

Augmentation vs. Diminution in Greek Dialectal Variation: An Optimal System

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1. Introduction¹

The morphological processes of diminution and augmentation, widely known as evaluative morphology, is a well studied topic in linguistic theory and various theoretical accounts have been put forward in order to define their status in grammar (see among others Anderson 1985, 1992; Bauer 1997; Scalise 1984, 1988, 1994). In this paper, we presume that evaluative morphology, at least in Greek, is placed at the derivational end of the morphological continuum (cf. Melissaropoulou & Ralli 2008). More specifically, following Melissaropoulou & Ralli (2008) Greek diminutive suffixes are considered to be heads of their constructions on the basis of certain criteria: a) the unjustifiable / unpredictable irregularities and gaps in the inflectional paradigms of diminutives; b) the specialization in meaning or the change of a semantic feature they cause to the base; c) the transmission of the morphosyntactic features of gender and inflection class to the derived forms and d) their being subject to subcategorization and selectional criteria, as opposed to inflectional markers.

Following this account, the present paper investigates the process of augmentative suffixation in S(andard) M(odern) G(reek) as well as in its dialectal variation (Aivaliot, Grico, Pontic) and compares it with its counterpart, i.e. diminution, on the basis of earlier work on diminution by Melissaropoulou (2006, 2007), Melissaropoulou & Ralli (f.c. a, b) and Ralli & Melissaropoulou (2007), in order to evaluate the whole process of evaluative morphology in dialectal variation in contrast with SMG. The aim is to investigate if there is differentiation cross-dialectally in the process of augmentation and evaluation as a whole on the suffixal morphological level and the theoretical implications of this divergence in the morphological system of the examined dialects.

The paper is structured as follows: in the next section basic characteristics of suffixal augmentation are investigated, serving as the basis of our comparison. More specifically, in section 2.1 the range of suffixes in use is presented, section 2.2 focuses on their distributional characteristics, while in section 2.3 and 2.4 gender assignment and probability of alternation are treated respectively. In section 3, suffixed augmentation is compared with its semantic counterpart, i.e. diminution, while in section 4 our proposal is provided on the basis of the analyzed data.

Examining the mechanisms of dialectal augmentation along with its counterpart, dialectal diminution, we can see that in dialectal variation, contrary to SMG, the two components of evaluative morphology are in symmetry. The two aspects of dialectal evaluative morphology share the same or symmetrical characteristics. In an effort to account for this linguistic variation that covers evaluative morphology as a whole, we propose that the observed dialectal divergence can be interpreted as a step of dialectal evaluative morphology towards optimization (cf. Kiparsky 1982) in the sense that it leads to a morphological system, with less morphological complexity, less grammatical rules, more strict distribution, thus firmer and more economical and in that sense optimal (cf. Melissaropoulou & Ralli

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f.c. a, b Ralli & Melissaropoulou 2007 for diminution, Melissaropoulou 2007 for the whole suffixal derivational system of Aivaliot).

We base our study on data from S(andard) M(odern) G(reek) as well as its dialectal variation (Aivaliot, Pontic and Griko). Aivaliot and Pontic dialectal varieties were spoken once in the former Ottoman Empire in the areas of Northwest and West Turkey respectively. Nowadays, they continue to be spoken in Greece, within communities of first, second and third generation refugees; Aivaliot is spoken in certain Asia-Minor dialectal enclaves of the island of Lesbos, while Pontic, mainly in the Northern part of Greece but in other parts of the Greek mainland as well. However, there are still some speakers of Pontic in Turkey, in the areas of Tonia and Ofi. Lastly, Griko is a dialectal variety of Greek origin which is spoken in the area of Salento, Southern Italy.

