

Language contact substantiating gender realization and loan-noun integration in Heptanesian, Italiot and Cretan*

Vasiliki Makri
University of Patras

1. Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that, notwithstanding their current weakening, contacts between Greek and Romance saw an upward trend in the absorption of Romance vocabulary into Greek varieties in past years. The aim of this paper is to present part of my research dedicated to the treatment of Romance loanwords in Greek. The paper endeavors a comparative analysis of loanword integration into three Modern Greek dialects, i.e. Heptanesian, Cretan and Italiot, which have been in a situation of linguistic contact with Romance varieties. The main rationale behind the choice of these specific varieties lies in the challenge they display concerning the diversity of their sociolinguistic backgrounds; they are affected by a source language of common origin, but present significant differences. In the case of Italiot, we speak of a fully bilingual environment and isolation from other Greek-speaking communities, while in the case of Heptanesian and Cretan we speak of an environment of forced occupation by a sovereign conqueror, i.e. Venetians, but always in close communication with the Greek mainland.

The two languages involved differ in their typological characteristics since the Romance varieties can be characterized as *semi-analytic*, while the Greek varieties can be characterized as *synthetic*. The nominal category has been selected for the purpose of the following analysis. I will offer a sketchy description of the available theory concerning borrowing, noun-loanword integration and gender assignment which will form the basis for my analysis.

The morphological mechanisms applied to the process of loanword integration in Greek are expected to reveal the required compliance with the behavior generally observed in nouns of Greek origin. The linguistic innovations spread in these dialects are to be approached thoroughly, on the grounds that they are assumed to contribute not only to the formation and enhancement of the nominal morphology of the systems in question, but most importantly to the elucidation of the complex grammatical category of gender. In particular, I start with the hypothesis that a certain homogeneity and congruity in the mechanisms governing loanword integration need to be traced. Canvassing the consistency permeating the process of loanword adjustment and gender assignment, I aim at offering a cartography of gender and the way it functions in the recipient system altogether.

My investigation covers the following issues: (a) the way nominals of Romance origin are subject to interlinguistic transfer in Italiot, Heptanesian and Cretan, (b) the analysis of the strategies adopted by the two dialects for integrating nominal loanwords into their morphology, and (c) the examination of the mechanisms regulating gender assignment to Romance loanwords; I assume that these mechanisms trigger linguistic innovations and offer a deeper understanding of the operation of the gender system of the recipient language (RL).

In this paper, with respect to Italiot, Heptanesian and Cretan nominal loanwords, I lay emphasis on the high priority of the structural characteristics of the recipient language, i.e. Greek, which heavily determine the integrated by-product of borrowing as well as gender assignment. I advocate that the speakers' full awareness of the properties of the recipient language prove to be of paramount importance for the choice of the employed integration strategy and a specific gender value.

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The paper is organized as follows: after the introduction, section 2 summarizes basic premises and assumptions about the notions of borrowing, language change, and noun-loanword integration. In section 3, a brief presentation of the typology of the systems in contact is offered. Section 4, provides a description of gender-assignment principles and nominal morphology of Greek. In section 5, the nominal morphology of loans is illustrated from the perspective of inflection-class inclusion and gender assignment. The dialectal data are analyzed in section 6, where claims are put forward, probing into the developments in noun inflection and the overall mechanisms of gender allocation in the three dialects. The paper ends with a brief outlook in section 7.

2. Theoretical premises

Language contact alludes to the use of more than one languages in the same place at the same time and constitutes a source of linguistic innovations (cf. Thomason 2001: 2, 62; 2003: 688). The process of the insertion of a structure or a form from a linguistic system to another is called ‘borrowing’ (cf. Haugen 1950; Poplack & Sankoff 1984). Lexical borrowing is a common form of cross-linguistic influence and a well-studied issue in the literature (Winford 2003: 9). Cross-linguistically, languages tend to borrow more nouns than verbs (Comrie 2000; Haspelmath 2008), a tendency preserved in the three dialects under examination. Borrowed nouns constitute the focal point of my investigation.

