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Expressivity as an option of tense-aspect in language: The case of Modern Greek imperfective past

Eliza Kitis and Anastasios Tsangalidis

Abstract

There is an extensive literature on the main tense and aspect (hereafter TA) options and their configurations in Modern Greek (hereafter MG) as well as on their core meanings and functions. In this paper, we examine cases in which the predicted TA configurations are violated, and highlight the reasons that lead to this violation. We locate the motivation in the realm of the subjectivity of the speaker, or narrator, who imposes his/her own stance on what is being said or written, on the one hand, and in the realm of rhetoricity, on the other. We explore the speaker's options in registering their perspective of, and comment on, the content of the utterance, as these options are expressed morphologically and/or lexically through the TA system of MG. In particular, we are concerned with instances in which the MG TA system is transcended, or even subverted, rather than observed, in order to project within the bare diegetic axis another dimension. This dimension enables the narrator to add a personal commentary on, or an evaluation of, the fabula, or the reported or narrated event, or even to inscribe their own subjective involvement with it. In the realm of rhetoricity, on the other hand, we demonstrate how the speaker can overlay the diegetic voice with another voice reflecting their own stance towards the fabula, or even with a multiplicity of voices or points of view. In effect, we investigate how TA configurations that are normally disallowed in the system can be exploited in order to infuse a multiplicity of voices, effecting a multifunctionality of discourse and creating a polyphonic text.

The level that is the focus of our investigation of TA configurations in MG is not that of referentiality in language but rather that of expressivity. The level of expressivity can accommodate violations of predicted configurations, since such violations are motivated by the subjectivity of the speaking/narrating subject or persona, or by rhetorical expediency. The methodology adopted in our approach blends various levels of analysis as morphological and lexical configurations can often be explained at the intersection of various domains.

Introduction

The core meanings and functions of the main tense and aspect options and their configurations in MG have been identified and amply described in the literature – concentrating on morphological, syntactic and semantic issues.¹ The focus of this paper will be on instances in which the predicted TA configurations in certain contexts are violated and the reasons that lead to this violation. Crucially, we are going to concentrate on what may be called a parameter of expressivity affecting the interpretation of otherwise well-understood grammatical behaviour. In effect, we will propose that we need to postulate a multi-level model of linguistic analysis for the description of tense-aspect in order to accommodate the data observed. We will propose that truth-functional propositional meaning can be accounted for at the referential level of language analysis, whereas expressive or evaluative and ideological “meanings” can be deferred and explained at the interpersonal level of expressivity in language use. We, thus, manage to preserve our grammatical categories intact with their core semantic meanings, but we are also able to explicate subjective non-truth-functional meanings or implications that need a pragmatic framework or a broader evaluative semantics (Kitis 2000) in order to be adequately accounted for.

1. MG tense/aspect: The data

The system of tense and aspect in MG has been argued to involve a symmetrical combination of the crucial oppositions of [+/-perfective] and [+/-past], as shown, for example, in (1) below.

- (1) “Aspect is especially important in the Greek verbal system, with the crucial opposition being between imperfective (continuous/durative) and perfective (aorist/punctual); this dichotomy extends throughout the finite verbal system:

	Imperfective (IPV)	Perfective (PV)
Present Indicative	<i>grafo</i>	<i>grapso</i>
Future Indicative	<i>tha grafo</i>	<i>tha grapso</i>
Preterit Indicative	<i>egrafa</i>	<i>egrapsa</i>
Subjunctive	<i>na grafo</i>	<i>na grapso</i> ”

(Joseph 1983: 79–80)

It has been variously argued that this aspectual distinction corresponds to the cross-linguistic [+/-] perfective categories.² In other words, the MG perfective (PV) always includes both endpoints of an event, while the imperfective (IPV) focuses on just one part of a situation, as shown in (2) below (I(nitial), F(inal) – following Smith 1991; cf. Tsangalidis 1999: 174):

- (2) *MG Perfective:* I F
 ////////////////
MG Imperfective: I . . //////////////// . . F

Moreover, the MG imperfective is taken to be an instance of the most general imperfective grammatical category in that it may be used as any one of Comrie’s (1976: 25) imperfective subcategories, i.e., habitual, continuous, progressive or non-progressive.

