

Dialectological research and linguistic theory: the case of compounding¹

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This paper examines Modern Greek dialects as far as their morphological structure is concerned. More specifically, compounding in Southern and Northern dialects is examined. I argue that although compounding is an active process in all dialects in Southern dialects more synthetic structures appear than in the Northern ones.

Keywords: Modern Greek dialects, analyticity, syntheticity, the hidden factor.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine compounding in Modern Greek dialects. The paper specifically examines whether i) the dialects are differentiated according to the monomorphemic or polymorphemic structure of their words (according to the data presented in the studies), ii) the process of compounding appears in the same way in all dialects and iii) compounding process has the same frequency in all dialects.

2. The study of morphology in Modern Greek dialects

According to Tzitzilis (2000: 17-18) the studies of Modern Greek dialects can be classified into the following categories: a) the diachronic studies that start around the middle of the 19th century and form the largest part of the studies in question, b) the studies of the 1980s which are developed in the context of structural dialectology and c) the studies which are represented by the seminal work of Newton (1972) and follow the framework of generativist dialectology. The above studies examine the morphological structure of the dialects to some extent although they do not focus on morphology. In the “Introduction in the Modern Greek Grammar” (1938) Triandafyllidis has already included in the seven main features according to which he classifies dialects the following morphological features: a. “the maintenance of the syllabic or tense augment” e.g. εδένετε [eð'enetē] v.s δένετε [ð'enetē] ‘you tied’, b. the different “derivative endings”, e.g. –ούδι [uði] appears in Thrace, Macedonia and Cyprus,

-έλι [ˈeli] Mytilene and Aivali, -πουλος [ˈpulos] in Peloponnese and in the last names of the Northern dialects (op. cit., 70). However, Triandafyllidis concludes (op. cit., 72) that “the morphological variations are not many”. Considerable contributions in the morphological analysis are found in recent studies (cfr. Koutita-Kaimaki 2000, Drachman & Malikouti-Drachman 2001, Joseph 2001, Pantelidis 2001, Gafos & Ralli 2001).

3. Compounding in Modern Greek dialects

The theoretical framework of the present study is that of the theory of Grammaticalization, according to which compounding is a process of “lexicalization”, and has different –and probably contrastive– features from the process of lexicalization, although both lexicalization and grammaticalization occur in language change.

More specifically, according to Cabrera (1998: 218) lexicalization: “a. is a lexicotelic process (it goes from syntax to the lexicon), b. affects syntactically-determined words and phrases or sentences (it is a syntactogenetic process), c. abides by the metonymical Concretion Hierarchy, d. feeds the lexicon and bleeds the syntax.”

The issue that the present study addresses is if the dialects are differentiated according to the monomorphemic or polymorphemic structure of their words. This issue can be related to the analyticity or syntheticity of the dialects. Part of this general issue is the way that compounding appears in the dialects.

Lexical units from eleven (11) glossaries of Modern Greek dialects, which represent the distribution in Northern and Southern dialects are examined in the present study.

A data-base of 3,304 compound words is created from the total of 36,340 words of the glossaries (9.09%).

There are two methodological problems in collecting the compound words of the dialects’ glossaries: a. the first one concerns the decision of the composer of the glossary to include a compound word. As in the general vocabularies too, the composers do not include compound words if they include the free words from the stems of which the compound is composed.

b. The second problem concerns some compounds of the Standard Modern Greek which are included in the dialects’ glossaries because of their different pronunciation in the dialect (e.g. χασουμῖρω [xasumiˈro] ‘to retard’) or because of the dialect’s specific meaning.

Due to the fact that most of the glossaries’ composers adopt the same attitude towards the selection of such lexical items, the comparison between the dialects was not difficult.

In the final selection of the entries I did not include compound words of the Standard Modern Greek. Opaque compound words as far as their internal structure is concerned in which compounding is traced as a historical process (e.g. *νοικοκυρά* [nico'cira] 'housewife') were also not included. On the other hand, I gathered the words in which compounding is synchronically traced, that is, the compounds the stems of which appear in simple lexical units in the synchrony of the dialect or the Standard language.

I would like to mention some cases of opaque compounds which the speakers reanalyze and by assigning them new meanings, they make them new compounds,
 e.g. the Cretan *εφτακράτορας* [efta'kratoras] for *αυτοκράτορας* [afto'kratoras] 'emperor', where [efta] means 'seven',
βραδυόφωνο [vraðj'ofono] for *ραδιόφωνο* [raðj'ofono] 'radio', where [vraðj] means 'evening'.

