

QUESTIONS, INTERROGATIVE CLAUSES AND INT SENTENCE TYPE IN MODERN GREEK

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Abstract

Στην παρακάτω ανακοίνωση εξετάζουμε ερωτηματικές προτάσεις στα Νέα Ελληνικά, επιχειρώντας να ορίσουμε τα χαρακτηριστικά του ερωτηματικού προτασιακού τύπου, και τη σχέση του με πλάγιες γλωσσικές πράξεις που μοιάζουν να έχουν μορφή ερώτησης. Στόχος μας είναι να διερευνήσουμε τον ρόλο της επιτόνησης, της ρηματικής έγκλισης, του ρηματικού προσώπου και του ρηματικού χρόνου, της άρνησης αλλά κυρίως του μορίου *μήπως* στην ερμηνεία εκφωνημάτων που επιλέγονται από τον Ομιλητή προσδοκώντας είτε σε μια *απάντηση*, είτε σε μια *πράξη* από τον Ακροατή. Στα πλαίσια της Λειτουργικής Γραμματικής (Functional Grammar, Dik 1997) και της Λειτουργικής Γραμματικής του Λόγου (Functional Discourse Grammar, Hengeveld 2002), συζητάμε επίσης την λειτουργία της προσλεκτικής μετατροπής της κύριας προσλεκτικότητας ενός εκφωνήματος ερωτηματικού προτασιακού τύπου και σχολιάζουμε κατά πόσο οι πλάγιες γλωσσικές πράξεις, που μοιάζουν με ερωτήσεις, εξακολουθούν να ορίζονται από μια ερωτηματική κύρια προσλεκτικότητα.

Keywords

int sentence type, wh-imperatives, functional grammar, Functional Discourse Grammar, *μήπως*

1. Introduction

In this paper we study utterances in Modern Greek with rising intonation, or more precisely rising- falling intonation, as in (1).

- (1) Πώς σε λένε;
How you-ACC call-3rdPL?
How are you called?

We attempt a classification of the grammatical and lexical means with which questions are expressed. We examine the relationship between questions and interrogative sentence type, trying to establish whether all utterances with rising intonation are questions, and thus of an interrogative sentence type. Moreover, we discuss the particle *μήπως*, which typically introduces yes - no questions.

2. The pragmatics of questions and our research hypotheses

According to Dik (1997) a question is a linguistic expression through which a Speaker (S) expresses his/her willingness to get a relevant verbal response from an Addressee (A), and they are associated with the sentence type 'interrogative'.

The Functional Grammar (FG) description of a question can be seen in (2).

- (2) Int E: X: [extended predication]

Moreover, questions are used to open up an exchange between S and A.

As far as sentence types are concerned, as stated in Givon (1989), the Declarative sentence type's goal is to impart *information*, the goal of Imperative sentence type is to elicit *action* and the goal of Interrogative sentence type is to elicit *information*. When uttering a WH- question, S intends to confirm the identity of an item, and when uttering a yes- no question, S intends to confirm the truth of a proposition.

We are particularly interested in question 'look-alikes', this 'grey area' of indirect speech acts, or in the cases where, as Joseph and Philippaki Warburton (1987) put it, 'sentence types are used in functions other than their normal one, for example when a yes- no question is used as a request for action, even when spoken with question intonation', as in (3).

- (3) Μπορείτε να μου δώσετε ένα κιλό κουλουράκια;
Can- 2nd PL na me-GEN give-2nd PLSUBJ one kilo biscuits-DIM ?
Can you give me one kilo of little biscuits?

