The Indicative in Modern Greek

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Abstract: In this paper we investigate the illocutionary values of the Modern Greek Indicative mood. We discuss Indicative’s declarative uses, such as assertive, mirative, emphatic assertions uses and assertive uses in disguise (rhetoric questions). We also look at Indicative within an interrogative sentence type context and discuss polar interrogatives, content interrogatives and emphatic questions. We explore directive uses, such as hortatives. We further look at additional segmental marking, and refer in particular to requests for confirmation, mitigating questions, proffer and wondering uses of the Modern Greek Indicative.

Key words: Modern Greek, Indicative mood, illocution, assertions, segmental marking

1. Introduction
In this paper we investigate the illocutionary values of the Modern Greek Indicative mood.

We discuss declarative, interrogative and directive uses of the Indicative. In our discussion, we explore particles associated with clauses in indicative in Modern Greek, as well as the prosodic contour, as a formal feature of distinguishing sentence types. We investigate the role of segmental markers such as the particle μηπως ‘mipos’ (perhaps).

Noonan (1985) defines Indicative as the form that ‘mostly resembles declarative main clauses’, while Hengeveld (2004) stresses that ‘they are not one and the same’.

2. Declarative sentence type
It is debatable whether declarative uses are the typical uses of the Indicative, as considered by some linguists, since, for example, as we are showing below, it is used as much in questions.

The declarative sentence type in indicative is typically associated with propositional illocutions. Behavioural (directive) uses are mostly associated with the Subjunctive.

Intonation here is dictated by focal choices. Mennen and Okalidou (2006) demonstrate that broad focus involves a ‘high level of the accented syllable’ (which we will call INT1), while narrow focus involves a ‘rise from low to the accented syllable, which is high’ (which we will call INT2). Typical declaratives involve assertions, expressions of belief, reports etc.

2.1. Assertive uses of Indicative
Assertions are typically expressed in Indicative. This type of basic illocution, met in most languages, aims to provide the addressee with some information. INT1 and INT2 intonation is used.

(1) Ὅ Γιάννης με ἀγαπάει.
The Yanis me love-SG3.PR.IND
‘John loves me.’

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Negative Indicative is marked by the indicative negation particle δε (den) positioned before the verb, as in (2). Negative declaratives are characterised by a rise from low from the accented syllable to high after the accented syllable intonation (Mennen and Okalidou 2006), which we will call INT3.

(2) Ο Γιάννης δεν με αγαπάει.
Ο Yanis den me agapai.
The Yanis den me love-S3.PR.IND
‘John does not love me.’

2.2. Mirative uses of the Indicative
When a speaker expresses an assertion, they intend to share with the addressee some information. When a speaker expresses their admiration through an utterance, effectively they are also sharing some information with their addressee.
Utterances in this category demonstrate a mixture of declarative and interrogative properties; they exhibit content interrogative intonation characteristics (INT3, also used for negative declaratives, see also section 3 below). The speaker conveys their emotional reaction to the addressee, e.g. their surprise or admiration, as in (3).

Such utterances are often proceeded by an exclamative, such as ‘πω!πω!’ (‘po!po!’ ouhaouh). Moreover, they might be introduced with a question word, as in the example (3), which further demonstrates their combined declarative and interrogative characteristics. However, the speaker does not expect an answer here (as in the case of content interrogatives). If the addressee feels inclined to answer, they will thank the speaker, rather than provide information related to the question word ‘slot’.

(3) Τι ωραίο φόρεμα είναι αυτό!
Ti oreo forema ine afto!
‘What beautiful dress is-SG3.PR. this!’

2.3. Emphatic Assertion
Emphatic assertions involve nominal, verbal or adverbial focal points, as in (4). The speaker can focus on any of the constituents (verb, time or location for example).

(4) Θα πάς στο γιατρό αύριο.
Tha pas sto yatro avrio.
‘You will go to the doctor tomorrow’

2.4. Declarative assertions in disguise: Rhetoric questions
Below we review some declarative uses of the indicative disguised as questions; both the speaker as well as the addressee know the answer, so the question-like intonation is used as a special effect.

Rhetorical questions exhibit similar intonation to other interrogative constructions (see section 3 below); however the speaker does not expect the addressee to provide them with an answer. In fact, the speaker is certain of the answer, and believes that the addressee is aware both of the answer as well as of the fact that the speaker already possesses this information. They often take a formulaic connotation in themselves, as in (5).
Moreover, rhetorical questions are often used to affect the addressee’s behaviour, allowing them to reflect upon the potential ‘answer’ that the speaker implies as a unique option; again some common (formulaic) patterns can be observed, for example disguised questions initiated by ‘Πόσες φορές σου έχω πει…;’ (How many times have I told you…) as in (6) and ‘Πόσον καιρό οκόμα θα…;’ (For how long will I still…?), as in (7).

Examples (8)-(11) present a sample of declarative utterances disguised as questions where the speaker intends to condemn the addressee’s current behaviour (and therefore change their attitude). The speaker would utter such formulaic ‘questions’ to enhance the propositional content of any previously made assertions. (8) and (11) are content interrogative like, while (9) and (10) are polar interrogative like. A wise addressee would know better than to answer such questions.