Compound words in which the second element does not appear as an autonomous stem in the synchrony (e.g. those with *-βολώ* [vo'lo], *-κοπώ* [ko'po], *-κόπος* ['kopos]), as well as the compounds with prepositions of older periods of Greek were also excluded from the data-base, because they belong to the study of prefixation. Although borderline cases exist between the above mentioned categories and although the opacity / non-opacity of the compound lexical units is a gradient phenomenon, I choose to restrict my study in compounds *vera e propria* in order to investigate more easily the fundamental question about the syntheticity / analyticity of the dialects. The number of words as well as the numbers of the compounds and the compound verbs and participles examined in the present study are presented in Table 1:

DIALECT	Total of words	Total of compounds	Percentage of compounds	Total of compound verbs and participles	Percentage of compound verbs and participles
Veria	2,552	70	2.7%	4	5.7%
Siatista	3,202	112	3.4%	5	4.4%
Litochoro	980	35	3.5%	1	2.8%
Helia (Peloponnese)	891	79	8.8%	8	10.1%
Sarakatsanika	487	43	8.8%	1	2.3%
Pelion	5,500	471	8.5%	21	4.4%

Zante	1,716	128	7.4%	12	9.3%
Agiasos (Mytilene)	2,700	255	9.4%	32	12.5%
Roumeli	6,500	611	9.4%	90	14.7%
Chios	2,232	232	10.3%	27	11.6%
Crete	9,580	1,268	13.2%	247	19.4%
TOTAL	36,340	3,304			

4. Types of compounds in Modern Greek dialects

The compounds of the dialects can belong to every category of the typologies of Ralli (1992) and Anastasiadi-Symeonidi (1996).

Examples:

$N + N \rightarrow N$

τρυγ-ο-κάλαθο [tri'ɣokalaθo]

vine-harvest + basket

'vine-harvest basket' (Zante)

$A + N \rightarrow N$,

αγουρ-ου-βότανου [aɣuru'votano]

unripe+ herb

'unripe herb' (Pelion)

$Adv + N \rightarrow N$,

πισωστρόγκι [piso'struɣi]

back+fold

'back fold' (Roumeli)

$A + A \rightarrow A$,

λειων-ό-μακρος [la'nomakros]

thin+long

'thin and long' (Crete)

$Adv + A \rightarrow A$

πολυπαθομένος [polipaθo'menos]
much+suffer (passive participle)
'someone experienced many troubles' (Crete)

N + A → A
αλλαξ-ο-φορεμένος [alaksofore'menos]
a suit of clothes+wear 1s-passive
'someone who has changed clothes' (Roumeli)

N + V → V,
παλαμ-ου-δέρνω [palamu'derno]
palm+beat 1s
'to have pain in the palms' (Siatista)

V + V → V
δερν-ο-κοπανίζομαι [ðernokopani'zome]
beat-1s+bumb-1s-passive
'to hit one's self' (Crete)

Adv + V → V
ταχινσηκώνομαι [taçinosi'konome]
early + weak up 1s.passive
'to wake up early' (Crete)

Adv + Adv → Adv σιακεί [Ja'ci]
straight+there
'straight there' (Pelion)

Compounding between a verb stem and an adverb is also found, e.g.
βλεποφάνερα [vlepo'fanera]
see (stem)+obviously
'obviously'.

5. Compound verbs

In order to investigate better the question of analyticity / syntheticity, I will focus on compound verbs. Here follow some examples of such compound verbs and their thematic relations according to the typology of Ralli (1989):

I. *coordinative compound verbs*:

According to Ralli (1989, 207-08) this type of compounds is rare in Common Greek. However, they are not so rare in the dialects:

Examples:

ζυμ-ο-μαγειρεύω [zimomaji'revo]
knead (stem)+cook 1s-active
'to knead and cook, to be occupied with cooking' (Roumeli)

βρεχ-ο-λιάζει [vrexo'lazi]
rain (stem)+have sun 3s. active
'to rain and have sun' (Crete)

γελ-ο-χαχανίζω [jeloxaxa'nizo]
laugh (stem)+laugh loudly 1s.active
'to laugh loudly' (Crete)

μερ-ο-φιλώ [merofi'lo]
tame (stem)+make friends 1s-active
'to reconcile' (Crete)

