

A Bleeding Rule in Modern Greek

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In the so-called northern dialects of modern Greek, there is a general rule which deletes the underlying high vowels *i* and *u*, when unstressed. This brief note is basically concerned with attempting to show that under certain conditions the underlying vowel *i* of a number of lexical items does not undergo this general rule because another rule changes it into the semivowel *j*.

Let us consider a few examples taken from the dialect of northern Euboea, an island close to Athens, which belongs to the mentioned group of northern dialects:

/miso/ [msós] 'half'
 /psixi/ [psxí] 'soul'
 /xeri/ [xér] 'hand'
 /mikros/ [mkrós] 'small'
 /xorafi/ [xuráf] 'farm'
 /mesimeri/ [mismér] 'noon'
 /etima/ [étma] 'ready'
 /alevri/ [alévr] 'flour'
 /skulikia/ [sklíkja] 'worms'
 /kudunia/ [kdúnja] 'bells,' etc.

From the examples given above, it can be seen that the unstressed high vowels *i* and *u* of the phonological representation are deleted in the phonetic representation, whereas the unstressed middle vowels *e* and *o* become *i* and *u*, respectively¹⁾.

The rule that deletes unstressed high vowels can be roughly formulated as follows:²⁾

$$(I) \begin{bmatrix} + \text{ voc.} \\ - \text{ cons.} \\ + \text{ diff.} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \emptyset / [- \overline{\text{stress}}]$$

¹⁾ Needless to say, the rule that deletes the unstressed high vowels *i* and *u* precedes the rule that raises the unstressed middle vowels *e* and *o* to *i* and *u*, respectively. If the order of these rules were the reverse, then not only the underlying *i* and *u*, but also the derived *i* and *u* from the raising of the middle vowels would be deleted.

²⁾ Generally, the underlying high vowel *i* is not deleted in the following cases:

However, there is another general rule in modern Greek which turns the unstressed high vowel *i* into the semivowel *j* in the immediate environment of another vowel. A few examples taken from the dialect of northern Euboea will illustrate this process:

/vradia/ [vrádja] 'nights'
 /dulia/ [dljá] 'work'
 /piano/ [pjánu] 'I catch'
 /kamia/ [kamjá] 'nobody'
 /xorio/ [xurjó] 'village'
 /elies/ [eljés] 'olives'
 /kremidia/ [krimídja] 'onions'
 /dio/ [djó] 'two'
 /kardia/ [kardjá] 'heart'
 /pedia/ [pidjá] 'children'
 /maidanos/ [majdanós] 'parsley', etc.

Using Bach's neighborhood convention, the change of *i* into *j* can be given by the following phonological rule:³⁾

(2)
 $i \rightarrow j/V$
 [- stress]

It is obvious that in order to obtain correct results the given rules (I) and (2) should apply in a strictly fixed order. Specifically, rule (2) must apply before rule (I). If the order of these rules were the reverse, then there would be no way of correctly deriving the given lexical items. Notice that after the application of rule (2) rule (I) is no longer applicable to examples like the above because the application of rule (2) removes representations to which rule (I) would otherwise apply. Such a functio-

(I) If it is stressed, as /foni/ [funí] 'voice', /piso/ [písu] 'behind', /riza/ [ríza] 'root', etc.

(II) If an unpronounceable consonant cluster is created by its deletion, as /skifta/ [skiftá] 'stoopingly', /pnigma/ [pnigména] 'drowned', etc.

(III) If it is changed into *j*, as is shown below.

³⁾ There are a few lexical items in which the unstressed *i* does not change into *j*, though it is in the environment of another vowel, because if it were changed into *j*, then the pronunciation of one lexical item would completely coincide with that of another lexical item which has a different meaning. Thus, the language itself provides the means of differentiating pairs of lexical items which would be pronounced alike otherwise. An example of such a pair of lexical items will be cited here: /skiazo/ [skjázu] 'I frighten', but /skiazo/ [skiázu] 'I shadow'.

nal relationship between two rules has been called bleeding relationship, and rule (2) constitutes a characteristic case of a bleeding rule in modern Greek.

References

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