(5) Τι είναι η πατρίδα μας;  
What is the homeland our?.
‘What is our country?’

(6) Πόσες φορές σου έχω πει να πλένεις τα χέρια σου πριν το φαγητό;  
How many times have I told you to wash your hands before the meal?
‘How many times have I told you to wash your hands before the meal?’

(7) Πόσον καιρό οκόμα θα σιδερώνω τα ρούχα σου;  
How much time still will iron your clothes?
‘(For) how long will I iron your clothes?’

Examples (8)-(11) present a sample of declarative utterances disguised as questions where the speaker intends to condemn the addressee’s current behaviour (and therefore change their attitude). The speaker would utter such formulaic ‘questions’ to enhance the propositional content of any previously made assertions. (8) and (11) are content interrogative like, while (9) and (10) are polar interrogative like. A wise addressee would know better than to answer such questions.

(8) Τι σου συμβαίνει, τέλος πάντων;  
What you happen after all?  
‘What is the matter with you, after all?’

(9) Δε ντρέπεσαι;  
Not ‘be ashamed’-?
Aren’t you ashamed?

(10) Τρελάθηκες;  
Are (have you got) you crazy?

(11) Τι με νοιάζει εμένα;  
‘Why should it bother me (why should I care personally)?’
In (12) μήπως ‘mipos’ acts as a discourse organiser marker, not an illocutionary marker (see discussion on μήπως ‘mipos’ in section 5.2 below). It is used as a means to enumerate different contributions the speaker have made to the addressee’s benefit, therefore enhancing the force of the hinted biased answer, which is always positive. Again, however, the addressee is not expected to provide any (positive) answer.

(12) Μήπως δε σε φροντίζω;
Mipos de se frontizo?
‘(Perhaps) don’t I look after you?’

3. Interrogative sentence type
According to Givon (1989), the goal of a Decl. sentence type utterance is to impart information, whilst the goal of an Interrogative sentence type is to elicit information, either ‘to confirm the identity of an item’ (for WH-questions, or content interrogatives), or ‘to confirm the truth of a proposition’ (for Y/N questions, or polar interrogatives).

Questions in Modern Greek indicative include polar interrogatives (differentiated from assertions by intonation); according to Mennen and Okalidou (2006), intonation is ‘low level from the accented syllable; it appears as the nuclear accent before a continuation rise’, which we call INT4.

In content interrogatives question words such as ποιός, (‘pios’, who) πού (‘pu’, where), τι (‘ti’, what), γιατί (‘yiati’, why), πώς (‘pos’, how), πότε (‘pote’, when) are used. It is possible to question more than one element in a clause. Their intonation is similar to the one of negative declaratives (INT3).

Moreover, question like utterances might be used in cases where the speaker does not expect a typical answer to a question, therefore have a different communicative function (such as hortatives or requests).

Intonation (interrogative prosodic contour) is the main feature (sometimes the only feature) that differentiates a Decl. sentence type from an Int. sentence type. In this section we compare Int. sentence types with Decl. using Indicative.

3.1. Polar Interrogatives
Polar questions in Modern Greek are identical to declarative statements but with distinct intonation (similar to Italian and Spanish).

Polar interrogatives have intonation as their marker (non-DECL intonation, INT4). Word order is non-specific at the level of phrases; it is defined by topicality/focality relations. A ‘yes’ (ναι) or ‘no’ (όχι) answer is expected from the addressee.

Observing the examples (13), (14) below we can make the following remarks: Example (13) demonstrates that intonation is the only feature that differentiates an assertion of Decl. sentence type, when compared with the example (1) above, from a question of an Int. sentence type. Example (14) shows a polar interrogative with the indicative negation (δεν, den)

(13) Ο Γιάννης με αγαπάει;
The Yanis me love-SG3.PR.IND
‘Does John love me?’

(14) Ο Γιάννης δεν με αγαπάει;
O Yanis den me agapai?
The Yanis den me love-SG3.PR.IND
‘John does not love me?’

3.2. Content Interrogatives
As mentioned in section 3, content interrogatives involve the use of question words, using INT3 intonation, as in example (15). The speaker intends to elicit information specifically related to the ‘slot’ in the sentence currently filled by the question word. We can question the agent, as in (15), the goal, as in (18), the time as in (16), the manner, as in (17).

(15) Ποιος δεν θέλει παγωτό;
Pios den theli pagoto?
‘Who does not want ice-cream?’

(16) Πότε μπορείς να με πάρεις τηλέφωνο;
Pote boris na me paris tilefono?
‘When can you call me on the phone?’

(17) Πώς πίνει ο Γιώργος τον καφέ του;
Pos pini o Giorgos ton kafe tu?
‘How does Giorgos drink his coffee?’

(18) Ποιου φοιτητή την εργασία διαβάζεις τώρα;
Piu fititi tin ergasia diavazis tora?
‘Whose student’s work are you reading now?’