τσακ-ο-πετεινίζομαι [tsakopeti'nizome]
quarrel (stem)+act like a cock 1s-passive
'to quarrel like a cock' (Crete)

χαφτ-ο-πίνω [xafto'pino]
swallow (stem)+drink 1s.active
'to drink and eat hastily' (Crete)

II. *compound verbs with dependence relation between their elements:*

IIa. *compound verbs with "determinante – determinato" relationship between their elements:*

Examples:

αδικ-ο-θανατίζω [adikoθana'tizo]
unjustly+die 1s-active
'to die unjustly' (Roumeli)

λειψ-ο-τρώγω [lipso'trogo]
incompletely+eat 1s-active
'to eat incompletely' (Roumeli)

χαϊδαναστένω [xaidana'steno]
caresses+bring up a child 1s-active
'to bring up a child with affection an caresses' (Roumeli).

Πβ. *Compound verbs with relationship between their elements which corresponds to the relationship of an attributive to its arguments:*

a. argument that grammatically corresponds to the object of a verb and usually expresses the theme:

Examples:

φυτρ-ο-ποτίζω [fitropo'tizo]
seed bud+water 1s-active
'to water the seed bud' (Roumeli)

στειρ-ο-χωρίζω [stiroxo'rizo]
sterile+separate 1s-active
'to separate the sterile from the fertile sheeps' (Roumeli)

καρπαλωνεύγω [karpalo'nevgo]
fruit+thresh 1s-active
'to thresh the fruits' (Crete).

b. argument that grammatically corresponds to the complement which is accompanied by από [apo] 'by' and it semantically represents the Agent:

Examples:

νεραϊδ-ο-κρουσμένος [neraiðokruz'menos]
fairy+strike (passive participle)
'someone under the influence of fairies' (Roumeli)

αγερ-ο-κρούγομαι [ajero'kruome]
wind+bit 1s-passive
'to be bitted by a bad spirit' (Roumeli).

c. argument that grammatically corresponds to a prepositional phrase:

Examples:

ματζουκ-ο-καρτερώ [matzukokarte'ro]
stick+wait for 1s-active
'to set up a trap to somebody' (Crete)

βατ-ο-κρυμμένος [vatokri'menos]
briar+hidden (passive participle)
'afraid, unsociable' (Roumeli).

6. The hidden factor

Apart from the compounds in which the meaning is the product of the syntactic relation between their elements, in the following I will focus on the cases of compounds in which the syntactic relationship cannot explain their meaning. In other words, for the interpretation of these compounds semantics and pragmatics should be taken into account.

I focus on the “hidden factor” (Wamelink-van Lint 1994, 2: 657), that is, the relationship between the compounds constituents from a semantic and pragmatic point of view (cfr. Giannouloupoulou 2001: 103-111):

Examples:

1. σταφιδ-ο-μαραίνομαι [stafidoma'renome]
grape+wither 1s-passive
'to get older as a grape that withers' (Crete)
2. κρεμμυδ-ο-τρώγω [kremido'trogo]
onion+eat 1s-active
'to live on onions' (Roumeli)
3. κουβαρ-ο-μαζωμένος [kuvaromazo'menos]
ball of thread+gather (passive participle)
'shy' (Roumeli)
4. ξυλ-ο-κουβεντιάζω [ksilokuve'djazo]
wood+talk 1s-active
'to talk incoherently' (Roumeli)
5. ξεν-ο-φωνάω [ksenofono'nao]
foreign+speaking 1s-active
'to speak my first words as a baby' (Roumeli)
6. τυφλ-ου-πανιάζω [tiflupa'jazo]
blind+piece of cloth 1s-active
'to deceive' (Pelion)
7. κλειδ-ου-στούμιάζω [klistustu'mjazo]
key+mouth 1s-active
'to have no appetite' (Siatista)
8. αληυρ-ου-διμουνίζου [alivrudimu'nizu]
flour+infuriate 1s-active
'to hit someone and metaph. to attract sexually somebody' (Agiassos).

The compounds in the above examples “are usable only in the presence of substantial contextual support” (Downing 1977: 822).

