

Classification of Modern Greek Verb MWEs

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Abstract

In order to implement a parsing system for Modern Greek (MG) free subject Verb MWEs (Samaridi and Markantonatou: 2014), we created a corpus of 2569 free subject verb MWEs, we studied their syntactic structures and we propose a simple and exhaustive classification of them.

1. Introduction

MWEs can be classified into lexicalized and institutionalized expressions (Bauer, 1983) with regard to their semantic compositionality. Lexicalized expressions can be further divided into fixed, semi-fixed and syntactically flexible with regard to their flexibility (Sag et al, 2001). The classification of the free subject verb MG MWEs by Fotopoulou (1993) covers a wide range of verb MWE syntactic structures but it defines a large number of classes (13 in all) and leaves out sentential constituents of verb MWEs and phenomena related with them such as subject control: e.g. η Ελένη_j έφαγε_j τον κόσμο να τον βρει_j = Helen_j ate_j the world to find_j him (‘Helen searched everywhere to find him’).

Drawing on the study of about 2600 verb MWEs, we propose a classification that does not depend on specific grammatical frameworks and exhaustively classifies free subject verb MG MWEs in a small number of classes (5 classes).

2. Classification of verb MWEs

MWEs show a degree of semantic non-compositionality and/or a degree of morpho-syntactic inflexibility. In each case, there is a degree of fixedness between the verb and its complements. Following morpho-syntactic

criteria, we classify MG free subject verb MWEs into five (5) categories as shown below:

a. verb + inflexible XP [fixed (i, ii) or semi-fixed (iii, iv)]: e.g.

- i) η Μαρία ήπιε [NP το αμίλητο νερό]
the Mary drank [NP the non-speaking water]
‘Mary is silent.’
- ii) η Μαρία έπεσε [PP από τα σύννεφα]
the Mary fell [PP from the clouds]
‘Mary was taken by surprise.’
- iii) η Μαρία_j έφτασε [AP τελευταία_j και καταϊδρωμένη_j]¹
the Mary_j arrived [AP last_j and battening_j]
‘Mary arrived late.’
- iv) η Μαρία_j κάνει_j [XP πως δεν βλέπει_j]²
the Mary_j does_j [XP that not see_j]
‘Mary ignores something.’

b. verb + [XP with inflexible head + XPgen]:
e.g.

- i) η Μαρία_j τρώει [NP [τα νόχια] της_j]
the Mary_j eats [NP [the nails] hers_j]
‘Mary is nervous.’
- ii) η Μαρία άναψε [NP [τα λαμπάκια] του Κώστα] → η Μαρία [XPgen του] άναψε [NP τα λαμπάκια]³
the Mary lit [NP [the lamps] the Costas] → the Mary [XPgen he] lit [NP the lamps]
‘Mary irritated Costas.’
- iii) η Μαρία πιάστηκε [PP [στα δίχτυα] του Κώστα]
the Mary was caught [PP [in the nets] the Costas]

¹ The adjectives (‘τελευταία’, ‘καταϊδρωμένη’) agree in gender, number and case with the subject.

² The verb ‘κάνει’ behaves as a control verb and the subject ‘η Μαρία’ is the controller.

³ The possessive genitive ‘του Κώστα’ can be replaced by the weak personal pronoun ‘του’ that precedes the verb.

‘Mary was trapped by Costas.’

iv) η Μαρία μπήκε [PP [στο ρουθούνι] του Κώστα] → η Μαρία [XP_{gen} του] μπήκε [PP στο ρουθούνι]³

the Mary entered [PP [in the nostril] the Costas] → the Mary [XP_{gen} he] entered [PP in the nostril]

‘Mary was annoying Costas.’

c. verb + two inflexible XPs [fixed (i-iv) or semi-fixed (v)]: **The order of constituents is usually fixed:** e.g.

i) η Μαρία έκανε [XP [NP την τρίχα] [NP τριχιά]]
the Mary made [XP [NP the hair] [NP rope]]
‘Mary exaggerated things.’

ii) η Μαρία έβγαλε [XP [NP το φίδι] [PP από την τρύπα]]
the Mary pulled [XP [NP the snake] [PP from the hole]]
‘Mary found a solution for a difficult problem’

iii) η Μαρία πέφτει [XP [PP από έκπληξη] [PP σε έκπληξη]]
the Mary falls [XP [PP from surprise] [PP to surprise]]
‘Mary is taken by surprise all the time.’

iv) η Μαρία τραβάει [XP [NP το σκοινί] [XP μέχρι να σπάσει]]
the Mary pulls [XP [NP the rope] [XP until to break]]
‘Mary crosses the line.’

v) η Μαρία_j έκανε_j [NP μαύρα μάτια] [XP να τον δει]⁴
the Mary_j made_j [NP black eyes] [XP to him see]_j
‘it took Mary a lot of time to meet him.’

d. verb + an inflexible XP + a free XP: e.g.

i) η Μαρία έφαγε [NP τον Κώστα] [NP λάχανο]
the Mary ate [NP the Costas] [NP cabbage]
‘Mary beat Costas.’

ii) η Μαρία έριξε [NP το μπαλάκι] [PP στον Κώστα]
the Mary threw [NP the ball] [PP to the Costas]
‘Mary put the blame on Costas.’

iii) η Μαρία ήρθε [PP στα χέρια] [PP με τον Κώστα]
the Mary came [PP into hands] [PP with the Costas]

‘Mary had a fight with Costas.’

e. verb + three XPs (at least one inflexible): e.g.

i) η Μαρία έδωσε [PP στον Κώστα] [NP λαβή] [PP για σχόλια]

the Mary gave [PP to the Costas] [NP handle] [PP for comments]

‘Mary gave a handle to Costas for comments.’

ii) η μητέρα έκανε [NP την Μαρία] [[NP τόπι] [PP στο ξύλο]]

the mother made [NP the Mary] [[NP ball] [PP into wood]]

‘the mother beat Mary brutally.’

3. Diagnostics of constituency

Given the morpho-syntactic inflexibility, it is difficult to use the constituency diagnostics that apply to compositional structures.

When the degree of inflexibility is high, the diagnostics that apply are the following:

a. Fixed word order (2.c: i): η Μαρία έκανε [[την τρίχα] [τριχιά]] → *η Μαρία έκανε [[τριχιά] [την τρίχα]].

b. No external elements intervene between the components (2.c: iv): η Μαρία τραβάει [[το σκοινί] [μέχρι να σπάσει]] → *η Μαρία τραβάει [το σκοινί] πάλι [μέχρι να σπάσει].

When there is a high degree of flexibility, the following diagnostics also apply:

a. Reordering (2.d: ii): η Μαρία έριξε [NP το μπαλάκι] [PP στον Κώστα] → η Μαρία έριξε [PP στον Κώστα] [NP το μπαλάκι].

b. External modifiers of the entire range of MWE (2.b: i): η Μαρία_j τρώει [NP [τα νύχια] της_j] → η Μαρία_j τρώει πάλι [NP [τα νύχια] της_j] = the Mary_j eats again [NP [the nails] hers_j].

References

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⁴ The verb ‘έκανε’ behaves as a control verb and the subject ‘η Μαρία’ is the controller.