

The voicing of the initial /t/ of definite articles and object pronouns in Modern Greek dialects: evidence from Greek Canadians

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Post-nasal voicing is one of the phenomena typical of Standard Modern Greek (SMG). This is being investigated in forms /ton/, /tin/ and /to/ which are accusative singular forms of the masculine, feminine and neuter genders for the definite article or the clitic object. In Standard Modern Greek (Holton et al., 2012; Kainada, 2011), the /n/ of the masculine and feminine forms causes a following voiceless stop to become voiced, while it undergoes place assimilation. Dialectal variation of morphophonological voicing assimilation patterns in SMG has received little attention. This phenomenon is capable of laying bare the acoustic characteristics of voicing, nasality and morphophonemics in SMG.

The /t/ of the article or object pronoun has been reported to be realised as voiced (Kontosopoulos, 2001; Vadasi, 2007) in SMG dialects. In other words, instances such as /ton polemo/ and /ton pira/ could be realised as [tombolemo] and [tombira] or [dombolemo] and [dombira] respectively (the /t/ of the article or pronoun has been reported to be voiced). The data for the study constituted 208 interviews of first-generation Greek Canadians (with 120 men and 88 women), representing 5 of the 15 major varieties of Modern Greek: Athenian (standard), Northern, Peloponnesian, South-Eastern and Eastern (Trudgill, 2003). They were coded manually for the presence or absence of voicing in the initial segments of the pronouns and determiners.

We have taken 20-minute segments of each interview which have been automatically annotated on the basis of the transcriptions by using a Modern Greek model for the Montreal Forced Aligner (McAuliffe et al., 2017). We have extracted 9,045 tokens of these constructions in phrase initial position, which we are manually coding for the presence or absence of voicing in the initial segment of the determiner or pronoun. A phonologically interesting finding is that both types of assimilation (progressive and regressive) occur even when the nasal is deleted, that is we find instances of examples such as [dobolemo] and [dobira]. In terms of geographical distribution, voicing was found among speakers from Northern Greek (15%) but also among some speakers from the Peloponnese (8%) and Athens (3%).

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