LANGUAGE VARIATION IN SPACE AND IN TIME
A social-dialectological approach to variation in the Transitive-Perfective Clause in Dialects
of Marathi

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Abstract
This paper addresses the theme of the workshop by providing a social-dialectological slant on variation in language. I will begin with a brief overview of the central theoretical and methodological tenets of the variationist approach to language. Two methodological off-shoots of the variationist approach - socio-historical linguistics and modern dialectology - are briefly introduced for examining synchronic variation in the NIA language, Marathi and its implications for examining language change. The paper provides a description of variation in case marking and agreement in the transitive-perfective clause in regional varieties of Marathi, including Konkani and Ahirani. The data are drawn from an on-going dialectological survey of Marathi at the Deccan College. The data are compared with historical sources including Grierson (1905). It is often not possible to directly analyse language change in space, but synchronic evidence in the form of areal variation substitutes for the diachronic dimension. We will analyse the regional variation within the socio-historical framework and argue that the variation is the result of both language-internal and language-external factors.

1. Introduction

Social dialectology differs from traditional dialectology in shifting the focus from invariant, archaic, rural forms of language used by settled communities to incorporating variationist / sociolinguistic methods of sampling as well as the quantitative methods of analysis based on data from large corpora (e.g. Siewierska and Bakker 2006).

Dialectology, a precursor of sociolinguistics, examines divergence of two local dialects from a common ancestor and synchronic variation in the regional varieties. Sociolinguists, on the other hand, are interested in the full range of forms in a community (and their social evaluation). Sociolinguists use information about social structure, people movements, extra-linguistic situation, contextual factors and social evaluation of structural options in explaining mechanisms of language change / evolution. Modern dialectology integrates a discussion of these social factors as also historical facts in the interpretation of dialectal variation and change. Modern dialectology not only identifies the areal distribution of particular linguistic features but also takes interest in the effect of mobility and contact with speakers on the speech variety / varieties of a region.

Social Dialectologists believe that languages are inherently variable. Such variation is not "free" but is "structured heterogeneity" (Weinreich et al 1968:188). Further, language evolution is variational (like biological evolution), proceeding by competition and selection among competing linguistic alternatives: A and B (and C), with A or B (or C, or A and C, or B and C) prevailing because they were favoured by particular ecological factors (Mufwene 2001).

The research agenda for studies of dialect / language variation and change was charted by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) in their seminal paper, 'Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change'. This agenda can be summarised in the form of five aspects of language change:

The constraints problem: The constraints problem involves formulating 'constraints on the transition from one state of a language to an immediately succeeding state' (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968:100).

The transition problem: This is the question of what intervening stages can (or must) be posited between any two forms of a language separated by time. (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968:184).

The actuation problem: why the change was not actuated sooner, or why it was not simultaneously activated wherever identical functional conditions prevailed. This is paraphrased by Walkden in the Handbook of Historical Syntax as follows: "What factors can account for the actuation of changes? Why do changes in a structural feature take place in a particular language at a particular time, but not in other languages with the same feature, or in the same language at other times?"

The embedding problem: "How are the observed changes embedded in the matrix of linguistic and extralinguistic concomitants of the forms in question? (That is, what other changes are associated with the given changes in a manner that cannot be attributed to chance?)" (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968:185).

The evaluation problem: How do members of the speech community evaluate the change in progress?

Of the five, Weinreich et al recognised the actuation problem, "why did a particular change occur at a particular place at a particular time" to be at the heart of a theory of language change. Theories of language change differ in that they deal either with language-internal factors (e.g. language acquisition, cognition, language use) or with language-external factors, which concern population dynamics (e.g. migration / population movements, contact, network ties, imperfect learning). The latter are examined by sociolinguists / social dialectologists. The sociolinguistic approach to language variation and change (which developed largely from the pioneering work of William Labov) includes consideration of both linguistic constraints (e.g. the conditioning environment) as well as sociological and contextual constraints (e.g. speaker's age, sex, education, formality etc.).

Social dialectology introduced sociolinguistic sampling methods to dialectology; data are collected from a wide spread of speakers in the local speech community, including speakers who are mobile and have come in contact with other regional speech varieties. Speakers belonging to diverse age-groups, educational and professional backgrounds and both sexes are sampled. (For an overview of applications of this method see Trudgill et al 2003.) The particular methodology helps to examine the mechanisms of diffusion of language / dialect change which can then be modelled (e.g. the cascade model or the gravity model, Trudgill et al 2003).

Besides addressing traditional areas of sociolinguistic variation and change, social dialectology is also concerned with newer areas of research such as dialect formation, dialect

diffusion and dialect levelling. These are the mechanisms by which language change is effected.

Dialectology has forged interfaces with sub-disciplines other than sociolinguistics too. In recent times there has been a growing realisation of the need for collaboration among syntacticians and typologists on the one hand (who deal with cross-linguistic data drawn from standard varieties; e.g. data presented in the *World Atlas of Language Structures* see www.wals.info) and dialectologists / sociolinguists (who deal with non-standard, spoken varieties; e.g. *Linguistic Survey of India* https://dsal.uchicago.edu/books/lsi/https:/ and Romani Project /romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/). Sub-disciplines such as Syntax and Typology are now turning attention to variation in language. Dialectology is seen as complementing the typological interest in cross-linguistic variation by making available a larger number of attested grammatical systems. A further advantage is seen in the dialects as non-standardised grammatical systems (unlike the languages that typology generally deals with). The advantage is that dialectal data gives typologists and syntacticians a larger number of attested grammatical systems to explain within their theoretical frameworks. Dialectology (whether regional or social) has focussed attention on non-standard speech varieties; typological linguistics and syntax, on the other hand, have tended to focus attention on standard languages. We are witnessing today a cross-fertilisation of methods from sub-disciplines of linguistics - dialectology, historical linguistics, typology and contact linguistics - in mutually beneficial ways (e.g. Bisang 2004; Chamoreau et al 2012). This development has led to fresh opportunities for explaining language change using dialectological data.

