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## The case of 'φοβάμαι' and other psychological verbs

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### Abstract

Σε αυτήν την ανακοίνωση θα εξετάσουμε την περιοχή ορισμένων ψυχολογικών ρημάτων επικεντρώνοντας την προσοχή μας στο ρήμα 'φοβάμαι', το οποίο θα αντιπαραβάλουμε με τα μεταφραστικά ισοδύναμά του στην Αγγλική. Θα επισημανθούν οι διάφορες λειτουργίες, κυρίως του 'φοβάμαι', στο λόγο, όπως και η σχέση αυτών των λειτουργιών με τα γραμματικοσυντακτικά χαρακτηριστικά του(ς). Θα καταλήξουμε στο συμπέρασμα ότι λειτουργίες γραμματικοποίησης και αποσημασιοποίησης έχουν συμβάλει στη συγχρονική χρήση τέτοιων ρημάτων και ειδικότερα στη χρήση τους στο χώρο των γλωσσικών πράξεων.

### 1. Psych-verbs in Modern Greek

The Deep structure of the psych(ological) verbs has been widely discussed, initially in Postal (1970) and later on in Belletti and Rizzi (1988), Grimshaw (1990), Kakouriotis (1991)-in connection with M.Greek- and Pesetsky (1995) amongst others. They have been so named, perhaps due to the fact that their thematic grid contains an Experiencer argument and thus the verb expresses the mental/psychological state that the entity expressed by the Experiencer argument is in. Psych-verbs, according to Belletti and Rizzi's analysis, are ergative (unaccusative) verbs, similar to *arrive*, *exist*, *fade*, *fail* etcetera. They have been further subclassified into three kinds, the argument structures of which are shown in the d-structure below:

- (1)a: Exp [V Th]    oli        θαυμάζω    ti                soprano  
                              NOM:N    V                    ART:ACC    N:ACC  
                              ‘All of them admire the soprano’
- (1)b: e [[V Th]Exp] i        soprano tromazi ta                mikra  
                              ART:NOM    N        V        ART:ACC    N  
                              ‘The soprano frightens the kids’
- (1)c: e [V Th[P Exp]i        soprano aresi    s    ti                Maria  
                              ART:NOM:    N        V        P    ART:ACC:    N  
                              ‘The soprano appeals to Mary’
- (1)d: e [V Th[Dat Exp]] i        soprano aresi    tis                Marias  
                              ART:NOM:    N        V        ART:GEN:    N  
                              ‘The soprano appeals to Mary’

(1a) class has an external Experiencer argument and a Theme internal argument which are mapped onto the subject and object position, respectively, -in accordance with the

thematic hierarchy; thus (1a) are just a typical class of syntactically transitive verbs. On the other hand, (1b, c) contain verbs that lack an external argument, that is, their subject position is not assigned a  $\Theta$ -role, and have, instead, two internal arguments. The difference between (1c) and (1b) is that in the former the Experiencer argument in the surface structure is marked with dative, which is indicated either by the preposition *se*, 'to', or the morphological dative/genitive, just as in double object constructions (cf. Kakouriotis, 1996). This section will be mainly focused on subclass (1b), that is, on verbs that have an Experiencer object and a Theme subject in their s-structure and have also appeared under the name "non-stative psych-verbs" (Zubizarreta, 1987). Note that those verbs also express change of state.

## 2. Non-stative experiencer psych-verbs in Modern Greek

There is sufficient evidence to the claim that a group of psych verbs in Mod. Greek, with an Experiencer object in the surface structure, behave in all respects like ergative-anticausative alternation, as illustrated below from English. (The same constructions occur word for word in MG):

- |       |                       |       |                         |
|-------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| (2) a | The man sank the ship | (3) a | The sun melted the snow |
| b     | The ship sank         | b     | The snow melted         |

Now, as far as English is concerned an analysis of psych-verbs as ergatives is impossible given that the intransitive alternant which is supposed to be the basic (given that the transitive alternant obtains through the introduction of an external argument which fills the (e) empty subject position) is out.