It has been argued that the transfer of nouns from one language to another is contingent upon numerous factors, both language-internal and language-external. By way of example, apart from the decisive role of language external factors, namely the sociopolitical and economic ones which facilitate borrowing in contact settings, language internal mechanisms drive the process between the system that exercises a dominating influence (source language, SL) and the affected language (recipient language, RL), such as form similarities, structural and semantic equivalences (Ibrahim 1973; Poplack, Pousada & Sankoff 1982; Winford 2010).

The approaches proposed concerning the integration or non-integration of transferred nouns may vary and range from the so-called ‘retentionist’ position to the extreme ‘diffusionist’ views. Advocates of the ‘retentionist’ position (Meillet 1921; Weinreich 1953; Field 2002, among others) maintain that the structure of nouns can be fully integrated in the recipient’s morphology on condition that the latter is structurally attuned to that of the donor, whereas according to supporters of the ‘diffusionist’ view (Wackernagel 1926; Thomason 2001, among others), no restriction on the transfer of structural features can be found on the condition that in the contact situation the two languages are under intense contact and the speakers fully bilingual. Interestingly, a ‘weak retentionist’ position is adopted by Jakobson (1962), and more recently by Ralli (2012a,b), who claim that integration of structure is feasible when the grammatical structure of the recipient is compatible with the structural tendencies of the donor language.

Concerning the strategies employed in the insertion of a noun in the recipient’s morphology, either the direct or the indirect insertion (Wichmann & Wohlgemuth 2008: 99) can be put into practice. In direct insertion, transfer of nouns with slight -if any- phonological modification is applied, while in the second case, compatibility of loan nouns with the requirements of the recipient’s morphology is achieved through some functional elements, such as affixes.

The innovations which are to be examined in the remainder of this paper are instances of direct insertion, while indirect insertion in the dialects in question is to be investigated in a forthcoming paper and is expected to divulge an admittedly intriguing linguistic behavior.

3. The systems in contact

Concerning the recipient and the source language, the two systems in contact share the same properties in relation to inflection. More specifically, although Italian is morphologically poorer, in

both Greek and Romance nominal inflection is fusional and the ending has the same morpho-syntactic function, as it combines with the same morphological category, i.e. roots or stems. Additionally, both Standard Modern Greek (henceforth SMG) and Romance have an *overt gender system* (in the sense of Aronoff 1998), since gender is phonologically manifested (overt) on the noun. Borrowing from a language with gender classes to a language also having the category of gender entails a necessary classification in terms of gender class.

With reference to the source language, Italian is a semi-analytic linguistic system and has a bipartite gender system wherein every noun is either masculine or feminine. In Italian, as in SMG, the explicitly expressed values of gender incite different endings.

This typological proximity between the two linguistic systems in contact is anticipated to favour loanword integration (Meillet 1921; Haugen 1950, 1958; Jakobson 1962; Ralli 2012a,b). In this paper, a ‘weak retentionist’ position is adopted, for the typological proximity is treated, if not as the necessary precondition, at least as a sufficient condition for loanwords to be incorporated in the expressions of a new language. Hence, it is anticipated and shown that loanword integration is facilitated when the borrowed material fits the grammatical structure and corresponds to the linguistic tendencies of the recipient language.

4. An overview of gender and inflectional class in SMG

SMG has very rich morphology and is a highly inflected linguistic system. In the process of inflection, nouns morphologically consist of stems and inflectional endings. Nouns signal gender distinctions and inflect for case and number, while they are distributed in numerous inflectional paradigms, known as inflectional classes (IC). Number is distinguished into singular and plural. SMG has a three-gender system, as nouns are distributed into the masculine, feminine and neuter gender. As proposed by Ralli (2002, 2003), noun stems and derivational affixes are inherently specified as for specific gender values, while number and case are marked in suffixes.