2. The parameters

2.1. The range of suffixes in use

The first parameter we are going to examine is the range of suffixes in use. For reasons of clarity, it should be mentioned from the very beginning that, for the purposes of the present paper, we are treating prototypical evaluative morphology, in the terms of Grandi (2002: 52), i.e. the descriptive operations of augmentation (the semantic features BIG and/or GOOD vs. BAD). We leave thus apart those suffixes that express also other semantic features / values (such as agent or instrument), e.g. *faya(s)* ('big eater'), which denotes a person that performs the activity denoted by the base to exaggeration.

In SMG a relatively vast range of augmentative suffixes is attested (cf. Triantafyllidis 1991 [1941]; Klairis *et al.* 2004), although they are smaller than those of diminutives (cf. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994), which can be seen in the examples under (1) below:

(1)

a. **-a^{2/3}**

maxer-a	<	maxeri
'big knife'		'knife'
varel-a	<	vareli
'big barrel'		'barrel'
kalaθ-a	<	kalaθi
'big basket'		'basket'

b. **-'_os**

kras-os	<	krasi
'big quantity of wine'		'wine'
krevat-os	<	krevati
'big bed'		'bed'
tir-os	<	tiri
'big piece of / a lot of cheese'		'cheese'

² According to Hasserlot (1957) the augmentative suffix *-a*, derives from the plural form of Ancient Greek neutral nouns. This plural form derives in turn from earlier forms bearing collective meaning ("le féminin augmentatif [...] est sorti d'un féminin à valeur collective, reposant a son tour sur un ancien pluriel neutre", Hasserlot 1957: 156).

³ According to Grandi (2002: 274, 275) the augmentative formations with *-a* suffix, found in Modern Greek as well as in Romance Languages (among others Portuguese, Spanish, Occitan), served initially to solve the incompatibility of realizing the semantic value BIG for neuter nouns. "Dunque, si può ragionevolmente immaginare che le formazioni accrescitive femminili neogreche e romanze in *-a* avessero, inizialmente, le funzione di risolvere questa incompatibilità, ripristinando l'espressione morfologica del valore semantico BIG per i nomi neutri" (Grandi 2002: 275).

- c. **-ar(os)**^{4/5}
- | | | |
|---------------------|---|-----------|
| peð-ar(os) | < | peði |
| ‘big boy / handsom’ | | ‘child’ |
| skil-ar(os) | < | skil(os) |
| ‘big dog’ | | ‘dog’ |
| kleft-ar(os) | < | klefti(s) |
| ‘big thief’ | | ‘thief’ |
- d. **-ara**
- | | | |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| mixan-ara | < | mixani |
| ‘big machine’ | | ‘machine’ |
| fon-ara | < | fon |
| ‘strong voice’ | | ‘voice’ |
| korm-ara | < | kormi |
| ‘big body’ | | ‘body’ |
- e. **-akla / ukla**
- | | | |
|----------------|---|----------|
| mat-ukla | < | mati |
| ‘big eye’ | | ‘eye’ |
| mit-ukla | < | miti |
| ‘big nose’ | | ‘nose’ |
| fon-akla | < | fon |
| ‘strong voice’ | | ‘voice’ |
| γajður-akla | < | γajðuri |
| ‘big donkey’ | | ‘donkey’ |
- f. **-akla(s) / ukla(s)**
- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------|
| adr-akla(s) | < | adra(s) |
| ‘big/ bulky man’ | | ‘man’ |
| arap-akla(s) | < | arapi(s) |
| ‘big/ bulky African’ | | ‘African’ |
- g. **-arona**
- | | | |
|-------------|---|---------|
| spit-arona | < | spiti |
| ‘big house’ | | ‘house’ |
| mat-arona | < | mati |
| ‘big eye’ | | ‘eye’ |
- h. **-aka(s)**⁶
- | | | |
|---------------|---|-----------|
| stav-aka(s) | < | stavr(os) |
| person’s name | | |

The most productive of the above mentioned suffixes are *-a*, *-ara*, *-ar(os)* and *-ukla*.