2. The imperfective past

Focusing our attention on the imperfective past, we can state that in MG it can express a habitual situation or a state, as in (3)–(5), as well as a continuous one, as in (6). In this latter function, it roughly corresponds to the English past progressive, which can denote an eventuality that has some duration.

- (3) *I manades emenan sto spiti eno*
 the mothers stayed.3P.IPV at-the house while
i paterades dulevan ekstos spitiu.
 the fathers worked.3P.IPV outside house.GEN
 ‘Mothers stayed/used to stay(IPV) at home while fathers worked/used to work(IPV) outside the home.’
- (4) *Palia mename se spitia ke oxii se*
 Old stayed.1P.IPV in houses and not in
diamerizmata.
 flats
 ‘In the old days we lived (IPV) in houses and not in flats.’
- (5) *O Petros pijene stin eklisia kathe Kirjaki.*
 The Peter went.3S.IPV to-the church every Sunday
 ‘Peter went/used to go(IPV) to church every Sunday.’

- (6) *O Petros duleve oli tin Kirjaki.*
The Peter worked.3S.IPV all the Sunday
'Peter worked/was working (IPV) all day on Sunday.'

In the general theory of Aspect, it has been claimed that while perfective forms can be used to refer to situations that have internal structure, "imperfective forms cannot be used to refer to situations lacking internal structure" (Comrie 1976: 26). In what follows we will deal specifically with the imperfective forms of some predicates that refer to situations that lack an internal structure, aiming to show how these oppositions can be resolved in the same form. We have noticed that it is often the case that imperfective forms are encountered in predicates that ordinarily admit the perfective aspect only. These tense-aspect combinations, then, appear as violations of the predictable licensed configurations. Consider the following examples:

- (7) *Otan ton skotosa pethena mazi tu.*
When him killed.1S.PV died.1S.IPV with him
'When I killed (PV) him I died (IPV) with him.' (headlines)
- (8) *Metaniono ji afto pu ekana ala ton*
regret.1S for this that did.1S but him
agapo ton agapusa akomi ke otan ton
love.1S him loved.1S.IPV even and when him
skotona.
killed.1S.IPV
'I repent for what I did, but I love him, I loved (IPV) him even when I killed (IPV) him.'
- (9) *Ekini tin ora pethena ki ego mazi*
That the hour died.1S.IPV and I with
tu. Me aftes tis kuvendes prospathise
him. With these the words tried
i Katerina Gianakopulu ... (continuation of (8))
the Katerina Giannakopoulou
'"At that time I died (IPV) with him." With these words Katerina Giannakopoulou tried to...' (continuation of (8))
- (10) *"Kapote otan enas stratos vomvardize mia*
At.one.time when an army bombed.3S.IPV a
poli, to ekane ja na tin kataktisi.
city it did for to it conquer.

Tora, otan vomvardizete mia poli, ine ja
Now, when is.bombed a city, is for
na stali ena minima". Exun perasi
to be.sent a message. Have.3P passed
25 xronia apo tote pu o Umbertoo
25 years since then that the Umbertoo
Eco diatipone ton pasignosto afto aforizmo.
Eco stated.3S.IPV the famous this aphorism.
"There was a time when an army bombed (would bomb) (IPV) a city in order to conquer it. Now, when a city is bombed, it is for a message to be sent." 25 years have passed since Umbertoo Eco stated (IPV) this famous aphorism.'

- (11) *Otan i ipiresies ton IPA anakaliptan*
When the services of.the USA discovered.3P.IPV
to maxitiko skelos tu Islam ke to
the militant faction of.the Islam and it
afipnizan, katefthinondas to enandion
awakened.3P.IPV directing it against
tis Sovietikis Enosis ke meta tin katarefsi
the Soviet Union and after the collapse
tis to xrisimopiisan os exmi tu doratos
its it used.3P.PV as head of.the spear
tis Pangozmias Taksis, sti Rosia, ta Valkania,
of.the Global Order in.the Russia, the Balkans,
ton Kafkaso ke opu alu, itan asfalos
the Caucasus and where else, were definitely
"kali" i simera demonopiumeni drastes.
"good" the today demonized perpetrators.
'When the US services discovered (IPV) the militant faction of Islam and awakened (IPV) (nurtured, kindled, helped its awakening) it, directing it against the Soviet Union, and after its collapse they used (PV) it as a spearhead of Global Order, in Russia, The Balkans, Caucasus and in other places, today's demonized perpetrators were definitely "good".'
- (Neoklis Sarris, *Ta Nea* 13–14.10.01)

- (12) *Otan i 210 panepistimiaki jatri dilonan*
When the 210 university doctors stated.3P.IPV
oti paretunde apo to kliniko ergo sta
that resign.3P from the clinical work in.the

dimosia *nosokomia* *ixan fenete (...)* *ksexasi*
 public hospitals had.3P it.seems forgotten
oti to kliniko ergo *ine "arikta*
 that the clinical work is inextricably
sindedemeno" me to ekpedeftiko.
 connected with the teaching.