Givon (1989), illustrates this 'grey area' between different sentence types (or speech acts) through different continua which demonstrate the 'scaling' from one sentence type to another. For example, to show the scaling between imperative and interrogative he includes the following continuum (4):

- (4) **most prototypical imperative**
- a. Pass the salt.
 - b. Please pass the salt.
 - c. Pass the salt, would you please?
 - d. Would you please pass the salt?
 - e. Could you please pass the salt?
 - f. Can you pass the salt?
 - g. Do you see the salt?
 - h. Is there any salt around?
 - i. Was there any salt there?
- most prototypical interrogative**

The question is whether question like indirect requests are of an interrogative sentence type. Dik (1997) believes that when indirect requests are expressed through a question, or a question look-alike, a pragmatic conversion of the primary illocution takes place. The primary illocution of the utterance is still Interrogative, as coded in the Grammar, but the pragmatically converted illocution is e.g. an indirect request, as part of the Discourse. There are several arguments against previous theories differentiating between a literal and an intended meaning, where either ambiguity was considered, or there was preponderance of the literal or primary illocution.

In Functional Grammar (Dik 1997), we would take into account the Illocution of the Speaker (ILL_S), the Illocution of the Addressee (ILL_A) and the Illocution of the message (ILL_M),

in order to decide whether, in a given context, we are dealing with pragmatic conversion of the primary illocution, as it is coded in the message through grammatical or lexical means.

In Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG, Hengeveld 2002), choices made by the Speaker S, which better reflect S' intentions, are analysed at the Interpersonal Level, as in (5).

$$(5) \quad (M_1: [(A_1: [ILL (P_1)_S (P_2)_A (C_1: [...(T_1) (R_1)...] (C_1))] (A_1))] (M_1))$$

In Chondrogianni 2002 we demonstrated how the instantiation of the variable M, which represents S' communicative intention (only one) through the use of the operator **m** (lower case), can also provide us with the possibility to allow the 'coexistence' of sentence types with speech acts (ILL) that they are not traditionally associated with.

- (6) Να διαβάξεις λίγο πιο δυνατά.
 Να read-SUBJ-you little more loud.
 You should read a little louder (please).

Suggestion: [(A ₁ : [IMP(P ₁) _{Sp} (P ₂) _{Addr} (C ₁ : [(C ₁)](A ₁))] (M ₁)
	(C ₁)	

In the above table we show an example of FDG analysis. Our hypothesis is whether in an utterance such as 'Διαβάξεις λίγο πιο δυνατά;', A1 is Interrogative (primary illocution) or Imperative, as the indirect request might suggest.

Apart from defining the sentence type INT in Modern Greek and specifying the grammatical, lexical and prosodic means it is usually associated with, we intend to further pursue the following research questions:

- If we adopt Dik's (1997) definition of question, together with the goals of different sentence types as mentioned above, is it safe to claim that when S forms an utterance with rising (or rising- falling) intonation, expecting a non- verbal response (e.g. action), we are not dealing with a question? Consequently, can we assume that we are not dealing with an Int. illocutionary operator?
- Does illocutionary conversion sufficiently explain the interpretation of such utterances?
- Furthermore, if in such a case, where in other words we are not dealing with a true question, A 'does provide S with a true proposition X with a content as specified in the Extended Predication' would this consist a violation of Grice's cooperation maxims? Would one expect, e.g in (3) a (verbal) answer?
- Moreover, can we safely claim that a rising intonation utterance closing an exchange, can safely not be classified as a question?

The question particles μήπως, and μη(v) can be translated as 'perhaps', 'I wonder if'. They are often viewed as mitigating or softening the illocutionary force of the request, often also acting as politeness markers.

- (8) Μήπως ξέρετε πού είναι η Τράπεζα;
Mhpws know- youPL where is the Bank?
Do you, perhaps, know where the Bank is?
- (9) Μην άκουσες κάτω;
Mhn hear-youSING something?
Did you hear anything by any chance?

4.2 Leading yes- no questions

When S is reasonably certain of the truth value T of his/ her (positive or negative) predication, a tag 'isn't it so' might follow his/ her statement, irrespective of the verb used in the main clause, asking confirmation from A (with a positive answer expected).

