

The suffix -ίδι(o) through its derivatives in Standard Modern Greek*

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Περίληψη

Η μελέτη εξετάζει το επίθημα -ίδι(o) στην Κοινή Νεοελληνική σύμφωνα με το μοντέλο της Κατασκευαστικής Μορφολογίας. Έπειτα από συλλογή και μελέτη δεδομένων παρατηρούμε ότι το επίθημα επιλέγει ουσιαστικά-βάσεις με το χαρακτηριστικό [+υλικό], ενώ είναι πραγματολογικά κυρίως [+λόγιο] ή [+/-λόγιο]. Κατασκευάζει ουδέτερα ουσιαστικά με υποκορισμό που επιφέρεται σε συγκεκριμένο χαρακτηριστικό της σημασίας της βάσης, ενώ παρατηρείται και η ύπαρξη πρόσθετων, μη συνθετικών σημασιών. Επιπλέον, ο υποκορισμός μπορεί να συνδεθεί με υποτιμητική συνδήλωση. Ωστόσο, υπάρχουν λεξήματα στα οποία το -ίδι(o) δεν είναι επίθημα αλλά ομώνυμο τέρμα.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: βάση, υποκοριστικό, λόγιο χαρακτηριστικό, σημασιολογική οδηγία, μη συνθετική σημασία, ομωνυμία

1 The framework

This paper investigates the Modern Greek suffix -ίδι(o)¹ within the framework of Corbin's Construction Morphology (Corbin 1987, 1989). In this model the lexicon is considered an organized system of regularities (Dangas 2012: 1021) with two important principles. The first is form-meaning *associativity*, that is, form and meaning are constructed simultaneously, since the meaning of the constructed lexeme (CL) or derivative is based on its morphological structure. Therefore, the meaning of a CL emerges compositionally and, thus, it is predictable (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 2016: 60). The second basic principle is *stratification*, according to which in the derivation there are particular hierarchies imposed on:

- (a) the structure of the CL, which is constructed in a binary fashion, and
- (b) the predictable meaning, which is constructed according to
 - (i) the Lexeme Construction Rule (LCR)
 - (ii) the instructional meaning of the suffix related to the LCR and
 - (iii) the kind of base to which the affix is attached.

It follows that associativity determines stratification.

Central to the derivation is the Lexeme Construction Rule (LCR). An LCR includes four components: (1) a structural operation imposing a categorical relation between the base and the CL, e.g. the present LCR which derives nouns from nouns, (2) a semantic operation which constructs the basic meaning of all CLs that are generated by the LCR, (3) a morphological paradigm which contains the affixes, e.g. the diminutive suffixes -ίδιο, -άκι, and (4) restrictions concerning the compatibility of suffix and base, the availability degree and suffix register (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis

* I would like to thank Professor Anna Anastassiadis-Symeonidis for her valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own responsibility.

¹ The parentheses indicate an inflectional suffix. I will take them for granted in the rest of the paper by not indicating them.

2015: 4). Following a specific LCR, a suffix selects a base and is applied to it, thus generating a lexical unit.

Furthermore, the model recognizes three categories of monolectic lexemes: (a) [+constructed], (b) [-constructed] and (c) [-constructed +complex]. In vocabulary acquisition speakers do not need to store the meaning of [+constructed] lexemes in their memory, as they depend on the lexical meaning of the base and the LCR that formed it. On the contrary, they have to learn the meanings for categories (b) or (c), since it is impossible to analyze the lexeme's constituents (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 2015: 3).

2 The data

The majority of the data were collected from the *Reverse Dictionary of Modern Greek* (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 2002), while additional data were found in slang.gr and Christophoulou (2016). Sources that aided the analysis with lexical and etymological information include four dictionaries (*Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek* 1998; Babiniotis 2002; Babiniotis 2009; Charalambakis 2014) as well as electronic databases (Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, Etymonline, LSJ lexicon, Wiktionary).