Turning now to the range of augmentative suffixes in use, in Greek dialectal variation we can see that the picture is somehow differentiated. Looking first at the Aivaliot dialect, we can see that the number of the attested suffixes is much more limited. The suffixes in use are the following:

⁴ Inflectional affixes and other phonological material are put into parenthesis, based on the inflection class analysis proposed by Ralli (2000, 2002). The absence of parenthesis means that according this analysis the whole form is considered to be a stem’.

⁵ *-ar(os)* and *-ara* suffixes derive from the Hellenistic and Medieval Greek suffix *-ari(n)* with the addition of the inflectional suffixes *-o(s)* and *-a* respectively.

⁶ According to INS (1998) this suffix derives from the combination of the suffixes *-aki* (diminutive) and *-a(s)*.

(2)

a. -ar(us)

voð-ar(us)	<	voð
‘big ox’		‘ox’
arap-ar(us)	<	arap(s)
‘big/ bulky African’		‘African’
cil-ar(us)	<	ciła
‘big paunch’		‘paunch’
mat-ar(us)	<	mat
‘big eye’		‘eye’

b. -ara

spit-ara	<	spit
‘big house’		‘house’
kurts-ara	<	kurits
‘big / pretty girl’		‘girl’
mt-ara	<	mit
‘big nose’		‘nose’

c. -a

açıl-a	<	açıl
‘big lip’		‘lip’
vrukuzon-a	<	vrukuzon’
‘big knickers cord’		‘knickers cord’
tsibuk-a	<	tsibuk’
‘big pipe’		‘pipe’

(Data from Melissaropoulou 2006, 2007)

A similar situation seems to hold for Pontic. Augmentation realized through the morphological process of suffixation is restricted to suffixes *-a*, *-(u)kla(s)* *-(i)kla* and *-’_os*, as shown in the examples under (3):

(3)

a. -a

voθrak-a	<	voθraki
‘big frog’		‘frog’
kadzik-a	<	kadzik’
‘big pocketknife’		‘pocketknife’
kamak-a	<	kamaki
‘big spear / big tool used to get the coals off the stove’		‘spear/ tool used to get the coals off the stove’

b. -’_os

palikar-os	<	palikari(n)
‘big / very handsome man’		‘young / handsome man’
kriar-os	<	kriarin
‘big ram / brave man’		‘ram’

c. -(u)kla(s)

adr-(u)kla(s)	<	adras
‘big/ bulky man’		‘man’

d. -(i)kla

θi(i)-kla	<	θia
‘bulky/ ugly aunt’		‘aunt’

Particularly interesting is the situation in Grico, where the number of suffixes is restricted to one and only: the suffix *-una*, which is of Italian origin.

(4) -una

kaski-una	<	kaska
‘big box’		‘box’
[ʃ]il-una	<	[ʃ]ilo
‘big lip’		‘lip’
anem-una	<	anemo
‘strong wind’		‘wind’
tsen'tr-una	<	tsentra
‘big sting’		‘sting’

(Data from Tommasi 1996, Cassoni 1999)

To sum up, we can see that the number of dialectal augmentative suffixes in use is much smaller than in SMG. In Aivaliot, the three suffixes in use coincide with some of the most productive SMG augmentative suffixes (cf. Triantafyllidis 1991 [1941]). In Pontic, the number of suffixes in use is four, while in Grico only one suffix is attested to express augmentation, the suffix of Italian origin *-una*.

2.2. The distribution of augmentative suffixes

Examining now the distribution of augmentative suffixes in the systems in study, according to Minas (2003:38-48), the Modern Greek suffix *-a* forms feminine augmentatives from neuter bases stressed on the penultimate syllable. Elaborating on this, Melissaropoulou (2007) observes that *-a* combines with [–animate] neuter nouns of the 6th Inflectional class (cf. Ralli 2000, 2002 for a detailed analysis of Greek nominal inflection) ending in *-i*. The distribution of the suffix *-a* is roughly the same in SMG⁷ as in Aivaliot and Pontic.

