

UDC: 811.14'06'367

■ ON SOME COMPOUND PREPOSITIONS DENOTING SPACE IN MODERN GREEK

PREDRAG MUTAVDŽIĆ¹, DARKO TODORVIĆ

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
Department of Modern Greek Language and Literature,
Belgrade, Serbia

Predložko-padežne konstrukcije u savremenom grčkom jeziku su po svom značenju polivalentne, posebno one koje se formiraju od jednog priloga za mesto i jednog akuzativnog predloga. Autori ovog rada su nastojali da ukažu na neka od mogućih prostornih i mesnih značenja, koja se iskazuju putem složenih konstrukcijskih fraza πάνω από/σε te κάτω από/σε. Ove konstrukcije nisu izabrane nasumično, budući da ih savremeni grčki gramatičari i sintaktičari ubrajaju u grupu visoko frekventnih. Iz tog razloga su autori nastojali da u radu obuhvate u najosnovnijim crtama, koliko je to bilo moguće, njihova lokativna značenja, tj. značenje prostora i mesta, kako na semantičkom tako i na logičkom planu. Na osnovu svih analiziranih primera, proističu dva osnovna zaključka: semantičko-logičko poimanja lokativnosti putem navedenih konstrukcija u savremenom grčkom jeziku dijametralno se razlikuju, te da je poimanje lokativnosti neposredno zavisno od samog ugla posmatranja.

KLJUČNE REČI: predlozi, grčke složene predložke konstrukcije, adverbijal, apsolutna lokacija, relativna lokacija.

One of the most complex characteristics of Modern Greek, sometimes very difficult to comprehend, are the so-called compound expressions (or phrases) denoting space. These particular spatial expressions are formed by means of combining two different morphological elements: the first element, a spatial adverb, which is obligatory, followed by the second one, a preposition:

- 1) Στο δωμάτιό της υπάρχει μια τσάντα πάνω στο τραπέζι.
In her room there is a bag on the table.
- 2) Το μικρό της αγόρι κάθεται κάτω από την καρέκλα.
Her little son is sitting under the chair.

1 Kontakt podaci (Email): pelem967@yahoo.co.uk

In these sentences the position of the located objects (*bag, son*) in space is strictly determined in relation to the reference points (*table, chair*) by means of the syntagmatic unit of two morphemes which are known in Greek as **προθετικό σύνολο** (Prepositional Group; Μπαμπινιώτης/Κλαίρης 2005: 738). We would like to stress that these syntagmatic structures do not imply that all spatial adverbs can be collocated with both of the accusative prepositions (σε, από) or that all spatial adverbs could be used in the formation of such syntagmatic structures. Greek grammarians emphasize that some adverbs can take either σε or από, while others can take both.

The main purpose of our paper is to examine the possible combinations of adverbs denoting space with the prepositions σε and από and to analyze the semantic differences when they are used with both prepositions. Our examinations have been confined to two most common concepts of space: α) superior – (ε)πάνω, and β) inferior – κάτω.

In the works of Mackridge (1985), Joseph and Philippaki-Warburton (1987) and Fries (1988), parts or entire pages are devoted to this problem. Mackridge and Fries developed their arguments focusing on prepositions, while Joseph and Philippaki-Warburton provided a systematic description of the expressions denoting space following the questionnaire arranged by Comrie and Smith (1977). In our paper, following Joseph and Philippaki-Warburton's approach, we shall try to analyse each complex preposition which collocates with a verb of location, motion to a goal, motion from a source and passage. An attempt will be made to add some corrections and alternatives to the traditionally proposed semantic criteria.

I) SUPERIOR: (Ε)ΠΑΝΩ ('ABOVE', 'OVER', 'ON', 'UP', 'UPON', 'UPPER')

This adverb of place collocates with both accusative prepositions σε and από, whose semantic difference is pointed out in Mackridge (1985: 210):

(ε)πάνω σε → 'above' + 'with';

(ε)πάνω από → 'above' + 'up'.