- (10) a. - Πήγες στο σχολείο, έτσι δεν είναι;
Went- 2ndSING to-the school, isn't it?
You did go to school, didn't you?
- b. - Ναι, πήγα.
Yes, I went.
- (11) a. - Δεν πήγες στο σχολείο, έτσι δεν είναι;
Not went- 2ndSING to-the school, isn't it?
You didn't go to school, did you?
- b. -Ναι, δεν πήγα.
Yes, I didn't go.ⁱ

Both (10) and (11) would be unacceptable if introduced by μήπως.

4.3 Alternative yes- no questions

- (12) Δουλεύει η Μαρία στο Πανεπιστήμιο ή δε δουλεύει;
Work-3rdSING the Maria to-the University or not work-3rdSING?
Does Maria work at the University or she doesn't?
- (13) Δουλεύει η Μαρία στο Πανεπιστήμιο ή όχι;
Work-3rdSING the Maria to-the University or no?
Does Maria work at the University or not?

Again, both (12) and (13) would be unacceptable if introduced by μήπως.

5. Wh - questions

The following table shows some of the most common lexical means used in wh-questions, in the form of Functional grammar Q-constituents.

(14)	(Q _{x_i} :<person>)	‘ποιος, ποιόν’	‘who, whom’
	(Q _{x_i} :person)	‘ποιο άτομο’	‘which person’
	(Q _{x_i} :<thing>)	‘τί’	‘what’
	(Q _{x_i} :thing)	‘ποιο πράγμα’	‘which (thing)’
	(Q _{x_i} :<time>) _{Temp}	‘πότε’	‘when’
	(Q _{x_i} :time) _{Temp}	‘τι (ποια) ώρα’ (ποια μέρα)	‘what time’
	(Q _{x_i} :<place>) _{Loc}	‘πού’	‘where’
	(Q _{x_i} :place) _{Loc}	‘σε ποιο μέρος’	‘in which place’
	(Q _{x_i} :<reason>) _{Reason}	‘γιατί’	‘why’
	(Q _{x_i} :reason) _{Reason}	‘για ποιο λόγο’	‘for which reason’
	(Q _{x_i} :<way>) _{Manner}	‘πώς’	‘how’
	(Q _{x_i} :way) _{Manner}	‘με ποιο τρόπο’	‘in what way’
	(Q _{x_i} :<quantity>) _{Quantity}	‘πόσο’	‘how much’
	(Q _{x_i} :quantity) _{Quantity}	‘τι ποσότητα’	‘what quantity’

(15) Πού μένεις;
Where live-2ndSING
Where do you live?

(16) Σε ποιόν άφησες τα κλειδιά;
To whom did you leave the keys?

(17) Πότε να σου τηλεφωνήσωⁱⁱ;
When na you call-1stSINGSUBJ
When should I call you?

(15), (16) and (17) illustrate the use of wh-words, where S asks A to ‘fill in’ the missing information. There are no apparent restrictions on grammatical or lexical means through which these questions are expressed. (Single) Question words usually appear at the beginning of a sentence, but for focality reasons can also appear at the end. The particles *μην*, *μήπως* cannot introduce wh-questions. Apart from the verb, all major constituents of a clause can be questioned. Question words are also used in exclamations and in reported speech.

6. Subjunctive interrogatives

Subjunctive independent interrogative clauses can be classified as surprise queries, polemic/repulsive queries, echo questions, rhetorical questions, indirect requests (as in (19)), indirect commitment queries (Tzartanos 1946, Chondrogianni 1997).

The use of particle μήπως would look peculiar in (18) and unacceptable in (19), unless followed by the verb μπορεί (can), in which case we would have a direct request for permission.

- (18) Να φέρει ο Γιάννης την Ελένη στο πάρτυ;
Na bring-3rdSINGSUBJ the Yannis the Eleni to-the party?
Can Yannis bring Eleni to the party?

Permission/ Indirect Request: [(A₁: [INT(P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- (19) Να ρωτήσω κάτι;
Na ask-1stSINGSUBJ something?
May I ask something?