- |       |                                  |   |                      |
|-------|----------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| (4) a | John frightens the kids          | b | *The kids frightened |
| (5) a | Mary upset the teacher           | b | *The teacher upset   |
| (6) a | The comedian amused the audience | b | *The audience amused |

Thus, the non-affixed mediated alternation which the ergative verbs exhibit is not possible with the psych verbs in English. This presents a serious problem given the fact that both ergative and psych verbs are causative. This problem has been pointed out by Pinker (1989) and Grimshaw (1990). As a matter of fact, Pinker points out that a verb like *go*, being a verb of motion, should have a transitive alternant, but this is not so in English, though it can obtain in M. Greek:

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| (7) a. | The kid went to school / to peði pige sto sxolio;   |
| b.     | *I went the kid to school / piga to peði sto sxolio |

Coming back to the psych verbs, we see that the situation in Mod. Greek is quite different and a group of them, mainly those with an -azo ending, which is representative in our case, can be classified as ergatives-unaccusatives because:

(8) a. They alternate; b. They do not passivize; c. They form good middle constructions

The representative list which exhibits the syntactic phenomena of (8) above runs as follows:

(9) *agrievō* 'enrage', *aiðiazō* 'disgust', *anisixō* 'worry', *ðiaskeðazō* 'amuse', *iremo* 'calm', *isixazō* 'appease', *nevriazō* 'upset', *pismono* 'become stubborn', *Θimono* 'get angry', *tromazō* 'frighten', etc.

### 2.1. *Psych-verb alternation in Modern Greek*

Unlike English, Mod. Greek exhibits the anti-causative alternation with the verbs in (9) above:

- |       |  |       |   |
|-------|--|-------|---|
| (10)a | <i>ta mikra agriepsan ta skilia</i><br>The kids upset the dog        | (10)b | <i>ta skilia agriepsan</i><br>*The dogs upset       |
| (11)a | <i>ta skilia ðiaskeðasan ta peðja</i><br>The dog amused the children | (11)b | <i>ta peðja ðiaskeðasan</i><br>*The children amused |

This is *prima facie* evidence to support the claim we have made.

The second piece of evidence comes from passives. Pesetsky (1996) claims that an unaccusative in the sense of Perlmutter (1978) and ergative in the sense of Burzio (1986) does not passivize. According to Laskaratou and Philippaki (1984) and Kakouriotis (1989), verbal passives are monolectic and lexical passives are periphrastic made up of the copula and the *-menos* participle, e.g. *ta aftokinita afta kataskevazonde stin iaponia* vs *ta aftokinita afta ine kataskevasmena stin iaponia*. Unaccusative verbs in Modern Greek do not passivize:

(12) *ta vasana gerasan to jani, o janis gerase (apo ta vasana), \*o janis gerastike ...*

The same applies, however, to our psych verbs:

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| (13) | <i>o pavlos ðimose ti fili tou</i><br><i>i fili tu pavlu ðimose (me ton pavlo)</i><br><i>*i fili tu pavlu ðimoθike apo ton pavlo</i> | <i>i maθites nevriasan to ðaskalo</i><br><i>o ðaskalos nevriase me tus maθites</i><br><i>*o ðaskalos nevriastike apo tus maθites</i> |
|------|--|--|

Compare also *idrono* 'perspire' versus *\*idronome*, *pefto*, 'fall', vs *\*peftome*, *xreokopo* 'bankrupt', vs *\*xreokopume* and *muxliazo* vs *\*muxliazome*.

The last argument that bolsters up our thesis has to do with Middle constructions. Condoravdi (1989) and Kakouriotis (in press) with respect to MG have arrived at the conclusion that non-affix mediated middle constructions in Modern Greek are possible

only from ergative verbs unlike English where middle constructions obtain from some non-ergative verbs. Compare below:

- |                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (14) The book reads pleasantly | *to vivlio δjavazi efxarista        |
| Italian traslates easily       | *ta italika metafrazun efkola       |
| This luggage transfers easily  | *aftes i aposkeves metaferun efkola |