For some of them, knowing pragmatic conditions makes their interpretation easier. In 1 we notice the metaphor of the man who gets older as a grape that withers, in 2 the common knowledge of the speakers about the exclusive living on onions as a sign of extreme poverty is actualized, in 3 a shy man is compared to a ball of thread, in 6 the meaning of ‘deceive’ is given by a game, during which the players close their eyes with a cloth, in 7 there is a metaphor of locking one’s mouth to give the meaning ‘lack of appetite’. In 4, 5, 8 it is opaque –at least for mc– which is the semantic process that gives rise to such meanings. According to Downing (1977: 839) “speakers code what is salient to them within a given context”. If we don’t share the context, we cannot understand the new meaning of the compound. Of course etymology can solve the problem for the specialist, but the speaker seems to lose the game.

Two points have to be stressed here: a) the process of metaphor in the above mentioned compounds is actualized contemporarily with the process of compounding, that is, these compounds did not have from the beginning a literal meaning which is shifted to a metaphorical one, but the metaphorical meanings of the compound constituents are actualized at the same time with the realization of compounding.

b) the “hidden factor” has to be recalled even in compounds that are not metaphorical. Even in compounds with literal meaning it seems that the syntactic relationship between the compound constituents does not play a crucial role; instead it seems that the semantic load of the two lexical morphemes take part and every semantic relationship between them is recalled. In cases such as χατζηπερδεμένος [xatziberde'menos] ‘someone involved in a difficult situation’ (Agiastos), αντρειοκαλειόμαι [andrika'ljume] ‘to pretend the brave man’ (Crete), αμουχλοκαίγομαι [amuxlo'ceyome] ‘to be burnt slowly’ (Crete), I think that a possible paraphrase would need the whole phrase –or better the whole utterance– in order to convey the meaning. As Wamelink-van Lint mentions (op.cit., 658) “A number of linguists are, in fact, opposed to the postulation of a fixed set of possible relations. They argue that, since research has shown that many more relations are possible, the relation slot must be capable of being assigned any appropriate contents. The process of deciding on these contents is then guided by the meaning and function of the compound elements”.

7. Are there differences between the dialects as far as compounding is concerned?

In this study they were examined through information of the following dialects' glossaries:

Northern:

the dialect of Agiasos (Mytilene), Siatista, Veria, Litochoro, Pelion.

Southern:

The dialect of Helia (Peloponnese), Zante, Roumeli, the Cretan dialect and the Southeastern dialect of Pyrgi (Chios). According to Triandafyllidis (1938: 244): "the dialects of Roumeli and Epirus share with the Peloponnesian and the other Southern dialects the syntactic use of the indirect genitive, while they share the Northern vowel status with the dialects of Thessaly and Macedonia". According to Triandafyllidis, Sarakatsanika too are similar to the dialects of Epirus and Etolia.

Statistical observations can only be indicative for two reasons: first, glossaries are usually non-scientific studies; second, the glossaries include lexical items that do not exclusively belong to the dialect. Yet, when a significant divergence in the percentage of the compounds in the total of the dialectal words is observed, this is a strong indication for the different status of compounding in the Northern and the Southern dialects.

It is worth-mentioned that the lowest percentage of compounds appears in the glossaries of Veria, of Siatista and of Litochoro (2.7%, 3.4% and 3.5% correspondingly), while the highest percentage of the compounds appears in the glossaries of Crete, Chios, Roumeli and Agiasos (13.2%, 10.3%, 9.4% and 9.4% correspondingly). The glossaries of Peloponnese, of Sarakatsanika, of Pelion and of Zante present significant percentage of compounds without significant differences (8.8%, 8.8%, 8.5%, 7.4% correspondingly). The above data could be interpreted as follows: in the prototypical Northern dialects compounding is restricted, in the prototypical Southern dialects compounding increases, while in the intermediate dialects (Sarakatsanika, Peloponnesian, of Pelion) a significant percentage of compounding is noticed. The whole picture is disturbed only by the dialect of Agiasos (Mytilene) which belongs to the Northern dialects but presents one of the highest percentage of compounding.

Concerning the statistics of the regional frequency of the compounds, Andriotis (1956: 22) remarks: "the frequency of the compounds with argument structure that corresponds to subject / object, as well as of the other three categories is considerably bigger in the periphery of the metropolitan Greek region, namely coast and islands (especially Crete, Karpathos, Naxos, Imvros c.t.c.) and is relatively lower in the interior of the country. This unequal distribution corresponds to the more general unequal synthetic force of the Modern Greek dialects".

The aim of the present study is to combine the percentage of the compounds with features of syntheticity / analyticity in the dialects.