3.3. Emphatic questions
Emphatic questions (also in literature as contrastive statements), have a polar interrogatives’ like intonation (although Arvaniti and Baltazani 2005 discuss early intonation clues the addressee might possess in order to identify the Speaker’s intention). The pragmatic conversion is here reinforced, as in (19). With a slightly different intonation, the speaker might express their surprise (mirative uses, section 2.2).

(19) Δεν πήγες στο γιατρό;
Den piges sto yatro?
‘You didn’t go to the doctor!’

4. Behavioral uses of Indicative (Directives)
Behavioral uses of Indicative demonstrate that there is no one-to-one relationship between Indicative Mood and Declarative sentence type. When uttering these utterances (as in the case of hortatives), the speaker aims to change the addressee’s behavior, rather than to share or elicit information. Below we discuss hortative uses.
4.1. Hortative
Question like utterances (with polar interrogative like intonation) are used as exhortations, as in (20), (21).

These are distinct behavioral uses of content interrogatives since, despite the fact that a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer might be acceptable, usually the addressee will reply with ‘εντάξει’ ‘OK’. The speaker expects an action, rather than the confirmation of the propositional content of the question.

(20) Φεύγουμε;
Fevgume?
Leave-PL1.PR.IND?
‘(Shall) we go?’

(21) Φύγαμε;
Figame?
Leave-PL1.PAST.IND
‘Are we gone?’

5. Additional segmental marking
Below we can see other uses of Indicative which demonstrate that it does not always coincide with the Declarative sentence type. These involve requests for confirmation, mitigated questions, proffer, where a change of behaviour rather than a verbal response is expected from the addressee and wondering.

5.1. Request for confirmation
In (22), the speaker adds the tag ‘isn’t it’, seeking to confirm the propositional content of the question. It is interesting that in Greek the formulaic tag ‘έτσι δεν είναι’ (‘it is like that’) is used, irrespectively of the verb in the matrix. The negative ‘den’ is used here for emphasis, rather than as a negative tag (not similar to the French ‘n’est-ce pas’) often followed by a tag question such as ‘έτσι δεν είναι’ ‘etsi den ine, isn’t it), which reinforces the assertive element, as in (22), and the alternatives in (23), (24).

(22) Θα έρθεις αύριο, έτσι δεν είναι;
Tha erthis avrio, etsi den ine;
Will come-SG2.PR.IND tomorrow, like that not is?
‘You will come tomorrow, isn’t it (won’t you)?’

(23) Θα έρθεις αύριο, δεν είναι;
Tha erthis avrio, den ine;
Will come-SG2.PR.IND tomorrow, like that not is?
‘You will come tomorrow, isn’t it (won’t you)?’

(24) Θα έρθεις αύριο, δεν τα έρθεις;
Tha erthis avrio, den tha erthis;
Will come-SG2.PR.IND tomorrow, not will come?
‘You will come tomorrow, won’t you?’

5.2. Mitigated Questions- Proffer
In (25), the speaker offers help, attempting a change of heart from the point of view of the addressee, in a non-offensive way, by mitigating the strength of the proposition in
the question. The speaker might in fact suggest that the addressee need their help, and there in no harm in admitting so. Example (25) gives therefore, when uttered, the opportunity to the speaker to provide the addressee with a piece of advice, in the form of a mitigated question, intending to change the addressee’s behaviour, and get their consent for an altered behaviour.

(25) Μήπως θέλετε βοήθεια;
Mipos thelete voithia?
‘Perhaps you need some help?’

The use of ‘μήπως’ might also mitigate the force of the interrogative, as in (26). It can only be used in polar interrogatives or in disjunctive content interrogatives. Notice the verb in a future perfective form, although an imperfective would also be acceptable.

(26) Μήπως έρθει ο Πέτρος;
Mipos erthi o Petros?
‘Perhaps Petros might come?’

5.3. Wondering: self directed questions
Another category of question like utterances, where the speaker does not really expect an answer from an addressee (if any), are utterances expressing wondering. When in indicative, they are most often introduced by the particle ‘άραγε’. In ‘άραγε’ + indicative, an answer from the addressee (if any) would not be inappropriate, as in (28), (29). The difference from rhetoric questions is that the speaker genuinely states, through the use of ‘άραγε’ that they do not know the answer.

(29) Άραγε βρέχει;
Araghe vrexi? (often also in opposite order)
‘I wonder’ it rains/ is raining?

(30) Άραγε θα βρέξει;
Araghe tha vreksi?
‘I wonder’ will it rain?

6. Summary
We demonstrated above that Indicative in Modern Greek is used in two main sentence types:
• Declarative uses (including Assertions, Miratives, Emphatic Assertions, and declaratives in disguise, such as rhetoric questions)
• Interrogative uses (Polar Interrogatives, Content Interrogatives, Emphatic Questions)

Moreover a discussion was made of secondary sentence types, (additional segmental marking) such as Requests for Confirmation, Mitigated questions, Wondering and Proffer.

References
Hengeveld, K. et al. (2006). Basic illocutions in the native languages of Brazil.