The verbs above exhibit no ergative alternation, e.g. *I read the book* but not *\*The book read*. *I translate Italian* but not *\*Italian translates*. As far as M. Greek is concerned, however, in order for the verb to become middle, 'ergativizing' is a prerequisite. Moreover, all the non-affix mediated psych verbs in the list make excellent middles:

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| (15) ta ruxa stegnosan (ergative) | o δaskalos nevriase (ergative, psych verb) |
| afta ta ruxa stegnonun amesos     | o δaskalos mas nevriazi diskola (middle)   |
| (middle)                          | ta mikra tromaksan                         |
| to patoma kaθarise                | ta mikra tromazun efkola                   |
| tetja patomata kaθarizun efkola   |  |

We have produced enough evidence that psych verbs behave like ergatives and, most importantly, that they can participate in the ergative alternation. The crucial point is, in fact, that Modern Greek provides all the necessary evidence to prove the point whereas English does not. In the remaining of the paper we will concentrate on just one psych verb, *φοβάμαι*, and its translational counterparts.

### 3. The case of 'φοβάμαι'

Focusing on the Greek psych-verb *φοβάμαι* and its translational equivalents *fear/be afraid*,<sup>1</sup> we want to claim firstly that, not only mental verbs in the broad sense, but also the special class of psych-verbs can be shown to contribute to the class of speech act verbs. Secondly, additionally to Vendler's (1972) claim that there is close affinity between mental and, in particular, thought verbs and speech act verbs, we will show that the category of psychological verbs, or the domain of emotions, has been a source for the development of propositional attitude and speech act verbs, and interpersonal meanings. Moreover, contrary to Vendler's claim that there is a two way "leakage" between speech act verbs and mental verbs, we will show, by tracing back the diachronic evolution of both *φοβάμαι* and *fear/be afraid*, that the leakage is unidirectional only, from emotions to propositional attitude and performativity, and not the other way round or both ways. At a crosslinguistic level, this study is intended to add further evidence to Traugott's (1989) thesis that this directionality, from emotions to performativity and interpersonal meaning, is consistent with a universal tendency in language to move from propositional meanings via expressivity to interpersonal ones,

since emotions are represented in propositional form while performativity involves interpersonal meanings.

It will also emerge from an examination of the origins of both *fear* verbs that their source domain is spatial rather than emotional. In both the cases of *φοβάμαι* and *fear/be afraid* there has been a shift from concrete spatial source domains to the more abstract domain of emotions. Our diachronic itinerary is expected to partially explain the syntactic patterns into which *φοβάμαι* enters. Therefore, let us have a look at some typical uses of the verb *φοβάμαι* (real data):

- (16) Φοβάται αλλά αποκαλύπτει.  
is afraid-3SG but reveal-3SG  
'He is afraid/scared but reveals' (title, *Τα Νέα*, 19-2-94, newspaper)
- (17) Ποιος φοβάται (ακόμη) τον Λένιν;  
Who is afraid-3SG (still) the-ACCS Lenin?  
'Who's (still) afraid of Lenin?' (title, *Εξουσία*, 24-4-97, newspaper)
- (18) Φοβάμαι νέο κτύπημα  
Am afraid-1SG new blow 'I fear a new blow' (newspaper title, 31/5/97)
- (19) Φοβάμαι να σου πω κι' άλλα.  
Am afraid-1SG to you tell and(add)more. 'I'm afraid to tell you more'.
- (20) Φοβήθηκα που ο αδελφός του δεν μπήκε με την πρώτη.  
Was scared-3SG that the brother his not entered-3SG at the first(go).  
I was scared that (because) his brother did not succeed at first go.
- (21) Φοβάμαι ότι/πως δεν μπορώ να σου αποκαλύψω τις πηγές μου.  
Am afraid-1SG that not can to you reveal-1SG the-ACCF sources my.
- (22) Φοβάμαι μήπως αποτύχω ξανά.  
Fear-1SG that fail-1SG again. 'I am afraid/fear that I might fail again'.
- (23) Φοβάμαι μου είναι αδύνατο να τη δεχτώ.  
Am afraid-1SG (to)me is-3SG impossible to it-SGF accept-1SG  
'I'm afraid I can't accept it' (an application).
- (24) Μου είναι αδύνατο να τη δεχτώ, πολύ φοβάμαι.  
Me is-3SG impossible to it-SGF accept-1SG, much am afraid.  
'I can't accept it, I'm afraid'.
- (25) A: Ν' ανοίξω λίγο;  
Shall-1SG open-1SG a little(please)? 'Shall I open? (May I?)  
B: Θα βρέξει, φοβάμαι.  
Will(particle) rain-3SG am afraid-1SG. 'It'll rain, I'm afraid'
- (26) Φοβήθηκε από το σεισμό  
Was scared-3SG of/from the-ACCN earthquake.  
'She got frightened/scared by/at/ the earthquake'.