However, the role of dialectology is often that of a hand-maiden (one which provides rich dialectal data) just as it was in the nineteenth century for historical linguistics. A truly fruitful integrated approach to language variation and change must accommodate the goals of dialectology. Having identified the areal spread of a given structural feature, social dialectologists seek answers to questions such as the following:

  i.   How did a particular regional variety come to have the linguistic features that it has?
 ii.   Do the optional structures x and y co-exist in an idiolect / dialect or is only one of the structures possible in an idiolect? (i.e. is the variation inter-speaker or intra-speaker?)
iii.   Are there systematic linguistic and social contexts in which either option / variant is preferred by the speaker?

This paper will focus on (i) describing synchronic dispersion in the morpho-syntactic feature of ergativity in the spatial domain in the Marathi-speaking region; (ii) comparing the synchronic data with historical sources to draw indirect inferences about dialect change; (iii) pointing to questions and generating hypotheses for further study of variation in space and in time in the Marathi region. I will attempt to account for patterns of variation in the geographical and temporal dispersion of ergativity within a usage-based framework which draws on the sociolinguistic theory.

The remaining sections of the paper are organised as follows. Section two introduces socio-historical linguistics as a methodology for examining variability in the spatial, temporal and social domains. Section three is focussed on variability in the linguistic feature, ergativity. Fresh dialectal data from regional varieties of Marathi is presented and compared with specimens from the *Linguistic Survey of India* (1905). Optionality in regional as well as in idiolectal usage will be described in order to raise relevant questions and generate hypotheses for further examination within the framework of social dialectology.

2. Socio-historical linguistics: a methodological off-shoot of variationism

The analysis of variable dialectal data in this paper employs two methodological off-shoots of variationism : social dialectology and socio-historical linguistics. We will briefly describe and illustrate these approaches before proceeding to addressing the main goals of the paper.

Socio-historical linguistics uses the quantitative, variationist methods of sociolinguistics to examine diachronic development of social / regional dialects. A central assumption of the approach being used is that the linguistic forces which operate today are not unlike those of the past (Romaine 1982) i.e. there is no reason for assuming that language did not vary in the same patterned way in the past as it does today (cf. the uniformitarian principle). Current variation and its correlation with social structure and patterns of human interaction may be used in constructing a social model. The approach helps the researcher to investigate whether and to what extent synchronic variation in contemporary regional varieties of a language reflects diachronic developments. (See Romaine 1982 for a case study of syntactic variation in Scots English using the sociohistorical approach.) Methods such as age-grading or apparent time are employed in making use of synchronic data to reconstruct language change within a speech community (see e.g. Sankoff 2006.)

To illustrate the socio-historical methodology used to study language variation and change, I reproduce below a case study of the transitive-perfective clause in the variety of Marathi spoken in the border town of Kupwar (reported originally in Kulkarni-Joshi 2016).

Gumperz and Wilson (1971) was an influential study in the field of contact sociolinguistics. They made a case for isomorphism or the development of identical syntactic structures in the contact varieties of Marathi, Kannada and Hindi-Urdu in the town of Kupwar located in the state of Maharashtra (where Marathi is the state official language) close to the border with the state of Karnataka (where Kannada is the state official language). Gumperz and Wilson presented data to suggest that close contact among the three speech varieties over several hundred years had led to the putative syntactic isomorphism. Kulkarni-Joshi (2016) used synchronic and diachronic data from Kupwar and the surrounding Marathi-Kannada bilingual region at the state border to demonstrate that isomorphism was an artefact of the particular methodology used by the researchers in the previous study. The socio-historical approach and the apparent age construct were instrumental in arriving at this conclusion.

A linguistic feature in the Kupwar variety of Marathi (A New Indo-Aryan language) which was reported as affected by contact with Kannada (a Dravidian language) was the syntax of the transitive-perfective construction. Gumperz and Wilson reported the loss of ergativity in this speech variety under the influence of the non-ergative Kannada. Data collected in the re-visit of Kupwar revealed that (i) ergative marking may be present or absent on the subject NP of a perfective clause and (ii) the verb in such a clause may agree with the subject NP which may or may not be case-marked or with the non-case marked object NP. The analysis of agreement in the transitive perfective clause was based on the following number of tokens (= instances of use of the transitive-perfective construction): Kupwar 58 tokens from 8 speakers; Hittani 62 tokens from 9 speakers; Bijapur 13 tokens from one

sample; Dharwar sample 1–11 tokens; Dharwar sample 2–5 tokens. Of these, the Kupwar (District Sangli, Maharashtra) and Hittani (District. Belgaum, Karnataka) data were collected by the author. Bijapur and Dharwar data are from Grierson (1905).

