

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

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We will discuss the dialectal variation of a morphophonological voicing assimilation pattern in Modern Greek that has received little attention in the literature. The forms /ton/, /tin/, /to/ are accusative singular forms of the masculine, feminine and neuter gender, either for the definite article or for the clitic object pronoun. For example: /ton polemo/ "the war", /ton pira/ "I took him." In Standard Modern Greek (Arvaniti, 1999; 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. Thus, the forms above are pronounced [tombolemo] and [tombira] respectively.

It has been reported (Kontosopoulos, 2001; Vadasi, 2007) that in some northern Greek varieties, the /t/ of the article or pronoun is also voiced, meaning that in these varieties, the examples above are pronounced [dombolemo] and [dombira]. However, there are no detailed accounts of this pattern. We examine it in a dataset constructed from 208 transcribed interviews of first-generation Greek Canadians (Anastassiadis et al., 2017) who moved to Canada between 1945 and 1975 as young adults (median age: 22 years of age). The sample contains 120 (58%) men & 88 (42%) women born between 1935 and 1965 and represents 8 of the 15 major varieties of Modern Greek (Trudgill, 2003).

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. So far, we have examined 3,021 of these tokens and found corroborating evidence for the pattern as only the masculine and feminine forms have a voiced /t/ (Figure 1), whereas the /t/ of the neuter form remains unvoiced. 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 [doblemo] and [dobira]. In terms of geographical distribution, we find voicing not only in speakers from Northern Greek (15%) but also in some speakers from the Peloponnese (8%) and Athens (3%). Since this phenomenon is more prevalent among speakers of Northern Greek, we are currently conducting a more in-depth investigation of /t/ voicing among 27 speakers from that region. In addition to the voicing of /t/ we are examining the duration and formant measurements of the following vowel and nasal and we will add these results to our presentation.

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