Gender constitutes a lexical feature actively involved in the word-formation process in Greek (Ralli 2002, 2003). Moreover, gender plays an active role in borrowing (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis & Chila-Markopoulou 2003).

The distribution of nouns into three genders points to a formal assignment system that has a semantic core which is principally determined by *animacy* and *humanness* (Ralli 2002). In SMG, the determination of gender seems to be heavily dependent on morphological criteria relevant to inflection, derivation and compounding (Ralli 2002, 2003). More precisely, inanimate nouns are allocated to neuter by default on account of the sex-based division, but are also divided into all three genders by virtue of the employment of formal assignment rules that clearly outweigh the semantic principles. Ralli’s (1998, 2000) proposal for a division of Greek nouns into 8 ICs is followed in this analysis:

- (1) i. Nouns of inflection-class type 1 are masculine and feminine:
 - a. *o xoros* ‘dance’.MASC
 - b. *i odos* ‘street’.FEM
- ii. Nouns of inflection-class type 2 are masculine:
 - a. *o diavitis* ‘compasses, diabetes’
 - b. *o ayonas* ‘fight, match’
 - c. *o kanapes* ‘sofa’
 - d. *o papus* ‘grandfather’

iii. Nouns of inflection-class types 3 and 4 are feminine:

- a. *i ayapi* ‘love’ (IC3)
- b. *i evdomada* ‘week’ (IC3) *i maimu* ‘monkey’ (IC3)
- c. *i apopsi* ‘opinion’ (IC4)¹

iv. Nouns of inflection-class types 5, 6, 7, and 8 are neuter:

- a. *to sinefo* ‘cloud’ (IC5)
- b. *to luluði* ‘flower’ (IC6)
- c. *to cerðos* ‘profit’ (IC7)
- d. *to xroma* ‘colour’ (IC8)

A basic theoretical assumption with regard to a language with a number of nominal inflectional classes like Greek lies in the requirement that each be allocated a gender (Aikhenvald 2004: 1035). From this viewpoint, morphological gender assignment applies to SMG for all ICs, but IC1 which consists of both masculine and feminine nouns (1i).

5. Dialectal data

Cretan and Heptanesian loan nouns come mainly from two sources, Venetian and Standard Italian, while Salentino and Standard Italian have supplied Griko with loan nouns. The influence of Standard Italian² on Heptanesian and Cretan is apparent, on the grounds that Venice had already adopted Standard Italian as the official language, long before the unity of Italy, in the second half of the 19th century (Fanciullo 2008). Thus, tracing whether a loan word derives from the local Romance dialect or from Standard Italian is not easily discernible, for the original noun has the same form and use in both varieties.

In what follows, I list indicative examples from Griko, Heptanesian and Cretan. The loans³ are extracted from written sources, databases and the digitized material of the *Laboratory of Modern Greek Dialects* (LMGD) of the University of Patras.

(2)	Dialect	Loan	Italian/Venetian/Salentino	Meaning
Masculine nouns				
a.	Heptanesian	[IC1] <i>avokat-os</i>	<i>avvocato</i>	lawyer
		[IC2] <i>infermieri-s</i>	<i>infermiere</i>	nurse.man
		<i>profesora-s</i>	<i>professore</i>	professor
		<i>lavorante-s</i>	<i>lavorante</i>	worker
	Cretan	[IC1] <i>abasiador-os</i>	<i>ambassador</i>	delegate
		[IC2] <i>ðatseri-s</i>	<i>dazièr</i>	tax collector
		<i>konsola-s</i>	<i>console</i>	consul
		<i>yalante-s</i>	<i>galante</i>	gentleman

¹ For reasons of clarification, it is imperative to underline the fact that despite the form similarity of the ending *-i* in the nominative singular of IC3 and IC4, these two classes of feminine nouns are distinguishable from each other in that they display different allomorphic variation, receive different endings, and IC4 largely consists of learned nouns.

