

Sociolinguistic interpretation needs geography (and dialectology):

final unstressed vowels in some southern Campanian dialects

While (Tuscan-based) standard Italian contrasts final unstressed /i e a o/ (the latter arisen from merger of Proto-Romance -o and -u), Neapolitan has neutralized all final unstressed vowels into /ə/. Moving further south, if one listens to connected speech produced by speakers of dialects of central Campania (in the area of Vallo di Diano, see Fig. 1), the first auditory impression is that a neutralization of the Neapolitan kind has taken place here too. Thus, in the dialect of Polla (province of Salerno), for instance, connected speech displays a generalized prevalence of final [ə] (1a) as in Neapolitan; however, one can also find examples of non-centralized final vowels (1b):

- (1) a. [və'nɛt:ərə/'so b:ə'nu:tə 'lɔ:rə] 'vennero/sono venuti loro' (they came/have come)  
[par'tjet: a'jiɛrə] 'partii ieri' (I left yesterday)  
[sta fa'ti:jə a 'a:mə fə'nu:tə] 'questo lavoro l'abbiamo finito' (we've finished this job)
- b. [və'nɛt:əro] 'vennero'  
[fə'nu:tə/-a] 'finita' (ended, fem.sg.)  
[a'jiɛri] 'ieri' (yesterday)

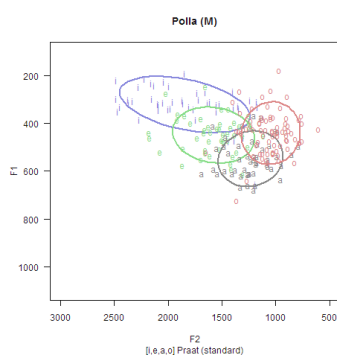
This variation is traditionally accounted for by appealing to osmosis between different levels of the speakers' repertoire, so that the occurrence of unreduced final vowels is ascribed to standardization (as we said, Italian contrasts final /i e a o/), while centralized vowels are taken to mirror the basilectal variety more faithfully. For example, an account along similar lines is provided by Maturi (2002:58) for the dialects of Sannio Beneventano, while commenting on spontaneous productions by a speaker who alternates [a vər'niʃə] 'the paint' and [la vər'niʃe], in the latter occurrence "restoring the full vowel along with the standard article" (cf. standard Italian *la vernice*). In this perspective, Pollese data too could be interpreted as an example of vacillation between basilectal Campanian schwas (1a) and acrolectal standard Italian full final vowels (1b).

A closer look at vowel systems in this area, though, shows that this interpretation is not on right track for the data in (1). Previous studies (Cangemi et alii 2010, Loporcaro et alii 2010) in fact showed that the dialects of Vallo di Diano indeed have a conservative final vowel system of the Tuscan kind

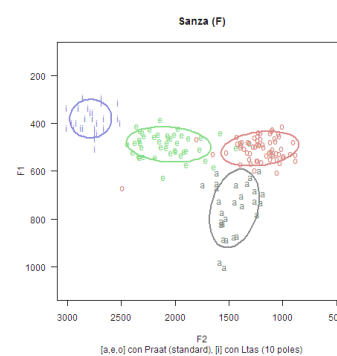
(/i e a o/). Since the basilectal variety has four unreduced vowels, variation between full and centralized vowels cannot be ascribed to social dynamics like the one proposed by Maturi (2002) to explain variation in Sannio. The analysis of the geolinguistic context in which our dialects are spoken turns out to be crucial here, in order to arrive at a more satisfactory interpretation of the data: these are best interpreted in terms of the interaction between a basilectal pole (with full final vowels) and a koine variety (with centralized vowels), namely Neapolitan. This interpretation is supported by a close acoustic analysis of our corpus, which shows that the dialects of Vallo di Diano do have four separate final vowel phonemes, but their realization is more centralized in varieties which had stronger contacts with Naples (e.g. Polla, which has been directly linked with Naples since the Roman age through the Via Popilia; see Fig. 2) than in more isolated ones (e.g. Sanza; see Fig. 3).



Italy, Campania, Vallo di Diano, Polla and Sanza



Vowel dispersion graph (68% ellipses, male speaker)



Vowel dispersion graph (68% ellipses, female speaker)

#### References :

Cangemi, F., Delucchi, R., Loporcaro, M. & Schmid, S. (2010) Vocalismo finale atono “toscano” nei dialetti del Vallo di Diano (Salerno), Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> AISV Conference (Naples, 3-5 February).  
 Loporcaro, M., Cangemi, F., Delucchi, R. & Schmid, S. (2010), Tuscan-like final vowel system in Vallo di Diano dialects, Workshop on Sound Change (Barcelona, 21-22 October).  
 Maturi, P. (2002), Dialetti e substandardizzazione nel Sannio beneventano, Frankfurt am Main etc.: Peter Lang.