

On the Cross-linguistic Phonology of Greek Loanwords in English

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Investigating the cross-linguistic phonology of loanwords contributes to understanding the processing of bilingual speech and it has implications for learning and teaching methods. Kytö and Pahta (2016) provide an overview of the influence of Greek on English. A correspondence between grammatical gender and word-final syllables of Greek words with the grammatical gender of their loans in French and Spanish was reported by others (Sotiropoulou and Cornwell, 2023). This study examines the association of grammatical gender, prosodic features, and word-final syllables of Greek words with the phonology of their loans in English. The focus is on loanwords in English whose word-final syllables in Greek are /Cos, CCos/ and /Ci, CCi/+[e]; 220 such common loanwords are studied. Greek feminine or masculine nouns in /Cos#/ delete /os/ in English, reducing the syllable count as in feminine μέθοδος /'mēθoðos/ 'method' ['mēθəd] and masculine διάλογος /ði'əloyos/ 'dialogue' ['daɪəlɒg], ending in a word-final consonant not permitted in Greek (which only allows word-final /n s/). An exception is the feminine έξοδος ['eksoðos] loaned as 'exodus' ['eksədəs]. In contrast to feminine or masculine, Greek neuter nouns in /Cos#/ become either /Cəs/ in English as in γένος ['jənos] 'genus' /'dʒinəs/ or /Cas/ as in ήθος ['iθos] 'ethos' ['iθəs]. Greek word-final /CCos/ keeps the consonant cluster in English and follows the same rules, except for feminine or masculine /C+liquid+os/ and masculine ['zmos#], which become /C+ə+liquid/ and /zəm/ as in feminine θίβλος ['vivlos] 'bible' /'baɪbəl/, in masculine κύλινδρος ['ciliñðros] 'cylinder' /'sɪləndər/ and masculine ενθουσιασμός [ɛnθusie'zmos] 'enthusiasm' /ɛn'θuzi,æzəm/. An exception is /vros#/ becoming /rəs/ as in masculine θησαυρός [θiːsə'vros] 'thesaurus' [θiː'sɔːrəs]. The phonology of Greek loanwords in English with word-final syllables /Ci, CCi/+[a] <iα> in Greek is uniform word-finally, deleting the vowel syllable /e/ in English, becoming /Ci, CCi/ as in φωνολογία [fonolo'jia] 'phonology' /fə'nələdʒi/, συμμετρία [sim'e'tria] 'symmetry' ['simətɾi], and ψυχολογία [psixolo'jia] 'psychology' /saɪ'kələdʒi/, reducing the illegal in English word-initial /#ps/ to /s/. The uniformity of this rule may be attributed to the exclusivity of the grammatical gender of word-final /Ci, CCi/+[e] nouns in Greek, which are feminine. These Greek loanwords are stressed on the antepenultimate syllable in English and the penultimate syllable in Greek. Results reveal an association of grammatical gender, prosodic features, and word-final phonology of Greek words with the phonology of their loans in English, encouraging further investigations of Greek word endings in their loanwords in other languages.

References

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