The Pragmatics of Prohibitive and Hortative in Modern Greek

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Abstract: In this paper we discuss the prohibitive and hortative in Modern Greek (MG) and consider the way they are related to Subjunctive (and Imperative). We argue that the particle *μη(v)* acts as the MG prohibitive marker when used independently, i.e. when it is not preceded by the subjunctive particle vα. We show that the prohibitive functions involve preventives, negative warnings and emphatic prohibitions. Moreover, we discuss the hortative non-concessive uses of the particle *ας*, focusing on its propositional (wishes) and behavioural uses (indifference). We conclude by suggesting that *μη(v)* and *ας* are of equal status to *vα*.
Key words: MG, prohibitive, hortative, pragmatics, basic illocutions

1. Introduction

In this paper we are discussing prohibitive and hortative uses in MG, which are, formally, both usually considered as part of the MG Subjunctive; we explore the illocutions related to main clauses introduced by the modal particles *μηv* and *ας* and we analyse the relationship between the grammatical mood these particles are associated with and the corresponding sentence type(s), as a means of expression of the Speaker's intention.

We are, therefore, interested in the way the particles *μη(v)* (in prohibitive) and *ας* (when involved in hortative uses, including wishes but excluding concessive uses) are related to the Subjunctive particle *vα*, and subsequently to the Subjunctive mood (as well as to the Imperative, where appropriate). Hence, a question we attempt to answer involves the relationship between functions (illocution) and form (verb moods). Consequently, we explore whether the particles *vα, ας,* and *μη(v)* are of similar status, i.e. whether they are markers of distinct verb moods.

Nα and *ας*, (as well as *μη(v)* to some extent) have been discussed by many scholars (most recently Tsangalidis, Roussou, Giannakidou, Holton et al., Karantzola, as well as Joseph a few years earlier) from a semantics and syntax point of view. Imperatives and hortatives are often considered under the wider umbrella of optatives. From a Semantics point of view, imperatives and hortatives both relate to the speaker's expression of a wish about a future state of affairs. If this state of affairs does not depend on the addressee alone, then we are dealing with a hortative. If it does depend on the addressee, then we are dealing with a prohibitive.

We focus on their pragmatics, as mentioned above, and in particular on the way the illocution (and hence the grammatical mood choice) is codified in the message. We are applying the principles of Hengeveld (2004a,b), Hengeveld et al. (2007, 2008) on basic illocutions, which illustrate the way Functional Discourse Grammar typology operates at a semantic and pragmatic level (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008). Basic illocutions are expressed by the speaker in various forms, using syntactic, morphological and phonological means. Therefore, basic illocution distinctions emanate from formal parts of the language system.

Hengeveld et al. (2007), following research on 23 Brazilian languages, distinguish between propositional and behavioural uses of basic illocutions, based on their communicative value. Propositional uses are associated with assertive and questioning illocutions; assertive subtypes consist of declarative and mirative uses, whilst questioning subtypes consist of polar and content interrogatives. Behavioural (positive and negative) uses involve speech acts that intend to influence or affect the behaviour of the addressee and/or others; they include imperative subtypes (orders), hortative subtypes (exhortations), admonitive subtypes (warnings) and supplicative subtypes (requests for permission). Prohibitive uses form, thus, part of the category of behavioural uses, whilst hortative uses involve both prepositional uses (wishes) as well as behavioural uses.

2. The Prohibitive

In this section, we discuss the prohibitive in MG and differentiate between uses which are introduced by *μη(v)* and are not preceded by *να*, including preventives, negative warnings and emphatic prohibitions. In addition, we discuss the n-less *μη* and examine whether the presence or absence of final (v) affects its function.

It is often the case in languages that negative imperatives function as expressions of prohibition. However, negative imperative and prohibitions should not be considered as one and the same: the function of prohibitives suggests an imperative where something should not be the case, rather than the negation of an imperative itself (see also van der Auwera 2006). The prohibitive negation involves the proposition, rather than the illocution. The addressee is asked to not intentionally do a specific act.

It is not unusual for languages to exhibit specific constructions to express prohibitions, through specific prohibitive markers; in other words, languages might make use of negative markers that are dedicated to express prohibitive utterances. We believe that such is the case of the MG *μη(v)*, when it is not preceded by other modal particles. Van der Auwera (2006) discusses in detail the use of prohibitive markers, based on a corpus of a large number of languages. He suggests that in languages there is a preference for distinct prohibitive markers, which we believe also applies to MG.

Furthermore, van der Auwera states that many languages include two negative markers, as is the case for MG (i.e. the declarative *δεν* and the subjunctive negation *μην*). In MG, the combination of imperative verb forms with both negative markers is not permitted. As we can see in example (1) below, the second person singular imperative cannot combine with the indicative negation *δε(v)*. This is not unusual; in many languages it is impossible to combine a declarative related negation (such as *δεν*) with an imperative form.

(1)   *Δεν παίξε.
       NEG play-2.SG.PRF.IMP
       Not play.

In example (2), we note that the MG imperative cannot combine with the subjunctive negation *μη(v)* either.

