

Gender assignment to Romance nominal loans in Heptanesian¹

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Abstract

This paper deals with gender assignment to nominal loanwords in Heptanesian, a dialectal system, upon which the impact of Standard Italian and Venetian has been significant. The examination of gender assignment evinces the compliance -incumbent upon loanwords- with the word-formation pattern of the recipient language which is heavily stem-dependent. It is shown that the end-product of the borrowing process is predominantly ordained by (a) the natural gender in the assignment of masculine or feminine grammatical gender and (b) the morphological properties of Greek, which are pivotal to loanword accommodation, for the Greek nominal system is built on a stem which is combined with an inflectional suffix. It is also argued that the phonological/form likeness between the Heptanesian and Romance endings seems to play a secondary part in the accommodation of Romance loanwords.

Keywords: language contact, gender assignment, nominal loanwords, loanword accommodation, Heptanesian, Romance



1. Introduction

In case of a language coming in contact with another dominant language group, language change gradually occurs as the linguistic outcome of social changes that promote language contact. Language contact is highly likely to lead to the so-called “borrowing” (Haugen, 1950) and “integration” (Weinreich, 1953; Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Haspelmath, 2008; Sankoff, 2001) of foreign forms and structures resulting in changes in the vocabulary and morphology of the recipient language.

This paper canvasses borrowing and language change in the nominal morphology of Heptanesian, a Modern Greek dialect which has been heavily influenced by two Romance varieties, Venetian and Standard Italian. The aim of this paper is to scrutinize gender assignment during the transition from the donor variety to the recipient variety, that is, the process by which speakers are able to assign a gender feature value to a lexical item. Examining the role of grammatical (phonological, morphological, and semantic) factors regulating gender assignment, it is revealed that the structural characteristics of the recipient language (i.e. Greek) contribute to the final outcome of the borrowing process and the choice of gender in lexical borrowing.

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Our data are extracted from the available written sources, databases and the digitized material of the Laboratory of Modern Greek Dialects of the University of Patras (inter alia Angelopoulos, 2008; Alexakis, 2005; Zois, 1963; Pantazatos, 2000; Pomonis-Tzaglaras, 2007; Skiadaresis, 1959; Strani, 2010; Kasimatis, 1996; Kollas, 1960; Komis, 1996).

The paper is organized as follows: after the introduction, section 2 provides a brief presentation of the typology of the systems in contact. Section 3 summarizes basic premises and assumptions on the notion of gender from a cross-linguistic point of view, as well as its status in the recipient system. In section 4, a sketchy description of the sociolinguistic background of Heptanesian is offered, prior to the analysis of the dialectal data and the formation of the nominal morphology of the dialect after language contact. The paper ends with a discussion in section 5, where I further consider the developments in noun inflection and the strategies employed in loanword accommodation.

2. Greek and Italian

2.1. General characteristics

Being a Greek dialect, Heptanesian is typologically fusional, similarly to Standard Modern Greek (hereafter SMG), as it is a highly inflected linguistic system with rich morphology. The grammatical category of nouns is morphological combinations of stems and inflectional endings. They inflect for gender, case and number, while they are distributed in numerous inflectional paradigms, known as inflection classes. Gender has three values, masculine, feminine and neuter, and number is distinguished into singular and plural. According to Ralli (2003; 2005), gender is specified in stems, while number and case are specified in suffixes.

Compared to Greek, Italian is a semi-analytic language and does not have cases. Both SMG (RL) and Italian (SL) have the category of gender and an *overt gender system* (Aronoff, 1998:8), as gender is phonologically manifested on the noun. Italian has two gender values, masculine and feminine. Although Italian is morphologically poorer, both linguistic systems are typologically related, as nominal inflection is fusional and inflectional endings are combined with the same morphological category, i.e. stems.

