Standard Greek, Cypriot Greek and in-between: evidence for separationist morphology

Tsiplakou (in press; 2009) observes that in certain registers of Cypriot Greek (CG henceforth) forms and features from CG and from Standard Greek (SG henceforth) co-exist within constituents, thus challenging an analysis of such mixing as standard code-switching. Some examples focusing on morphological aspects of this co-occurrence follow, all data are from Tsiplakou (2009):

1. τέτας εφοίταζην proclisis (SG)
   and us.ACC.CL scare. PAST.IMPF.3SG
   ‘and s/he was scaring us’
2. στίς προινές εσίν πένανα τί να γαλάμε τούτι δόδσεκα. SG ‘θα’ instead of CG ‘enna’
   in the morning.ones you is that is to be.2SG. will put this. FEM twelve
   ‘it’s who’ll be in the morning slots. Her, we’ll put for twelve.’
3. πάντα δύναμες πεστές αδινάμιες SG ‘tis’ and CG ‘tes’
   to spot.1ST.PL. the strengths and the weaknesses
   “in order to spot the strengths and the weaknesses”

In all the above examples we have SG morphological characteristics within CG utterances, well below the level of phrasal constituents. Tsiplakou (2009) analyzes these and similar data as instances of interlanguage effects – apparently under the tacit assumption that SG is acquired by CG speakers as an L2 during childhood.

What is striking, however, is the absence of any mixing of morphological exponents in syntactic environments exclusive to CG, such as cleft-like wh-questions with embu (Grohmann, Panagiotidis & Tsiplakou 2006; Gryllia & Lekakou 2006). This fact, coupled with the dissociation between terminal syntactic terminal nodes and their morphological exponents, could potentially lead us to a different hypothesis: speakers of CG have a repertory of forms including both CG exponents, (e.g. tes in (3)) and SG ones, e.g. tis, to match the syntactic terminal nodes generated by their native CG grammar.

Still, there is an obvious constraint: the feature content of the syntactic node must match that of the morphological exponent, as per the standard workings of the Elsewhere and the Subset Principle (see Harley 2008 on keeping the two distinct). Therefore, in (2), in order to express – say – a [future] feature on a T head, a CG speaker can use either the native enna or the SG θα exponent. In the same vein, CG embu (or en pu, if bimorphemic) cannot be expressed with any SG form, given the former’s feature content, which is not matched by any SG exponent. Finally, the option of using SG clitic placement, as in (1), follows if clitic placement (enclisis vs. proclisis) is not a purely syntactic issue but decided by morpho-phonology.

References


Harley, Heidi 2008. When is a syncretism more than a syncretism? Impoverishment, syncretism, and underspecification. In D. Harbour, D. Adger and S. Béjar (eds.) Phi Theory. OUP.251-294
