

Morphosyntactic contact in translation: reflexives between Greek and Latin in the Bible

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During the post-Classical stages of both Greek and Latin, a restructuring of the system of personal pronouns and adjectives takes place in each language. In both cases, a relevant outcome of this process is the creation of a new possessive reflexive adjective ('one's own'), as a development of the adjectives ἴδιος (*idios*) 'private', 'personal' and *proprius* 'personal', 'peculiar' respectively. This process is accomplished in later stages. The suffixed form (*i*)dikós survives into the possessive *ōiko* of contemporary Greek (Alexiadou 2005). Latin *proprius* develops into a possessive reflexive adjective in Romance languages such as Spanish, French, and Italian, replacing or reinforcing *suus* in this function (with different properties in each language, cf. Pierluigi 2007). The grammaticalization path from adjectives with full lexical meanings to reflexive possessive adjectives poses interesting –and largely unexplored– challenges to linguistic research. In the specific case, Gr. *idios* and Lat. *proprius* –though differing lexically– show parallel developments. This raises a further question: are the two processes totally independent or are they –at least partly– an effect of language contact?

The contact hypothesis deserves being explored: a clearly perceived equivalence between *proprius* and *idios* (in their full lexical meaning) is actually attested already in Classical Latin: *proprius* is the translation equivalent of *idios* in learned loan translations, e.g., of the philosophical and medical vocabulary (Fortuine 2000); also the derived word *proprietas* 'property' is a calque from Greek *idiótēs* (Ernout-Meillet 1985⁴ s.v. *proprius*). Is the contact hypothesis viable also for the later development of the "grammatical" meaning 'one's own'? A type of texts in which Gr. *idios* and Lat. *proprius* come in contact are translation texts, and this is particularly evident in biblical translations. In the Latin versions, both of the Old and of the New Testament, *proprius* may translate –as an alternative to (classical) *suus*– Gr. *idios*:

Greek:	ho	aph'heautoũ	lalōn	tēn	dóksan	tēn	idían	zēteĩ
	the:NOM	from	himself	speak:PTCP	the:ACC	glory:ACC	the:ACC	own:ACC seek:3SG
Latin:	Qui	a	semetipso	loquitur,	gloriam	propriam	quaerit	
	who:NOM	from	himself	speak:3SG	glory:ACC	own:ACC	seek:3SG	
	'He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory' (Jn 7.18.1)							

In our research, we test the hypothesis that contact with Greek may have played a role in the development of Lat. *proprius* into a reflexive possessive adjective, and we select biblical translations for our testing. The role of translation for the rise and spread of grammatical change is widely acknowledged in literature, as well as the particular status of translated sacred texts (contributions in Cornillie & Drinka (eds.) 2019, Lavidas & Bergs (eds.) 2020; Bianconi 2021, Drinka 2011, Gianollo 2011, 2014, van der Louw 2007). We single out the conditions that govern the translation choice in the Vulgata and in earlier translations (the Vetus Latina). In order to do so, we complement the annotation of translation matches with further uses of *idios* and *proprius* in the texts under consideration and in coeval and / or sociolinguistically comparable non-translated texts. We consider factors such as word-order (pre- vs. post-nominal), number and person of antecedent, syntactic position and grammatical function of antecedent, emphatic use after accompanying pronoun, predicative use after copula, nominalized use. We then evaluate the innovation in each language considering the respective starting conditions for the change. In Greek, the expansion of *idios* is linked to the demise of the old forms of reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives, a conspicuous change in New Testament Greek, and affects all grammatical persons. In Latin, instead, the expansion of *proprius* has been interpreted as a reaction to the expansion of *suus* 'his' into non-reflexive functions.

The two languages, therefore, converge on a similar solution (the addition of *idios* / *proprius* as reflexive possessive adjectives) starting from differing original conditions in terms of systemic pressures. We argue that contact may have catalyzed this change, which, however had independent triggers.

Keywords: possessive reflexive adjectives, contact, translation, Greek, Latin

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