The semantic criterion presented above, with or without any contact between the located object and the reference point, could explain many examples²:

3) Η Μαρίνα άπλωσε ένα μαντήλι πάνω στο πρόσωπό της.
Marina spread a handkerchief over her face.

4) Η κυρία Αγγέλου πρέπει να είναι πάνω από 50 χρονών.
Mrs. Angelou must be over 50 years old.

It can be interpreted that the third sentence extralinguistically includes a certain contact between the located object (face) and the reference point (*handkerchief*), while in the next sentence, the located object (*Mrs. Angelou*) has no contact with the reference point (*50 years old*). Although according to the examples different distribution of

2 The same semantic condition is described in Joseph & Philippaki-Warburton (1987: 142-3).

prepositions can be accounted for by the criterion contact, there are cases which could not be properly explained by contact.

Although Fries suggested in his paper the following gloss to the examples (1988: 138)

- a. είναι **πάνω στο** τραπέζι
 es ist oben + NÄHE Tisch (= auf dem Tisch)
- b. είναι **πάνω από** το τραπέζι
 es ist oben + NÄHE Tisch (= über dem Tisch)

he makes a remark in a footnote (1988: 141) in which he does not define his semantic concept of +/-NÄHE (proximity):

[+/-KONTAKT] kann auch im Deutschen nicht als relevantes semantisches merkmal angesehen werden (z.B. ist ein Buch auch dann noch auf einem Tisch, wenn zwischen ihm und dem Tisch etwas anderes liegt, usw.).

Even though this note pertains to the German example, Fries seemed to regard +/-NÄHE as quite applicable to Modern Greek. Qvonje, on the other hand, believes that "so heisst 'um...herum' γύρω σε oder γύρω από, wobei σε Berührung oder unmittelbare Nähe bedeutet (γύρω στο τραπέζι), während από einen relativ grösseren Abstand (γύρω από την πόλη) andeuten kann. Dem entsprechen, mit vielleicht noch geringerem Unterschied μπροστά σε/από." (Qvonje 1983/1984: 17). Tachibana (1993: 527) slightly modifies Fries' suggestion by adopting a new term, REGION, to NÄHE (proximity), because the former is well-defined by psycholinguistics:

We will say that object X is in the region of object Y when X is spatially close enough to Y to have the sort of interactions with it that normally occurs between X's and Y's. This definition of region is deliberately vague, because the perceptual attributes of a region are correspondingly vague. (Miller & Johnson-Laird 1976: 59)

At first sight it could be said that the main problem here concerns a paraphrase of the same terminology since the condition of contact is evident in both cases. On the other hand, the semantic meaning of the term region is neither so strict nor limited as that of the term contact and therefore can be widely applied covering many examples. As far as Modern Greek language is concerned, we are of the opinion that the term region is a more appropriate and useful linguistic expression than contact, bearing in mind the following three reasons:

- A) firstly, this criterion could be applied to the simple accusative preposition σε, e.g. in the next sentence the subject must be placed within the region of the window, but not necessarily in (a direct) contact with it:
- 5) Η Άννα απολησμονήθηκε κοιτώντας τις φωτογραφίες **κοντά στο** παράθυρο.
 Anna drifted away looking at the photos near the window.

B) secondly, region is more convenient than contact and for this reason it can explain such pairs as (6–7), whose difference is, no doubt, based on subjective way of perception rather than an objective factor:

6) Μου φάνηκε χαμένος με το κεφάλι του σκυμμένο **πάνω σ'** ένα βιβλίο.
He seemed lost to me with his head bent over a book.

7) **Πάνω από** το πρόσωπό του φάνηκε μια αχτίδα ελπίδας.
Just above his face appeared a ray of hope.

C) thirdly, region provides a possibility to explain in a parallel way the difference between *σε/από* which co-occurs with other adverbs of space.

