

Digging for -ings: a survey of selected (pseudo)anglicisms in dictionaries of modern Greek

One of the many ways for a language's vocabulary to extend through neology is through lexical borrowing. A very specific type of this phenomenon is the anglicism, which is created when a language borrows a word or phrase from the English language and incorporates it into its vocabulary. This process can be reflected at various levels in the borrowing language, such as its phonology, morphology, grammar, or vocabulary. For historical reasons, the prominence of the English language has caused anglicisms to be the most widely spread lexical items that are borrowed at a global level. This trend has been further enhanced by the introduction of vocabulary from terms related to international business, as well as new technologies, most notably computers and the internet, as these are originally coined in English and very quickly make their way into foreign lexicons. For these reasons, among others, English is also the most popular foreign language to learn, which makes anglicisms spread more easily. In some cases, these items are adopted verbatim in the new languages, usually when these languages share the same alphabet as English, that is, Latin. In the case of languages such as Greek, that use a different alphabet, these items normally follow a process of transliteration or other types of anglicization that help words and phrases assimilate into the new language. In some cases, the influence of English is so prominent that cases of pseudoanglicism also occur, resulting in lexical items that appear to be English because of their form but, in fact, are not.

This paper explores the inclusion and treatment of a special category of anglicisms and pseudoanglicisms as they occur in dictionaries of modern Greek. This category consists of nouns ending with -ing, a suffix that corresponds to the present participle and gerund of a verb, which is typical of English morphology and has been incorporated in other languages through the process of borrowing. The methodology is based on a selection of five Greek dictionaries that are available online, which are compared with each other in terms of their macrostructure to find out how inclusive they are in their treatment of this phenomenon. Dictionaries that are available exclusively on paper were not considered taking space constraints into account. The decisive criterion for this selection was that the dictionaries are currently in use. Among the selected dictionaries, three are the products of professional lexicographers, while the other two are works of crowdsourcing. At the second stage of the process, the resulting entries are examined in terms of their orthography and cross-checked against a corpus of modern Greek to test whether their treatment reflects actual language use according to the data. Then, moving further into the lexicographic microstructure, the possible existence of Greek equivalents is researched in all five dictionaries. These findings are also cross-checked against the corpus for frequency in an attempt to see which of the existing alternatives native users of Greek tend to use and which are possibly more alien to them. Finally, the list of lexical items in the findings is explored as to which domain or semantic field they belong to as well as their register, style, and attitude; this exploration aims to unveil possible trends in their coinage and usage.