'When the 210 university doctors stated (IPV) that they (would) re-sign from the clinical duties in state hospitals, apparently (...) they had forgotten that clinical duties are "inextricably connected" with teaching duties.'

(A. Karkagiannis, *Kathimerini* 7.01.02)

- (13) *Itheles ego na su ime pisti*
 Wanted.2S I to you be.1S faithful
 (a) *otan esi epernes to plio ja*
 when you took.2S.IPV the boat for
ti Rodo?
 the Rodos?
 (b) *otan esi pijenes sti Rodo?*
 when you went.2S.IPV to.the Rodos?

'Did you expect me to be faithful to you (a) when you took (IPV) the boat to Rodos?' (b) when you went (IPV) to Rodos?' (reference to one event).

3. The imperfective past and event classes

It is generally accepted that imperfective morphology expresses either habituality or genericity, on the one hand, and durativity or continuousness, on the other. Normally, imperfective forms cannot be used to refer to predicates lacking internal structure, unless they are used to express habituality or genericity as in our examples (3)–(6) above.

In addition to the grammatical distinction, which is quite straightforward in MG (cf. (1) above), all verbs in MG have their inherent lexical aspect, as well.³ If we adopt the most generally accepted aspectual classification of predicates, we have to distinguish between [+/-] bounded events, [+/-] durative events and [+/-] homogeneous events (depending on whether some change is involved in an event). These properties of lexical predicates yield four aspectual classes of events or situations. They are presented in Table I adapted from Kearns (2000):

Table I.

	Change	Duration	Bound
<i>State</i>	-	+	-
<i>Achievement</i>	+	-	+
<i>Activity/Process</i>	+	+	-
<i>Accomplishment</i>	+	+	+

The two components of aspect (usually termed grammatical and lexical aspect or aspect proper and *Aktionsart*^A) are known to interact in important ways (cf. for example, Smith 1991 and Papproté 1988 with reference to MG). The relationship between these verb classes and the particular grammatical markers discussed earlier is not always straightforward and despite attempts to define the [+/-] perfective distinction universally, the exact situation in each language will have to be examined in language-particular terms. As far as MG is concerned, it may be argued, for example, that "the choice of aspect ... forces state-achievement and state-accomplishment transitions. ... [A]s a rule... state and activity predicates will become accomplishments or achievements if used in the perfective aspect", while "[i]n general, the imperfective aspect transforms accomplishments into activities or states and activities remain unaffected" (Papproté 1988: 452).

The transformation of an accomplishment to an activity is consonant with the core meaning of the imperfective discussed above. Imperfective forms allow an internal viewing of the event, obliterating its limits and bounds. Imperfective forms transfer the focus of interest from the finished product to the process. However, this is feasible if the event is amenable to such a processual analysis. In other words, transition of predicates from the class of accomplishment to that of activity is possible if the event has a certain internal structure which can be unfolded under the microscopic viewing of the imperfective form. Since accomplishments are characterized as durative, imperfectivization of their predicates is possible, not only for the expression of habituality and genericity, but also for the expression of both continuous and progressive aspects. These facts are summarized in Table II:

Table II.

Grammatical Aspect	Lexical Aspect (Situation Type)	Expressing
Imperfective Past +	States Activities Accomplishments	Habituality, Genericity Continuity Duration

Thus, the sentence in (14) is seen as a finished/bounded/telic event that was completed in a year and is viewed in its totality ignoring its processual stages.

- (14) *Extize to spiti tu se ena xrono.*
 Built.3S.PV the house his in one year
 'He built (PV) his house **in** a year.'

On the other hand, by imperfectivising the same predicate, as in (15), we shift our focus from the completed event to its internal structure, that of the building of the house. By so doing, we also capitalize upon the correlate of duration, which is also part of the meaning of activity-type predicates, obliterating the correlate of boundedness since activities are unbounded.