A comparison of the particular linguistic feature in Kupwar Marathi with other contact varieties of Marathi close to the Maharashtra-Karnataka border (Fig. 1) showed that the non-contiguous contact variety of Marathi in Dharwar showed a complete shift towards a Kannada-like agreement pattern in transitive perfective clauses; some variability was observed in the Bijapur sample; Kannada-like agreement was predominant in the Bijapur sample. Data collected in the border village of Hittani (in the state of Karnataka) showed a cross-generational pattern of variation identical to that in KuM. In both KuM and in Hittani Marathi, standard Marathi-like agreement dominated. Quantification of the linguistic feature relvealed that Kupwar Marathi and Kupwar Kannada had not reached complete intertranslatability as was claimed by Gumperz and Wilson. Marathi-like agreement was predominant in Kupwar Marathi across age groups. Younger speakers of KuM appeared to have moved to a more standard Marathi-like usage. Cross-generational usage of the particular linguistic feature in KuM was identical to that in the cross-border variety of Marathi in Hittani village; Kupwar Marathi usage was, however, unlike that in contiguous Bijapur and in non-contiguous Dharwar. Indirect inferences regarding dialect change could thus be drawn using 'age of speaker' as a social variable. This development was ascribed to the changed status of Marathi in the region (i.e. that of state official language) since the formation of linguistic states in 1960.
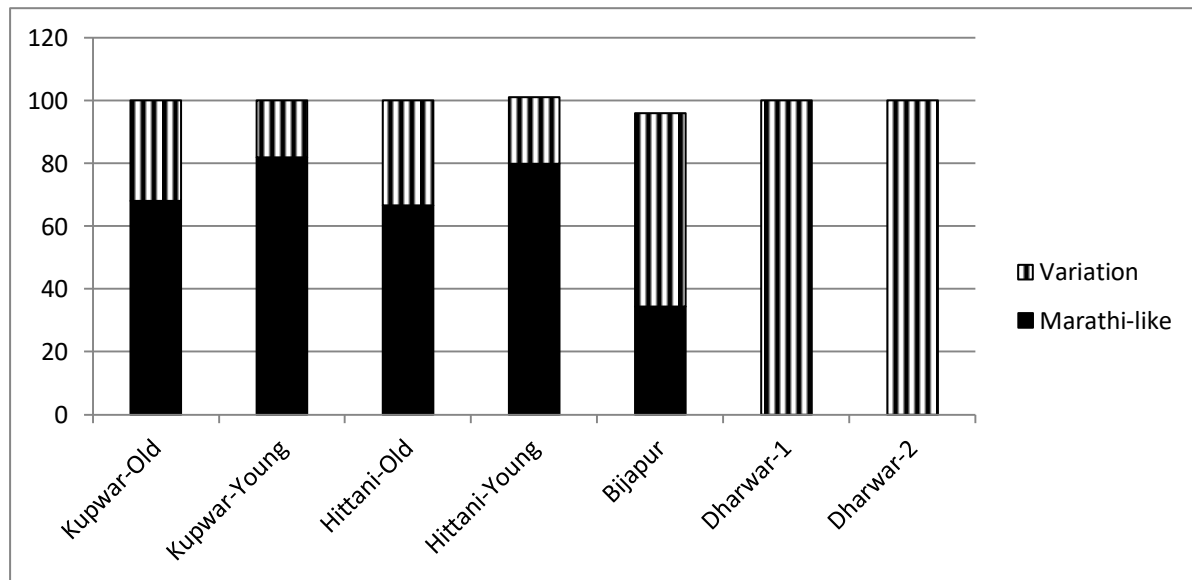

Figure 1: Frequency of Marathi-like agreement in the transitive perfective clause in varieties of Marathi spoken in Kupwar (south Maharashtra), Hittani (north Karnataka), Bijapur and Dharwar (Karnataka).

The socio-historical method investigates both linguistic and social constraints on language change (cf. the constraints problem identified by Weinreich et al 1968, see above). In a study of dative marking in historical and dialectal varieties of Marathi, for instance, we

found that the change from the regional / traditional marker of the dative to the modern / standard marker was constrained by semantic functions of the NP to which the marker was attached: the modern marker first emerged to mark the recipient, beneficiary and goal functions while the functions of purpose, external possessor, etc. were affected later in the course of this development (see Kulkarni-Joshi and Kelkar *forthcoming*).

2.1 Limitations in using the socio-historical linguistic approach

Reconstruction of diachronic changes in language using synchronic data within the socio-historical approach relies significantly on having access to comparable data from different points in time. Typically these are written texts. Very often the varying genres of the available texts make it difficult to compare and draw reliable inferences about language change. At times it is the formal nature of written language which renders texts a less than satisfactory source of information. Marathi is fortunate to have literary representations of the various phases in its historical development; however, a problem I have faced in my use of these texts for applying the socio-historical method is that dialectal features which are typical of spoken language are often not captured in the written texts. For example, the regional variants of the transitive-perfective construction in Marathi are rarely found in writing. My examination of this linguistic variable in dialects of Marathi (section 3 below) is therefore largely restricted to comparison with specimens of Marathi in Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* which is a written record of varieties of the language as it was spoken a little over a hundred years ago.

We will now move to a description of ergativity in selected varieties of Marathi.

3.0 Variability in the transitive-perfective construction in Marathi

Ergativity in Indo-Aryan languages is a well-studied phenomenon and has been examined using various approaches in linguistics – historical, typological, syntactic, and sociolinguistic. Previous studies of the ergative construction in western NIA include Bhatt, 2007; Davison, 2004; Kachru, 1987; Kachru & Pandharipande, 1978; Mahajan, 1990, 1997, 2012; Mohanan 1994; Subbarao, 2012, and others for Hindi-Urdu; Deo & Sharma, 2002; Pandharipande, 1997 for Marathi; Patel, 2007 for Kutchi Gujarati; Khokhlova, 2000, 2002 for Marwari; Bickel & Yadava, 2000 for Nepali; and Bhatia, 1993; Bhatt, 2007; Butt and Deo, 2001; Chandra, Kaur and Udaar, 2014 for Punjabi.

