

Exocentric compounds in Modern Greek: evidence from lexical access

The present study investigates the lexical access of exocentric compounds in Modern Greek (MG), through a lexical decision task with overt priming. There are three types of compounds in MG depending on the semantic relations holding between their constituents and the position of the head (Ralli, 2013): A) *Dependent compounds* are head-final structures with a dependency relation between their constituents (e.g., *ayrioyata* ‘wild cat’), b) *Coordinative compounds*, are likely to have a head-head structure as both constituents contribute equally to the whole compound on grammatical and semantic grounds (e.g., *alatopipero* ‘salt & pepper’), c) *Exocentric compounds*, which are characterized by the absence of an internal head and attributive semantic relation among

constituents (e.g., *kokkinomallis* ‘redhead’ is not “a kind of head” but “someone who has red head”). Previous psycholinguistic evidence (Marelli et al., 2009) reported symmetric priming elicited by the first and the second constituent in Italian exocentric compounds, suggesting no internal hierarchy and a flat representation. For MG, Manouilidou et al. (2012) reported strong priming effects in both first and second constituent of MG coordinative compounds, suggesting that both constituents appear to play a comparable role in accessing meaning and structure of the compound. Aim: This study mainly focuses on exocentric compounds in order to investigate how their core characteristic, that is, the absence of an internal head, affects their lexical access. Method: lexical decision task where the whole compound primed each constituent (e.g., *ayrioyata* > *ayria* vs. *ayrioyata* > *yata*). Stimuli: 16 dependent, 16 coordinative, and 20 exocentric compounds. Participants: 30 native speakers of MG. Results showed a main effect of compound type (e.g., dependent, coordinative, exocentric) and a significant compound x constituency interaction. Pairwise tests showed a significant difference between dependent and exocentric compounds. The first showed an equal priming in both constituents while the latter showed an inhibition effect in the 2nd constituent. Discussion: these results provide initial evidence for a lexical access through decomposition for all types of compounds and suggest that the existence of an internal head is a factor which does affect processing.

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