² Following De Mauro (1963), given that the contact with Romance took place before the end of the 20th century, by using the term Standard Italian, I do not refer to the form the language has presently, but to a relatively standard written language used in those time periods as the source of the loanwords. I would like to thank Anna Thornton for her comment on this.

³ The loans are presented in the citation form, i.e. nominative singular, and are transcribed in a broad phonological transcription. The corresponding forms in Romance are also provided, together with the English translation.

	Italiot	[IC1]	<i>gualan-o</i>	<i>calanu</i> ⁴	peasant
		[IC2]	<i>kavaleri</i>	<i>ca(v)alieri</i>	rider
b.	Heptanesian	[IC1]	<i>kompromes-os</i>	<i>compromesso</i>	compromise
		[IC2]	<i>aparati-s</i>	<i>apparato</i>	device
			<i>busula-s</i>	<i>bussola.FEM</i>	compass
			<i>monte-s</i>	<i>monte di pietà</i>	pawnshop
	Cretan	[IC1]	<i>bats-os</i>	<i>bacchio</i>	knock
		[IC2]	<i>beti-s</i>	<i>petto</i>	chest
			<i>γaba-s</i>	<i>gaban</i>	coat
			<i>lapante-s</i> ⁵	<i>lampante</i>	clean oil
	Italiot	[IC1]	<i>àrgul-o</i>	<i>albero</i>	tree
		[IC2]	<i>trokti</i>	<i>trutta.FEM</i>	trout

Feminine nouns [IC3]

c.	Heptanesian		<i>infermiera</i>	<i>infermiera</i>	nurse.woman
	Cretan		<i>permadona</i>	<i>primadonna</i>	prostitute
	Italiot		<i>femena</i>	<i>fimmena</i>	woman
d.	Heptanesian		<i>mankantsa</i>	<i>mancanza</i>	lack
	Cretan		<i>(z)vena</i>	<i>vena</i>	vein
	Italiot		<i>griddha</i>	<i>argilla</i>	clay
e.	Heptanesian		<i>portamoneta</i>	<i>portamonete.MASC</i>	wallet
	Cretan		<i>vatsina</i>	<i>vaccino.MASC</i>	vaccine
	Italiot		<i>devotsiona</i>	<i>devozione</i>	devotion
f.	Heptanesian		<i>agoli</i>	<i>angolo.MASC</i>	corner
	Cretan		<i>borberi</i>	<i>polvere</i>	dust, gunpowder
	Italiot		<i>beneditionsi</i>	<i>benedizione</i>	blessing

Neuter nouns

g.	Heptanesian	[IC5]	<i>vern-o</i>	<i>inverno.MASC</i>	winter
	Cretan		<i>armament-o</i>	<i>armamento.MASC</i>	weapon
	Italiot		<i>pjad-o</i>	<i>pianto.MASC</i>	crying
h.	Heptanesian		<i>mobil-o</i>	<i>mobile.MASC</i>	piece of furniture
	Cretan		<i>γadol-o</i>	<i>gondola.FEM</i>	sewer
	Italiot		<i>fior-o</i>	<i>fiore.MASC</i>	flower
i.	Heptanesian	[IC6]	<i>kabioni</i>	<i>campione.MASC</i>	sample
	Cretan		<i>kalitsuni</i>	<i>calzone.MASC</i>	filled pastry
	Italiot		<i>lentsuli</i>	<i>lenzuolo.MASC</i>	sheet
j.	Heptanesian	[IC7]	<i>pel-os</i>	<i>pello.MASC</i>	down, flock
	Cretan		<i>eb-os</i>	<i>nembo.MASC</i>	rain cloud
k.	Cretan	[IC8]	<i>rizma</i>	<i>risma.FEM</i>	ream
	Italiot		<i>sayma</i>	<i>sarma.FEM</i>	burden

A first examination of the Heptanesian, Cretan and Italiot nominal loanwords reveals that they have been completely integrated into the Greek nominal system, since they receive the nominal endings of SMG and inflect according to the nominal inflection of the recipient language; the loan nouns in the dialects in question are regularly conjugated according to the (entire) paradigm of the IC they are integrated into.