This typological proximity between the two linguistic systems in contact seems to favor loanword integration from the one language to the other, which invokes the view of Jakobson (1962) and more recently of Ralli (2012), according to which the main prerequisite for loanwords to be incorporated in the expressions of a new language is that they fit the grammatical structure and correspond to the linguistic tendencies of the recipient language (see also Haugen, 1950).

Nouns transferred from Romance varieties into the Greek dialect may either retain or alter their gender value. In this context, it is particularly interesting to explore in which ways and with which mechanisms the two-valued Romance affect the original tripartite grammatical gender distinction of Heptanesian and shed light on the way gender assignment operates on the whole in the recipient language.

3. Gender

According to Corbett (1991), grammatical gender is an inherent feature of nominals which is stored in the mental lexicon as part of the distinctive features of nouns. Additionally, gender classifies nouns and participates in agreement (Corbett, 1991).

Grammatical gender does not characterize every language, but in languages with gender, gender assignment may depend on semantic and formal (phonological and morphological) criteria. The grammatical gender of a noun is distinct from natural gender (sex), which is based on the relevant attributes of its referent. However, it usually correlates with it for a certain set of nouns expressing animacy (Dahl, 2000) or humanness. This usually means masculine or feminine, depending on the referent's biological sex, while the grammatical gender of a –human noun does not always coincide with its natural gender.

3.1. Gender in SMG

Gender in Standard Modern Greek has a three-term gender system, with a masculine, feminine and neuter distinction. Gender is an inherent and abstract property of noun stems and derivational suffixes (Ralli, 2002). Gender in –human nouns is linked to the morphological feature of inflection class, while it is associated with the semantic feature of humanness in +human nominals (Ralli, 2002). This feature is actively involved in the word-formation process of Greek (Ralli, 2002; 2003). Crucially, it is essential in borrowing, as it plays an active part in this process (Anastasiadi-Symeonidi & Cheila-Markopoulou, 2003). When it comes to the default gender in SMG, the neuter value has been perceived to be the unmarked gender option (Dressler, 1997; Anastasiadi-Symeonidi, 1994:191; Christofidou, 2003).

4. Data

4.1. Heptanesian – Sociolinguistic context

Heptanesian is the dialect spoken on Heptanesa, the islands of the Ionian sea, Corfu, Cephalonia, Zante, Ithaca and Paksi (Kontosopoulos, 2001:67), which were under Venetian rule for four or five centuries (ca end of 14th – beginning of 19th c.), depending on the island. Heptanesian displays features inserted through contact with Venetian and Italian, the official language used in administration and education (Fanciullo, 2008).

With the exception of some mere descriptions and mainly glossaries, there are no modern linguistic studies on Heptanesian. This presentation intends to cover a part of this gap providing a systematic linguistic presentation of morphological change induced by contact with Romance.

4.2. Grammatical gender assignment in Heptanesian loanwords

A first examination of the Heptanesian nominal loanwords divulges that they have been completely integrated into the Greek nominal system, since they are attached the nominal endings of SMG and inflect according to the nominal inflection of the recipient language.

Regarding their accommodation, there is a preference for specific inflectional classes, in combination with specific values of grammatical gender, while the animate and more precisely the [+human] nouns receive a gender value with respect to their

matching with natural gender. According to Ralli (2002), there is a hierarchy in gender assignment in Modern Greek, where semantics prevail over morphology. As is the case in SMG (Ralli, 2002), grammatical gender in Heptanesian is assigned on the basis of natural gender: [+human] nouns denoting a male entity are assigned the masculine value (1a) and those denoting a female entity are allocated the feminine gender (1b). A certain priority to semantics seems to apply to borrowed nouns as well. Moreover, loanword integration confirms Ralli's (2012) proposal that the morphology of borrowed words appears to be predominantly conditioned by language-internal tendencies, by the Greek tendencies in our case. Consider the following dialectal data:

