely that some Romany speakers may do the same. This would explain the variant *ado* (R) for *ando* 'in'; *landzav* (R) is the reverse phenomenon (hypercorrection) for *ladzav* 'I am ashamed.'

Turkish loan words sometimes show vocalic variation from speaker to speaker: *vakíti* 'time' may be pronounced *vakúti* (R) and I have even heard the first *-i-* in *vakíti* pronounced as in Eng. *bit* (or, perhaps better, like the final vowel in Rum. *urít* 'ugly'). Both *sígo* and *súgo* 'quickly' occur. Turk. *dizi* turns up as *dízi* 'sincerely' but also as *dúzi*.

It is particularly the Turkish high back unrounded vowel *ɨ* which is subject to various renditions; occasionally maintained, it is more often shifted to /i/ or /u/.

The sound /y/, Turkish *ü*, is maintained by some speakers, e.g. in *súti* 'milk' (see in glossary s.v. *súti*).

4. Accent

There is a perceptible stress accent which falls almost always on the last or next-to-last syllable. (I would be more positive except for certain words like *barvalo* 'rich', *baxtalo* 'lucky' which are ambiguous; some speakers seem to stress the antepenult, others the last syllable.) In some word-classes this accent is fairly predictable. Inherited nouns and adjectives ending in *-o*, *-i*, *-e* almost always accent these endings and retain the accent on the final syllable in the course of inflection. Among dozens of examples may be cited as typical: *loló* 'red', *bibí* 'aunt', *paté* 'clothes'; the accusative singular of *tšavó* 'boy' is *tšavés* (*diklem e tšaves* 'I saw the boy'). Nouns and adjectives ending in a consonant are not predictable: *amál* 'friend' but *bálval* 'wind' (also *balvál* however). Borrowed nouns and adjectives ending in a vowel, even if the vowel is *-o* or *-i*, often accent the penult: *métska* 'bear', *hekímo* 'doctor', *denízi* 'sea'.

In the verbal system, the ending is usually accented except that in the imperfect tense, the tense marker *-as* is regarded as enclitic: *džanél* 'he knows', but *džanélas* 'he knew'. Participles are treated like adjectives in *-o*, *-i*, *-e*: *mató* 'drunk', *giló* 'gone' (both masculine singular).

Unstressed case endings are always enclitic, e.g. the

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instrumental *-sa* in *mánsa* 'with me'. (Other case endings are listed below under Section 10.) The adjectival genitive formations *-esko*, *-engo*, are accented on the penult, as are the pronominal forms *lésko* 'his', *láko* 'her', etc.

An enclitic particle *-da* (see glossary) has been taken over from Turkish in the sense 'also', as *me da* 'I too'.

When object pronouns follow a verb they are enclitic: *de-man* 'give me'.

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