The LCR under investigation is $[[X]_N -\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron_{(suf.)}]_N$. At the beginning of the analysis, the following lexemes were excluded, as they do not fit the present LCR:

- (a) Prefixed or compound lexemes, to which $-\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron$ had been applied before prefixation or compounding.
- (b) Lexemes without a recognizable base, thus being [-constructed +complex]: ρουβίδιο 'rubidium' and αμίδιο 'amide'.
- (c) Lexemes with $-\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron$ that synchronically have no semantic difference from their base like βακτηρίδιο ← βακτήριο 'bacterium', ορμίδιο ← ορμιά 'fishing line'.²
- (d) Lexemes which seemingly end in $-\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron$, but $-\acute{\iota}\delta-$ constitutes part of the base to which the suffix $-\iota\omicron$ is attached like ιρίδιο 'iridium' ← ίριδα 'iris', αλυσίδιο 'small chain' ← αλυσίδα 'chain'.
- (e) Lexemes derived by adjective-to-noun conversion like κατοικίδιο ('pet', noun) ← κατοικίδιος ('domestic', adjective)
- (f) Diminutive lexemes whose base is not certain, like πινακίδιο 'small board' ← πίνακας or πινακίδα 'board', νησίδιο 'small island' ← νησί or νησίδα 'island'. If the second noun is their base, then they should be categorized under (d).
- (g) The lexeme υβρίδιο 'hybrid', whose base seems to be ύβρη 'hubris, insult' only through folk etymology (Latin *hybridium* < *hybrida* < *hibrida* < *ibrida*).
- (h) The lexeme εγγειρίδιο 'dagger' or 'manual'. There seems to be no discernible base for it. Moreover, the Ancient Greek (AG) noun ἐγγειρίδιον 'hand-knife, dagger' was a conversion from the adjective ἐγγειρίδιος 'in the hand' (LSJ, Babiniotis 2009). This means that it probably occurs in Modern Greek (MG) only as an inherited word.

In order to facilitate the analysis, I organized the material into two big categories: lexemes with a scientific sense and non-scientific ones. Since this is an arbitrary

² According to the model, the base and the derivative cannot have the same meaning. Thus, $-\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron$ here is not a suffix, but it may be a segment that mimics the form of the suffix $-\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron$. This segment may mark the lexemes as belonging to a certain class; in βακτηρίδιο the addition of the segment $-\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\omicron$ may be an explicit way to mark the lexeme as belonging to the class of small entities (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis, personal communication).

decision, there are lexemes which belong to both categories like τριχίδιο, which means ‘small, thin hair’ (non-scientific sense) and ‘root hair’ in Botany.

3 The bases

The analysis of the bases reveals that their grammatical category is noun. These nouns appear to express concrete concepts like objects (μαχαίρι ‘knife’, σάκος ‘bag’, φιάλη ‘bottle’), animals (ιχθύς ‘fish’, χοίρος ‘pig’), people (γραία ‘old woman’, πόρνη ‘prostitute’, άνθρωπος ‘human’), groups of people and their organization (κόμμα ‘political party’, κράτος ‘state’), language-related units (φράση ‘expression’, λέξη ‘word’)³ and buildings (ναός ‘temple’, εκκλησία ‘church’). Some are hard to place in a category, but they still involve concrete concept e.g., άρτος ‘bread’, σταγόνα ‘drop of a liquid’, σάρκα ‘flesh’ and τρίχα ‘hair’.