The focus of this paper will be on a closer examination of spatial and temporal variation in the morpho-syntax of the transitive-perfective clause in Marathi. Present-day standard Marathi is a split ergative language (split for person and aspect). Only third person nominal expressions are marked for the ergative case and the verb in such clauses agrees with the nominative object NP. Overt ergative marking is absent in the first and second persons though the rule for agreement remains the same. Old Marathi (which is accessible in literary and inscriptional texts) reveals that Old Marathi (c.1000 AD to 1390 AD) overtly case marked the agent in all three persons and the verb agreement was with the nominative object

(or the verb took default neuter agreement). The regional varieties of present-day Marathi reveal Old Marathi-like or standard-Marathi-like nominal marking and agreement pattern or they have lost ergativity altogether; yet others show variability in marking the agent with ergative case and variability in patterns of agreement as well. Such variability is more evident in the speech varieties at the borders of the Marathi-speaking region today.

The synchronic, contemporary data for this study are drawn from five regional varieties of Marathi:

i. the standard dialect based on the educated, Pune variety;
ii. the Nagpur variety bordering Hindi to the north-east of the Marathi-speaking region today;
iii. Ahirani bordering Gujarati to the north-west of the Marathi-speaking region today;
iv. the Sangameshwar speech variety in the Konkan close to Goan Konkani to the south-west of the Marathi-speaking region today; and
v. southern variety of Marathi in Kolhapur district bordering Dravidian Kannada.

The data were gathered in the course of an on-going Survey of the Dialects of the Marathi language at the Deccan College, Pune[1]. The focus of this project is on capturing morpho-syntactic variability. Data were gleaned through personal narrations, narrations of traditional stories and responses to a semi-structured questionnaire based on videos developed by the project team at the Deccan College. Elicitation and translation could not have been useful in collecting data on dialects of a single language. Further, the relatively infrequent occurrence of morpho-syntactic variables in natural speech is well-known. Hence, videos were developed to elicit particular agreement patterns, case markers, verb forms, etc. These responses were cross-checked with data from narrations. Narrations are seen as advantageous for employing the social-dialectological approach. Narration is a cultural universal, they have ready accessibility, length of discourse specimens facilitates statistical counts (cf. quantitative analyses in social dialectology) and it guarantees availability of a number of examples of given construction-types in the text (Hopper Thompson 1980: 282). For the diachronic dialectal data in this paper I have relied on published sources, mainly the Linguistic Survey of India (1905; Vol. VII) and partly on Ghatage's *Survey of Marathi Dialects* (for Kudali).

3.1 Old Marathi

The transitive-perfective construction in Old Marathi had overt morphological marking on personal pronouns in all three persons. The first and second person plural pronouns in Old Marathi show syncretism. Agreement was with the nominative object. The available written records for old Marathi suggest a homogenous, non-variable ergative system in Old Marathi.

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[1] The project is funded by the Rajya Marathi Vikas Sanstha of the Government of Maharashtra and is being implemented at the Deccan College, Pune since September 2017. Till date, data have been collected in sixteen of the 36 districts in Maharashtra from 154 villages and 1543 speakers.

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	am^hi
Perf	1	miya	am ^hi
Non-Perf	2	tu	tum^hi
Perf	2	tuwa	tum^hi
Non-Perf	3	to	tyani
Perf	3	tene	tyani

Table 1: Pronominal paradigm of Old Marathi (based on Tulpule 1960)

Examples of the transitive-perfective construction in Old Marathi

1. *mīya ramatẽ mhəṇitlẽ*   [Līḷācəritrə: Līḷā 317]

   I.ERG ram.ACC say.PFV.3SN

   'I said to Ram.'

2. *tẽhĩ gosawīyãtẽ dekhilẽ*   [Līḷācəritrə: Līḷā 315]

   he.ERG sage.ACC see.PFV.3SN

   'He saw the sage.'

3.2 The standard dialect of Marathi

Split-ergativity, where the ergative case marking occurs only in the perfective aspect, is reported for the western NIA (New Indo-Aryan) languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, but not for Bangla, Oriya, Bhojpuri, and Marathi. In the standard dialect of Marathi, only the third person subject NP of a finite transitive clause in the perfective aspect bears ergative marker (i.e. the case marker *-ne/-ni/-nə*); direct objects and subjects of intransitive clauses are nominative and the verb agrees with the non-case marked NP (3a); if both subject and object NPs are case-marked, the verb shows default, neuter agreement (3b). Overt morphological-marking on the first and second person pronouns in the ergative construction of Old Marathi is lost in present-day standard Marathi. Further, the 1st and 2nd person pronominal forms are identical to the corresponding non-perfective pronominal forms in OM. Syncretism in the first and second person plural pronouns of OM persists in today's standard variety.

   Standard Marathi

3a. *ti-nə/e/i   kagəd   phaḍ-l-a*

   she-ERG   paper.3SM   tear-PERF-3SM

   She tore the paper.

3b. *tyanə/e/i   muli-la   mar-l-e*

   he-ERG   girl.3SF-ACC   hit-PERF-3SN

   He hit the girl.

When Marathi was codified / standardised towards the end of the nineteenth century, the standard variety was based on the variety spoken by the educated elite class in Pune (Poona). Grierson's data for Poona Marathi reveals variability in the forms of the first and second personal pronouns in a single speaker's speech (*myã* and *mi* in competition; *twã* of Old Marathi is still retained in Poona variety of the late nineteenth / early twentieth century.) This variability is absent in present day standard / Pune Marathi.

Poona Marathi of the late nineteenth century (Grierson 1905: Poona Specimen 1)

4. *tujhi adnya **mi** kadhĩ-hi moḍʰli nahĩ*

   your.SF command.SF I.ERG when-even break.3SF NEG

   'I never disobeyed your command.'

5. *təri **myã** apəlya mitra-bərobər čəin kərawi mhəṇūn **twã** məla kədhi kərḍũ hi dilẽ nahĩs*

   yet I.ERG self.OBL friend.OBL-with revelry.3SF do.SUBJ therefore you.ERG I.DAT

   when young lamb even give.3SN NEG.2S

   'Yet (you) never gave me a lamb's young one so that I could make merry with my friends.'