- (15) *Extize to spiti tu epi ena xrono.*
 Built.3S.IPV the house his for one year
 'He was building (IPV) his house **for** a year.'

Thus, imperfective aspect can cancel the feature of boundedness of accomplishment-type predicates transforming them into activities. Moreover, as unbounded events, activities cannot be contained in containment-like adverbials, such as 'in a year'. Boundedness is no longer part of the meaning of the derived (=accomplishment-originated) activity, although it can be an aspect of implicature, since it can be cancelled, as in (16):

- (16) *Extize to spiti tu epi ena xrono*
 Built.3S.IPV the house his for one year
ala pote den to teliose.
 but never not it finished.3S.PV
 'He was building (IPV) his house **for** a year, but he never finished it.'

If we assume that the core meaning of the imperfective is [-bound], whereas that of the perfective is [+bound], then we expect the meaning of imperfective forms always to dominate that of lexical aspect, as depicted in Table II. Thus, for the imperfective past forms of accomplishments or achievements, the feature [+boundedness] must only arise as an implicature. In effect, boundedness is only an implicature in the case of imperfective past forms while it is part of the core meaning of perfective ones. The implications of this statement are that the meaning of boundedness cannot

be cancelled in the case of past perfective forms (as in (17)), whereas this is possible for imperfective past forms as we saw in (16). Table III below summarizes our position so far.

- (17) **Extize to spiti tu se/epi ena xrono*
 Built.3S.PV the house his in/for one year
ala pote den to teliose.
 but never not it finished.3S.PV
 *'He built (PV) his house **for/in** a year, but he never finished it.'

Table III.

	Core Meaning	Implicature	Negation of final endpoint
Past Perfective	+bound	-	+contradiction (-acceptable)
Past Imperfective	-bound	+bound	-contradiction (+acceptable)

What is the case, however, with the class of achievements? Can the imperfective transform an achievement predicate into an activity-type one? Although we cannot review all possible cases here, we will only note that this is not always possible (e.g., **Ενώ έβρισκα τη Μαρία στο σαλόνι, χτύπησε το κουδούνι.* 'While I found (IPV) Mary in the living-room, the doorbell rang.').

What prevents achievements from transforming into activities in imperfective aspect is their lack of the correlate of durativity. As shown in Table I above, achievements lack temporal duration and, as a result, they also lack an internal structure. Achievement predicates, therefore, cannot unfold, so to speak, in time or space, for there is no internal structure to be exposed thereby. They refer to instantaneous events. On the other hand, there are some achievement-predicates that are amenable to imperfectivization, especially those referring to cognitive acts, as in (18), for example:

- (18) *Oso permuse i ora andilamvanotan /*
 As passed.3S the time realized.3S.IPV /
evlepe / katalavene / diesthanotan oti
 saw.3S.IPV / understood.3S.IPV / felt.3S.IPV that
de tha boruse na tin vri.
 not will was.able.3S to her find
 'As time went by he realized/saw/understood/felt (IPV) that he wouldn't be able to find her.'

Even if perception verbs are used in the imperfective form, it is clear that they are used in their metaphorical sense of referring to a cognitive process

(cf. Comrie 1976: 35). Without going into details here, we can briefly conclude that, if the imperfective is attached to an achievement (excluding metaphorical and idiomatic uses), it can only denote a series of non-homogeneous, individuated, repetitive actions over a period of time. However, such imperfective achievements do not constitute a single, homogeneous activity, as shown in Table IV that complements Table II:

Table IV.

Grammatical Aspect	Lexical Aspect (Situation Type)	Expressing
Imperfective Past+	States Activities Accomplishments	} Habituality, Genericity Continuity Duration----- (activity)
	Achievements	

4. Formal representations

In Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) it has been claimed that an imperfective sentence denotes a state-type predicate that includes reference to the current point introduced into discourse by a perfective tense or a temporal adverbial clause. This means that in (19) both the imperfective and the perfective are temporally coreferential. In other words, the imperfective has been analysed as an anaphoric tense, which requires an explicit or implicit antecedent. It has also been analysed as providing a temporal frame forming a background for foregrounded main line events. This analysis is appreciated in the context of the imperfective past denoting an unbounded or *noncompletive action* (Jackendoff 1991).

