

Verb-deriving processes in Modern Greek: the role of the learned and non-learned level

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Περίληψη

Στην εργασία αυτή διερευνάται το επίπεδο ύφους (ή χρήσης) των μορφολογικών μέσων (προσφυμάτων, προσφυματοειδών στοιχείων και δεσμευμένων θεμάτων) που χρησιμοποιούνται για την παραγωγή ρημάτων στην κοινή νέα ελληνική. Διαπιστώνεται ότι τα μορφολογικά μέσα που χρησιμοποιούνται για τον σχηματισμό των μεταφραστικών δανείων εκπροσωπούν το λόγιο επίπεδο, ενώ τα δάνεια προσφύματα εντάσσονται στη μη λόγια ποικιλία. Επίσης, καταδεικνύεται η συστηματική σχέση των μετριαστικών προθηματοειδών στοιχείων με το μη λόγιο επίπεδο.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: γραμματικοποίηση, δανεισμός, διεθνισμός, ελληνική γλώσσα, επίπεδο ύφους, μεταφραστικό δάνειο, νεολογισμός.

1 Introduction

Modern Greek has a wealth of verb-deriving processes. Modern Greek verbs can be formed by means of suffixation, prefixation, parasynthesis or conversion (Efthymiou 2018):

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| (1) a. | <i>καθαρ-ίζω</i> ‘to clean’ | (<i>καθαρός</i> ‘clean’) |
| b. | <i>υπερ-φορτώνω</i> ‘to overload’ | (<i>φορτώνω</i> ‘to load’) |
| c. | <i>εκ-θρον-ίζω</i> ‘dethrone’ | (<i>θρόνος</i> ‘throne’) |
| d. | <i>γλωσσολογ(ώ)</i> ‘perform the activity of a linguist’ | (<i>γλωσσολόγος</i> ‘linguist’) |

The above-mentioned verb-forming processes generally differ in terms of morphological productivity (Efthymiou, Fragaki and Markos 2012a, Efthymiou 2018). It is also notable that in contemporary Greek the domain of affixal derivation seems to be expanded, mainly via grammaticalization (e.g. the suffixization of Ancient Greek *ποιώ* ‘to make/do’), and via borrowing (e.g. the suffix *-άρω* and the prefix *καρα-* (Ralli 2005, Dimela and Melissaropoulou 2009, Manolessou and Ralli 2015, Efthymiou 2017):

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|--------|---|-------------------------------------|
| (2) a. | <i>απλο-ποιώ</i> ‘to simplify’ | (<i>απλός</i> ‘simple’) |
| b. | <i>ζουμ-άρω</i> ‘to zoom’ | (<i>ζουμ</i> ‘zoom’) |
| c. | <i>καρα-ντρέπομαι</i> ‘to be extremely ashamed’ | (<i>ντρέπομαι</i> ‘to be ashamed’) |

As a consequence, new verb-forming elements enter in competition with older Modern Greek verb-forming affixes (cf. Anastassiadi-Symeonidi 1986, Efthymiou, Fragaki and Markos 2012a, Efthymiou, Fragaki and Markos 2012b, Efthymiou 2017, 2018, 2019).

This study focuses on a) verb-forming affixes which Modern Greek borrowed from other languages (e.g. the suffix *-άρω*), b) verb-forming elements which are related to the introduction of loan words in Modern Greek (e.g. the prefix *εκ-*), and c)

prefixoids which create diminutive verbs in Modern Greek (the prefixoid *κουτσο-* ‘lame’):

- (3) a. *ζουμ-άρω* ‘to zoom’
b. *εκ-βιομηχαν-ίζω* ‘to industrialize’ (cf. also French *industrialiser*)
c. *κουτσο-τρώω* ‘to eat slowly, from time to time’

It will be argued that the preference for certain elements rather than others may be related to sociolinguistic (i.e. register) factors.

This paper has been divided into five sections. In section 2, I briefly explain the features [+learned], [+/- learned] and [-learned], which will be used in the following sections. Sections 3, 4 and 5 discuss the characteristics of the verb forming elements under investigation. Section 6 is a brief conclusion.