(1) a. **Masculine nouns**

<i>avokatos</i> . MASC 'lawyer'	< ital. <i>avvocato</i> . MASC
<i>profesoras</i> . MASC 'professor'	< ital. <i>professore</i> . MASC
<i>lavorantes</i> . MASC 'worker'	< ital. <i>lavorante</i> . MASC

b. **Feminine nouns**

<i>femena</i> . FEM 'woman'	< ven. <i>femena</i> . FEM
<i>infermiera</i> FEM 'nurse.woman'	< ital. <i>infermiera</i> . FEM
<i>profesoresa</i> 'professor.woman'	< ital. <i>professoressa</i> . FEM

As far as the nouns with the [-human] feature are concerned, an important factor regulating loanword accommodation in Heptanesian seems to be a certain phonological similarity of the two systems based on the homophony of the endings $-a$ and $-o$ between the two languages, which allows for gender assignment (cf. Clyne 2003), since gender can be inferred from the form of the words as argued by Aronoff (1998:8). It becomes noticeable that in the case of phonological identification of the Italian ending with the Greek one, there is integration with the appropriate Greek inflection which is expressed by this ending.

In fact, in both the donor and the recipient language, $-a$ indicates femininity in the citation forms, while $-o$ is an indicator of neutrality in Greek and of masculinity in Italian. Thus, [-human] Romance nouns which end in $-o$ and are typically masculine are integrated as neuter nouns. In the same vein, [-human] nouns from Romance ending in $-a$ and belonging to the feminine nouns are accommodated in Heptanesian as feminine in $-a$.

(2) a. **Neuter nouns**

<i>appartamento</i> . NEU 'apartment'	< Ital. <i>appartamento</i> . MASC
<i>aiuto</i> . NEU 'aid, support'	< Ital. <i>aiuto</i> . MASC 'help, assistance'
<i>sospiro</i> . NEU 'breath, sigh'	< Ital. <i>sospiro</i> . MASC 'sigh'

b. **Feminine nouns**

<i>avaria</i> . FEM 'damage, favor'	< Ital. <i>avaria</i> . FEM 'damage, failure, breakdown'
<i>fatiga</i> . FEM 'exertion, strain, struggle'	< Ital. <i>fatiga</i> . FEM
<i>vista</i> . FEM 'sight, view, glimpse'	< Ital. / Ven. <i>vista</i> . FEM

The phonological identification of the endings of the two systems constitutes an indicator that they can be treated as 'interlingual correspondences' (Weinreich, 1953:39-40) between the two languages in contact, and their structural compatibility acts as a facilitator for loanword integration and gender assignment.

However, there are Romance roots with the [-human] feature whose ending is not phonologically identical with the corresponding Greek one, which we will investigate afterwards.

In the remainder of the paper, we provide an analytical examination of the ways the Heptanesian speakers employ for the integration of nominal loanwords from Romance with their modification and hellenicization, so as to fit the native Greek inflectional system.

4.2.1. Masculine nouns

As specified above, the human loans that denote a male entity are integrated in the inflection of masculine nouns in accordance with the natural gender. Thus, many nominal loans with the [+human, +male] feature ending in *-e*, *-o* and consonant are accommodated as masculine nouns in *-os* (inflectional class 1 for Ralli, 2000; 2005).

(3) a. *X-e* → *X-os*

<i>liberatoros</i> . MASC ‘liberator’	< Ital. <i>liberatore</i> . MASC
<i>dotoros</i> . MASC ‘doctor’	< Ital. <i>dottore</i> . MASC
<i>pitoros</i> . MASC ‘painter’	< Ital. <i>pittore</i> . MASC

b. *X-o* → *X-oς*

<i>impresarios</i> . MASC ‘agent’	< Ital. <i>impresario</i> . MASC
<i>elegantisimos</i> . MASC ‘elegant man dressed to the nines’	< Ital. <i>elegantissimo</i> . MASC
<i>kontadinos</i> . MASC ‘peasant, farmer, lout, coarse man’	< Ital. <i>contadino</i> . MASC ‘peasant, farmer, redneck’

c. *Xconsonant* → *Xconsonant -oς*

<i>tsavatinos</i> . MASC ‘bad repairman’	< Ven. <i>javatín</i> . MASC ‘repairman’
X = stem	

