

Relative clauses in Heritage Greek

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In this paper, we investigate the production of restrictive relative clauses (henceforth RRCs) in Heritage Greek in contact with US English. RRCs are modifiers of nouns and both in English and in Greek appear post-nominally. In Greek, RRCs are introduced in two ways: a) by the pronoun *o opios* literally 'the who' which agrees with the nominal head it modifies in gender and number irrespectively of animacy and is preferred in formal registers; b) by the un-inflected complementizer *pu* 'that', again, irrespectively of animacy. *Pu* RRCs are argued to appear mostly in colloquial speech (Mackridge, Philippaki-Warburton 1997: 212). In English, the non-agreeing pronouns *who* and *which* are used modifying persons vs. animals/things respectively, while the complementizer *that* is used for things, animals and persons. We explore the question whether there are differences in the production of Greek RRCs with respect to the two strategies between Greek Heritage Speakers (HSs) in the US and monolingual controls; if so, we examine whether these are due to interference from English.

Methodology: In a production task, speakers narrated a fictional event (N=63 HSs in the US, Mean Age=23;0 and N=64 monolinguals, Mean Age=21;4) in two communicative situations (to a close friend, *informal*, and to the police, *formal*) (Wiese 2017), in both English and Greek.

Findings: Across groups speakers produced more Greek RRCs introduced by *pu* than *o opios*. A one-way Anova reveals no significant difference between the two groups concerning *pu* RRCs but a statistically significant one concerning *o opios* RRCs ($F(1, 125) = 41.862, p=.000$).

Comparing the HSs' English and Greek narrations we found 157 occurrences of RRCs introduced by *that* in English and 430 introduced by *pu* in Greek. The reverse pattern is observed with the pronoun *who*, which is found more frequently in their English (82) than *o opios* in their Greek narrations (6). We also found 70 instances of *which* clauses.

Discussion: Both groups favour the production of *pu* RRCs. We found no clear evidence that *o opios* is preferred in formal registers by monolinguals. We cannot attribute the overuse of *pu* RRCs by HSs to English interference, as they produce a lower number of *that* than *pu* RRCs. We argue that HSs avoid *o opios* RRCs as they have difficulties with establishing agreement between nouns and modifiers (Alexiadou et al. 2021). This is corroborated by their use of the English non-agreeing pronouns *who* and *which*.

References

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