We will examine verbal agreement and ergative marking on the subject NP in the transitive, perfective clause in regional varieties of Marathi. Our interest will be in questions such as the following: What is the nature of variability observed in the morpho-syntax of the transitive-ergative clause in contemporary regional varieties of Marathi? Can we trace the trajectory of change from Old Marathi-like system / a historically prior state to the present-day? What are the socio-linguistic / socio-historical correlates of the observed change(s)?

3.3 The dialectal data: diachronic and synchronic

The SDML (Survey of Dialects of the Marathi Language) data collected so far indicates three broad patterns in the morpho-syntax of the transitive-perfective construction (listed below as A, B and C).

[A] **Retention of Old Marathi-like ergativity in Nagpur Marathi**

Of the surveyed regional varieties, the Nagpur variety retains overt morphological marking on personal pronouns in all three persons and agreement with the nominative object in the transitive-perfective clause, as in Old Marathi.

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	ami
Perf	1	mya, mi	ami
Non-Perf	2	tu	tumi
Perf	2	twa	tumi
Non-Perf	3	to/ti/te	??
Perf	3	tyanə	tyani

Table 2: Pronominal paradigm of the Nagpur dialect (based on LSI data)

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	ami
Perf	1	mi/miya/minə	ami
Non-Perf	2	tu	tumi
Perf	2	tu/tya/tunə	tumi
Non-Perf	3	to/ti/te	NA
Perf	3	tyani / tini / tyanə	tyani

Table 3: Table Pronominal paradigm of the Nagpur dialect (based on SDML data)

Example of Nagpur Marathi of the late nineteenth century (Grierson 1905: Specimen no. 1*)*

6. mya apᵊlya mitra-bərobər čəin kəray-saṭhi twa mə-la kokᵊru dekhil dellə nahi
   1S.ERG self.OBL. friend-with fun do.NON.FIN.-for you.ERG 1S-DAT young goat.SN
   even give.PFV.3SN NEG

   'You didn't even give me a young goat for me and my friends to play with.'

Example of Nagpur Marathi of the present times (SDML, 2019)
7. mi-nə khal-un pay-l-ə

  I-ERG below-ABL see-PFV-3SN

  'I saw (something) from below.'

The past tense is formed as in the Dekhan,; thus *mya marᵊlə* I struck, *tya marᵊlə* thou struckest. The third person singular of transitive verbs sometimes ends in *ən*; thus *dhaḍᵊlən* sent. […] The past tense of transitive verbs is used in the same way as in the Dekhan, the subject being put in the case of the agent, and the verb agreeing with the object in gender and number or being put in the neuter singular (LSI Vol. VII, p. 221).

     We note an expansion in terms of morphological forms available in the first and second person singular pronouns in the transitive-perfective clause in the Nagpur speech variety. The predominant forms heard in the course of field work in rural Nagpur were *minə* 'I-ERG" and *tunə* 'you-ERG'. Interestingly, these are not attested in the LSI Nagpur specimens. (Hindi-like ergative pronominal forms marked by –*ne* are attested in the LSI further to the east in the Chhindwara speech variety (see Grierson 1905: 319-329). Further research would reveal the developments which led to the present-day forms in the Nagpur dialect. [Nagpur and Chhindwara were a part of the Central province under British rule.] Was a non-local morphological marker adopted to mark the ergative in the Nagpur variety? If yes, how do we account for the observation that a non-local feature was adopted by this regional variety of Marathi? Or, could the –*ni* marking in the first and second persons have resulted from an analogical change modelled on the third person pronouns? Answering these questions requires further examination of the data.

     Agreement pattern in the Nagpur speech variety, both in the LSI and in the SDML data are as in standard Marathi: the verb agrees with the non-case marked object NP or shows singular neuter agreement.

[B] Development of standard-Marathi-like ergativity: Ahirani
Ahirani (also referred to in the literature as Khandeshi, Dhed Gujarai) instantiates this type of ergativity among the dialects of Marathi. Ahirani (Khandeshi) is not classified as a dialect of Marathi by Grierson, but as belonging to the central NIA group along with Bhili, Banjārī or Labhānī, Bahrūpiā, etc. Grierson provides two specimens of the speech variety sampled in Khandesh, Nandurbar taluka (Grierson 1905, Vol IX.3. specimen nos. 65 and 66). The pronominal paradigms for Ahirani of the late nineteenth century (LSI data) and that of the present day are presented in Tables 4A and 4B respectively.

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi, məi	ham, am, apən

Perf	1	mi, me	ami, amhu
Non-Perf	2	tu	tum
Perf	2	tu, tuna	tumi, tumhi
Non-Perf	3	to, ti, te	te, tya
Perf	3	tyane	NA

Table 4A: Pronominal paradigm of the Khandeshi/ Ahirani dialect (based on LSI Vol. IX.3 data, p. 209)

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	ami, amhi
Perf	1	mi	ami, amin, amhi
Non-Perf	2	tu	tumi
Perf	2	tu	tumi, tumin
Non-Perf	3	to/ti	tya
Perf	3	tyani	tyasni

Table 4B: Pronominal paradigm of the Ahirani dialect (based on SDML data)

A caveat we would like to add immediately is that the comparison of the ergative constructions in Ahirani in the LSI and in the SDML is being attempted here although the LSI specimen was collected in Nandurbar district and the available SDML specimen was collected in the neighbouring Dhule district.

On comparing the two paradigms, we note complete syncretism in the first and second person singular forms in present-day Ahirani; the forms *mi* and *tu* are used both in non-perfective and in perfective constructions. This development in Dhule Ahirani may have resulted from close contact with / bilingualism in Marathi.