Consequently, the next step of our investigation is verbal compounds and more specifically the compounds that belong to the grammatical category of verbs or participles. It is assumed that verbal compounds of this kind condense in monomorphemic lexical units the syntactic relations that are expressed in the sentence and consequently can give strong indications for the analytic or synthetic character of a dialect.

The lowest percentage of compound verbs is observed again in Northern dialects, and in the Sarakatsanika (Sarakatsanika 2.3%, Litochoro 2.8%, Siatista 4.4%, Pelion 4.4%, Veria 5.7%), while the highest percentage of compound verbs is observed in the Southern dialects (Crete 19.4%, Roumeli 14.7%). The rest of the dialects present strong percentage of compound verbs too.

The percentage of the compounds in the total of the glossaries' words and the percentage of compound verbs and participles in the total of compounds are given in Table 2:

TABLE 2

DIALECT	Percentage of compounds in the total of words	Percentage of compound verbs and participles in the total of compounds
Veria	2.7%	5.7%
Siatista	3.4%	4.4%
Litochoro	3.5%	2.8%
Helia (Peloponnese)	8.8%	10.1%
Sarakatsanika	8.8%	2.3%
Pelion	8.5%	4.4%
Zante	7.4%	9.3%
Agiasos (Mytilene)	9.4%	12.5%
Roumeli	9.4%	14.7%
Chios	10.3%	11.6%
Crete	13.2%	19.4%

Can the above mentioned indications (the general higher percentage of compounding in Southern dialects compared to the Northern ones and the general higher percentage of compound verbs in the total of compounds in the Southern dialects compared with to Northern ones) prove that the Southern dialects are differentiated from the Northern ones as far as syntheticity / analyticity is concerned? Obviously no, if we don't make more general accounts. On the other hand, the terms of syntheticity / analyticity are quite fuzzy and can be interpreted in several ways. It is also well-known that the course of the languages from analysis to synthesis and vice-versa is permanent.

Conclusions can be more difficult when we investigate dialects and not languages.

Following the approach of Greenberg ([1954] 1960): “Synthesis is calculated by an elegantly simple mathematical formula: total of morphemes divided by total of words (M / W) which yields the ratio of morphemes per word. This measure is called the ‘synthetic index’” (Schwegler, 1993: 114). On the basis of this index the Southern dialects appear to be more synthetic.

It is worth-mentioning here a typical example of a compound word, which in the Southern dialect of Roumeli appears as a compound *αλαφρογοιότη* [alafrojor'ti] ‘small fest without vacation’, while in the Northern dialect of Siatista the same semantic collocation appears as two autonomous lexical units: *αλαφρά ιουρστή* [ala'fra iur'tsi].

However, in order to formulate integrated conclusions about the syntheticity / analyticity of the dialects we have to examine other morphosyntactic phenomena too. E.g. the restricted use of genitive and its substitution by prepositional phrases in the Northern dialects can also advocate for the growing analyticity of the Northern dialects (Petrounias, personal communication).

8. Conclusions

The study of compounding in the Modern Greek dialects has shown that: i. compounding appears in every dialect, ii. the percentage of compounds in the total of the words of glossaries, as well as the percentage of compound verbs in the total of compounds gives some first indications that compounding appears stronger in the Southern than in the Northern dialects, iii. in order to get integrated answer to the question about the analyticity / syntheticity of the dialects we need to co-examine other phenomena of word-formation as well as morphosyntactic ones, iv. this co-examination will be useful in the study of the dialectal morphology under the point of view of reconstruction of the morphological evolution in Modern Greek.

9. Notes

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10. Περίληψη

Στην εργασία μελετάται το φαινόμενο της σύνθεσης στις νεοελληνικές διαλέκτους. Συγκεκριμένα εξετάζονται λεξικές μονάδες από γλωσσάρια νεοελληνικών διαλέκτων, αντιπροσωπευτικών ως προς την κατανομή τους σε βόρειες και νότιες. Διαπιστώνεται αφενός ότι η σύνθεση έχει ισχυρή παρουσία σε όλες τις διαλέκτους και αφετέρου ότι η σύνθεση εμφανίζεται ισχυρότερη στις νότιες διαλέκτους συγκριτικά με τις βόρειες. Τα συμπεράσματα συσχετίζονται με τη συνθετικότητα / αναλυτικότητα των διαλέκτων.