Other examples also illustrate why the criterion contact is not (or cannot be) compatible:

8) Φέρνει το παλτό του **πάνω από** το πουκάμισο.
He is wearing his coat over the shirt.

9) Τα σεντόνια σας είναι **πάνω από** το στρώμα του κρεβατιού.
Your sheets are above the mattress of the bed.

10) Ο Γιάννης έβαλε το δεξί του χέρι **πάνω από** το αριστερό.
George placed his right hand over his left one.

It is obvious that in all constructions given above a sort of contact between two objects (*coat-shirt; sheets-mattress; right-left leg*) can be noticed. In the extralinguistic situation the phrase *πάνω από* is selected. It seems that region cannot be applied to these cases, because the speaker in sentences (8–10) is not simply concerned with the location of an object in space, but his attention is devoted to the comparison between two objects, whose position is interchangeable in theory. Therefore, in cases (8–10) there is a perceptually equal focus on both objects, which are compared with each other, while in cases (3–4) it is only the located object that is highlighted in perception and the reference point is nothing but a mere background. We shall call the cases of (3–4) absolute location and those in (8–10) relative location: all the cases with absolute location admit both *σε* and *από* according to the semantic criterion +/-REGION, whereas the cases with relative location always require the preposition *από*.

We are of the opinion that the following cases can be explained only in this manner:

11) Τα αεροσκάφη πετάνε **πάνω στο** ουρανό.
Airplanes fly in the sky.

12) Τα αεροσκάφη πετάνε **πάνω από** το ουρανό.
Airplanes fly over the sky.

- 13) Το λεξικό μου είναι **πάνω σ'** αυτό το κίτρινο βιβλίο.
My dictionary is above that yellow book.
- 14) Το λεξικό μου είναι **πάνω από** αυτό το κίτρινο βιβλίο.
My dictionary is on the top of that yellow book.

Although in sentences (11-12) location is clearly described, it is done in a quite different manner: since the position of objects cannot be considered interchangeable, their location is considered absolute. On the other hand, in sentence (13) the meaning of location is relative (in comparison to the sentences 8-10), since logically and semantically the object is placed in the middle (or somewhere in the middle) of the pile of books. In contrast, sentence (14) shows the absolute position (location).

This so-called idiosyncratic role of the compound prepositional phrase **πάνω από** could be easily recognized if we have in mind the ablative meaning of accusative preposition **από**. When the preposition **από** is used in noun phrases to express its clear ablative function, it always functions in them as the second (and obligatory) element of the comparison denoting the semantic meaning of relative location:

- 15) Η φίλη μου είναι **ομορφότερη από** μένα.
My (girl)friend is more beautiful than me.

So far the analysis has covered Greek verbs of location or action within a certain place. However, Greek verbs of motion show some slightly different features:

- 16) Ο ιππότης **πήδηξε πάνω στο** άλογό του.
The knight mounted his horse.
- 17) Έπεσα **πάνω σ'** έναν παλιό μου φίλο στο δρόμο.
I ran into my old friend in the street.
- 18) Το ελικόπτερο έφτασε **πάνω από** το σημείο του αεροπορικού δυστυχήματος.
The helicopter arrived above the place of airplane accident.

The motion from a source with +REGION has at least three possibilities of direction:

- 19) Το πήρα **πάνω από** το τραπέζι.
I took it from the table.
- 20) Πέρασε **κάτω από** το δέντρο.
He passed under the tree.
- 21) Σήκωσαν τα παιδιά τους **πάνω από** έναν ψηλό τοίχο.
They lifted their children over a high wall.

In sentence (19) motion is not related to an imaginary vertical axis, in sentence (20) there is a downward motion along the vertical axis and in sentence (21) there is an upward motion along the axis. In other words, in these sentences the motion from the upper part is selected by *πάνω από* regardless of the vertical axis, while the motion directed towards under is represented by the compound prepositional phrase *κάτω από*.