Although many nominal loanwords bearing the features [+human, +male] inflect according to the Greek nouns in *-os*, there are also borrowed nouns in *-e* which are accommodated in Heptanesian in *-es*, *-is* or *-as*, bearing witness to the fact that the inflectional class of masculine nouns in *-as/-is* (inflectional class 2 for Ralli, 2000) is still very productive in the Greek system:

(4) a. *X-e* → *X-e-s*

<i>abitantes</i> . MASC	‘dweller’	< Ital. <i>abitante</i> . MASC
<i>lavorantes</i> . MASC	‘worker’	< Ital. <i>lavorante</i> . MASC
<i>muzikantes</i> . MASC	‘musician’	< Ital. <i>musicante</i> . MASC

b. *X-e* → *X-is*

<i>infermieris</i> . MASC	‘nurse.man’	< Ital. <i>infermiere</i> . MASC
<i>kontrabadieris</i> . MASC	‘smuggler, trafficker’	< Ital. <i>contrabbandiere</i> . MASC
<i>generalis</i> . MASC	‘general of the army’	< Ital. <i>generale</i> . MASC

c. *X-e* → *X-as*

<i>profesoras</i> . MASC	‘professor’	< Ital. <i>professore</i> . MASC
<i>petsentas</i> . MASC	‘trailer trash’	< Ital. <i>pezzente</i> . MASC ‘beggar, miser’
<i>konkorentas</i> . MASC	‘adversary, rival, competitor’	< Ital. <i>concorrente</i> . MASC

The productivity of the Greek declension class of masculine nouns in *-as/-is* is substantiated by the incidence of a number of human nouns in *-o*, which are converted into words in *-as* or *-is*, instead of being adjusted as words in *-os*, as it is to be expected by the form of their ending. Human nouns ending in consonant which are integrated into the dialect as masculine nouns in *-is* constitute additional evidence of the productivity of inflection class II.

(5) a. *X-o* → *X-as*

komprimarias. MASC ‘tenor for secondary parts, supporting actor’ < Ital. *comprimario*. MASC ‘co-star’

b. *X-o* → *X-is*

aventurieris. MASC ‘adventurer, risk taker’ < Ital. *avventuriero*. MASC ‘swashbuckler’

c. *Xconsonant* → *Xconsonant -is*

remesieris. MASC ‘furniture maker, carpenter’ < Ven. *remesser*. MASC

Phonology plays a decisive role in the integration of nominal loanwords in specific inflection classes, since most human nouns ending in *-o* in the Romance system are transferred to the *-os* group of masculine nouns in Heptanesian and those ending in *-a* are attached the ending *-as* and assigned the masculine grammatical gender value, always in conformity with the natural gender².

(6) a. *X-o* → *X-os*

<i>avokatos</i> . MASC ‘lawyer’	< Ital. <i>avvocato</i> . MASC
<i>asotsiatos</i> . MASC ‘partner, associate, comrade, subscriber’	< Ital. <i>associato</i> . MASC ‘associate, partner’
<i>impiegatos</i> . MASC ‘employee, clerical worker’	< Ital. <i>impiegato</i> . MASC

b. *X-a* → *X-as*

<i>arkevistas</i> . MASC ‘archivist, file clerk’	< Ital. <i>archivista</i> . MASC
<i>tatas</i> . MASC ‘father’ (affectionate term)	< Ital. <i>tata</i> . MASC
<i>kanajas</i> . MASC ‘knave, rogue, swindler’	< Ital. <i>canaglia</i> . FEM

It is noteworthy that nonhuman loans which are of masculine gender in Italian/Venetian are rarely allocated the masculine gender value in Heptanesian. Nevertheless, albeit infrequent, such cases are also attested in the dialect:

² A specific form (phonological shape) encompasses assignment of a specific grammatical gender value and membership in a specific inflection class.