We do not see similar syncretism in the first and second person plural pronouns. Ahirani is said to represent a grammatical system having a mix of characteristics of neighbouring Gujarati and Marathi. But we find that the plural forms in the pronominal paradigm of Ahirani are more differentiated than those of either Marathi or Gujarati (cf. section 3.2 for standard Marathi and Table 5 for Gujarati). While the nominative and agentive first and second person plural pronouns in both Marathi and Gujarati show syncretism, the equivalent pronominal forms in Ahirani (LSI Vol. IX.3, p. 209 as well as SDML data) show absence of syncretism. However, the SDML Ahirani data shows overlap among the pronominal forms used in non-perfective and in perfective constructions. This variability reflects reflexes of diachronic change and indicates a period of fluctuation and potential language change. It will be interesting to note the projected direction of this on-going change. The –n marking on first and second person plural pronouns in the perfective (*amin* we.ERG, *tumin* you.PL.ERG) may also have resulted from analogy with the third person pronominal forms. Educated Ahirani speakers optionally used standard-Marathi-like pronominal forms.

Verbal agreement in the LSI specimen of Khandeshi / Ahirani, and that in the present-day Dhule Ahirani (SDML) is like that in Old Marathi and in Standard Marathi.

8. tya-ni   tyas-le   ap°li   jin°gi   waṭ-ī   did-ī
  he-ERG   he-DAT   self.3SF   property.SF   distribute-CP give.PFV.3SF
'He divided his property (among his sons).'
(LSI Vol IX.3, Specimen No. 65 collected in Nandurbar district)

9. te por-ni   tya   manus-le   piwan   pan̥i   di-n-ə
   that girl-ERG that.OBL   man-DAT   drink.NON.FIN   water.N give-PFV-3SN
  'The girl gave the man water to drink.'
  (SDML data collected in Dhule district)

10. amin khir khadi
   we.ERG[*2] porridge.SF eat.PFV.3SF
  'We ate the porridge.'
  (SDML data collected in Dhule district)

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	hu	ame, am
Perf	1	mẽ	ame
Non-Perf	2	tu	təme, tam

---

[2] The nominative and ergative forms of 1st plural need to be cross-checked.

Perf	2	tẽ	təme
Non-Perf	3	te	teo
Perf	3	teṇe	teoe

Table 5: Pronominal paradigm of Gujarati (based on LSI data, Vol. IX.2)

[C] Reduction of ergativity: Konkani in Ratnagiri

In this sub-section we will consider the Sangameshwar speech variety spoken in the Ratnagiri district in south-west Maharashtra. [3]

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	əmi
Perf	1	mini	əmi
Non-Perf	2	tũ	tumi
Perf	2	tuni	tumi
Non-Perf	3	to / ti	te
Perf	3	tyani/tini	tyanni

Table 6. Pronominal paradigm of the Sangameshwar speech variety (based on LSI data; p.66)

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	əmi
Perf	1	mi	əmi

---

[3] Grierson makes a difference between the Konkan standard (which includes varieties such Agri, Bankoti and Sangameshwari in the coastal stretch from Thane to north Ratnagiri) and Konkani spoken in the region extending from Rajapur in Ratnagiri district uptil Sindhudurg district.

Non-Perf	2	tu	tumi
Perf	2	tu	tumi
Non-Perf	3	to / ti	te
Perf	3	tyane/tine	tyanni

Table 7. Pronominal paradigm of the Sangameshwar speech variety (based on SDML data)

We compared the pronominal paradigms of the Sangameshwar speech variety as attested in the LSI and in the SDML; over time, syncretism has developed in the first and second person singular pronouns. The LSI evidence shows that, unlike Old Marathi, case syncretism occurred in the first and second person plural pronouns in Sangameshwar a hundred years ago.

Grierson (1905: 122) observes that Sangamshwari closely agrees with the Konkan Standard of Marathi (cf. footnote 4). Verbal agreement in the transitive–perfective clause in Sangameshwar variety / Standard Konkan is with the object, even if it is inflected (as in Goan Konkani and in Gujarati). See examples 11-15 below: sentences 12-15 show agreement with the case-marked object; sentence 15 shows agreement with a non-inflected object NP *vãṭṇi*.

11. tya giresta-n hya-s ḍukrã tsaraya-s seta-var dhaḍ-l-an
    that person-ERG he-DAT pigs feed-DAT field.OBL-LOC send-PFV-3S
    'That person sent him to the field to feed pigs.'
    (LSI 1905:125)

12. bapᵊsa-n tya-s [….] miṭi marᵊ-l-an
    father-ERG he-DAT […] embrace.SF hit-PFV-3S
    'Father embraced him.'
    (LSI 1905:126)

13. tya-nə   eka   gəḍ-ya-s   sad   ghət-l-an
    he.OBL-ERG one.OBL   labourer-OBL-DAT call.SF   throw-PFV-3S
    '*He called a labourer.*'

14. leka-n   bapsa-s   pərət bolna   ke-l-an
    child-ERG   father-DAT again speech.SN do-PFV-3S
    '*The child once again spoke to the father.*'

15. məg tya-nə tyãs-ni   apᵊlya   jinəgi-č-i   vãṭni
    then he-ERG he-DAT   self.OBL property.OBL-GEN-3SF division.SF

    kərun di-l-i
    do-CP give-PFV-3SF
    'Then he divided his property and gave (his son) his share.'
    (LSI 1905:125)

In data collected for the SDML project, we find variability in verbal agreement in the Sangameshwar villages. The variability appears to be correlated with the religion of the

speaker. Non-Muslim collaborators in Sangameshwar use standard-Marathi-like agreement (with non-inflected object NP). Among Muslim collaborators in Sangameshwar (Karanjari, Amavali, Kondivare and Kasba villages), the verb agrees with the second person plural and third person (sg. or pl.) subject; elsewhere the verb agrees with the nominative object (Kazi 2019). It is also worth noting that non-Muslims in Sangameshwar / Ratnagiri report Marathi as their home language while Muslims report Kokni to be the home language (ibid.)