7. Intonation, grammatical mood, verb person, negation, and the use of μήπως

- (20) a. Φεύγουμε;
Leave-1stPL
Shall we go?

Question/Request: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- b. Να φεύγουμε;
Na leave-1stPLSUBJ?
Shall/ Should we go?

Request/Order: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- c. ?Μήπως φεύγουμε;
Mipos leave-1stPL?
Perhaps we are going?
- d. ?Μήπως να φεύγουμε;
Mipos na leave-1stPLSUBJ?
Perhaps we could be going?
- e. Δε φεύγουμε;
Not leave-1stPL?
Don't we go?
- f. Μήπως δε(ν) φεύγουμε;
Mipos not leave-1stPL?
Perhaps we are not going?

- (21) a. Φεύγετε;

Leave-2ndPLⁱⁱⁱ
Shall/ Should you go?

Order: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- b. Να φεύγετε;
Shall/ Should you go- SUBJ?

Order: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- c. Μήπως φεύγετε;
Mipos leave-2ndPL?
Perhaps you are going/ leaving?
- d. Μήπως θα φύγετε;
Mipos tha leave-2ndPLFUT?
Perhaps you will be leaving?
- e. *Μήπως να φεύγετε/ φύγετε;
Mipos na leave-2ndPLPERF/ -PERF?
Perhaps you should be leaving?

- f. Δε(ν) φεύγετε;
Not leave-2ndPL?
Don't you go?

- g. Μήπως δε(ν) φεύγετε;
Mipos not leave-2ndPL?
Perhaps you are not leaving?

- (22) a. Φεύγουν;
Leave-3rdPL
Are they going?
- b. Να φεύγουν;
Na leave-3rdPLSUBJ?
Shall/ Should they go?

Suggestion/Order: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- c. Μήπως φεύγουν;
Mipos leave-3rdPL?
Perhaps they are going?
- d. ?Μήπως να φεύγουν;
Mipos na leave-3rdPL?
Perhaps they shall be going?

- e. Δε(ν) φεύγουν;
 Not leave-3rdPL?
 Don't they go?

Through examples (20), (21) and (22), we attempt to establish the sentence type we are dealing with, through the permutation of different factors:

- Intonation
- Grammatical mood
- Use of μήπως
- Negation
- Verb person

20(a) can be interpreted as an indirect request, but also a yes-no question. 20(b) can be interpreted as a suggestion, or an indirect request, but not a yes-no question. 20(c) can be considered a peculiar but acceptable yes – no question in a given context. 20(d) is unacceptable. 20(e) can be interpreted as a yes- no question (we were supposed to go but we don't seem to be leaving now) but also a suggestion – with different intonation .

The use of negation in a suggestion as in examples such as (23) is not usual.

- (23) Δεν με βοηθάς να πλύνουμε το αυτοκίνητο?
 Not me-ACC help-2ndSING na wash-1stPL the car?
 Don't you help me to wash the car?

Givon (1989) among others mentions the use of negation as mitigator (or softening operator), especially in the face of perceived higher authority. Negation may be combined with other irrealis operators, as Givon calls them, including modals, subjunctives, and yes- no question markers.

20(f), where μήπως is combined with negation, can only be interpreted as a yes- no question (a 'real' question), with the particle being a marker of uncertainty. It is interesting to compare examples in (20) and (21).

21(a), depending on intonation, can be interpreted as a 'true' question ('are you leaving?'), as a question/ suggestion ('will you be leaving?'), but also as a request – or a threat ('are you leaving, or else'). 21(b) is questionable. The order or suggestion expressed in 20(b), in 1st person plural, involves both the Speaker and the Addressee, and seems to be preferred to 21(b). 21(c) is equivalent to 21 (d); note that μήπως does not restrict S's choice of tense; past, present or future are all acceptable.