In the scientific vocabulary the semantic feature [+material] is, possibly, even stronger. Several bases in Biology involve plants (βολβός ‘bulb’, ρίζα ‘root’, βλαστός ‘sprout’, σπόρος ‘seed’), humans and other animals (οφθαλμός or όμμα ‘eye’, όργανο ‘organ’, ίνα ‘fiber’, αρτηρία ‘artery’) and objects (σωλήνας ‘pipe’, σφαίρα ‘sphere’). In Medicine we can find nouns related to the pathology of the human body (όζος ‘nodule, gall’, όγκος ‘tumor’). We also find the noun λόφος ‘hill’ metaphorically used in Anatomy as a lump of an organ. Moreover, we find στρώμα ‘mattress, layer’ in Geology, σώμα⁴ in Physics, άγαλμα ‘statue’ and σκύφος ‘kind of wine cup’ in Archeology.

Several of these nouns constitute part of the elevated or scholarly vocabulary of MG and thus are marked with the feature [+learned]⁵ e.g., ιχθύς ‘fish’, χοίρος ‘pig’, άρτος ‘bread’, οφθαλμός or όμμα ‘eye’. A great many of them, though, are part of the language norm, i.e. [+/-learned], e.g., σάκος ‘bag’, άνθρωπος ‘human’, μαχαίρι ‘knife’, εκκλησία ‘church’. While in Anastassiadis-Symeonidis (2002) there is no base marked as [-learned], additional material (Christopoulou 2016, slang.gr) revealed such base nouns of the slang vocabulary like πουτάνα ‘whore’, καριόλα ‘slut’, πούστρα ‘faggot’, μαν ‘dude’. There we also find [+/-learned] bases, like γουρούνι ‘pig’ and ψάρι ‘fish’, as denotational equivalents of the respective [+learned] bases χοίρος and ιχθύς.

We observe that the suffix mostly selects bases from the [+learned] to the [+/-learned] side of the feature’s spectrum. However, there are a few [-learned] bases. Their existence may be explained by the fact that the notion of smallness, expressed in the derivatives, can be linked to belittlement (see 4.1, 4.2). Since some base nouns have derogatory uses, we can expect that they may also be [-learned]; πούστρα ‘faggot’ is itself a pejorative and, when selected by the suffix (πουστρίδιο), the latter intensifies the derogatory sense of the derivative by linking smallness to devaluation.

³ People who are not linguists may think that words and expressions have a material dimension, as they might consider that sounds and letters are their building materials.

⁴ Σώμα usually means body but its derivative is σωματίδιο ‘particle’.

⁵ This is a pragmatic feature associated to language use and discourse genres (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 2016: 73).

4 The derivatives

4.1 Lexemes without scientific meaning

The analysis of the derivatives reveals that, when *-ίδιο* is applied to a base noun, it produces a noun derivative of neuter grammatical gender with the general/instructional meaning ‘small X’, where X is the variable of the base noun. In other words, the CL is a diminutive of a base X inserted in the LCR $[[X]_N -ίδιο_{(suf.)}]_N$ e.g., *ιχθύδιο* ‘small fish’, *φιαλίδιο* ‘small bottle’, *γραϊδίο* ‘small old lady’.

A plausible question that arises here is to what aspect of the noun’s meaning the sense of smallness is applied. Is it applied to the totality of the referent or to a specific aspect? Size seems to be the feature of the diminutive’s application. In particular, objects appear to be evaluated along a scale of size specific to each object. For instance, *εκκλησίδιο* is small as a church only along a scale of church-size and only compared to what an average-sized church is. However, this scale may involve different aspects of size; in *τριχίδιο* ‘small hair’ smallness is applied to the length of the hair and not to its width. It may also not involve size; in *πορνίδιο* ‘young prostitute’ the diminutive is applied to age. If we take these observations into consideration, we may conclude that the general/instructional meaning of a CL, which can be predicted by its morphological constituency, will be applied to particular idiosyncratic characteristics of the base’s meaning.