- (19) a. *I Maria bike mesa. O Janis erave.*
The Mary came.3S in. The John sewed.3S.IPV
'Mary came in. John was sewing.'
- b. *Otan i Maria bike mesa, o Janis*
When the Mary came.3S in, the John
erave.
sewed.3S.IPV
'When Mary came in, John was sewing.'

Nonetheless, despite the imperfective aspect, not all our examples of imperfective forms can be said to provide a reference frame (cf. (7)–(12)); moreover, all these predicates do not signify either an activity or an identifiable process or activity stage leading up to the bounding culmination. As achievements, all these predicates denote only one moment and this is the indivisible moment of change, the event itself. Achievements are inherently punctual and instantaneous.

We should clarify that all these events ((7)–(13)) are completive bounded actions that should be expressed by verb forms that characterize completion and boundedness. In other words, what is most interesting about our examples is that despite the imperfective marking on their verbs, (7)–(13) are in fact construed as perfectives and formally they can only be represented as such. All these cases denote specific events that occurred at some time in the past. None of them can be said to have duration, none of them can be said to denote repetition. If tense is the main localizing deictic parameter and can be explicitly represented by quantification over times, with variables *t* standing for times, then relations between those events denoted in our examples and their times of occurrence can be represented by "AT(*e*, *t*)", as shown in (20) and (21) below for our examples (7) and (10), respectively:

- (20) 'I(kg) died (at that time)'
Past $\exists e$ (DIE(*e*) & AGENT (kg, *e*))
'At a past time there was an event and the event was a dying and kg was its agent (experiencer/patient). (Gloss: kg= Katerina Gianakopoulou)
- (21) 'Eco expressed/phrased the aphorism'
[The *x*: Eco(*x*)] $\exists t \exists e$ (*t* < *t** & express (*e*) & AGENT (*x*, *e*) & OBJECT (*a*, *e*) & AT (*e*, *t*)). (Gloss: *a*= aphorism)

Imperfective past is not a form congruent with completion and boundedness, although, as we concluded above, completion may be an implicature. What is interesting to note, however, in connection to examples (7)–(13), is that they appear to violate this prediction in so far as boundedness is not just an implicature. It cannot be cancelled, despite the fact that the verbs appear in the imperfective form. None of our examples admits cancellation of the completion of the act reported. How can we, then, account for the occurrence of the imperfective form in these contexts?⁵

Aspectual oppositions are very difficult to explain in a formal way since, as Comrie (1976: 133) put it, they are subjective rather than objec-

tive. In other words, such aspectual differences need not necessarily lead to differences in truth-value, “unless the speaker’s view of the situation described is also included in the semantic representation.” It appears to us, then, that an explanation has to be sought beyond the level of what is said, at the non-truth-conditional level of what is being done with language, i.e. at the level of expressivity and subjectivity of language use. In what follows, we turn to a discussion of the non-referential plane of language.

5. Expressivity

A tripartite distinction between functions of language is not a recent development of linguistics. Bühler (1934) distinguished an expressive function of language (*Ausdruck*), which complemented a representative (*Darstellung*) and a vocative one (*Appell*). In the expressive function of language, the category of person understandably plays a more prominent role. It is worthy of note that our examples mostly code the first person singular (e.g. (7), (8), and (9)). Example (13) encodes the second person singular and can be said to function both at the expressive level but also at the vocative one. Lyons (1977) introduces another tripartite distinction of expressive, social, and descriptive information. He further uses the term *interpersonal* to subsume both the expressive and social functions (1977: 55). In particular, Lyons (1977: 107) describes expressivity as follows:

we can restrict the term ‘expressive’ to those indexical features of an utterance by means of which a speaker or writer establishes or reveals his individuality in a particularly original manner. Expressivity, in this sense, will therefore be a part of creativity ...; and it will fall within the province of stylistics, rather than semantics (in so far as these two branches of semiotics, or linguistics, can be distinguished from one another ...).

We submit that these imperfective past forms we have identified attaching to achievement predicates (and their subsequent imperfectivization) is a ploy in the speaker’s/author’s hands of effecting a visualization of the event for the sake of the audience. For our purposes, we will adopt Fleischman’s (1990) framework as she adapted it from Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Traugott (1982). We will distinguish, therefore, a multi-level functional model consisting of at least three levels of linguistic use and, consequently, of analysis: the referential, the textual and the expressive (forsaking the metalinguistic).