2 Defining [+learned] and [-learned] elements

After the language reform of 1976, the two distinct varieties of Greek diglossia, *katharevousa* (a ‘purist’ written variety) and *demotic* (the ‘popular’ variety, used for spoken and informal occasions) have merged to form Standard Modern Greek with a clear prevalence of the latter. What is now known as Standard Modern Greek is based on demotic features supplemented with so-called learned elements from *katharevousa* (Mackridge 1985, Horrocks 1997, among others), thus preserving features from both varieties at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical levels.

As a consequence, Modern Greek vocabulary is made up of lexical items of popular and learned (or [+learned]) origin (Petrounias 1985). The first may have two different sources: a) inherited from Ancient and Hellenistic Greek via medieval Greek, e.g. *γη* ‘earth’, or b) borrowed from other languages, e.g. *πόρτα* (Latin *porta*, ‘door’). The second refers to words that have been coined in modern times under the learned (or purist) tradition. These words are in their vast majority of three sources (Petrounias 1995): a) Learned loans from Classical or Hellenistic Greek, borrowed in an attempt to accommodate meanings of foreign words by expanding the meaning of ancient words that were thus reintroduced into the modern vocabulary (e.g. *πολιτισμός*, in Hellenistic Greek ‘administration of public affairs’ translates French *civilisation*), b) loan translations from Modern European languages (notably French and English) (e.g. *ουρανοξύστης* < English *skyscraper*), and c) loans from internationalisms based wholly or partly on Ancient Greek and/or Latin lexical elements (e.g. *ψυχολογία* < French *psychologie*) (see also Setatos 1969, among others). In the same spirit, Anastassiadi-Symeonidi, Fliatouras and Nikolaou (2018) observe that the learned level of Modern Greek is derived from natural diachronic inheritance, mainly through the language of administration, high oral/written registers, the scientific register and the language of church as language variation, as well as the standardization of Ancient Greek. They also maintain that the learned level nowadays includes the inherited segments, structures and processes from former periods of the Greek language on all levels of linguistic analysis (phonology, morphology, etc.) as well as lexicon, that are used mainly on the high/formal register.

Due to the heterogeneous range of learned elements in Modern Greek, the degree of learnedness is defined by a continuum (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras 2004).

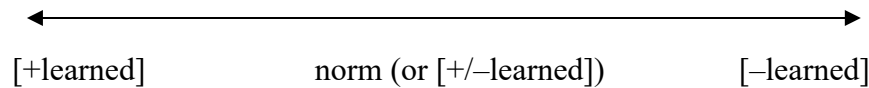


Figure 1 | The [learnedness] continuum (cf. Anastassiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras 2004)

The vast majority of basic everyday linguistic items can be classified at the intermediate zone of the continuum, belonging to the unmarked variety (i.e. the norm), whereas peripheral items can be located at the learned or non-learned zone, gradually diverging from the norm (see also Kamilaki 2012). According to Anastassiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras (2004), learnedness is defined by two criteria: a) by etymology and b) by register, in terms of representation of the high/formal level (see also Anastassiadi-Symeonidi, Fliatouras and Nikolaou 2018). The learned zone includes lexical items that are used mainly on the high/formal register and originate from Ancient Greek or constitute formations of *katharevousa*. On the other hand, lexical items characterized as [-learned] either have a popular origin or are used in informal or spoken (colloquial) speech (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi and Fliatouras 2004).

3 Affixes which Greek borrowed from other languages

The borrowing of derivational affixes in the verbal domain of Modern Greek is limited to *-άρω* and *καρα-*, which are both relatively new verb-forming elements in the history of Greek (Efthymiou 2018).

I will begin with *-άρω*, which is highly productive in Modern Greek. This suffix is of Italian etymology and entered Greek through borrowings of Italian verbs in *-are* and French verbs in *-er*. It is related to the introduction of loan words in Greek, and shows preference for non-native bases (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi 1994, Ralli 2005, among others):

- (4) a. τσεκάρω ‘to check’ (τσεκ ‘check’)
 b. φλερτάρω ‘to flirt’ (φλερτ ‘flirt’)

As shown in the corpus study of Efthymiou et al. (2012a), the suffix *-άρω* is a moderately productive verb-forming element, which enters in competition with older Modern Greek verb-forming suffixes, such as *-ίζω*, *-ώνω*, *-έω* and *-αίνω*, etc. More specifically, *-άρω* is found to be less productive than *-ίζω*, *-ώνω*, *-έω* and *-αίνω* and more productive than *-(i)άζω* and *-αίνω*. It is also worth noting that *-άρω* presents a rather high number of hapaxes in the data of Efthymiou et al. (2012a), something which suggests that the probability of finding new words formed by these elements is very high.

