

Structural combinatorial properties of Greek derivational suffixes

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Order, combinability and combinatorial restrictions derivational affixes are subject to have always been among the central issues of word formation and various theoretical proposals have been put forward in order to account for them (see, for example, Kiparsky 1982, Fabb 1988, Scalise 1994, Plag 1999, Hay 2000, 2002). In this presentation, we investigate the general principles which underlie the combination of a base with a particular suffix. We address two questions: a) Are the combinatorial restrictions base driven or affix driven? With respect to this question, there are two opposite views in the existing literature. Fabb (1988) and Scalise (1994) propose that selection is triggered by the suffix, while Plag (1996, 1999) suggests that it is the base which is responsible for selecting a particular type of suffixes. b) Could the non-occurring suffix chains be accounted for in purely morphological terms (e.g. the “monosuffix constraint” proposed by Aronoff & Fuhrhop 2002:452)?

Elaborating on these two questions we argue in favor of a selection which is suffix driven. We show that while certain suffixes combine with morphologically-simple bases, there are other suffixes which can combine with morphologically-complex ones, the internal structure of which is transparent to the particular suffixes. In the first case we find the Greek suffix *-ona(s)* (e.g. *axir(o)* ‘straw’ → *axir-ona(s)* ‘barn’). On the contrary, *-otita* belongs to the second category (e.g. *anag-e(os)* ‘necessary’ → *anag-e-otita* ‘necessity’). Moreover, within the spirit of Lüdeling & Schmid (2003), we claim that certain selectional restrictions of phonological or semantic nature, which seem to underlie some derived words, are due to the inherent properties of the suffixes themselves, i.e. to lexically specified features of the suffixal entries.

Our evidence comes from Greek, a morphologically-rich language, namely from Standard Modern Greek and some of its major dialects.

References

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