Passing now to the SMG masculine suffix *-aro(s)*, it is attached mainly to [+animate] masculine or [+animate] non-masculine bases, via which natural gender, i.e. sex can be realized. For example, the noun *γata* (‘cat’) bears in Greek feminine grammatical gender. When augmentivized as *γatarus*, it bears masculine grammatical gender which also differentiates sex. In other words, a *γatarus* is a big male cat.

Moreover, in SMG the number of [–animate] non-masculine nominal bases which combine with the masculine augmentative *-ar(os)* is really restricted, and often such forms, when attested, are marked as reserved to special vocabularies (e.g. the literary language). Finally, examining the SMG feminine suffix *-ara*, it is basically the most productive augmentative suffix and is practically free of restrictions, since, according to Daltas (1985), almost every noun susceptible to augmentation can attach to *-ara*.

Concerning the distribution of dialectal augmentatives, we are going to examine the distribution of Aivaliot suffixes along with the possible alternations in section 2.4 below. The distribution of augmentative suffixes in Pontic is based on the feature [±human]. *-kla(s)/-kla* are reserved to [+human] bases, *-a* to [–human] ones, while *-'os* augmentivizes neuters bearing masculine natural gender. As for Grico, *-una*, as the sole augmentative, is available for every base that is susceptible to augmentation.

⁷ According to Melissaropoulou (2007: 212) in SMG, and more particularly in the youth slang, the suffix *-a* forms intensive / augmentative forms from nominal bases denoting a person, e.g. *bekri(s)* ‘alcoholic’ > *bekra* ‘very alcoholic’, *mazoxisti(s)* ‘masochist’ > *mazoxa* ‘very masochist’. However, these formations, which are not so many, at least not yet, are quite recent, therefore we can make no secure predictions on whether their number will increase and the schema will prevail.

2.3. Gender assignment

Generally speaking, gender assignment⁸ in Greek depends partially on meaning and partially on form (cf. Ralli 2003:67, 76). According to Ralli, gender is assigned to human nouns on the basis of the semantic feature [\pm male] / [\pm female], while in non-human nouns it depends on morphological information, and more specifically on the morphological feature of inflection class. Morphological criteria are crucial for derived words as well, since derivational suffixes are inherently marked for gender and pass it on, through percolation to the derived forms.

As for gender assignment in augmentative formations, it has been considered in comparison with the diminutive ones (cf. Daltas 1985; Minas 2003 for Greek; Grandi 2002 for the languages of the Mediterranean area), focusing on the absence of neuter gender value in augmentation. Grandi (2002) observes that the absence of neuter gender value in augmentation is a common strategy in the languages of the Mediterranean area, with the exception of Slavic. Elaborating on this and examining the history of some augmentative suffixes, Grandi argues that the relation between augmentatives and the feature [\pm animate] is not accidental, and he justifies the absence of neuter gender value on the basis of the fact that it can be accounted for as not masculine and not feminine, thus not animate.

Examining the use of evaluatives in SMG, Daltas (1985) proposes a probabilistic relation which predicts the probability of appearance of each gender value in evaluative forms. As for augmentation, his proposal is as follows: A: 1 > FEM. > MASC. > NEU. = 0 (from Daltas 1985: 75), i.e. the probability of an augmentative to bear feminine gender value is higher than to bear masculine gender value, while that of neuter gender value is zero. Moreover, according to Daltas (1985), “every noun of SMG, notwithstanding its grammatical gender value, can attach to a feminine augmentative suffix”. Examples illustrating the above observation can be seen under (5), where all nouns, masculine (*anθrop(os)*), feminine (*mixani*) and neuter (*aftokinit(o)*), form a feminine augmentative in *-ara*:

(5)	<i>anθrop-ara</i> _{FEM}	<	<i>anθrop(os)</i> _{MASC}
	‘big man’		‘man’
	<i>mixan-ara</i> _{FEM}	<	<i>mixani</i> _{FEM}
	‘big machine’		‘machine’
	<i>aftokinit-ara</i> _{FEM}	<	<i>aftokinit(o)</i> _{NEU}
	‘big car’		‘car’