As can be seen the syntactic pattern of *φοβάμαι* is quite wide ranging. *Φοβάμαι* admits its experiencer in subject position in the structure *NP V*, as in (16). It can take an internal argument in the accusative *NP V NP*, as (17) and (18), or in a prepositional phrase (PP) expressing cause, as in (26). Moreover, it admits a *that/ότι/πως*-complement, as in (21), as well as a factive *που*-complement, as in (20). It also admits a *να*-clause, as in (19). Vendler (1972) wanted to prove that the semantic organization of verbs of “speech and thought” is very similar. As has been stated, we will extend his claim by showing that the semantic organization of verbs of “speech and emotions” is very similar, too.

### 3.1. The evolution of ‘φοβούμαι’

First, we will try to substantiate our claim that there is only one direction in Vendler's leakage, that from the source domain of space and motion to the target domain of emotions. Tracing back the history of *φοβούμαι*, we see that it originates from the ancient Greek *φοβέω* which means ‘put to flight’: *εφόβησε κολοιούς Il(iad), [Ζευς] και άλκιμον άνδρα φοβεί ib*. So we see that the meaning originates from the spatial source domain of motion and it later shifts to the domain of emotions: *terrify, alarm: τον Αλκιβιάδην εφόβουν, μή ...επαγώνται Th(oukidides)*. The Passive and Middle *φοβούμαι* in Homer was always used in the sense ‘to be put to flight’: *ού σ' έτι...φοβήσομαι ώς το πάρος περ Il 22.250*.

From this meaning of motion away from one point (due to imminent danger or compulsion) there develops the meaning of the emotion of fear as we know it now. Already in Herodotus we find: *φοβηθέντες, ώχοντο φεύγοντες* (flying in terror). Also in Plato we find it with its cognate object: *φοβούμαι αισχρούς φόβους Prt. 360b*, and later: *εφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν Ev. Marc. 4.41*. Its etymology as a verb signifying action also seems to be implicated in the use of the imperative form: *τον φόβον αυτών μη φοβηθήτε Ev. Marc*. The complementizer *ότι* also occurs with it: *φοβούμαι τινάς ότι; φοβούμαι ότι...=φοβούμαι μή...X(enophon), φοβούμαι τόδε, ότι... Th. 7.67*. When it admits a person accusative, it can also mean ‘stand in awe of’, ‘dread’: *φοβού τούς άνω θεούς, Pl(ato)*. So, as regards the derivation of the semantic organization of the verb *φοβούμαι*, we see the following schema being in full force: *fig. 1: spatial source domain of motion > domain of emotions*

### 4. The case of ‘fear’:

If we extend our diachronic approach to the verbs *fear* and *afraid*, we shall find that the basic configuration of their semantics owes a great deal to their etymology and the evolutionary aspects of their development. Let us first turn to the verb *fear*. As a noun, O(ld)S(axon) *fār* meant ‘ambush’, ‘stratagem’, and ‘danger’. The OS. verb *fārōn* meant ‘to lie in wait’. *Fear*, just like the A(ncient) G(reek) *φοβέω*, originally is an active