⁴ In Salentino dialect, the mid vowels /e/ and /o/ are raised into /i/ and /u/, respectively, when found in final position (cf. Maiden & Parry 1997).

⁵ Note that in the Cretan dialect, the [-animate] loans integrated into the *-es* masculine group are extremely sparse in comparison with their [+human] counterparts.

6. General remarks

Generally, as evidenced in (2), the rules governing gender assignment in Greek are applicable to words of foreign origin. The morphological integration of foreign words implies the gender class into which a certain word may be absorbed (Geerts 1975: 115). In the dialects in question, words of foreign origin are assigned to masculine, feminine or neuter class.

In Heptanesian and Cretan, loanwords are adjusted as masculine nouns in *-os*, *-is*, *-as*, *-es*, like those in SMG (2a). In Italiot, loanwords are almost exclusively accommodated as masculine nouns in *-o*, and secondarily in *-i*, which are reminiscent of *-but* not identical with the SMG inflectional affixes *-os* and *-is* owing to the final *-s* deletion resulting from the preference of Italiot systems for open (CV) syllables.⁶ Concerning the distribution of inanimate loanwords, it is worth noting that despite their diffusion in all the masculine paradigms, they are indubitably infrequent in Heptanesian and Cretan.

In contrast, a large amount of non-human nominals are integrated into the *-os* masculine group in Italiot. Concerning [-human] borrowings in Italiot, the final *-s* dropping of the masculine *-os* inflectional suffix, as a consequence of the preference of Italiot systems for open (CV) syllables, contributes to it being viewed as phonologically compatible to the Romance masculine *-o* suffix, further facilitating loanword integration. Hence, *rhyme associations* (cf. Shields 1979: 27) regulate the maintenance of the masculine gender from the SL to the RL. Additionally, it should be highlighted that suffix productivity of the RL may sometimes overthrow the prevalence of neuter gender in [-human] nouns. Thus, the most productive Greek inflectional marker *-os* characterizing masculine nouns (e.g. Greek *uran-os* ‘sky’) is traceable in an unquestionably great proportion of Italiot loanwords in *-o*.

Comparing the preferred masculine-gender allocation of non-human loans, and especially their adaptation to the *-os* masculine group in Italiot, to its sparsely attested occurrence in Heptanesian and Cretan, we need to ponder further over the undeniable preference for IC1 for [-human] nominals. To this end, the high productivity of the *-os* masculine group of SMG can be also impelled by the dynamic forces of the RL. This choice cannot not be seen as haphazard, in that it can be also interpretable in terms of the productivity of the masculine inflection class in *-o* for Romance inflectional systems (Iacobini & Thornton 1992; Thornton 1998).

In the dialects under examination, feminine nouns end massively in *-a* (2c-e) and to a smaller extent in *-i* (2f). This preference can be ascribed to the matching of the *-a* phonological feature between the languages in contact. In Greek, *-a* prototypically corresponds to the feminine gender value in the citation form, as is the case in Romance (2c-d). Words of feminine gender preserve their gender owing to the inter-linguistic phonological accord of the inflectional endings which flag the feminine gender value; thus, this form similarity acts as a facilitating factor in inflection-class integration and feminine-gender assignment.

With respect to neuter loanwords, nouns are accommodated to the *-o* (2g-h) as well as the *-i* neuter group (2i). It should be stated that in Cretan and Heptanesian, the *-o* neuter-noun group is by far the most productive and evidently absorbs more loan neologisms. In Italiot, the *-o* neuter class also appears to be more advantageous than the *-i* class in the incorporation of loans. This preference shows that the phonological compatibility of the inflectional suffix *-o* of both the donor and the recipient language entails assignment of this specific gender value and membership in IC5 (2g).