Daltas acknowledges, however, that the observed tendency is influenced by a) the feature [\pm animate] in accordance with gender and sex and b) a feature he calls [\pm marked]. More particularly, according to Daltas (1985) [\pm animate] nouns attach to feminine augmentative suffixes, no matter the gender value of the base:

(6)	<i>mixan-ara</i> _{FEM}	<	<i>mixani</i> _{FEM}
	‘big machine’		‘machine’
	<i>kol-ara</i> _{FEM}	<	<i>kol(os)</i> _{MASC}
	‘big ass’		‘ass’
	<i>δaxtiliδ-ara</i> _{FEM}	<	<i>δaxtiliδi</i> _{NEU}
	‘big ring’		‘ring’

On the other hand, non neuter [+animate] nouns tend to preserve the gender of the base when augmentivized, since in this case the relation between natural and grammatical gender is one by one. In other words, natural gender seems to facilitate the selection of the appropriate grammatical gender augmentative suffix. See the examples under (7) below:

⁸ For a thorough cross-linguistic analysis of gender cf. Corbett (1991).

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------|---|--------------------------|
| (7) | skil-ar(os) | < | skil(os) _{MASC} |
| | ‘big dog’ | | ‘dog’ |
| | kopel-ara | < | kopela _{FEM} |
| | ‘big young girl’ | | ‘young girl’ |

In addition, as far as the feature [±marked] is concerned, [+animate] masculine and feminine nouns can combine as well with the non expected augmentative suffix, i.e. a feminine base can take a masculine suffix and a masculine base can take a feminine suffix. This situation is considered as [+marked], in Daltas’ (1985) terms, as illustrated in the examples under (8):

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|-----------------------------|
| (8) | korits-ara _{FEM} / korits-ar(os) _{MASC} | < | koritsi _{NEU} |
| | ‘big young girl’ | | ‘young girl’ |
| | kaθijit-ara _{FEM} / kaθijit-ar(os) _{MASC} | < | kaθijiti(s) _{MASC} |
| | ‘big/great professor’ | | ‘professor’ |

Examining now the realization of grammatical gender values in dialectal augmentation, we can see that dialectal data confirm and offer further support to the general claim that neuter gender value is not realized in the process of augmentation. However, it is particularly interesting that, contrary to what is thought to be the prevailing (or, in Daltas’ terms, the unmarked) gender for augmentation (the feminine), the one that seems to prevail is masculine.

Starting with Grico, we have already seen that augmentation is realized through one and only suffix, *-una*. In all cases, the grammatical gender value assigned by the augmentative suffix is the masculine (see the examples in (4)).

It is worth noticing that, although *-una* is of Italian origin (cf. Rohlfs 2001), Grico does not follow the strategy of Italian as far as gender assignment is concerned. More specifically, although in Italian the augmentative *-one*, bearing masculine gender value, when attached to feminine nominal bases can take the form *-ona*, bearing feminine gender value (i.e. *bambina* ‘girl, female baby’ > *bambinona* ‘big girl’, *faccia* ‘face’ > *facciona* ‘big face’, *voce* ‘voice’ > *vociona* ‘strong voice’), this is not the case in Grico. All the augmentative forms suffixed with *-una* bear a specific gender value, the masculine one⁹.

As for Pontic, we can see that grammatical gender values are assigned in accordance with the characteristic [± human]. The feminine *-a* attaches to non human neuter bases in *-i*, while human bases attach either to *-’os*, when the base is neuter, or to *-(u)kla(s)* when masculine and *-(i)kla*, when feminine. We can see that in Pontic natural gender prevails over grammatical gender on the basis of the prevalence of the specific semantic feature.