As concerns the register properties of *-άρω*, the suffix is found to be more productive in spoken than written registers (Efthymiou et al. 2012a). According to Efthymiou et al. (2012a), the high productivity of *-άρω* in spoken registers can be related a) to the [-learned] or [+/-learned] character of its derivatives, which generally belong to everyday vocabulary, used in spoken interaction and b) to its preference to non-native bases, since spoken discourse is usually a fertile domain for the introduction of neologisms in language (cf. also Efthymiou et al. 2012b).

Turning now to the intensifying prefix *καρα-*, we observe that it originates from the Turkish adjective *kara* ‘black’.

- (5) a. *kara-simbaθó* ‘to get to like someone extremely’
 b. *kara-drépome* ‘to be extremely ashamed’

According to Manolessou and Ralli (2015), the use of *καρα-* as an intensifying prefix probably started from the borrowing of Turkish words where *kara* was a component with an intensifying function.

As concerns its register properties, the prefix *καρα-* is used in highly informal register and derives [–learned] words with negative connotations (Fotiou 1998, Efthymiou 2017, among others). This observation accords with Anastassiadi-Symeonidi (2010), who claims that borrowing constitutes a safe way for Greek to introduce finer distinctions on a pragmatic level. For the [–learned] level, Modern Greek employs suffixes borrowed from other languages, while for the [+learned] suffixes of Greek origin.

4 Verb-forming elements which are related to the introduction of loan translations in Modern Greek

Verb-forming elements which are related to the introduction of loan translations in Modern Greek are in their vast majority either a) prepositional prefixes (e.g. *απο-*, *εκ-*, *εν-*, etc.) or b) affixoids (e.g. *-ποιώ*, *αυτο-*, etc.) or c) bound stems (e.g. *-λογώ*, *-σκοπώ*, etc.) (for discussion on bound stems, cf. Ralli 2005):

- (6) a. *απο-*: *αποτοξινώνω* < English ‘to detoxify’
 b. *εκ-*: *εκβιομηχανίζω* ‘to industrialize’ (< French industrialiser)
 c. *εν-*: *ενυδατώνω* ‘to hydrate’ (< French hydrater)
- (7) a. *-ποιώ*: *παγκοσμιοποιώ* < English ‘to globalize’
 b. *αλληλο-*: *αλληλεπιδρώ* ‘to interact’ < French interagir
- (8) a. *-λογώ*: *ηθικο-λογώ* < ‘moralize’ French moralizer
 b. *-σκοπώ*: *βιντεο-σκοπώ* < English ‘to videotape’

What all these elements have in common is that they originate in Ancient Greek and are of learned origin. A large number of them (the so-called ‘neoclassical’ or ‘international’ affixes/elements) has been used for the creation of neologisms which tend to be international (internationalisms) passing from language to language (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi 1986, Ralli 2005, Efthymiou 2015, 2018, among others).

It is interesting to note that one of the most productive prefixes of Modern Greek, the prefix *ξε-*, which is of popular origin, does not participate in the creation of loan translations (Petrounias 1995). As Mendez-Dosuna (1997) has shown, *ξε-* is a formation of Medieval Greek, which developed from the combination of the Ancient Greek preverb *εκ-* (or *εξ-* before vowels) with the verbal syllabic augment *ε-*.