Additionally, an extremely small number of loanwords is incorporated into the IC7 (2j) in Heptanesian and Cretan (they do not exceed the sum of five in each dialects). This is ascribable to the fact that this class encompasses nouns carrying the feature [+learned] and evidently these words bear

⁶ Note that based on the research conducted so far, only three words integrated as masculines of the *-as* group have been traced among which one can find the following: the [+human] *croniduna*.MASC < Salentino *carugnune*.MASC ‘bounder’ as well as the [-animate] *lapistra*.MASC < Salentino *rapistre*.MASC ‘radish’.

resemblance externally to such nouns (i.e. *vel-os* ‘arrow’). Utterly meagre is the inclusion of loans into the neuter IC8 in Cretan and Italiot (2k). In the nominative singular, the *-a* ending in Greek denotes prototypically femininity, but subordinately is also a marker of neutrality, when it comes to IC8. Hence, adjustment into this neuter class is rarely witnessed, not surpassing the number of seven in both dialects.

As far as the integration into IC5 and IC8 is concerned, it becomes apparent that loanword integration is chiefly propelled by the form similarity between the ending items of the words (2g, k). Their assimilation in the system presupposes gender change from masculine to neuter for the former and from feminine to neuter for the latter with the concomitant preservation of the word form. However, in IC5, the factor of form compatibility is not always at play (2h). In Heptanesian and Cretan mostly, the morphological integration necessitating alteration of the word-final vowels and addition of the Greek ending *-o* is very widespread. This attests to the high productivity of this neuter class (for Heptanesian see also Makri 2015; Makri 2016; Ralli, Gkiouleka, & Makri 2015).

6.1 Loan-noun formation in Heptanesian, Cretan and Italiot

The integration of loanwords in the dialects in question reveals not only their inclusion in a grammatical class acquiring gender, but also that they have undergone the second stage of morphological accommodation, in being incorporated to a specific inflectional paradigm in Anastassiadis-Symeonidis’ (1994: 188) terms. To put it plainly, the system employs the process of nativization for the purpose of attaining complete adherence to the recipient system’s word pattern.

Heptanesian, Griko and Cretan follow the same strategies in borrowing Romance nominals (for Heptanesian see also Makri 2015). The first strategy encompasses adoption of the whole inflected form, that is, transfer of words, whilst the second one encompasses analysis of the noun, maintenance of the stem and attachment of Greek inflectional endings. For reasons of clarity and comprehensibility, it should be highlighted that the fusional nominal inflection of the two systems in contact, which translates into the combination of inflectional endings with the same morphological category, i.e. stems, facilitates the adjustment of loanwords.

More analytically, in the event of phonological coincidence between the inflectional ending of a [-human] loanword and the Greek ending, the perceived homophony (Clyne 1991: 170) assists in retaining the word in the recipient language, bearing the inflectional ending which marks the corresponding gender; this entails membership of the loanword in the IC denoted by this specific ending (2a: only Italiot, b: only Italiot, 2c-d, 2g, 2k). In this respect, the entire word is retained, i.e. stem and ending, and transferred as such and not just its stem; in this case, borrowing of full-word forms is brought about.