The referential component will accommodate all referential meaning. This is Halliday’s ideational or experiential level, at which we encode what is said and what the subject-matter is. This is the component of propositional meaning that will admit truth-conditions, the level at which we can evaluate what is talked about in respect of its correspondence to states of affairs in the world. This is the level concerned with what the case is or is not. It is at this referential level that we are concerned with the most fundamental meanings of tense and aspect.

The textual component caters to the text-forming properties of the linguistic system. As concerns the system of tense-aspect, its various configurations distribute the load of information into backgrounded and foregrounded components, thus contributing to the coherence of the discourse (Hopper 1979).

The level of the linguistic system that is our main concern here is that of expressivity. Both this level and the textual level of language function belong to the realm of pragmatics. They are pragmatic components of the system. Fleischman (1990: 6) writes that at this level we can subsume affective, social, and conative functions of language, in other words “its resources for expressing personal attitudes toward what is being talked about, toward the text itself, and toward the participants in the communicative transaction. Among the various linguistic resources located in the expressive component, ... are those serving to communicate evaluation and point of view.”

6. Tense, aspect, and expressivity

Going back to examples (7)–(13), we propose to juxtapose the functions of past perfective and past imperfective, since these two forms are competing forms for actualising in language the events denoted in our examples. In order to do that, we need to review very briefly the basic meanings and functions relevant for our discussion of the two forms. We first turn to a brief examination of the function of the past perfective form in MG.

What is the basic meaning of past? This question is raised by Fleischman (1989), too. Many researchers agree that one of its basic meanings is the correlate of distance (Steele 1975, Langacker 1978, Hutchinson 1985). Past tense morphemes in languages are used to express pastness, broadly understood as distanced from the current moment of the speaker, or the current time of the discourse reality. If this is so, then past tense is interpreted

as distal rather than past or passed. Moreover, in contrast to other languages, such as English, past perfective in MG cannot express hypothetical/*irrealis*/non-actual/uncertain realizations along with the actualization of the feature of distance. This feature, too, places past perfective realizations in the sphere of objective *realis* situations in the past at a certain distance from the speaker. Moreover, perfective past encodes boundaries of the event denoted and thus the event is presented as a finished completed product assigned a specific place in the past. All these correlates support the assignment of the feature [+dissociative] to MG past perfective actualizations. If this is so, it is to be expected that this verb-form will mostly function at the level of referential meaning in language.⁶

While perfective forms are synthetic, imperfective ones are analytic. Imperfective forms anatomize, so to speak, the event denoted, inviting the reader/addressee to look inside it, rather than register it as a consumed action. Imperfective past forms of achievement events may connote empathetic subjectivity of the speaker pleading for sharing the proposition with her audience, as in (7), (8) and (9), in which the reader/addressee is almost promoted to the status of an eye-witness. In these examples, by unfolding the event through imperfectivization before the very eyes or ears of the audience, the speaker manages to also unfold, and thus expose, her suffering psyche as the perpetrator (agent) of the action (killing), but also as the experiencer of further suffering along with it (dying). She thus manages to tie in one knot both the agent and the affected, the implications of the latter mitigating those of the former. All this is achieved by subverting through imperfectivization the represented event. The event is no longer *represented*, but *constructed* through the subjectivity of the speaker-agent and the speaker-affected, simultaneously the perpetrator and the victim.⁷

Further, imperfective past forms of achievement events may act as elongation devices. Just as El Greco's figures are elongated to reach out of the frame's boundaries onto Heaven, or whatever is placed high up, so, too, imperfective forms of achievement events stretch out of their well-determined boundaries to reach into the present moment of the speaker or the discourse. Examples (10) and (12) are good illustrations of this function of imperfectivized achievement events.

In (10), we can still hear a very strong echo of Eco's aphorism, which is thus validated as an eternal truth acquiring the force of a law-like statement. Imperfectivising the verb form achieves its dialogic substance in a perennial discourse that is always current and present. The form of the verb assumes a loquor whose locutions have jurisdiction over an interminable period of time. Of course, both the expressions *pasignosto* 'well known' and

aforismo 'aphorism' contribute to this interpretation. However, it is the aspectual form chosen for the verb that leaks, so to speak, the author's attitude towards Eco's aphorism: his approbation, his view that Eco's aphorism has to be attributed perennial validity, that it has been apposite all these years, thus annulling the punctuality of its enunciation.

