

## Voice Acquisition in Greek

Anticausatives, which behave like unaccusatives, and their relationship to passives has been the topic of much discussion. The literature has focused on the similarities and differences between the two constructions in e.g. English, where they differ morphologically: anticausatives bear active morphology, while passives are formed on the basis of a participle and an auxiliary (Marantz, 1984; Baker et al., 1989; Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 1995; among others). In languages like Greek, however, anticausatives cannot be easily distinguished from passives on the basis of morphology: anticausatives bear either an active (1) or a non active form (2) or both an active and a non active form (3), used to form passives as well. The question then is whether (1) to (3) are anticausatives or whether (2) and (3) are only passives (Alexiadou et al., 2006; Tsimpli, 2006). The problem becomes more complex since many passivized verbs in Greek do not allow the *by*-phrase (4) (Zombolou 2004).

As anticausatives and unergatives in English are identical in their surface syntax, most acquisition studies have examined whether children are sensitive to the distinction between the two (van Hout, 1996, Snyder et al., 1995; Babyoneshev et al., 2001; Borer, 2004; among others). In view of the complexity of the Greek paradigm, here we focus on the relationship between anticausatives and passives, and the problem the morphological syncretism raises for their acquisition. In their elicitation experimental study with Greek-speaking monolingual children aged 2;7-4;3, Zombolou, Varlokosta, Alexiadou, and Anagnostopoulou (ZVAA) (2010) showed that there is an overgeneralization of the active over the non-active form, concluding that (1) is structurally less complex than (2), (3) and (4) (see also Terzi & Wexler, 2002; Tsimpli, 2006; Driva & Terzi, 2008). This provides support for the view that passives and anticausatives bearing non-active morphology, involve a more complex structure. Specifically, they both include a Voice head (Kratzer 1996) (5a), whereby Voice in anticausatives is 'expletive' (Embick 1998, Doron, 2003, Schäfer 2008) and has different features than passive Voice. On the other hand, anticausatives bearing active morphology have the structural representation in (5b). On Jakobowitz & Nash's (2001) terms, (5b) is less complex, as the functional category *v* is always present in anticausatives. On the other hand, (5a) is more complex, since the functional category Voice is present only in some anticausatives. This suggests that the difference between passives and anticausatives can no longer be expressed in terms of implicit arguments (see also Kallulli, 2006), since no agentivity effect was observed.

In this follow-up study, we will examine two more parameters on which anticausatives might be distinguished from passives: (a) [ $\pm$  animacy] and (b) [ $\pm$  intention] (see Zombolou, 2004; Kallulli, 2006). Some verbs like in (3) seem to prefer the non-active over the active form (i) when an inanimate (physical) agent (6a) or (ii) an unintentional cause (7a) or (iii) an animate undergoer occurs (8a), although (i), (ii) and (iii) may co-occur with the active form as well, as shown in (6b), (7b) and (8b) correspondingly. Specifically, we designed an experimental study with young Greek-speaking children testing all possible variables (a) [ $\pm$  active form], (b) [ $\pm$  undergoer animacy], (c) [ $\pm$  agent animacy], and (d) [ $\pm$  intention], dividing the experiment, according to these variables, in nine different phases of testing.

The data in (6) to (8) suggest that in cases where an external causer is present/salient, Voice has to be present (assuming that features such animacy/intention are encoded in Voice). These findings support views on Voice, e.g. Doron (2003), according to which non-active morphology surfaces with externally caused verbs to block the structural realization of the external argument. This hypothesis is also supported by L2 acquisition data, where the active form is used when the agent is unspecified, even in cases in which an agent/cause might be present but it is not explicit; on the contrary, the non-active is preferred when the agent is present or salient (Zombolou, 2009; in progress).

## Examples

- (1) to parathiro                      espase  
the window-SG-NOM              break-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG  
'The window broke.'
- (2) i bluza                              skistike  
the T-shirt-SG-NOM              tear-NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG  
(i) Anticausatives interpretation: 'The T-shirt tore.'  
(ii) Passive voice interpretation: 'The T-shirt was torn (by somebody).'
- (3) i fotia                              esvise/svistike  
the fire-SG-NOM                    extinguish-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG/NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG  
'The fire went out.'
- (4) i bluza                              skistike                              \*apo tin eleni  
the T-shirt-SG-NOM              tear-NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG              by the Eleni-PP  
'The T-shirt was torn by Eleni.'
- (5) a. [Voice [vCAUS [ Root ]]]  
b. [vCAUS [ Root ]]
- (6) a. to pedi                              \*htipise/htipithike                              apo ton keravno  
the child-SG-NOM              hit-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG/NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG              by the lightning-PP  
'The child was struck by lightning.'  
b. i porta                              eklise                              me ton aera  
the door-SG-NOM              close-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG              with the wind-PP  
'The door closed because of the wind/ was closed by the wind.'
- (7) a. to panteloni mu                      akubuse                              sto podilato  
the trousers my-SG-NOM              touch-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG              in.the bicycle-PP  
ke              \*lerose/lerothike kata lathos  
and              dirty-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG/NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG  
'My trousers were brushing against the bicycle and got dirty by accident.'  
b. to parathiro                      espase                              kata lathos                      sto katharisma  
the window-SG-NOM              break-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG              by accident-PP              in.the cleaning-PP  
'The window broke by accident during cleaning.'
- (8) a. to trapezomantilo                      leroise/lerothike  
the window-SG-NOM              dirty-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG/NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG  
'The tablecloth got dirty.'  
b. o kostas                              \*lerose/lerothike  
the kostas-SG-NOM              dirty-ACTIVE-PAST-3SG/NON.ACTIVE-PAST-3SG  
'Kostas got dirty.'

## Selected References

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