As concerns their register properties, verb-forming elements which are related to the introduction of loan translations in Modern Greek typically occur in refined or written speech and their derivatives are usually [+learned] or [+/-learned] forms (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi 1986, 2010, Ralli 2005, Efthymiou 2015, Efthymiou, Fragaki and Markos 2012b, Efthymiou 2018). The example of *-ποιώ* is characteristic. Like *-άρω* (see section 3), *-ποιώ* is productive in forming neologisms and enters in

competition with other verb forming processes (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi (1986, Efthymiou et al. 2012b). Although the two verb-forming elements (i.e. *-ποιώ* and *-άρω*) are observed to have similar productivity scores, they show mirror image preferences as regards their productivity in spoken and written texts: *-ποιώ* is more productive in written texts containing a large amount of terminology, whereas *-άρω* appears to be more productive in spoken texts (Efthymiou et al. 2012b). According to Efthymiou et al. (2012b), the high productivity of *-ποιώ* in written registers can be related to the [+learned] character of the verbs it forms: *-ποιώ* usually forms verbs with a [+learned] character, which are mostly expected in formal or written texts.

5 Prefixoids which form diminutive verbs in Modern Greek

Diminutive verbs show a wide variety of meanings. They do not only indicate deviation from the default value denoted by the base, but can also express a range of meanings such as the attitude of the speaker, mitigation, etc. (see among others Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Grandi 2009, Stosic and Amiot 2011):

(9) Italian *dorm-icchiare* ‘sleep poorly’

As shown in Efthymiou (2017), Modern Greek diminutive (i.e. deintensifying) verbs are mainly formed by means of prefixoids (i.e. elements, which have acquired a new more abstract meaning through grammaticalization):

- (10) a. *ψιλο-* ‘slim’ : *ψιλοθυμώνω* ‘to get a bit angry’
 b. *κουτσο-* ‘lame, gimpy’ : *κουτσοβλέπω* ‘to see poorly’

Ψιλο- ‘slim’, *κουτσο-* ‘lame, gimpy’ and *ψευτο-* ‘false’ are three of the most common prefixoids which can be interpreted as verbal diminutivizers. As illustrated in the examples in (10), all these elements, in their bound use, do not behave like parts of compounds, but function as prefixes expressing a more subjective meaning (Efthymiou 2017, cf. also Babiniotis 1969, Dimela and Melissaropoulou 2009). It is worth noting that *ψιλο-*, *κουτσο-* and *ψευτο-* are of popular origin (cf. Babiniotis 1969). As concerns their semantic contribution, these (deintensifying) prefixoids have a range of meanings beyond deintensification, covering the negative or positive attitude of the speaker, mitigation of the force of the utterance, emotional involvement or other non-evaluative meanings (e.g. event internal pluractionality, etc.) (Efthymiou 2017):

- (11) a. *ψιλοπίνω* ‘I don’t want to tell you that I drink (a lot), but I do so’ (example taken from Xydopoulos 2009)
 b. *κουτσοτρώνω* ‘to eat slowly, from time to time’
 c. *ψευτοδιαβάζω* ‘to study half-heartedly, from time to time’.

As can be seen from the examples in (11), *kutso-* and *psefto-* are typically associated with qualitative interpretations, emphasizing the lower quality of the action, while *psilo-* is typically associated with the pragmatic meaning of mitigation (Giannouloupoulou 2004, Xydopoulos 2009, Savvidou 2012, among others).

Finally, as concerns their register properties, these prefixoids typically form verbs with a [–learned] character, which are mostly expected in informal or spoken

speech (Efthymiou 2017, 2019). Interestingly enough, this observation accords with the well-known assumptions that diminutives are normally used in informal contexts (see among others, Prieto 2005, Sifianou 1992, Efthymiou 2019) and suggests that the study of usage frequency across (spoken and written) registers can be very useful in drawing a refined picture of verb-forming elements.

6 Conclusion

To sum up, the observations made in this paper provide support for suggesting that in the verbal domain of Modern Greek, the preference for certain verb-forming elements rather than others is related to register factors. It was shown that verb-forming elements which are related to the introduction of loan translations in Modern Greek fall into the learned category, whereas borrowed affixes fall into the [-learned] category. Furthermore, it was shown that for the [-learned] level, Modern Greek verbs employ suffixes or prefixes borrowed from other languages (e.g. *-άρω, кара-*) or affixoids of popular origin (e.g. *ψευτο-*) while for the [+learned] register prepositional prefixes (e.g. *εκ-, εν-*) or affixoids and bound stems of learned origin (e.g. *-σκοπώ, -ποιώ*).

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