In 21(e) the use of μήπως is peculiar with both the perfective as well as the imperfective subjunctive. 21(f) operates in the same way as 20(e), both a yes-no question as well as an indirect speech act, and the same applies to 20(f) and 21(g), accepted only as questions. However, in (22), with the use of 3rd person, only 22 (b) and (e) can have the 'double' use (depending on intonation) of both a yes- no question as well as an indirect speech act. The

remaining examples in (22) can be interpreted only as questions.

Examples (20) to (23) illustrated cases where it is the intonation that indicates to the Addressee whether, through a question like utterance, S expects a verbal response or a certain action to be performed. However, the role of the verb person, as well as the role of particles becomes apparent.

Furthermore, if we revisit examples 7(b) to (g), we will notice that μήπως (and μην) are usually followed by a verb. Hence 7 (c) and (f) are perfectly acceptable with the introduction of μήπως, 7(b) is peculiar, 7 (d) is unacceptable and the same applies to interrogatives with a specific focal point, as in 7(e) and (g).

The function of the question particle μήπως and needs to be further examined.

Μήπως is a marker of Subjunctive; as we saw earlier, it introduces yes – no questions (always at the beginning of the utterance) but it can also be followed by an indicative mood; it has to be noted that morphology alone cannot indicate whether we are dealing with subjunctive or indicative. Μήπως can also be used in reported speech, in examples such as (24).

- (24) a. Είδες τον Γιάννη;
See-2ndSINGPRES Yanni?
Did you see Yanni?
- b. Την ρώτησε μήπως είδε τον Γιάννη.
Her asked-3rdSINGPAST whether saw-3rdSINGPAST the Yanni.
He asked her whether she saw John.

Moreover, according to traditional grammar, μήπως introduces clauses expressing uncertainty, as in (25), or hesitation, but it is also used as a modal particle, together with άραγε, λες, μην, indicating possibility, politeness etc. (Clairis and Babinotis 1999)

- (25) Φοβάμαι μήπως το μάθουν οι γονείς μου.
I am scared whether my parents find out.

8. Indirect speech acts – Question like utterances

In the examples (26), (27), (30), 31(c), question like utterances have only the function of speech acts. In this category of utterances, particles or parentheticals which usually follow an INT sentence type, such as μην, μήπως, cannot be used. Similarly, particles and parentheticals appearing in examples (26), (27) such as παρακαλώ, λίγο, μια στιγμή, do not appear in questions (see also Raptis 1995). In addition, verb restrictions apply: the verb cannot be used in the past.

- (26) Κρατάς λίγο την σκάλα;
[Can you] hold- Imp the ladder (for) a little (while)?

Request: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

As we have mentioned earlier, there are no morphological means to distinguish the indicative and imperative form of verb ανοίγετε in (30). However, there is a conventionalised interpretation of such a request, with time and location being considered specific because of the context. Reported speech as in (28), seems very peculiar, while from (29) it is obvious that S asked A to do something, rather than to say something. In (30) we observe that answers which are acceptable for the yes- no questions are unacceptable here. In (31) it becomes apparent that A would give the same verbal response to a direct order, expressed through imperative and an indirect request.

- (27) Ανοίγετε σας παρακαλώ την πίσω πόρτα;
[Can you] open-Impl, please, the back door?

Request: [(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁)

- (28) ?Με ρώτησε αν κρατάω λίγο τη σκάλα.
? S/ He asked me if I hold/ am holding the ladder for a while.

- (29) Μου ζήτησε να κρατήσω τη σκάλα.
He asked me to hold the ladder.

- (30) α. - Ανοίγετε σας παρακαλώ την πίσω πόρτα;
[Can you] please open the back door?
β. - Ευχαρίστως./ Παρακαλώ./ *Δεν ξέρω.
With pleasure./ Please/ *I don't know.

- (31) α. - Δώσε μου το αλάτι .
Give me the salt.
β. - Ευχαρίστως./ Ορίστε./ *Δεν ξέρω.
With pleasure/ There you are/ *I don't know.
γ. Μου δίνεις το αλάτι ;
[can you]give-DECL me the salt?
δ. - Ευχαρίστως./ Ορίστε./ *Δεν ξέρω.
With pleasure/ There you are/ *I don't know.

