

A Constructionist View of Complex Interactions between Inflection and Derivation: The Case of SMG and Griko (University of Patras, 2013)

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Abstract

In this contribution, I offer a summary of my 2013 Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Patras on inflection and derivation from a Construction Morphology standpoint.

Keywords

inflection – derivation – Greek dialects – Standard Modern Greek (SMG) – Construction Morphology

1 Theoretical Background

The main focus of this thesis is a vexed, but (at the same time) intriguing question, that is, the relation between inflection and derivation in the morphological component. Answering this question entails first taking a position on several theoretical issues concerning the architecture of the grammar.

The grammatical nature of both inflection and derivation has been a hotly debated topic in the literature. With respect to derivation, Aronoff's (1976) seminal work on word formation provided strong arguments supporting the view that derivation is to be seen as a purely morphological process that cannot be treated in syntactic terms. Since then, with few exceptions, derivation has been considered as the morphological process *par excellence*.

However, the grammatical nature of inflection and its position in the grammar is still an open issue. One can distinguish two different views. Under

what is termed the *Split Morphology Hypothesis* (Anderson 1982, 1992; Perlmutter, 1988), inflectional processes take place in a post-syntactic component. Inflectional features are added to structures as syntactic features and these features are spelled out by the operation of some sort of formal device. In opposition to these models, a number of different theoretical approaches argue that inflection is located within the morphological component along with word-formation processes (see, among others, Booij, 1994, 1996; Ralli, 1999).

The present thesis builds on the latter assumption and seeks to find the possible ways in which the two processes interact. I accept that inflection and derivation have in principle different functions: 'Inflection is what is relevant to Syntax', in Anderson's (1982) famous quote, whereas derivation is what is relevant to the formation of new words (or lexemes). However, the analysis is based on the view that words are syntactic atoms, i.e. they are inserted into syntactic structure as wholes, and that their own internal morphological structure is unavailable to syntactic manipulation (Stewart & Stump, 2007).

Assuming that inflection and derivation are accounted for in the same grammatical component, the crucial question is: *how sharp is the demarcation between inflection and derivation?* Again, there are different approaches to this issue. Under what is termed a 'unified' account, there is no sharp demarcation between inflection and derivation, but rather the relation between the two processes can be defined as a cline from prototypical derivation to prototypical inflection (cf. Bybee, 1985; Lieber, 1980).

In contrast to the unified account, several morphological models consider inflection and derivation as distinct morphological processes which potentially interact during word formation (cf. among others Kiparsky, 1982a,b; Scalise 1986; and Ralli, 1988). The aim of these models is to detect to what extent the two processes interact. Within the spirit of these models, the distinction between contextual and inherent inflection is crucially important (Booij 1994, 1996). In the present thesis, I support the latter view of the organization of the morphological component.

The present thesis bases its claims on theoretical models which represent the morphological component of grammar in terms of a *richly structured mental lexicon* (cf. Booij, 2010; Bybee, 1988; Jackendoff, 1975; Lieber, 1980 and Ralli, 1988). Following the fundamental tenets of *Construction Morphology* (CM), as developed by Booij (2010), I argue that the relation between the two processes can be adequately represented by means of hierarchically ordered morphological schemas in a theory of the lexicon which predicts that there are relations between the different parts (both schemas and words) of the lexicon.

2 Aims and Scope of the Thesis

The present thesis does not aim to develop a new theory about the relation between inflection and derivation. It has two major aims: first, it tries to illuminate the question of the relation between inflection and derivation by focusing on some manifestations of their interaction in word formation in Modern Greek and, second, it seeks to provide a formal model for the relation between inflection and derivation which reflects the findings of the theoretical discussion and accounts for the various phenomena.

As Jackendoff (2011: 586) puts it, “a theory that aspires to account for language as a biologically-based human faculty should seek a *graceful integration* of linguistic phenomena with what is known about other human cognitive capacities and about the character of brain computation.” Thus, by taking into consideration, first, the aspects of the relation between inflection and derivation that have been already discussed in the previous literature and, second, the proposals of the subsequent analysis, the second aim of this thesis is to provide a construction-based approach to the relation between the two processes.