The motion from above –REGION could be exemplified by the following sentence:

- 22) Το νέφος μαζεύεται **πάνω από** τα κεφάλια μας.
Smog gathers above our heads.

II) INFERIOR: ΚΑΤΩ ('UNDER', 'BENEATH', 'DOWN', 'BELOW', 'LOW')

Even though this concept of space forms two poles of the imaginary vertical axis with superior, it does not select the accusative preposition in the same and parallel way to *πάνω*:

- 23) Ο σκύλος μου μαζεύτηκε **κάτω από** το τραπέζι.
My dog cowered under the table.

- 24) Δεν κρατάω το τηλέφωνο **κάτω από** τη μασκάλη μου.
I am not holding the phone under my arm(pit).

In sentence (23) the located object (*dog*) and the reference point (*table*) are in –REGION, so the compound prepositional phrase *κάτω από* seems to be semantically parallel to the compound prepositional phrase *πάνω από*. However, the accusative preposition *από* is also selected in the cases of +REGION, as in our example (24). Therefore, contrary to *πάνω*, *κάτω* is not concerned with +/-REGION.

The motion from under the reference point could be illustrated in the following example:

- 25) Ο σκύλος μου βγήκε **κάτω από** το τραπέζι.
My dog came out under the table.

In this sentence the preposition *από* has its basic meaning – ablative, while the adverb of place *κάτω* is used to indicate both logically and semantically the precise position from which the motion starts. The same ablative situation is evident in the following sentence in which only the accusative preposition *από* is used:

- 26) Οι δεινόσαυροι χάθηκαν **από** τη Γη.
The dinosaurs vanished from the Earth.

In the above sentence the compound prepositional phrase *κάτω από* is avoided because of the key role of the adverb *κάτω*. In other words, this adverb completely modifies both semantic and logical meanings of our statement, moving them even further, beyond the reference point:

26b) * Οι δεινόσαυροι χάθηκαν **κάτω από** τη Γη.
 * The dinosaurs vanished **under** the Earth.

However, if the basic structure of sentence (26) is slightly modified and if the adverb *κάτω* is added, it may be noticed that the compound prepositional phrase *κάτω από* has its basic logical and semantic meaning – denoting a position (place) under the reference point:

26c) Οι δεινόσαυροι χάθηκαν για πάντα **κάτω από** τις ακτίδες του ηλίου.
 The dinosaurs vanished for good **under** the sun rays.

But in some cases the motion towards a place under the reference point also requires usage of the compound prepositional phrase *κάτω από*, as shown in the following examples:

27) Η Άννα χάθηκε **κάτω από** τα πυκνά δέντρα του δάσους.
 Ann vanished **under** dense trees of the forest.

28) Άφησα τα κλειδιά μου **κάτω από** το πορτοφόλι της.
 I left my keys **under** her wallet.

CONCLUSION

As we can see from the examples given above, in Modern Greek the categorisation of space made by using compound prepositions *superior* is much more complicated than when using the *inferior*. The distinction of accusative prepositions *σε/από* in locations and motion-to is not directly determined by directionality of verbs, whereas it may be the case of motion-from and passage.

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SUMMARY

ON SOME COMPOUND PREPOSITIONS DENOTING SPACE IN MODERN GREEK

This paper aims to explore the meaning of space expressed by adverbials of place πάνω and κάτω in compound constructions formed with accusative prepositions από and σε. With a view to the obtained results, we noticed that there was a considerable difference within the very system for denoting space (and place), which entirely depended on the optical point of view and on the idea of space. Also, various morphological and syntactic modes of space representation in Modern Greek were directly reflected within the same optical point of view.

KEYWORDS: preposition, Greek compound prepositional phrase, adverb, absolute location, relative location.

(Original scientific paper received 30.01.2010;
revised 27.06.2010;
accepted 04.07.2010)