(2)   *Μην παίξε.
       NEG play-2.SG.PRF.IMP
       Not play

Some researchers suggest that the imperative 'borrows' its negation from Subjunctive (forming a surrogate negative imperative), as in example (3).

(3) Να μην πατάτε το πράσινο.
     SUBJ NEG walk-2.PL.PRF the green.
     You may not walk on the grass.

The speaker, however, has a choice to express a prohibition introduced either by να, as in (3), or by the negation μην, as in example (4).

(4) Μην πατάτε το πράσινο.
     PRH walk-2.PL.PRF the green
     Don't walk on the grass.

What is intriguing is to which extent the two utterances in (3) and (4) are in intermittent use, in other words whether their illocutionary force is affected by the presence or absence of the Subjunctive *να*. Moreover, from a morpho-syntactic point of view, we ought to question whether the two forms are to be considered as Subjunctive variations, or whether it is possible for *να* and *μη(ν)* to be of similar status, i.e. whether they are able to differentiate distinct forms, with distinct associated illocutions.

A verb mood can be defined as 'the morphological category that covers the reflection of a large semantic area, subdivided into illocution and modality' (De Groot 2010). In Classical Greek, grammatical verb moods were clearly defined based on morpho-syntactic characteristics. Since such distinctions ceased existing, various approaches have been taken including syntax-based (e.g. Philippaki-Warburton and Spyropoulos 2004) and semantics-based ones (e.g. Roussou and Tsangalidis 2010).

There is an ongoing discussion on the similarities and differences of particles *θα, να, ας*, to which we would like to add *μη(ν)*. All four particles can introduce independently of each other non-imperative forms. For example, the non-imperative imperfective in (5) can be preceded by *θα, να, ας* and *μη(ν)*. (For the time being we leave aside the fact that *μην* can also combine with *ας* and *να*).

(5) Ας*/να/θα/μη μιλάς όταν (δεν) σε ρωτάνε.
     PRT talk-IPF.SG.2 when they (don't) ask you.

Subjunctive is defined as the non-imperative perfective; some researchers, like Tsangalidis, prefer the semantic distinction between realis, related to free forms, and irrealis, related to non-free, perfective forms. Others define subjunctive through the use of its negation, *μη(ν)*. We believe that for a verb form to be considered being a subjunctive, it needs to be preceded by its characteristic particle *να*. Such a view would suggest that example (4) above cannot be considered a subjunctive.

As part of our research, we also took into account whether the optional nature of the final 'n' in *μη(ν)* indicated that we were dealing effectively with two different *μη*: in other words, whether an n-less *μη* suggested a difference in function from its 'n optional' counterpart. Its optional final 'ν' usually occurs before vowels and unvoiced stops, and occasionally before fricatives. Geographical as well as idiolect based variations have been observed. This also applies to *δε(ν)* as well as other words with a final 'ν' option, e.g. the masculine and feminine singular accusative definite articles. Joseph and Philippaki (1987) suggest that there are indications of differences in function; for example, it is usually the n-less *μη* that is used independently of '*να*' for

constituent negation. Joseph (2002) highlights that the negation *μη(ν)* always offers the option on the 'n' at the end, while the elliptic use of '*Μη*!' does not, as in (6).

(6)   Μη!
      NEG
      Don't!

Although, indeed, the elliptic use of *μη* is always n-less, the prohibitives introduced by *μη(ν)*, independent of *να*, consistently offer an '+ν' option, as in example (7). Therefore, the presence or absence of 'ν' does not explain why *μη(ν)* can be used without being dependent on *να*.

(7)   Μην κλαις, καρδούλα μου.
      PRH cry-2.SG.IMP, my heart.
      Don't cry, my heart.

We suggest that *μη(ν)*, when not preceded by the subjunctive particle *να* is of equal status with *να*, rather than simply acting as the subjunctive's negation. In our view, MG prohibitives are introduced by the prohibitive marker *μη(ν)*. We are making a case for mitigated prohibitives, which is consistent with other mitigated uses of the subjunctive (e.g. requests), as in example (3) above. We believe that subjunctive behavioural uses always involve mitigation of the utterance's illocution, since *να* introduces mitigated directives, mitigated prohibitions (as in example 3), and mitigated requests (including requests for permission). Thus, the presence of *να* lessens the impact of an utterance when a behavioural function is involved, in this case a prohibition. The choice a speaker has is, therefore, between a prohibition introduced by *μη(ν)*, the MG prohibitive marker par excellence, and its milder counterpart. Examples (3) and (8) present such a softer version of a prohibition (also reflected in its English translation).

(8)   Να μη μιλάς όταν δεν σε ρωτάνε.
      SUBJ PRH speak-2.SG.IPF. when NEG you ask-2.PL.IPF
      You may not talk when they don't ask you.

This formal difference between examples (3) and (4) indicates that *μη(ν)*, when not preceded by the subjunctive particle *να*, is of equal status with *να*, i.e. it acts as the dedicated prohibitive marker (also consistent with Auwera (2006)'s view that languages prefer distinct prohibitive markers).

   Prohibitives function as preventives and negative warnings. Preventives involve a verb in perfective verb form, as in (9).