Although the Speaker by uttering 31(a) and (c) is trying to achieve the same goal, the means that s/ he is using are different. However, although the grammatical codification of the illocution is different, it does seem that in (31c) we are not dealing with an INT sentence type. Compare example (31) with example (32) (which behaves in exactly the same way if expressed in Subjunctive, and also with μήπως).

(32) - Διαβάζει τώρα ο Πέτρος;
Is Petros studying now?

(A₁: [INT (P₁)_{Sp} (P₂)_{Addr} (C₁: [(C₁)] (A₁))] (M₁))

-*Ευχαριστως./ *Ορίστε./ Δεν ξέρω./ Μάλλον ναι.

*With pleasure/ *there you are/ I don't know/ Most probably yes.

When the epistemic presupposition of such utterance is questioned the utterance seems peculiar (Raptis 1995).

(33) ? Κρατάς λίγο τη σκάλα ή δεν ξέρεις;
?[Can you] hold-Imp the ladder for a while or you don't know?

Finally these utterances cannot be linked with the nullification of any directive intention.

(34) ? Κρατάς λίγο τη σκάλα- αλλά δεν θέλω να την κρατήσεις.
?[Can you] hold the ladder for a while- but I don't want you to hold it.

You can compare (34) with the utterance 'Do you know the results of the football match – but I don't want you to tell me'.

It is easier to explain the use of future tense (where one questions the condition of the propositional content), rather than the Imperative use, as in (35), where M is clearly requestive, and the illocution operator ILL is Interrogative.

(35) Θα κρατήσεις λίγο τη σκάλα;
Will you hold the ladder for a little while?

It is interesting that wh- imperatives do not allow the use of the past tense, not the use particle μήπως, except when followed by the future tense marker θα. We believe that (35) is acceptable with the introduction of μήπως.

9. Conclusion

It is very interesting to study the sequence

Μήπως
μπορείτε
να μου δώσετε
Θα μου δώσετε
Μου δίνετε
Δώστε μου
ένα μολύβι

and the reasons that make S chose one construction instead of another, in order to best achieve

his/ her goal. When S uses a direct imperative, A is expected to perform an action. When S uses an interrogative, A is expected to provide an answer. In a whimperative, A is given the opportunity to express his or her consent to perform an action (before actually performing the action). However, this does not necessarily suggest that the primary illocution is interrogative, since the acceptable answers are substantially from the ones expected in a real question.

Moreover, the prosodic contour of a wh-imperative is not identical to the one of a question, nor the grammatical means (e.g. past tense is excluded). The lexical means also differ: μήπως cannot introduce a whimperative, with the exception of the feature future, while we see parentheticals such as λίγο – a little, μια στιγμή –one moment being used.

Therefore, the mechanism of illocutionary conversion (FG) cannot cover Greek wh-imperatives, since their primary illocution is NOT Interrogative. The role of the particle μήπως is quite important. It is a marker of yes-no questions, usually mitigating the illocutionary force of the predication; it cannot introduce wh-questions, leading yes-no questions, alternative yes-no questions. It cannot proceed the subjunctive marker va, nor imperative.

The role of intonation is crucial; the next step for this research will be an FDG analysis focusing on the phonological component. But, even more challenging for a discourse grammar will be to describe not only the way S selects the best choice to fulfil his/ her intention, but the mechanism used by the A to interpret such an utterance

Σημειώσεις

ⁱ a yes – no question in Modern Greek with an ‘isn’t it’ tag cannot produce a contradictory answer

ⁱⁱ Also ‘Να σου τηλεφωνήσω πότε;’ to call you when?

ⁱⁱⁱ Can this form possibly be Imperative rather than Indicative? Intonation can assign it the ‘leave or else’ meaning ; it cannot be negated, but this can contribute to the argument.

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