In the same vein, in (12) the doctors' statement has lost the temporal punctuality of its enunciation, spanning over a considerable period of time, incurring a much stronger impact, thus placing the doctors (the source of the statement) up against the import of their statement and the subsequent commitments. In this way, the author manages to make a meta-commentary on his propositional meaning: by selecting an unlicensed aspectual form for his reporting verb, he manages to both report the doctors' statement at the referential level of the discourse, and to further force a subjective comment of criticism on the doctors' conduct at the level of expressivity. This is achieved by stretching out the punctual nature of the doctors' performative act and by investing it with a constructed duration; the author, thus, effects an artful elongation into time of correlates such as intentional aspects of performative acts.

Example (11) is another good illustration of how the author's meta-comment can seep into propositional meaning. It is an excellent case where both the referential and expressive meanings of language blend in the same lexical item, which becomes the exponent of both referential meaning as a lexeme and expressive meaning as an aspectual form. However, the generation of all these meanings is achieved through the merging of all these levels of semiosis in language. To be more specific, the author of (11), by selecting the imperfective aspectual form for an achievement verb (*anakalipitan* 'discovered', but also *afipnizan* 'awakened'), that is, by attributing duration to the event denoted, manages to subvert the event itself and transform it into an accomplishment. Accomplishments are events often characterized by intentional aspects of meaning. Their agents intend to carry out the act represented (*build a house, eat an apple, walk to work, etc.*) while achievement verbs usually denote instantaneous events that can be either reflexive or just happen to their subjects who are not aware of them (*die, cough, sneeze, yawn, realize*).⁸ The imperfective aspectual form of the instantaneous verb *anakalipto* 'discover' transforms it into an accomplishment and, indeed, this is the author's meta-commentary on what he is writing. The author, licensed in his discourse representation by the imperfective aspect, leaks into it his implicit view that what the US services did was an accomplishment (rather than a casual achievement), and as such they had to work over it for a certain period of time. So the revelation of the militant

faction of Islam was a US construction, or accomplishment, rather than a discovery.⁹ Thus, additionally, the proposition acquires an ironical tint.

Example (13), on the other hand, is invested with both expressive and vocative meanings. At the propositional level, the speaker asks a question of her husband, whose proposition is assigned at a particular point in time as specified by the apparently temporal *when*-clause. At the vocative level, the husband is addressed and challenged, while at the expressive level the wife expresses her exasperation towards her husband's conduct: she juxtaposes two (apparently conflicting) states of affairs occurring concurrently: her being faithful as against her husband's going away. By selecting the imperfective form for an achievement predicate, the wife manages to attribute to the event a non-existent duration, or even a repetition that does not correspond to the facts (the event of going away just happened once). She thus manages to impress her point on her audience much more poignantly than if she had chosen to represent the facts accurately only at the referential level of her discourse (cf. Kitis, 2001, forthcoming).

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined tense-aspect configurations at the level of their discourse function. In particular, we have identified some instances in which the predictable tense-aspect configurations are disallowed by the relevant linguistic system, and we had to invoke a discourse level of analysis, that of the expressivity of language, in order to offer an explanation. We believe that such instances of disallowed tense-aspect configurations cannot be accounted for at the referential, truth-conditional level of language use, but an adequate explanation is available at the discourse level of expressivity.

More specifically, we found that there are some instances of tense-aspect violations that are exploited by the language user in order to inscribe into the propositional meaning their subjective stance towards what is said. We have suggested that such violations of the system act as triggers for implicating into the referential meaning a meta-commentary on what is said. They form rhetorical ploys for instilling into the propositional content the subjectivity of the language user in the form of their individual stance, or empathetic involvement, towards the represented reality. In doing so, language users often succeed in constructing their own reality rather than representing it, even if from a particular viewpoint. If this is the case, then

we can also claim that tense-aspect configurations and their violated options can be exponents of particular ideologies.