Passing now to Aivaliot, we can see that, contrary to what is suggested by Daltas (1985) for SMG to be the most probable, thus more frequent or typical gender value for augmentation, i.e. the feminine, the general tendency in Aivaliot is for every possible base to be able to create a masculine augmentative form or a masculine augmentative form as well. See examples under (9) below:

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--|
| (9) | furn-ar(us) _{MASC} | < | furn(us) _{MASC} (vs. *furn-ara) |
| | ‘big oven’ | | ‘oven’ |
| | kleft-ar(us) _{MASC} | < | kleft(s) _{MASC} (vs. *kleftara) |
| | ‘big thief’ | | ‘thief’ |
| | γnek-ar(us) _{MASC} / γnek-ara _{FEM} | < | γneka _{FEM} |
| | ‘big bulky /sappy woman’ | | ‘woman’ |
| | mit-ar(us) _{MMASC} / mt-ara _{FEM} | < | mit _{MASC} |
| | ‘big nose’ | | ‘nose’ |

⁹ According to Rohlfs (2001: 173) in Grecaniko (a variety of Greek origin spoken in Calabria, Southern Italy) very few examples of augmentatives bearing feminine gender value are found (i.e. *jinekuna* ‘bulky / ugly woman’, *foraduna* ‘big mare’), but they are very rare.

aft-ar(us) _{MASC} / aft-ara _{FEM}	<	afti _{NEU}
‘big ear’		‘ear’
açil-ar(us) _{MASC} / açil-ara _{FEM} / açil-a _{FEM}	<	açil _{NEU}
‘big lip’		‘lip’

In Aivaliot, we can see that, unlike SMG, even feminine [+human] bases (e.g. *yneka*) may form a masculine augmentative form (*ynekarus*). What is of particular interest in Aivaliot is the correlation between gender assignment and suffixal alternation, and the function of both in the dialect, which will be discussed in the next section. To sum up, we can see that in Grico as well as in Aivaliot, the most probable (in Daltas’ 1985 terms) grammatical gender is not the feminine but the masculine. In Pontic, the assignment of grammatical gender is mostly determined on the basis of the presence / absence of a specific natural gender value ([±male], [±female]) in the base.

Elaborating on this, we could say that, unless natural gender and the semantic feature [+human] determine grammatical gender assignment (cf. the case of Pontic), contrary to SMG, the general tendency is for every base susceptible to augmentation to be able to create a masculine augmentative form or a masculine augmentative form as well. This observation is in accordance with Grandi’s (2002: 136-137, 182) claim that augmentatives are strongly linked to the feature [+animate], and that masculine gender is a typical indicator of this feature. In the dialects observed masculine tends to be the typical gender value for augmentation: in Grico it is the only one available, while in Aivaliot all-non masculine nominal bases tend to create masculine augmentatives or masculine augmentatives as well (along with feminine-s (c.f. next section)).

2.4. Suffixal alternations

In this section we are going to examine the possibility of augmentative suffixes to alternate, and we will investigate whether this alternation – when attested – is free or determines some kinds of modification in meaning. Given the vast number of augmentative suffixes in use, in SMG suffixal alternation is a quite frequent phenomenon, as can be seen in the examples under (10):

(10) xer-ara / xer-ukla	<	xeri
‘big hand’		‘hand’
mit-ara / mit-ukla	<	miti
‘big nose’		‘nose’
fon-ara / fon-akla	<	foni
‘strong voice’		‘voice’
spit-ara / spit-arona	<	spiti
‘big house’		‘house’
kleft-ara / kleft-ar(os)	<	klefti(s)
‘big thief’		‘thief’

Let us observe now the situation in the dialects considered. In Grico there is no possibility of alternation, since *-una*, is the only available grammatical morpheme for expressing augmentation. In Pontic (where the distribution of suffixes is based on natural gender) there is almost no seedbed left for free variation of augmentative forms. *-(u)kla(s)* and *-(i)kla* are reserved to [+human] bases, *-a* to [–human] bases, while *-’os* augmentivizes neuters bearing masculine natural gender. Finally, in Aivaliot the alternation between the existing augmentative suffixes, *-a*, *-ara* and *-ar(os)* seems to be attested, at least at a first sight. See the examples under (11) below:

(11) a.	maçer-ar(us)	maçir-ara	maçer-a	<	ma’çer
	‘big knife’				‘knife’
	kumat-ar(us)	kumat-ara	kumat-a	<	kumat
	‘big / huge piece’				‘piece’

	kalaθ-ar(us)	kalaθ-ara	kalaθ-a	<	kalaθ
		‘big/huge basket’			‘basket’
b.	knup-ar(us)	knup-ara		<	knup
		‘big mosquito’			‘mosquito’
	putik-ar(us)	putk-ara		<	putk(os)
		‘big mouse’			‘mouse’
	fið-ar(us)	fið-ara		<	fið
		‘big snake’			‘snake’
c.	γnek-ar(us)	γnek-ara		<	γneka
		‘big bulky /sappy woman’			‘woman’
	cil-ar(us)	cl-ara		<	cλa
		‘big paunch’			‘paunch’
d.	furnar(us) _{MASC}			<	furn(os) _{MASC} (vs. *furn-ara _{FEM})
		‘big oven’			‘oven’
	pseft-ar(us) _{MASC}			<	pseft(s) _{MASC} (vs. *psift-ara _{FEM})
		‘big thief’			‘thief’

Examining the examples above, we can see that this alternation does not hold only for [–animate] nominal bases (11a). Animate nouns, which do not differentiate natural gender through grammatical gender, are augmentivized by *-ara* as well as by *-ar(us)* (11 b). Additionally, as already shown in the previous section, feminine [±animate] nouns form both a feminine and a masculine augmentative form (11c), while masculine [±animate] nouns only form a masculine augmentative form (11d).

However, this alternation, when attested in the dialect, is not completely meaningless. In other words, the variation between the forms in *-a*, *-ara* and *-ar(os)*, or between those in *-ara* and *-ar(os)* is not free. In neuter [–animate] nouns *-a* forms the first augmentative (*kalaθi* > *kalaθa*), while *-ara* intensifies the meaning BIG (*kalaθara*), and *-ar(us)* denotes further intensification (*kalaθarus*). Similarly, feminine [±animate] nouns, are augmentivized by the addition of *-ara* (*cλa* > *clara*), and then intensification of the meaning BIG is realized through the masculine *-ar(os)* (*cilarus*).

In Aivaliot, the alternation between augmentative suffixes with the same nominal base expresses different degrees of augmentation, the strongest one being always expressed by the masculine augmentative suffix *-ar(us)* (cf. Melissaropoulou 2007). In other words, the alternation of augmentative suffixes, when possible, intensifies augmentation. This situation can be schematized as in Table 1.

Augmentative suffix \ Nominal Bases	[-human] neuter nouns in <i>-i</i>	Other neuter and all feminine nouns	Masculine nouns
<i>-a</i>	1 st grade of augmentation	-	-
<i>-ara</i>	Intensification of augmentation	1 st grade of augmentation	-
<i>-ar(us)</i>	Further intensification of augmentation	Intensification of augmentation	Sole form of Augmentation

(Melissaropoulou 2007:221)

Table 1

To sum up, the conclusion that can be drawn from the above is that even when alternation among augmentative suffixes is a possible strategy in a particular dialect, this is not completely free or meaningless, but has a semantic value, i.e. intensification in meaning, offering further support to the claim that there is a strong correlation between augmentation and masculine.

3. Comparison with diminution

Examining now the mechanisms of augmentation in dialectal varieties, along with its counterpart, diminution (cf. Melissaropoulou 2006; Ralli & Melissaropoulou 2007; Melissaropoulou & Ralli 2008, f.c. a, b), we can see that in dialectal variation these two strategies of evaluative morphology are in perfect symmetry.

