

# Constraining Disjunctive Constructions in Modern Greek

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A great deal of attention has been paid to agreement with coordinate NPs (Corbett, 1983a; Dalrymple and Kaplan, 2000; Wechsler and Zlatić, 2003; King and Dalrymple, 2004; Sadler, 2006) but NP disjunction has received rather less attention. It is well known, however, that agreement with disjunctive NPs shows a good deal of variability (Morgan, 1984, 1985; Peterson, 1986; Jennings, 1994; Eggert, 2002). That is, a subject involving a disjunction of two singular NPs may control singular or plural verb agreement, as illustrated below:

- (1) A rabbit or a goat has/have eaten all my lettuces (Peterson, 1986)

The present paper investigates the distribution of similar patterns in MG.

In MG, finite verbs agree in PERS and NUM with their SUBJ. When the SUBJ is a (conjunctive) coordinate NP, we see singular or plural verb agreement depending on whether the interpretation of the coordinate phrase is a split or joint (Heycock and Zamparelli, 2000) one, as in other languages. Turning to disjunction, we also observe variability regarding finite verb agreement, which can be either singular or plural, as seen below:

- (2) O mathitis i i mathitria prepei na  
The.MASC.SG male-student.MASC.SG or the.FEM.SG female-student.FEM.SG must be  
enimerothei/-thoun apo tous goneis  
informedSG/PL from the parents  
'The male-student or female-student must be informed from their parents'

A plausible hypothesis as to what controls the choice of verb agreement is the interpretation of the disjunctive NP as either a true exclusive disjunction (in which case the predicate is true of only one or the other of the disjuncts) or its interpretation as a conjunction in the context so that the predicate holds of both of the disjuncts (an inclusive interpretation of logical disjunction  $\vee$  also includes this contingency).

In order to investigate what the influences might be on the choice of agreement on the target (finite verbs), we developed a questionnaire that consists of declarative sentences with two disjuncts only and which includes cases in which the strongly preferred interpretation would be exclusive (sing) or coordinate (pl). The questionnaire was issued to Greek university graduates who had to choose only one of two verb forms. Some characteristic cases are shown below. Examples (3) and (4), receive an exclusive interpretation of *i*:

- (3) O Kostas i i Maria tha me parei me to autokinito  
The Kostas or the Maria will me pick-up with the car  
Kostas or Maria will pick me up with the car
- (4) O Kostas i o Giorgos ine xadelfos tis Marias  
The.MASC.SG Kostas.MASC.SG or the.MASC.SG Giorgos.MASC.SG is.SG cousin of-the Maria  
'Kostas or Giorgos is Maria's cousin'

Example (5) receives an interpretation of *i* as a coordinate (pl):

- (5) O giatros i o odontiatros mporoun na grapsoun farmaka  
The.MASC.SG doctor.MASC.SG or the.MASC.SG dentist.MASC.SG can.PL to write prescriptions  
'The doctor or dentist can write prescriptions'

Our results are consistent with the idea that the choice of agreement is determined by the interpretation of *i*. So the question is how to capture this formally.

Eggert (2002) presents a proposal of agreement in disjunctive coordinate NPs, formulated within DRT where agreement phenomena can be incorporated. Discourse factors as well as semantic factors are taken into consideration in the choice of agreement.

In this context, Eggert (2002) suggests that *or* is a subset function that operates over the set of disjuncts. This means that if we take the disjuncts to be a set then the function of *or* selects either a subset of that set or the whole set.

- (6) a.  $SUB(\{x, y\}) = \{x\}|\{y\}$   
 b.  $SUB(\{x, y\}) = \{x, y\}$

The choice between (6a) and (6b) depends on context. To this end a partition operator is defined based on the partition analysis of Schwarzschild (1996).

The aim of this paper is to attempt to formalise the above concept in Glue Semantics, used by LFG. Therefore, in the case of coordinated subjects we have the following meaning constructor for *or*, whose meaning part denotes that it is a subset function which selects one or both of the arguments as the appropriate SUBJ of the verb and the verb subsequently takes plural or singular agreement according to the selection. Hence what *or* does is that it combines two individuals to give the group of individuals or one of the two. The meaning constructor combines this information together and is of the same form as the meaning constructor for the group-forming *and* defined in Dalrymple (2001).

- (7) [or]:  $\lambda X.\lambda Y.SUB(\{X, Y\}) : (\uparrow \in)_{\sigma < e} \multimap [(\uparrow \in)_{\sigma < e} \multimap \uparrow_{\sigma < e}]$

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