The second strategy of integration is employed by Heptanesian and Italiot in the event of absence of phonological compatibility between the endings of the SL and the RL. The adaptation process they have undergone proves that there is some truth in Haspelmath’s (2008) view, according to which when a loanword is transferred from one language to another, the word in the RL does not have to be identical to the original word, for it can be subjected to additional modifications so as to comply with the rules of the recipient language. In this case, Romance loans are morphologically reanalyzed and recategorized into stems, and thereupon undergo ‘hellenicization’ through their combination with the inflectional endings of the nominal paradigms of the inflection classes examined in (2a-b,e-f,h,i,j), so that they can be used as words. Given the cross-linguistic typological propinquity between the SL and the RL and the common noun-formation pattern of the two systems, the structural analysis of the Romance nominals is readily attainable, resulting in the identification of the stem, its retention and eventually the replacement of the Romance endings with the Greek ones, with a view to ensuring their integration into the Greek morphology. Thus, the process of borrowing is restricted to the stem of the Romance word.

Regarding the second strategy, the basic premise can be grounded on the fact that social, economic and historical factors, which touch on extra-linguistic dynamics and have resulted in long-term intense contact and diffused bilingualism, have eased the detection of the stem by the native speaker and led to the substitution of Romance endings with Greek counterparts. Crucially, the direct transfer of stems corroborates the great importance of the morphological category of stem and its function in Greek morphology (cf. Ralli 2002, 2012a,b). In line with Ralli (2002, 2012a,b, 2014), the property of Greek morphology to be stem-based instigates the reanalysis in question, in that the words in the RL consist of a bound element, the stem, and an inflectional ending in case of inflection.

Critically, regardless of the way in which the borrowed elements are adjusted, their accommodation exposes the consistency of the final output of the linguistic innovations with the indigenous structural properties of the RL (cf. Ralli 2012a,b). Loanword integration points to the systematicity of the loanword-integration mechanisms in the recipient varieties which abide by the exigency in effect in the Greek system regarding the word-formation pattern, which dictates the combination of a stem with an inflectional ending. Thus, the system surfaces this endosystemic prerequisite materialized in the adjustment of Romance noun loanwords.

6.2 Gender assignment in Heptanesian, Cretan and Italiot

Semantic assignment rules are at work for human nominals in Italiot, Heptanesian and Cretan, encapsulated in the alignment of grammatical gender with the natural gender (sex), as supported by Anastassiadis-Symeonidis (1994) and Ralli (2002) for SMG. Compelled by this tendency, nouns bearing the feature [+human] and referring to a male entity are allocated the masculine gender value (2a), while those denoting a female entity are assigned the feminine gender (2c) (Ralli 2003: 103). The gender of the [+human] noun -masculine or feminine- in these varieties plays a primary role in its inclusion in an inflectional paradigm, which is always in agreement with its referent. Animacy and natural gender, as codified in grammatical gender by (Dahl 2000) are catalysts for the integration of nouns, corroborating the universal premise according to which gender has a semantic core (Aksenov 1984). The data validate the view that the gender of human nouns is semantically justifiable (Doleschal 2000). Thus, gender functions as a device of nominal classification in terms of the grammatical encoding of animacy, and 'humanness' in particular for Greek loanwords.

In the examined dialects, inanimate borrowings are assigned to any of the three genders by application of formal assignment rules that are based on the strict correlation between inflection and gender which is generally in force for later Greek. This corroborates Ralli's view (2002, 2003) according to which when the natural gender (male or female) does not play a role in the expression of grammatical gender, the grammatical gender (masculine, feminine or neuter) is deduced by the IC to which the noun belongs, which is denoted by the ending; hence, in Greek the determination of gender seems to be heavily dependent on morphological criteria relevant to inflection. Morphological assignment rules are in effect when the need of inflectional compliance of the loanwords with an ending item fitting an inflectional class of the recipient language emerges (cf. Christofidou 2003: 105), which applies to the second integration strategy analyzed in section 6.1. Moreover, Ralli's (2012a,b, 2013, 2014) assertion, that the inherent morphological properties of the recipient language are crucial for the integration of loanwords in a language affected by contact, is verified by our data.