A plausible implication can be the addition of further senses through the use of the lexeme in various contexts. This can be observed to a less or greater extent in some lexemes. The lexeme *ξιφίδιο* ‘small sword’, whose base is *ξίφος* ‘sword’, has acquired an additional specialized meaning, as it can also refer to the sword carried by the trainees of armed forces in their official suit. An instance of greater semantic specialization is *ματιδίο*, which signifies the upper part of an army officer’s official suit. Its base, *μάτιο*, used to denote a type of clothing commonly worn in the antiquity. Another instance involves *νυμφίδιο* ‘nymphet, slut’, which is based on the noun *νύμφη* ‘bride’⁶ (further discussed in 4.2).

There are, however, two lexemes, *ρνίδιο* and *ρπιδίο*, that superficially appear to be constructed with *-ίδιο*, but under a closer examination they are not. *Ρινίδιο* (usually in the plural, *ρινίδια*) is used to refer to small pieces of wood or metal cut off in the act of shaping an object. Its base is *ρίνη* ‘file, shaper’. Since *ρινίδιο* does not mean ‘small file’, it is not a diminutive of *ρίνη*. Also, there is a parallel form *ρινίδι*, constructed with the suffix *-ίδι*, which underwent an *-o* addition to mark the word with [+learned] feature for stylistic elevation (LKN). One of the senses of the suffix *-ίδι* concerns result (LKN), which explains *ρινίδια* as the result of filing. The same reasoning can be applied to *ρπιδίο*, a dated word for a fan that cools the air. Its base is *ρπή* ‘blast of air’, but it is not its diminutive. Instead, it is a tool that produces blasts of air. Again, there is the parallel form *ρπιδίο* to which we can assume an *-o* was added for stylistic elevation. Another sense of the suffix *-ίδι* is repeated movement (LKN), which can explain its interpretation, as *ρπιδίο* produces blasts of air through repeated movement of the hand. Possibly, this repeated movement became metonymically linked to the object with which it is performed, thus leading to the sense of the fan. Considering this information, we can conclude that in these cases *-ίδιο* is not a suffix but a final segment, [suffix *-ίδι* + *-o*], homonymous to the suffix *-ίδιο*.

⁶ *Νύμφη* in Standard MG means bride, though it is usually *νύφη* (*-μ-* deletion).

4.2 Lexemes with derogatory connotations

There exist some derivatives that are pejoratives: γράϊδιο, a small old woman but also a hag; πορνίδιο, a young prostitute, but also a whore; νυμφίδιο, a nymph, a slut; ανθρωπίδιο, a small person but also someone worthless; κομματίδιο, a small political party but also a petty one; λεξίδιο, a small word but also a petty one; φρασιδίιο, a small but also petty expression; αρθρίδιο, a small but also petty article, as a text.

These lexemes, in addition to the general meaning ‘small X’, carry a negative connotation. There appears to be a connection between smallness and belittlement. Even words like *belittlement*, *devaluation* display this connection, which implies that anything small is worthy of scorn and disrespect. This connection carries a cultural and evaluative load and, as such, it is a pragmatic comment which can be implicated depending on the context. Moreover, belittlement cannot prohibit the use of a diminutive with -ίδιο even for an object that is not considered small; ανθρωπίδιο ‘small person’ in its derogatory sense ‘worthless person’ can refer to people who are not short or small. Here we can also make a distinction between intensional and extensional readings; the extension of ανθρωπίδιο is ‘small person’, but its intension is ‘worthless person’.

It is interesting that throughout the entire material of the analysis, the three woman-related lexemes also carry a derogatory sense, while no lexeme for men as a pejorative was found. Two of them, πορνίδιο and νυμφίδιο, condemn a female’s sexual activity as immoral. This is expected, as prostitutes carry a very negative reputation in Greek society, while this also holds for sexually liberal women, whose free sex life is considered an index to their character. The lexeme νυμφίδιο is a special case. Its base is νύμφη ‘bride’, but it does not really mean ‘young bride’. The fact that it is marked only as a pejorative may be explained by the influence of the French *nymphette*, which is historically connected to the AG word νύμφη ‘young girl’ (Babiniotis 2002). Here we may notice that the application of the suffix may have contributed to the derogatory sense of the derivative by connecting young age to belittlement. It is also interesting that a word that used to denote a young girl became the base for a derivative that denotes a seducing and sexually liberal woman and, because sexual liberation is not deemed positive especially for women, it has also gained the meaning of an immoral woman. Moreover, the feature of young age is important in these lexemes, since the object of men’s sexual desire is stereotypically a young woman. Its lack in γράϊδιο explains why the latter carries non-sexually-related negative connotations.

