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**MODERN GREEK
WORD FORMATION**

Olga Eleftheriades

PREFACE

Word-formation, the study of the patterns on which a language forms new lexical units, i.e. words, was originally planned to be included in my grammar book *Modern Greek: A Contemporary Grammar* (1985). Due to the size of the volume, however, and to the fact that word-formation is an important entity in itself, yet often ignored and greatly neglected, it was deemed necessary to deal with it in a special volume.

Word-formation is usually treated as one of the chapters in Greek grammars, as it is in Triantaphyllidis, *Modern Greek Grammar*, among others which along with other relevant works and articles I frequently consulted. The only book in Modern Greek dealing more broadly and exclusively with word-formation, other than articles or treatises dealing with etymology of a number of words, is, to my knowledge, that of G. Papageorgiou (1976), which is rather “uncritical” in that it proceeds without a previous inquiry into the essential problems of word-formation.

Understanding of the regularly operating derivatory processes and knowledge of the patterns on which a language forms new lexical items, i.e. words, would be of great value to any student of a language, whether native or foreign. It would help the native student, who has already grown used to meeting such procedures through hearing or reading, to organize information and insights he already has about Greek word-formation into a practical system he can use.

A knowledge of word-formation, however, would be of greater value to a foreign learner of a language, and even more so to an English learner of Modern Greek rather than of a Greek learner of English, because of the easier application of that knowledge. Unlike English, Greek relies very little on non-formal methods of creating new words, such as a change of grammatical class (to play—the play). Thus, a familiarity with the most frequently occurring derivational affixes and units of composition together with the general idea of the principles of word-formation in Modern Greek will be sufficient to help the foreign student recognize the grammatical class of a word by its structure (noun, if it ends in *-ίας*, *-σιμο*, *-ότητα*, etc.) and discover the meaning of a new word through recognition of the base or root and the affixes. This feeling of vocabulary mastery will in turn give the learner an increasing motivation and

interest in language learning and will help enormously to increase the learner's vocabulary. Furthermore, a good vocabulary is a valuable resource and aid to success in any field.

In addition, understanding and knowledge of Modern Greek word-formation will elucidate the meaning of many English words with a Greek base or affix, especially of words pertaining to science, technology, and other specialized vocabulary. It has been estimated that of all the different words listed in an unabridged English dictionary more than three-fourths are of Greek and Latin origin. This percentage is even higher now that most of the words being added to English deal with science and technology and, as it is customary, Greek and Latin elements are used in coining scientific or technological terms. "In the vocabulary of pure sciences," writes McKnight (*English Words and Their Background*, 1923, 1968), "the Greek language served as a linguistic grandparent. . . . It started in the earlier period (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and the exploitation of the Greek language as a mine for scientific nomenclature has continued in modern science."

This volume will also have served another purpose if it could engage the attention of scholars and students to this subject, greatly neglected in grammatical works, while phonetics, accident and syntax, under one or another fancy and neoteristic treatment, have always received full attention. "It is a well-known fact," according to Stein (1972), "that word-formation has not yet received as much attention as phonology, syntax or semantics. It is significant that we accept that this is so without surprise: if nowadays due to the rise of generative transformational grammar the creative aspect in language is again stressed, one is astonished to see that the interest in linguistic creativity seems to be confined to syntax, whereas it could be most easily observed in word-formation."

After an introductory chapter on the background of Modern Greek vocabulary (chapter 1) and a brief introduction to word-formation (chapter 2), the present volume deals mainly with the commonly occurring derivational and compounding procedures in Modern Greek prefixation (chapter 3), suffixation (chapter 4), compounding (chapter 5), and other minor word-formation processes (chapter 6).

The volume does not pretend to offer an exhaustive delineation of aspects of Modern Greek derivational morphology, especially considering the lack of adequate sources and of a systematic work exclusively on Greek word-formation. It only attempts to offer a description of the trends of Modern Greek word-formation by examining the various formative types. Also, the word lists do not pretend to be exhaustive. This would be impossible in any case, since new words are being coined every day by authors, newspapers, magazines, journalists and others.

The notation in this volume, as it was done in my grammar book, is kept as simple as possible and all terms used in the book are usually explained as they are introduced.

Gloss is not given for words which have been previously translated or for a few word families where the emphasis is given only on the series of derivatives. It should be noted that translating words out of context cannot be fully satisfactory. Only the basic meaning or the one considered to be such is given for basic words, and for the derivative and compound words the most representative and appropriate in any given category after being analyzed in their constituents. In some cases, the English word derived from the Greek was preferred or added, in order to introduce the reader directly to the meaning of the word.

The spelling of the Greek words is in compliance with the official grammar of Modern Greek and according to modern etymological and other dictionaries.

The monotonic system of accentuation has been applied to all Greek words and phrases (both ancient and modern) cited in this volume.

For the etymology of words, among the many and various sources listed in the bibliography, Andriotis' *Greek Etymological Dictionary*, along with Liddell and Scott's *Greek English Lexicon*, and the *Oxford Dictionary of Etymology* were the most frequently consulted.

Olga Mavrophidou-Eleftheriades

Olga Mavrophidou-Eleftheriades was educated at the University of Thessaloniki, Greece (a *summa cum laude* graduate of the Department of Philosophy), University of Cincinnati (M.A. in Classics), and the University of California, Berkeley (postgraduate work and research). She was a professor of philology at Anatolia College and other schools in Greece, and taught Modern Greek at the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, and the Monterey Institute of International Studies. She also has taught Latin at Monterey Peninsula College. Her other works include *A Handbook of the Greek Stylized Language (Katharevusa)*, *Modern Greek: A Contemporary Grammar*, and *Problems of English-Speaking Students Learning Modern Greek*.