

Emphatic emphasis

Freedom of choice in Classical Greek

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Ancient Greek possesses an all-purpose indefinite item, which is *tis* ‘someone, anyone’. This term was available from the earliest attestations of the language to its latest and was able to convey any nuance of indefiniteness (specificity, nonspecificity, negative polarity, freedom of choice). Still, Classical Greek created another item *hostisoûn* ‘anyone whatsoever’, whose attestation lasted for a century only. It is morphologically extremely complex (*h-os-t-is-oûn*). It is based on the non-identificational relative term *h-os-t-is* (Faure 2021, but *hostisoûn* scarcely shows up in subordinate structures, Denizot 2019) and the multifunctional particle *oûn*, whose meaning is not easy to capture.

Hostisoûn is devoted to freedom of choice with some negative polarity usages, too. In that respect, it resembles English *any*. However, in contrast to *any*, it is only used in very emphatic contexts. Since freedom of choice is already associated with emphasis, the question arises as to how it can be made even more emphatic (although this situation is not unknown, cf. Fălăuș and Nicolae 2022). Based on an exhaustive study of all occurrences of *hostisoûn*, I will investigate the role that each morpheme plays and suggest several paths of explanation for this emphatic emphasis, all revolving around the role of the morpheme *-oûn*. The instability of this meaning may be the reason why the lifespan of the item was so short.

References

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