verb with an object as patient. Whereas in AG. *φοβέω* means to put to flight, English *fear* originally meant to plot against, to lie in wait, to endeavour after. From these two motion and locative meanings evolved the meaning of emotion of both these verbs: ‘to inspire with fear’, which, also in the case of the English *fear*, gave rise to the meaning ‘to drive away’ c. 1420, and ‘to deter from a course of conduct’ c. 1380. It is interesting to note that, while in Greek a morphological Middle develops from *φοβέω*: *φοβοῦμαι*, in English we see the form *fear* becoming a reflexive, meaning ‘to feel fear; to regard with fear; to be afraid’: (Both agentive *fear* and *φοβέω* become obsolete) *I fear me* (1393); *I fear me ...some... earthly love mingles with his friendship* (1856). Already in 1489 *fear* embeds dependent clauses (to feel alarmed or uneasy *lest* [something should happen]): *He feered sore leste Reynawde sholde make to deye rycharde of normandy*, Caxton *Sonnes of Aymon*. In particular, the evolutionary stages look like this:

*fâr* ‘ambush’ > OS. *Fârôn* > 1. *fear* (agent.) > 2. *fear* (reflx. 1393).

Some examples would be the following: 1. Aellfic: *ja bodan us faerdon*; 2. *I fear me ...some... earthly love mingles with his friendship*, 1489: with dependent clauses: *lest*; 1460: trans.: to regard with fear, be afraid of (anticipated event); 1603: to hesitate to do something: *As if he feared to attediate ...us. Dorothee...feared to obey*; 1400: to regard with reverence and awe: *Lett the wyfe see that she feare her husbande*. 1638: *Never feare*. What emerges from the examination of both these verbs (*φοβέω*, *fear*) is that they have followed parallel routes in their evolutionary semantics and morphosyntactic patterns. It appears, however, that whereas in the synchronic use *fear* seems to be more dynamic, projecting into the future, with *afraid* taking over in more stative aspects of the emotion of fear, the Greek *φοβάμαι* is both stative and dynamic according to its context and its aspectual properties.<sup>2</sup>

*Afraid* is the past participle of *affray*, meaning ‘alarmed from a previous state of peace’. As it was used frequently in its participial form, it soon acquired an independent status (16th c). Therefore, its stative fear meaning is accountable on the grounds of both its morphology (being a past participle) and its original meaning (locative).

## 5. The evolution of interpersonal meaning

Both the Greek *φοβάμαι* and its translational counterparts exhibit a high degree of positional variation within the clause. Already in its reflexive form *fear* occurs interclausally as a parenthetical: *26, I fear me, he will hardly get Copies* (1686), and later (1863) it appears as a parenthetical in its present sense: *The account ...will hardly, I fear, render my letters very interesting*. However, this function seems to have been very largely taken over by *be afraid*, as the latter construction has become current since the 16th c.

It is reasonable to assume that both *φοβάμαι* and *fear/be afraid* drop their complementizers at an earlier stage and gradually acquire potential for free movement

within the clause, which, of course, is elevated to the status of the main clause. Thus, both *φοβάμαι* and *be afraid*, having already undergone a process of desemanticization as we have seen, can be used as modalizers (24), highlighting the speaker's attitude towards what s/he is saying as well as to couch negative predictive speech acts, as in (21), (22). In this respect they seem to have followed a similar route as that of cognition verbs such as *think*. As has often been argued in the area of speech act theory, being in a certain state of mind is a prerequisite for enabling one to perform a certain speech act. Likewise, one can claim that, being in a certain emotional state, one is entitled to use the propositional form describing this state if one thinks that this might be grounds for performing a certain speech act. Indeed, the name for the emotional condition might evolve into the name for the speech act; and in the case of both the Greek *φοβάμαι* and the English *be afraid*, they are both used to perform negative predictive speech acts as we have seen. Therefore, they both are prime examples of what Traugott (1989) has shown to be a well attested process in language, i.e. cases of shift from propositional ('to flee', 'to lie in wait') to expressive meanings (emotions) to interpersonal ones (propositional attitude verbs, parentheticals, speech act hedges, speech acts, modalizers):