4.3 Lexemes of the scientific vocabulary

In lexemes with scientific meaning we also observe the instructional meaning of the diminutive. However, the CL also bears a more special meaning within a particular scientific field, which depends on the general meaning ‘small X’; ριζίδιο, based on ρίζα ‘root’, means ‘small root’ but in Botany it is a radicle, i.e. an embryonic plant root, and a small nerve root in Anatomy, the latter showing a metaphorical use. Another instance is οφθαλμίδιο or ομματίδιο whose bases are the [+learned] forms οφθαλμός and όμμα ‘eye’ respectively. Their general meaning is ‘small eye’, but in Zoology it is a cluster of photoreceptor cells of the eyes of insects. As it is evident, the general meaning has been applied according to the needs of the scientific context to name particular entities.

Even though there are many lexemes that are explained in the way we have argued, there are the following problematic cases: ακτινίδιο ‘kiwi’, γλυκίδιο ‘carbohydrate’, γονίδιο ‘gene’, λιπίδιο ‘lipid’, μορίδιο ‘morula’, οξειδίο ‘oxide’, πεπτίδιο ‘peptide’, πλασμίδιο ‘plasmid’, χλωρίδιο ‘chloride’ and ωίδιο ‘powdery mildew’. These lexemes do not seem to be diminutives of their base nouns e.g., γονίδιο seems to be based on γόνος ‘offspring’ but it is not a young offspring; οξειδίο, whose base appears to be οξύ ‘acid’, is not a small acid; χλωρίδιο, whose base appears to be χλώριο ‘chlorine’, is not a small chlorine.

Apart from ακτινίδιο, μορίδιο and ωίδιο, we notice that the rest of these lexemes are loans from other languages that were introduced in MG through transliteration; *-id/-ide*⁷ was transliterated as *-ίδ* with the further addition of the segment *-ιο*, hence [*-ίδ + -ιο*], giving a homonymous *-ίδιο*. Thus, they are not derivatives of the present LCR and any relation to the bases is only superficial; οξειδίο is a loan from the French *oxide*; πλασμίδιο, the genetic material in the cell of a bacterium, is a loan from the English *plasmid* and is not based on πλάσμα ‘creature, being, plasma’; πεπτίδιο, a chemical compound that contains amino acids, is a loan from the English *peptide* and is not based on ^οπεπτ-⁸ (< AG πέσσω ‘cook, digest’); λιπίδιο, an organic compound, is a loan from the English *lipid* and is not based on λίπος ‘fat’; γλυκίδιο is a loan from the international *glycid* or the French *glucide*⁹ and is not based on γλυκό ‘a sweet’.

Nonetheless, ακτινίδιο, ωίδιο and μορίδιο may be derivatives of the present LCR. Ακτινίδιο ‘kiwi’, whose base is ακτίνα ‘spoke’, was named so because the arrangement of a kiwi’s core seeds resembles the spokes of a wheel. Since a kiwi’s ‘spokes’ are much smaller than those of a wheel, the diminutive was used, literally meaning ‘small spoke’, to describe its core in a metaphorical way. Later, the word was metonymically used to refer to the whole fruit. A similar case is found in ωίδιο ‘powdery mildew’ (a kind of vine disease), which derives from the non-liberable base ^οω- (< AG ωόν ‘egg’). In English the word *oidium* is also used to refer to seeds produced by fungi, which explains how the lexeme derives from that base, literally meaning ‘small egg’. Whether this meaning also existed in Greek is not known; the lexeme could have been formed in English like other terms of Greek origin. However, this meaning does not exist in Standard MG. We can assume that in the past the meaning of ‘fungus seed’ was metonymically related to the fungus itself – as fungus seeds produce fungi – and later to the disease it provokes; that is, a chain of metonymies. If this reasoning is correct, ωίδιο and ακτινίδιο were produced by the present LCR as diminutives. Later metonymy added noncompositional senses which became the dominant ones in Standard MG.