(7) [-human]

kompromesos. MASC ‘compromise, arbitration, agreement’ < Ital. *compromesso*. MASC
anafanos. MASC ‘shortness of breath, anxiety’ < Ital. *affanno*. MASC
aparatis. MASC ‘device, the board used to secure the double-leaf door’ < Ital. *apparato*. MASC
‘equipment, device, gear, mechanism’

Commonly, the gender assigned to the -human nouns is neuter. This corroborates Ralli’s view (2002) that when the natural gender (male or female) does not play a role in the expression of grammatical gender, the grammatical gender (male, female or neuter) is deduced by the inflectional class to which the noun belongs, which is denoted by the ending³. Hence, most masculine Romance nouns of [-human] feature appear as neuter in Heptanesian, as we will see below.

4.2.2. Feminine nouns

The vast majority of loans of feminine gender value, both human and non-human, are integrated in the Greek inflection as feminine nouns of inflectional class 3 (Ralli, 2000), and generally end in *-a*, while rarest are the forms in *-i*:

(8) a. *X-o* → *X-i*

agoli. FEM ‘corner’ < Ital. *angolo*. FEM

b. *X-e* → *X-a*

nena. FEM ‘nanny, childminder’ < Ven *nene*. FEM
δοtsenta. FEM ‘teacher.woman’ < Ital. *docente*. FEM

This behavior differentiates them from masculine nouns, owing to the fact that even non-human nouns ending in *-e*, *-o* and consonant are not adapted as neuters, but as feminine nouns in *-a*. We postulate that this behavior is largely due to the properties of the recipient language, namely the fact that most of these loanwords denote abstract concepts and in Greek, abstract nouns standing for act, action or state receive feminine gender value (abstract processual nouns).

(9) a. *X-e* → *X-a*

natsiona. FEM ‘nation’ < Ital. *nazione*. FEM
natola. FEM ‘roof tile’ < Ven. *nàtole*. MASC
portamoneta. FEM ‘wallet, coin purse’ < Ital. *portamonete*. MASC
bonifikatsiona. FEM ‘improvement’ < Ital. *bonificazione*. FEM
donatsiona. FEM ‘donation’ < Ital. *donazione*. FEM
pienona. FEM ‘crowded place’ < Ital. *pienone*. MASC

³ Ralli (2002; 2003) considers gender to be a lexical feature whose information has to be listed in the Lexicon, since in several cases neither semantics nor morphology can account for the assignment of a specific grammatical gender value. Thus, gender assignment in SMG is considered only partially predictable.

b. $X-o \rightarrow X-a$

<i>kambia</i> . FEM ‘change’	< Ven. / Ital. <i>cambio</i> . MASC
<i>negotsia/nogotsia</i> . FEM ‘trade’ negotiation, shop’	< Ital. <i>negozio</i> /Ven. <i>negòzio</i> . MASC ‘transaction, deal,

c. $Xconsonant \rightarrow Xconsonant -a$

<i>patadona/ batadona</i> . FEM ‘sweet potato’	< Ven. <i>pataton</i> . MASC
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The fact that feminine nouns seem to be basically confined to one group of nouns those in *-a*, as opposed to SMG and other dialectal varieties where two classes of feminines are distinguished, those in *-a* (e.g. *laba* ‘lamp’ and those in *-i* (e.g. *poli* ‘town’) is considered to be attributed to phonological reasons on the grounds that Italian and Venetian feminine nouns in *-a* correspond to one admittedly very productive nominal class in both Italian and Venetian.