Propositional > textual > expressive > interpersonal

Vendler (1972) who includes *fear* together with *hope*, as emotively tinged and groups it together with *anticipate* as a 'putative' across the expositive *predict*, points up the "temporal connotations" of its class. One must add that these temporal connotations are what have enabled both *φοβάμαι* and *fear* to act as predictive speech acts. It must be noted that, while in Greek *φοβάμαι* does service for both *fear* and *be afraid*, in English *fear* is used for predictives only, whereas *be afraid* can perform both predictive but also non-predictive speech acts.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that we have witnessed a course of parallel shifts in the meanings of both the verbs *φοβάμαι* and *fear*. This course is duplicated in the case of the prepositions they occur with, *από* and *of* (see note 2). In the case of the verbs we can conclude that originally the signification of action ('flee in terror' for *φοβάμαι*, 'lie in wait' for *fear*) was metonymically used to indicate, or as the name of, the emotion, gradually giving up its place in the domain of meaning. So, we can safely assume that in both cases there has been a shift of meaning from the concrete source domain of motion (*φοβάμαι*) and locality (*fear*) to the target domain of emotions. In the case of these two verbs the source domain is currently inactive but its traces are felt in current uses of the verbs, not discussed here (such as the construction *φοβήθηκε από* and the element of futurity deriving from its source meaning 'lie in wait' in the case of *fear* [see note 2]).

We have also seen a further shift from the domain of emotions to the domain of propositional attitude meaning, and in this case, the domain of emotions has been used

as a source domain. Both *φοβάμαι* and *fear* (originally, and *afraid* later) joined the course of propositional attitude verbs very early in their evolution. Having dropped the need for the complementizer at some stage, they gradually exhibited potential for free movement within the clause. They are currently used (alongside their propositional uses) also as parentheticals promoting their embedded clauses to the status of the main. It is evident that there is a very small step from this state to the state of performativity. If a condition for speech acting is a certain state of mind, we can assume by extending this condition that a certain psychological state of mind, or the presumption of one, is a prerequisite for a speech act. And this constitutes a kind of metonymy. We acknowledge that it is often extremely difficult to tell whether we have a speech act verb use; and we also acknowledge that both *afraid* and *φοβάμαι* are currently used to introduce (rather than perform) speech acts. However, they both seem to be well on their way towards becoming full-fledged speech act verbs as some of their uses indicate. In this respect it is interesting to note their potential for activating non-root modalities of the modals they introduce in relation to the subject (see note 2).

As regards *φοβάμαι* and *fear*, we have provided evidence that supports Traugott's (1989) hypothesis that propositional meanings give rise to interpersonal ones and not vice versa. This evidence does not support Vendler's claims that there is a bidirectional leakage between thought and speech, and consequently between mental verbs and speech act verbs. This shows once more, as Traugott and Dasher (1987) would say, that "there are powerful regularities in semantic change of a far more specific sort than the 'extension of meaning, metaphoric shift, metonymic shift, amelioration' or 'pejoration' we hear so much about in earlier treatments of semantic change" (571). Moreover, we believe that we have provided evidence that extends Traugott and Dasher's (1987) claim that "as far as lexicalization of metalinguistic repertoires is concerned, [not only] 'having in mind' seems to be more fundamental than 'asserting that'" (571), but also 'having the emotion' has been proven to be very essential, too. Our evidence supports Traugott and Dasher's (1987) claim that thought (and we would add 'emotion' too) and speech "are not the same thing as the metacognitive and metalinguistic terms that lexicalize them" (572). Besides, both *fear* and *afraid* are native terms, and this constitutes further evidence for the postulated anteriority and priority of the emotion over its articulation as a performative or parenthetical verb. The relation, indeed, is not mutually constitutive.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Let it be noted that we consider as translational counterparts those terms which occur more frequently or readily as their translational equivalents and which appear first in dictionaries:

*fear*= φόβος, τρόμος, etc.; *afraid*=φοβισμένος, etc., *be afraid*=φοβάμαι (Penguin-Hellenews English-Greek Dictionary, 1975); φόβος=*fear, fright, dread, anxiety*; φοβοῦμαι=*be afraid, be fearful, be/stand in fear of*, etc. (Stavropoulos, 1988, Oxford Greek-English Learner's Dictionary, OUP).

<sup>2</sup> Due to lack of space, this point has not been discussed or demonstrated.

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