Perhaps there is one more derivative with a non-liberable base. In Embryology μορίδιο means morula, a spherical mass of cells formed after the splitting of the fertilized egg cell. At first, it seems it derives from the base noun μόριο ‘molecule, particle’. However, we cannot establish any semantic relation between the base and the derivative, as μορίδιο is not a small molecule. If we consider the origin of the English word *morula*, we see that the latter is a Latin diminutive of the Latin base *mōrum* ‘mulberry’, which may originate from the AG word μόνον ‘mulberry’. To

⁷ In reality, it was a reborrowing, as *-ide/-id* < Latin *-idium* < AG *-ίδιον*.

⁸ The symbol ^ο indicates a *non-liberable* base, that is, a base which cannot be freed with an inflection and thus requires a derivational affix e.g., ^οεαρ- (< AG ἔαρ ‘spring’) in εαρινός ‘of the spring (adjective)’ where *-ινός* is a derivational suffix (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis, personal communication).

⁹ The origin of these lexemes is the AG adjective γλυκός ‘sweet’. Metonymy may have played a role here, since certain carbohydrates have sweet flavor, but today we know this is not a general characteristic of the category.

make an analogy, if *morula* is a small mulberry and thus a diminutive of *mōrum*, then it may follow that μορίδιο was also fashioned in the same way, i.e. as a small mulberry and a diminutive of the AG base μόνον. In fact, this spherical mass of cells resembles a mulberry. Therefore, we can claim that in MG there is a non-liberable base, °μον- (< AG μόνον), selected by -ίδιο to produce μορίδιο, as a loan translation of *morula*.

The fact that in some lexemes we may recognize that the meaning of the lexeme is not related to the meaning of the constituents may show that in these lexemes the suffix has become lexicalized. According to Fliatouras (2018: 225–226), lexicalization is a process through which structure is not evident any more, with the linguistic unit being considered a lexical one and not a result of grammatical rules. This means that lexicalization can erase morphological derivation (ibid., p. 226). Therefore, speakers may observe that meaning does not arise from constituency in lexemes like ακτινίδιο, ματίδιο, νυμφίδιο, because their conventional meaning is noncompositional. For these lexemes perhaps we can claim that the suffix has become lexicalized but only partially, since in partial lexicalization we retain some morphological and semantic transparency (ibid., p. 231). This question requires further research and perhaps even experimental procedures, which could test constituency perception in these lexemes.

5 Conclusion

The suffix -ίδιο constructs neuter nouns. It selects nouns that semantically are [+material] and pragmatically [+learned] and [+/-learned], even though there are a few [-learned] bases, which can be explained by the connection of smallness to belittlement. Its instructional meaning is ‘small X’, where X is the base noun, thus producing a diminutive. The derivative, then, is applied to a particular aspect of the noun’s meaning. This kind of specialization is mostly observed in scientific contexts of use. There are also derivatives with additional noncompositional meanings, some of them due to metonymy. Moreover, derogatory connotations may exist in a derivative, as smallness and disrespect are pragmatically connected. Finally, there are some lexemes in which -ίδιο is not a suffix but a homonymous final segment. In these cases, either -ιδ is a transliteration of scientific loans with *-id/-ide* with the addition of the final segment -ιο or we have the suffix -ίδι with the addition of the final segment -ο.

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