16. tuǰ-ya   ḍæḍi-ni   tu-ǰya   pəppa-ni

     you-GEN-OBL   daddy-ERG   you-GEN.OBL   father.OBL-ERG

     parṭi   ṭʰəw-len   həyt
     party.SF   keep-PFV.3PL   be.PRS.3PL
     '*That's why your father has organized a party.*'

(Excerpt from the Prodigal Son Story collected for the SDML from Muslim collaborator in Kasba village by Kazi 2019)

In sentence 15 (collected in the Kasba village in Sangameshwar taluka), the verb *ṭʰəw-len* agrees with the ergative subject *dædi-ni* or *pəppa-ni* (3rd HON.). Similarly, in the sentences *tumi kagəd phaḍlew* 'You (pl) tore the papers', *tumi porala nijəwlew* 'You (pl) put the child to sleep.' the verb agrees with the subject.[4]

[D] Loss of ergativity in southern Maharashtra
In this sub-section we Chandgad-Gadahinglaj

In the southern variety (both the Gadahinglaj and Chandgad varieties) of Marathi spoken in the district of Kolhapur, overt ergative marking is present in all three persons (as in Old Marathi but unlike the contemporary standard variety). The actual pronominal forms differ: Chandgad variety has the forms *mya* (1st p.)and *tiya* (2nd p.) while the Gadahinglaj variety has *minə* (1st p.) and *tunə* (2nd p.). In both varieties these pronominal forms co-vary with the forms *mi* (1st p.) and *tu* (2nd p.) of the standard speech variety. A further similarity between the transitive-perfective clauses of the two southern varieties is preferred verbal agreement with the subject NP which is unlike all other regional varieties of Marathi. The verb agrees with the person and gender of the subject NP.

ASPECT	Person	Number	
		Singular	Plural
Non-Perf	1	mi	amʰi
Perf	1	mi/miya	amʰi

[4] Deo and Sharma (2009) make the following observation for the Gowari dialect of the documented in Grierson (1905): "transitive perfective subjects in the first and second person do trigger agreement, suggesting that they are behaving like nominatives in both morphology and abstract case features".

Non-Perf	2	tu	tumʰi
Perf	2	tu/tiya	tumʰi
Non-Perf	3	to/ti/te	tyani
Perf	3	to/tyanə	tyani
	3	ti/tinə	tyani

Table 8: Pronominal paradigm of the Gadahinglaj speech variety (based on SDML data)

In sentence 17, the subject NPs are not marked with instrumental marker in perfective aspect and the verb 'to do' agrees with subject.

17. hi BA kelin, natu pəndrawi kelyan
    she BA do-PFV-3SF grandson 15th do-PFV-3SM
    'She (grand-daughter) has completed graduation and the grandson has studied until the 15th class.'

In sentences 18 and 19, the subject is marked with instrumental marker in perfective aspect and the verb agrees with subject.

18. tyani baṭli anlelyani
    they.ERG bottle.SF bring.PFV.3PL
    'They brought the bottle.'

19. donʰi paḍlya baṭlya tyanə
    both fall.CAUS.PFV.3PL bottle.3PL.F he-ERG
    'He dropped both the bottles.'

This variant of the transitive-perfective construction is observed in most varieties of Marathi along the Marathi-Kannada border (see also Kulkarni-Joshi 2016 for data on Kupwar). The subject NP forms appear to be marked with the case marker –ne / ni. But the subject agreement prompts us to argue that the seemingly case-marked ergative subject NP has been re-analysed as nominative in the Marathi-Kannada contact region. Arguably, the contact with a Dravidian language, Kannada has triggered this reanalysis in the southern varieties of Marathi.

20. *tenə punyasnə alay*   (SDML data collected in Gadahinglaj)
    he   Pune-from come.PFV.PRST.3SM
    'He has come from Pune'

21. *minə pepər wacayloy*   (SDML data collected in Gadahinglaj)
    I newspaper read.PROG.PRST.1SM
    'I am reading the newspaper.'

22. moṭhya hɔspit°lat kam kəruca əsə ṭhərəvi-l-o mi (SDML data collected in Chandgad)
    big.OBL. hospital.LOC work.SN do-PRED thus decide-PFV-1SM I
    'I decided to work in the big hospital.'

    '

Our proposal that the ergative case-marked pronominal form has been reanalysed as nominative is strengthened by the occurrence of a form such as *teni* , used as an honorific , a pattern which seems to be modelled on the Kannada construction – *tənde awəru bandidu* (father he=HON. come.IMPF). The equivalent sentence in this variety of Marathi is presented in (22).

23. *pəppa teni alyat*   (SDML data collected in Gadahinglaj)
    father he (=HON.) come.PFV.PRST.3PL
    'Father has come.'

This section focused on describing broad patterns in the transitive-perfective clause in selected regional varieties of Marathi.

3.3 Inter-speaker and intra-speaker Variability

Idiolectal (intra-speaker) variation too is attested in the SDML data. For instance, in the data collected in southern Maharashtra in Gadahinglaj taluka of Kolhapur district (village Hebbal Jaldyal) the following variability was observed in the speech of a female speaker aged 55 years:

24. **mi-nə** ajpəryet he diwəs bəgitlə
    I-ERG today-until these days see-PFV-3SN
    'I saw these days until today.'

25. ti šenə kaḍʰun **mi-nə** pəiše bʰagiw-l-ə
    those.F cow dung.PL remove-CP money I-ERG settle-PFV-3SN
    'I picked cowdung to earn money and settle (these expenses).'