The operation of phonological assignment rules is principally conspicuous in non-human nouns (cf. Corbett 1991: 79) in both dialectal systems. Gender assignment takes place in accordance with the perceived homophony and other phonologically related factors (cf. Clyne 1991: 170-2), which bears additional evidence to Anastassiadis-Symeonidis' (1994: 191) claim that the insertion of loanwords and the process of gender assignment are in harmony with the general trend of SMG which calls for agreement between the morpho-phonological indicators and the grammatical gender

on the [-animate]. The phonological similarity of the endings of the two systems (the so-called ‘interlingual correspondences’ in Weinreich (1953: 39-40) or ‘diaforms’ in Selinker (1992: 83-84)) assists the progress of loanword accommodation and the process of gender assignment (see also Melissaropoulou 2013; Ralli, Gkiouleka & Makri 2015; Makri 2015), thus enabling the transfer of words which corresponds to the first integration strategy examined in section 6.1.

It is noteworthy that in the dialects under examination, there is a one-to-one correspondence between gender and IC in Romance borrowings across the board. Even IC1 is strictly connected to the masculine gender value (see 2a,b: [IC1]), contrary to SMG in which IC1 includes both masculine and feminine nouns (see 1i). The linkage between a certain IC and a particular grammatical gender testifies to the fact that gender assumes the role of an inflection-categorization device, and thus perceived as an inflectional classifier (see Melissaropoulou (2013) for similar deductions on Cappadocian and Griko). Generally, there is a strong interconnection between grammatical gender and natural gender (sex) and between ICs and grammatical gender, which are synergistically employed to designate the masculine, the feminine and the neuter gender, empowering the inclusion of the nouns by priority in the corresponding ICs.

7. Conclusions

In the context of the observed linguistic changes, which are reflective of linguistic borrowing that takes place in a situation of intense or significant contact (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 50; Ross 2003, 2006), the compelling consistency in the integration and gender assignment mechanisms displayed by all three dialects should be heightened, notwithstanding the multiformity of their sociolinguistic backgrounds. At this juncture, this paper shows that gender as a linguistic instrument enables linguists to delve into the linguistic coding of representations of the world and comprehend the grammatical organization of the language under examination (Aikhenvald 2000: 307).

Overall, this paper demonstrates that the integration of loans into a recipient linguistic system, which bears an overtly marked gender, may offer invaluable insights into grammatical gender assignment. In particular, the values of grammatical gender are overtly realized, since in the process of nativization, all the novelties are attributed to a grammatical gender which follows the Greek pattern of gender assignation. I have argued that the grammatical factors determining the assignment of gender value to loanwords in Greek are divided into semantic, morphological and phonological ones; hence, both a semantic and a morphological basis of gender assignment to loanwords are traceable in Greek. In general, gender serves as an inflectional classifier in the organization of nominal classification, on the grounds that nominal loanword inflection of the varieties under examination is organized according to Ralli’s (2000) division into inflectional classes.

Additionally, once loanword accommodation is in effect, the distinctness of the different ICs becomes evident, since loan nouns are distributed among the existing inflectional classes enriching them significantly. The speakers of the varieties in question treat borrowed words like the native ones, trying to integrate them into their inflectional system. To this end, the recipient systems resort to the available word-formation mechanisms in order to effect loanword accommodation. I have claimed that nouns of Romance origin are adopted by the three dialects in a uniform manner, i.e. through congruent strategies. Direct insertion is realized in two ways: firstly, only in case of the matching of the ending items between the two systems, does inflectional integration call for the borrowing of the whole Romance noun, i.e. both the root and the inflectional part (the inflectional ending). Secondly, morphological integration necessitates the adoption of the Romance root and the deletion of the ending item by the morphological system; then, the loans undergo reanalysis, and ultimately hellenicization with the addition of the appropriate inflectional ending. The dialectal data confirm Ralli’s (2012a,b, 2013, 2014) argument that loanword integration in Greek and the Greek dialects is constrained by the language’s intra-linguistic actuality, as borrowed words are modified to fit the Greek word pattern which is stem-based.

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