

RHYTHM IN MODERN GREEK

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Is Modern Greek a stress-timed or a syllable-timed language? This question is investigated through a comparison of Greek and English based mainly on readings of prose texts. The two languages are compared with respect to syllable lengths, rate of speaking and interstress intervals (or 'feet'). The two most important findings are that the average interstress interval is about the same in both Greek and English - about .5 second, and that the ratio of foot lengths in Greek increases in the proportion of 1 : 1.5 : 2 : 2.5 : 3 : 3.5 from one to six syllable feet.

This shows that foot lengths correlate with the number of syllables they contain, increasing by the addition of one unstressed syllable which has one half the quantitative value of a stressed syllable. It is mainly the alternation of vowel lengths within the foot that is important in Greek and establishes this rhythmic pattern. Thus, although we can say Modern Greek has a rhythm of alternation, it is neither a pure syllable-timed nor a pure stress-timed language.