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Loan verb acceptability and integration in Greek from typologically different languages

In this presentation, I deal with loan verbs in a language-contact situation involving Greek as recipient and English, Romance and Turkish as donor. More particularly, I discuss the techniques that make verbs of different languages to be accommodated in a non-uniform way within the same linguistic system, and try to provide an explanation for this divergence. To this end, I argue that an interplay of both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors constrains and determines the degree of acceptability and the specific shape of the form of these loans in the recipient language. On the one hand, I show that bilingualism and profound knowledge of the dominant language, which usually leads to heavy borrowing (Thomason 2001, Matras 2009), may also be the cause of a more elaborate accommodation of loans with an extensive use of native integrating elements (Enrique-Arias 2010). On the other hand, phonological and structural (in)compatibility between the languages in contact (Myers-Scotton 2002, Field 2002) may inhibit transfer leading to the adoption or rejection of specific integrating elements, as for instance, the use of an affixal integrator or that of a light verb (Ralli 2016). With respect to the linguistic factor, attention will be brought to the role of typological (in)compatibility between the donor (analytical English, semi-analytical Romance, agglutinative Turkish) and the recipient (fusional Greek) into accommodating loan verbs.

For the purposes of this talk, the principal evidence is drawn from the spontaneous speech of speakers of several Greek varieties, both dialectal, found in Greece, and heritage, as spoken in North America. The data consist of material that has been collected within the framework of various projects on Greek dialects and Greek immigration consisting of recordings of narratives of about 300 hours. They are also complemented with a number of certain written sources dating from the last century: see, among others, Dawkins (1916) for Cappadocian, Papadopoulos (1958) for Pontic, Karanastasis (1997) for Grekanico, Ralli (2017) for Lesbian, Seaman (1972) for American Greek, Maniakas (1991) for Canadian Greek.

Selected references

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