(9)   Μην έρθεις αύριο.
      PRH come-2.SG.PRF tomorrow.
      Don't come tomorrow.

Negative Warnings, as in example (10) involve verbs in imperfective forms. A positive warning would have been an imperative.

(10) Μην αναβαθμίζετε στην έκδοση 1.0.6.
      PRH upgrade-2.PL.IMP to the version 1.0.6
      Don't upgrade to version 1.0.6.

Emphatic prohibitions might be introduced by '*ποτέ*', and a narrow focal point intonation, as in example (11):

(11) Ποτέ μη μιλάς σε αγνώστους.
 Never PRH talk-2.SG.IMP to unknown.
 Never speak to people you don't know.

3. The Hortative
In this section we discuss the hortative particle *ας*. We briefly compare *ας* with the subjunctive particle *να,* and show its uses.

Hortative in MG is mainly introduced by the particle *ας*, which can be associated with main clauses only. A possible explanation is that *ας* historically originates from the verb form '*άφες*', which did not introduce subordinate clauses (a form of 'formal blocking' applies).

Ας cannot co-occur with the subjunctive *να* or the future *θα*, nor can it take objects like the English equivalent 'let'. It is often considered in intermittent use with *να*, related to the subjunctive; it is indeed difficult in many languages to distinguish among imperative, hortative, optative and irrealis forms.

However, the nature and behaviour of the particles *να* and *ας* are quite distinct: the typical subjunctive particle *να* introduces both main as well as subordinate subjunctives, something which is not the case for *ας*. Furthermore, their associated illocutions are quite different: although they both introduce wishes, *να* propositional uses also include wondering, mirative uses (disapproval), and estimating. Their behavioural uses also differ: *να* introduces mitigated directives, mitigated prohibitions and mitigated requests, none of which can be introduced by *ας*. Furthermore, their segmental marking is quite dissimilar: for example, *να* can combine with *μακάρι* (for wishes), *που* (for curses), *ίσως* (for enhanced expression of uncertainty) and *άραγε* (for enhanced expressions of wondering), none of which can combine with *ας*.

Ας introduces present as well as past perfective forms. We noted imperfect concessive uses, which do not form part of this research. Its illocution is related to propositional uses (wishes) and behavioural uses (expressing indifference), whereas *να*, as mentioned above, is related to a variety of behavioural uses (including requests).

3.1 Propositional uses: wishes.
Wishes introduced by *ας* involve a 1st person, singular or plural, construction, as in examples 12-13 below. The state of affairs described might involve both the speaker and the addressee, when first person plural is used. A wish might be fulfilable, as in (12) and (13), or unfulfilable, as in (14). Tense and aspect determine whether a wish is fulfilable or unfulfilable. The unfulfilability does not form part of the illocution. Unfulfilable wishes exceptionally allow for imperfect aspect.

(12) Ας γνωριστούμε λίγο καλύτερα.
 HORT know-PL.1.PRF.PASS. a little better.
 Let's get to know each other a bit better.

(13) Ας κερδίσουμε κι ας σκοράρει ο Galeti.
 HORT score-PL.1.PRF CONC score-SG.3 Galeti.
 May we win, even if Galeti scores.

(14) Ας κερδίζαμε κι ας σκόραρε ο Galeti.
      HORT we score-PL.1.PAST. CONC score-SG.3.PAST Galeti.
      May we had won, even if Galeti scored.

3.2 Indifference

Hortatives expressing indifference are characterised by the use of the 2ⁿᵈ or 3ʳᵈ person singular or plural and are potentially accompanied by a relevant hand gesture, shrugging of the shoulders, etc. The speaker reluctantly gives in to a state of affairs which does not seem ideal, but can be tolerated, as in examples 15-17.

(15) Ας μιλήσουν τα τραγούδια.
      HORT speak- PL.3.PRF. the songs
      Let the songs speak.

(16) Ας βρέχει.
      PRT rain-IMP.SGL.3
      Let it rain.

(17) Ας πάει η Ελένη στο πάρτυ.
      PRT go-PRF.SGL.3 the Eleni to-the party.
      Eleni may go to the party.

3.3 Negative hortatives

Ας takes the negation '*μην*', as in examples (18), (19) and (20). This does not necessarily support the argument that it is a characteristic subjunctive particle, since the choice of negation is a matter related to modality, rather than the mood itself (as Tsangalidis, for example, also points out).

(18) Ας μην φάμε άλλο.
      HORT neg eat- PL.1.PRF. anymore.
      Let's not eat anymore.

(19) Ας μην ξημέρωνε αυτή η μέρα.
      HORT NEG rise- SGL.3.IMP.PAST - this the day.
      May this day have not risen.

(20) Ας μην πάμε στο πάρτυ.
      HORT NEG go- PL.1.PRF. to the party.
      Let's not go to the party.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we discussed prohibitive and hortative uses in MG. We argued that *μη(ν)*, when not preceded by *να*, and *ας* are of equal status to *να*, in other words they are associated with distinct illocutions, which in turn, influence the nature of the mood they are related with. This indicates that prohibitives and hortatives might need to be considered separately from the wider category of Subjunctive.

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