4.2.3. Neuter nouns

As we have mentioned so far, the largest proportion of nonhuman loans is adjusted as neuters. Inanimate loans form the great majority of borrowed nouns of Heptanesian and inflect as neuters in *-o* (inflectional class 5 for Ralli, 2000), whilst there are many cases of neuters in *-i* (inflectional class 6).

With reference to the formation of Heptanesian neuters in *-o*, we examined previously the case of a general phonological matching of the endings between the masculines of the Romance system and the neuters of Heptanesian Greek. Hence, we will for the sake of convenience repeat the instances under (2):

(10) $X-o \rightarrow X-o$

<i>tsefo</i> NEU ‘ugly mug, shady person’	< Ven. <i>ceffo</i> MASC
<i>apartamento</i> . NEU ‘apartment’	< Ital. <i>appartamento</i> . MASC
<i>aiuto</i> . NEU ‘aid, support’	< Ital. <i>aiuto</i> . MASC ‘help, assistance’
<i>sospiro</i> . NEU ‘breath, sigh’	< Ital. <i>sospiro</i> . MASC ‘sigh’
<i>ordinatsio</i> . NEU ‘order, command’	< Lat. <i>ordinatio</i> . MASC

Analogically to them, many inanimate Romance nouns in *-e* and *-a* are formed, even against the tendency of feminine Romance nouns to be transferred in Heptanesian as feminines as well:

(11) a. $X-e \rightarrow X-o$

<i>velotsipendo</i> . NEU ‘bicycle’	< Ital. <i>velocipede</i> . MASC
<i>nitereso/intereso</i> . NEU ‘interest’	< Ital. <i>interesse</i> . MASC
<i>vermo</i> . NEU ‘worm’	< Ital. <i>verme</i> . MASC
<i>fioro</i> . NEU ‘flower’	< Ital. <i>fiore</i> . MASC

b. $X-a \rightarrow X-o$

<i>kaparo</i> . NEU ‘down payment, deposit’	< Ital. <i>caparra</i> . FEM
<i>skorso</i> . NEU ‘shake, tremor’	< Ital. <i>scossa</i> . FEM
<i>kosulto</i> . NEU ‘council, board, chamber, meeting’	< Ital. <i>consulta</i> . FEM

valigio. NEU ‘diplomatic pouch, mailbag’ < Ital. *valigia*. FEM ‘suitcase’

However, the neuter in *-o* inflection class of Greek is not the only productive class in the dialect. Neuters in *-i* exhibit particularly increased productivity (Christofidou, 2003). Subsequently, numerous inanimate loans in *-o*, *-e*, *-a* and consonant are adapted as neuters in *-i*:

(12) a. *X-o* → *X-i*

<i>kadini</i> . NEU ‘string, chord’	< Ital. <i>cordino</i> . MASC
<i>pedestali</i> . NEU ‘container for flowers, pedestal, piano, foot, lever’	< Ital. <i>pedistallo</i> . MASC ‘pedestal, stand, base’
<i>kumerki</i> . NEU ‘trade’	< Ital. <i>commercio</i> . MASC
<i>pati</i> ‘warranty, guaranty, surety’	< Ital. <i>patto</i> . MASC ‘agreement, treaty, covenant, pact’
<i>vatseli</i> . NEU ‘sink, washbasin’	< Ital. <i>vascello</i> . MASC ‘vessel, ship’

b. *X-e* → *X-i*

<i>stratoni</i> . NEU ‘alley’	< Ital. <i>stradone</i> . MASC
<i>edukatsioni</i> . NEU ‘education’	< Ital. <i>educazione</i> . FEM
<i>kanokjali</i> . NEU ‘telescope’	< Ital. <i>cannocchiale</i> . MASC
<i>kapitali</i> . NEU ‘capital, money’	< Ital. <i>capitale</i> . MASC ‘capital, assets’