3 Data

In his classic paper on the organization of the morphological component, Anderson states the following (1982: 572): “the question of overlap between portions of the study of language governed by distinct sets of principles is entirely an empirical one, to be answered by investigation of the facts of particular grammars rather than by pretheoretic stipulation or arbitrary definition of the fields of interest so that they must necessarily be disjoint.” Taking this position as a starting point and moving a step further, I claim that the question of the relation between inflection and derivation finds ultimate expression particularly in cases of fusional languages where the two processes manifest themselves in the same form.

The thesis focuses on two different linguistic varieties which both have rich inflectional systems and very productive derivational patterns, namely Griko and Standard Modern Greek. One may well raise the question of why one should examine these two varieties comparatively. Griko is a dialect of Greek origin spoken by approximately 20,000 speakers in 9 neighbouring villages which are located in the centre of the Salentine peninsula (Southern Italy). Traditional descriptions of Griko have already been published, including a general description of the grammatical system as well as aspects of the diachronic evolution of the dialect (see, among others, Karanastasis, 1997; Kat-

soyannou 1995a,b (for Bovesè spoken in Calabria); Profili, 1983; Rohlf's 1972a,b). The diachronic evolution of the dialect has garnered much attention; however, I choose to focus on a different aspect of the system, that is, the description of its synchronic morphological system, since a comprehensive treatment of the morphological phenomena is still lacking and important data remain unexplored. It is possible that the analysis of the phenomena in this thesis will have some implications for the discussion of the diachronic evolution of the language.

4 Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1 I analyse the different approaches to *lexical relations* (organization of the morphological component) and provided arguments in favour of the notion of the hierarchical lexicon. I strongly support the idea that neither the abstractive approach nor the constructive approach alone can provide an effective solution to the different phenomena, and thus we need a comprehensive approach which draws on both. I provide as well a brief overview of the theoretical models for the relation between inflection and derivation and show that both processes should be accounted for within the morphological component.

In Chapter 2, I discuss both inflection and derivation from a paradigmatic perspective. The aim is to show that for both inflection and derivation we can assume paradigmatic relations between their outputs. At this point, it should be mentioned that I do not present a list of criteria which show similarities and differences between the two processes, but rather I discuss a number of different phenomena that show that inflection and derivation have an *inherent paradigmatic nature*. Based on these assumptions, I argue that the relationship between the two processes can be accounted for from a constructionist perspective, given that it has a strong lexicalist perspective; i.e., it considers both inflection and derivation as morphological processes which are placed in the lexicon, it assumes paradigmatic relations between the schemas and the output of the schemas, and it offers the formal apparatus for analysing a number of morphological phenomena: the output schema form is adequate for both inflection and derivation. The arguments in favour of this claim are elaborated in the main part of the thesis.

In Chapter 3, I examine the relation between conversion and inflectional classes. In the discussion of the relation between conversion and inflectional classes, I touch on a number of issues concerning the grammatical nature of conversion.

First, I show that conversion in SMG is a very productive process within a limited domain, (i.e. compound formations with bound stems) and analysed all the formal and semantic properties of the conversion pairs. I provide arguments in favour of the view that conversion is a systematic paradigmatic relation between two lexical items and this relationship is the *locus of interpretation of the form-meaning asymmetry*. This paradigmatic relation accounts not only for the change in the category and the semantic properties of the formations, but also for the inflectional properties of the output verb.