From the point of view of boundaries, it is important that we have assumed a sharp distinction between grammar and the lexicon (and the corresponding well-defined categories of lexical and grammatical aspect). The [+/-] perfective contrast is known to interact with the *Aktionsarten* in important ways and a number of cross-linguistically available predictions can be seen to hold in MG. In this sense the distinction is validated and the content of each category needs to be defined specifically before we move on to the description of any particular combinations. The semantics of perfective and imperfective are well-defined and seem to dominate over the original lexical content of each verb class. Moreover, we have argued for a pragmatic level, which, further to the usual generation and exploitation of implicature, may be seen to encode the speaker's attitude towards the content of their diction. This level seems to dominate all others, in that it can lead to unexpected violations, not only of the original semantics of particular verbs and their combinations with particular tense/aspect morphemes, but also of the "normal" implicated meanings. Grammar, semantics, and pragmatics are all involved in the interpretation of any utterance, but, obviously, this is not to deny the possibility of identifying the categories of each level, of studying each individual category separately, and of determining the contribution of each.

It appears, then, that with respect to the tense-aspect system of languages, the referential and the expressive domains are overlapping areas interacting in interesting ways, each one contributing to the construction and negotiation of meaning. It seems to us, therefore, that we need to invoke a multi-layered linguistic system that integrates a multiplicity of viewpoints and analyses at all levels of discourse, if our objective is to attain a more comprehensive theory of language use.

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Notes

1. For example, Seiler (1952), Mackridge (1985), Mozer (1994), Xydopoulos (1996), Tsangalidis (1999).

2. For example, Mozer (1994), Xydopoulos (1996), Tsangalidis (1999).
3. This situation is not unusual in languages where a grammatical aspectual system is clearly and systematically marked – cf. for example Smith (1991). We assume that Langacker's account of aspectual oppositions in English cannot be readily transferred – as Nikiforidou (2002) seems to be doing – to the analysis of MG for obvious reasons. Langacker himself does not assume universal applicability of his categories, since, for example, he repeatedly acknowledges (e.g. 1990: 351, note 18) that his perfective/imperfective distinction is not “equivalent” to “the contrast called ‘perfective/imperfective’ in Slavic studies”.
4. Smith (1991) uses *viewpoint aspect* and *situation type aspect*, respectively.
5. It must be noted that, although MG exhibits the equivalent phenomenon to the French *imparfait de rupture* (Irandoust, 1998), our examples cannot be categorized as such instances, as their predicates do not mark time movement in a narrative structure, nor do they shift the temporal focus.
6. We acknowledge, of course, forms such as *efiga* ‘I left/I’m gone’ when the speaker is still there, or *pethana* ‘I died/I’m dead’, which can only have a metaphorical or idiomatic use. Without going into details here, the analysis of these uses will also have to depend on the strong *realis* features of these forms which are exploited at a meta-textual level.
7. It must be recalled that Giannakopoulou was accused of putting on an act. She had killed her lover – a priest – who, according to her report, was maltreating her.
8. Performative verbs are exempted, of course, as are some cognitive verbs denoting intentional mental activity, as mentioned in Section 3.
9. It is acknowledged, however, that the MG verb *anakalipto* ‘discover’ can also mean ‘invent’. Whichever of the two senses is selected for its interpretation, we believe that it is the imperfective form that attributes to USA services the intention to construct this potential for Islam.

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Focus: The interplay of phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics

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Abstract

Successful communication requires a balanced presentation of old and new information. Every sentence in a discourse typically connects to the previously established context and, at the same time, adds a new piece of information. New information has been traditionally associated with the notion of focus. It appears, however, that focus has received different interpretations depending on the level of linguistic analysis involved. In phonology, focus has been associated with intonational prominence. In syntax, focus has been related to a particular position in the sentence reserved for new information (e.g. Halliday's (1967) theme-rheme distinction or the Prague School communicative dynamism (see Mathesius 1928; Daneš 1964, 1968, 1970, 1974; and Firbas 1964, 1966, 1981; see also Sgall, Hajičová, and Penevová 1986 for an overview)). In semantics, Jackendoff (1972) was the first to point out that focus sensitive operators can have semantic (truth conditional) effects.

In this paper, an attempt is being made, on the basis of Greek data, to reconcile the above treatments of focus and to show that, in essence, focus is a unitary phenomenon with reflexes in phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Word order variation in Greek provides the test ground on the basis of which it is claimed that focus affects intonation patterns, sentence construction, sentence meaning and the information structure of the utterance. Thus, it appears that the levels of phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics are all involved in the realization of focus.

Introduction

This paper is a preliminary investigation of the different aspects of the notion of focus and their realization at different levels of linguistic analysis. My main aim is to show that the levels of phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics are all involved in the realization of focus. Drawing on data