c. *X-a* → *X-i*

<i>tsenturi</i> . NEU ‘belt’	< Ital. <i>cintura</i> . FEM
<i>pursi</i> . NEU ‘pocket’	< Ital. <i>borsa</i> . FEM ‘handbag, purse’
<i>triveli</i> . NEU ‘drill’	< Ital. <i>trivella</i> . FEM
<i>skuteli</i> . NEU ‘bowl, soup plate’	< Ital. <i>scodella</i> . FEM
<i>suzini</i> . NEU ‘prune, wrinkled person’	< Ital. <i>susina</i> . FEM ‘prune’

d. *Xconsonant* → *Xconsonant-i*

<i>spiloni</i> . NEU ‘pin’	< Ven <i>spilon</i> . MASC
<i>armelini</i> . NEU ‘apricot’	< Ven. <i>armelin</i> . MASC
<i>gotezini/ yotezini</i> . NEU ‘liqueur nip’	< Ven. <i>gotesin</i> . MASC
<i>teleri</i> . NEU ‘framework, shell’	< Ven. <i>telèr</i> . MASC
<i>tsekini</i> . NEU ‘pure gold Venetian coin’	< Ven. <i>zechin</i> . MASC

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we attempted to analyze the phenomenon of language contact with Italian and Venetian, and their effect on the morphology of Heptanesian through the phenomenon of borrowing. It is deduced that the dialectal data from Heptanesian verify the view of Drinka (2003) and Heine (2006), according to which, in a language-contact situation, the employment of the available linguistic material of the recipient language is encouraged for the formation of new words from the donor language, which are built upon the existing word schemes and structures that are available. In this light, the lexical ‘matter’ (Matras & Sakel, 2007) of Italian and Venetian is used as the raw material, to which the Greek suffixes are attached, with a view to creating lexical schemes familiar to the Greek system and the inserted material undergoing hellenicization.

It becomes evident through the dialectal data that the Heptanesian system follows more than one strategy in order to borrow nouns. First, in a bid to offer a hierarchy of the mechanisms governing the adjustment of nominal loans, it is shown that alignment with the natural gender is ranked in the highest position, as supported by Ralli (2002) for SMG, in which the alignment of grammatical gender with the natural gender (sex) is more than evident in the case of nouns that are marked with the [+human] feature.

Then, we ascertained that when the ending vowel of a -human loanword coincides phonologically with the Greek ending, the loanword is incorporated in the inflectional class denoted by this specific ending. In this respect, the entire word is retained and transferred and not just its stem. Thus, borrowing of full-word forms is at play:

(13) *ayiuo*. NEU ‘aid, support’ < Ital. *aiuto*. MASC

Conversely, when phonological identification of the endings is not observed, the native speakers of Heptanesian analyze the loanword, and this analysis has led to the retention of the stem and the substitution of the Romance endings by the Greek ones, aiming at their integration into the Greek Heptanesian morphology:

(14) *stratoni*. NEU ‘alley’ < Ital. *stradone*. MASC

In this case, the byproduct of borrowing is the stem of the Romance word and not the whole lot of the word. The key role that the morphological category of stem plays in Greek morphology finds its absolute confirmation in Heptanesian, where direct transfer of stems is witnessed. In this dialect, the nominal loans from Romance are reanalyzed as stems, corroborating Ralli’s view (2002; 2014) about the word-formation pattern of Greek which is stem-based, on the grounds that the morphologically complex words consist of a bound element, that is the stem, and an inflectional ending.

In a nutshell, the Heptanesian data shed light on the significance of the criterion of ‘conformity to the target language form’ (see Winter-Froemel 2008 for discussion). In the instances under examination, we argue that loanword integration and the final outcome of the borrowing process is principally regulated by (a) the natural gender in the assignment of masculine or feminine grammatical gender, (b) the morphological properties of the recipient language (i.e. Greek) within the framework of a general tendency of the Greek language to have its nominal system built on a stem which is combined with an inflectional suffix. The phonological similarity between the Heptanesian and Romance endings also appears to play a secondary role in the accommodation of Romance loanwords.

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