26. hyo ḍoṅgər ewḍʰa ubʰa kela **mi-nə**
    this.3SM mountain.SM. this much stand up do-PFV-3SM I-ERG
    'I raised (such a big) this mountain.'

27. mulgya-la **mi-nə** kay mʰəṭlə
    son.OBL-ACC I-ERG what said-PFV-3SN
    'What I said to my son was that […].'

28. mʰənun he kəṣṭə kər-un **mi-nə** lokan-cə šan gʰaṇ kaḍʰun **mi-nə** jətən ke-l-əy
    hence these effort.PL do-CP I-ERG people-GEN cow dung dirt remove-CP I-ERG
    preserve do-PFV-PRST
    'I have done dirty jobs in order to save (money).'

29. **mi** kaḍʰloy ki tu kaḍʰələs
    I   remove-PFV-1S-PRST or you remove-PFV-2S-PFV

(He said to him), have I taken it out or have you taken it out.

30. **mi** tewḍʰə šeṇ kʰa-ll-ə səgḷ-ə
    I   that much.3SN cow dung..SN eat-PFV-3SN all.3SN
    ‚I took the blame.'

The occurrence of the first person singular pronominal forms *mi* and *minə* in the speech of this single speaker was tabulated as in Table 9.

	Perfective Clause		Imperfective Clause	
	Transitive verb	Intransitive verb	Transitive verb	Intransitive verb
minə	11	0	1	0
mi	14	6	9	10

Table 9: Idiolectal variation in Hebbal Jaldyal (Dist. Kolhapur) Total number of tokens analysed = 51

It was observed that the presence or absence of the ergative marking on the pronoun is contingent upon the clause type (perfective or imperfective) and verb type (transitive or intransitive).

Samples collected from younger, educated speakers in this village show a complete absence of the structural alternative 'minə'. Evidence for inter-speaker variation becomes evident especially on comparing the speech of older speakers with that of younger, educated speakers. We noted a strong preference for subject agreement among all speakers in this region. Yet, among the younger speakers we see a shift towards standard Marathi-like object agreement (31):

31. **mi** tu-la don kuraḍ-i dak-əw-l-ya   (Female, educated speaker aged 25)
    I.ERG you-DAT two axe.F-PL show-CAUS-PFV-3Pl.F.
    'I showed you two axes.'

We summarise in the next section our main findings for the morpho-syntax of the transitive-perfective construction in the selected regional dialects of Marathi.

4.0 Discussion and conclusion

The primary aim of this paper was to demonstrate the social dialectological approach to variability in language. This version of dialectology was distinguished from traditional dialectology. Socio-historical linguistics was introduced as a methodological off-shoot of sociolinguistics; the method involved the use of quantification and correlation in comparing synchronic stages of a language and drawing inferences about language change. This was illustrated with the case of regional varieties of Marathi.

We examined the morpho-syntax of the transitive-perfective construction in selected regional varieties of Marathi. The selected dialects included varieties spoken at the extreme ends of the Marathi-speaking region today and the standard dialect. We noted variation across

these dialects both in case-marking the agent and in verbal agreement. The variation is summarised in table 10.

	Old Marathi	Standard Marathi	Nagpur	Ahirani	Sanga-meshwar	South Kolhapur
Nominal Domain (Marking on Subj. NP)	1,2,3 sg persons	3 sg, pl (Not overt on 1,2 persons)	1,2,3 sg persons	1pl 2pl 3 sg, pl	3 sg, pl	1,2,3 (reanalysis)
Verbal Domain (agreement)	object	object	object	object	object & subject	subject

Table 10. Summary of ergative marking on the subject NP and verbal agreement in the transitive-perfective clause across dialects of Marathi (The numbers 1, 2 and 3 indicate first, second and third person pronouns.)

We noted variability at the community level, at the inter-speaker as well as intra-speaker levels. Quantification of data collected in the course of the SDML project (using the methodology demonstrated in section 3.1 for Kupwar Marathi) within the framework of socio-historical linguistics will enable us to trace the diverse trajectories of dialect change. At this stage in the SDML, the focus is more on identifying macro-patterns in the geographical distribution of variants. Micro-level analysis, e.g. quantification of multiple tokens of the same linguistic feature across speakers in a region, has not been attempted yet in the project. However, certain tendencies are evident in the regional variation in the data. Both contact with neighbouring languages and analogy with existing patterns in the dialect have played roles in determining the structures of particular dialects. For now, we must leave the identification of these facilitating / constraining factors to future research.

Since the key idea of this workshop was to find meeting ground for the functionalists and formalists to examine variation in language, we conclude the paper by offering suggestions for such collaboration. (Suggestions on how the research objectives of social dialectology need to be incorporated in such an integrated research programme were listed in the Introduction.) A social dialectological approach and formal approaches to language variation differ in their assumptions about the nature of language, their goals and their methods. While the former assumes that "Language is inherently variable" the latter relies on the construct of the "ideal speaker-listener" and views variability largely as belonging to the realm of 'performance errors'. Social dialectologists are involved in building probabilistic models with some predictive value. They focus on identifying norms of language use shared by the community. They recognise that languages / dialects change as a result of changed

sociolinguistic circumstances as well as factors such as evaluation of the dialect by its speakers. They take up studies of both inter- and intra-systemic dialectal differences; these could benefit from formal theories in linguistics in the following ways. Linguistic theory can inform the decisions underlying the selection of dialect features to be studied, although the selection will typically not solely be based on considerations of a strictly linguistic nature. As suggested by Chambers and Trudgill (1998: 33), linguistic analysis can counteract the "atomistic" approach to dialect features that is typical of dialectology in that its practitioners have had a tendency "to treat linguistic forms in isolation rather than as parts of systems or structures".

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