Second, it is shown that the conversion process in SMG does not lead to an output from the default inflectional class. Under this view, SMG does not validate the hypothesis that converted verbs are associated with the default conjugation class of the verbal system. I argue that conversion is associated with inflectional properties that *systematically* characterize this class of formations. Converted verbs in SMG do not belong to a uniform inflectional class, but rather their inflectional pattern is a *synthesis* of two different patterns which are not very productive in general. The inflectional properties of the output can be considered as the *only* mark of the conversion process.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the appearance of verbal doublets in Griko, that is, verbs which show parallel forms with and without the verbalizer *-idz(o)*. Although this morpheme originally only formed verbs out of nominal bases, it seems that it has started to acquire a new status. I argue that the attachment of this element to the base marks the transition from IC2 to IC1. In this respect the marker *-idz(o)* can be seen as an element which gradually becomes more functional and is added onto the structure as a formally explicit indicator of the inflectional class (inflectional class marker).

This can have important theoretical implications as it suggests that some derivational elements can acquire inflectional properties. I do not claim that derivational elements can acquire morphosyntactic inflectional properties, but rather that they can acquire a *morphomic status*. Thus, a possible developmental path in the grammaticalization theory could suggest that derivational elements may become *morphemes*. It should also be emphasized that *-idz(o)* is still used as a genuine verbalizer in the system, which means that there are two different structural patterns according to which *-idz(o)* may form verbs out of nouns or change the inflectional class of a base which is already a verb. This functional change of the marker *-idz(o)* was represented as the creation of a new pattern at the word level.

I take a position in favour of the view that grammaticalization can be seen as the emergence of new patterns, i.e. constructionalization, and the creation of the new *-idz(o)* pattern as a *constructional change*. This solves the problem of how best to account for both the derivational and the inflectional pattern of

-*idz(o)* and shows the interaction of the two processes by means of hierarchically ordered schemas.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the appearance of inflectional material inside derivational formations. Drawing on data from both SMG and Griko, I argue that we can find cases where inflected forms may appear between the preverb and the base, but only under certain conditions.

This issue has led us to the examination of a number of related topics. First, I examine the nature of the augment in Griko and SMG and argue that in both varieties the augment does not keep its AG grammatical status, i.e. inflectional prefix, but rather it has developed into a morphological element which appears only under certain phonological conditions. It should be mentioned that these findings concerning the Griko data are contrary to the existing literature in which it is claimed that the augment is an obligatory element with clear morphological status. I argue that in both varieties the augment should be regarded as an *inflectional marker* which shows that inflectional processes have applied to the base.

Second, following previous literature, I present a classification of the Modern Greek preverbs which applies to both SMG and Griko. I focus on formations with Class II preverbs, since these formations show different degrees of cohesion and may have different structural interpretations. The findings of the analysis of the SMG data reveal that the internal augment shows up in formations with class II preverbs and that its distribution can be analysed on the basis of: (a) the lexical feature [+learned] associated with preverbs and stems, and (b) the structural cohesion between the preverb and the verb.

I also examine the appearance of the augment in verbal formations in Griko. The examination of this data reveals that in formations with class II preverbs the augment cannot appear word-internally. The augment may either appear at the beginning of the formation or be absent. This data challenges the Uninflected Base Hypothesis. However, the appearance of the augment inside formations with preverbs should not be considered as a simple case of inflection inside derivation. The augment is more an inflectional marker than an inflectional prefix.

CM has two main advantages compared to other morphological models in the representation of this data. First, the nature of schemas within CM can represent cases of inflection inside derivation, given that the different options can be accounted for by assuming that the same preverb can be combined with either the category of stem or the category of word. Thus, the focus turns to the discussion of the particular conditions that constrain the appearance of inflection inside derivation and the representation of these constraints on the schemas. Second, the different structural interpretations of the preverb-base

combinations can be represented as an inheritance tree in which all the possible formations are available to the language user. This morphological variation would be hard-pressed to find a natural account in rule-based models.

5 Conclusions

The present thesis has attempted to study the close interaction of inflection and derivation. In some cases this interaction is not easily detected or analysed and thus can be defined as *complex*. A number of issues still remain open. For example, we need to test this analysis in similar phenomena in other linguistic systems in order to examine its validity. However, hopefully, I have tried to initiate a discussion about phenomena that have been neglected in the previous literature and to offer a basis for a future research in the relevant domain.

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