First, the number of suffixes is small in both processes. According to Melissaropoulou (2006, 2007); Ralli & Melissaropoulou (2007), Melissaropoulou & Ralli (2008), while SMG displays a wide range of diminutive suffixes (12), in Aivaliot the number of suffixes in use is limited to three, as shown in (13):

(12) SMG diminutive suffixes

a. -aki	trapez-aki 'small table'	<	trapezi 'table'
	karekl-aki 'small chair'	<	karekla 'chair'
b. -aki(s)	jory-aki(s) personal name-DIM	<	jory(os) personal name
c. -ak(os)	δaskal-ak(os) 'small, not great teacher'	<	δaskal(os) 'teacher'
d. -itsa	karekl-itsa 'small chair'	<	karekla 'chair'
e. -uli(s)	aðerf-uli(s) 'young brother'	<	aðerf(os) 'brother'
-ula	vris-ula 'small fount'	<	vrisi 'fount'
-uli	mikr-uli 'tiny'	<	mikr (o) 'small'
f. -opul(o) / opula	xorjat-opul(o) 'young billy-goat'	<	xorjat (is) 'billy-goat'
	vosk-opula 'young female grazier'	<	vosk(os) 'grazier'
g. -utsik(os)/i/o	mikr-utsik(os) 'very small'	<	mikr(os) 'small'
	nostim-utsik(os) 'a little tasty'	<	nostim(os) 'tasty'

(13) Aivaliot diminutive suffixes

a. -eɿ	δaskal-eɿ _{NEU} 'young / good teacher'	<	δaskal(us) _{MASC} 'teacher'
b. -uða	vark-uða _{NEU} 'small boat'	<	varka _{FEM} 'boat'
c. -i	purt-i _{NEU} 'small door'	<	porta _{FEM} 'door'

(Melissaropoulou 2006, 2007)

In Aivaliot *-eɣ* creates diminutives bearing neuter gender value. It is the most productive suffix and is practically free of restrictions, since every base susceptible to diminution can be diminutivized by *-eɣ*. *-uða* bears feminine gender value and selects only feminine bases, while the neuter suffix *-i* is very restricted to a small number of [–human] bases due to its competition with *-eɣ*. Cumulation of suffixes is not attested while alternation holds practically only for feminine bases.

The situation in Grico is similar. The suffixes in use are the feminine *-eddha* and the neuters *-uddhi* and *-aki*. *-eddha* selects feminine bases, *-uddhi*, masculine or neuter nominal bases ending in *-o*, while *-a(k)i* selects bases ending in *-i* (cf. Melissaropoulou 2006; Melissaropoulou & Ralli f.c. b). See the examples under (14) below:

(14) **Grico diminutive suffixes**

a.	-uddhi	anem-uddhi	<	anemo
		‘weak/ little wind’		‘wind’
b.	-eddha	ornit-eddha	<	ornita
		‘small hen’		‘hen’
c.	-a(k)i	adzar-a(k)i	<	adzari
		‘small fish’		‘fish’

The strictly constrained distribution of these suffixes does not allow alternation and / or cumulation of suffixes.

In Pontic the productive diminutive suffixes in use are *-opon*, *-itsa* and *-its(os)/-itsi(s)* (cf. Oikonomidis 1958; Koutita-Kaimaki 1984; Tsopouridis 2002 [1998]). See the examples under (15) below:

(15) **Pontic diminutive suffixes**

a.	-op(on)	ščil-op(on)	<	ščil(os)
		‘small dog’		‘dog’
b.	-itsa	fil-tsa	<	fili
		‘small/ sweet female’		‘friend’
c.	-itsi(s) / -its(os)	ðävol-its(os)	<	ðävol(os)
		‘small devil’		‘devil’

-op(on) bears neuter grammatical gender and is the most productive diminutive suffix, attaching practically to any base susceptible of diminution, while the feminine suffix *-itsa* selects feminine bases. The particularity of Pontic is the existence of a diminutive suffix bearing masculine gender value, a characteristic which is absent in the other varieties examined. However, the use of masculine diminutive suffixes is not systematic as in SMG, where every masculine noun can have a masculine diminutive as well for example *cipos*_{MASC} > *cip-ak(os)*_{MASC} / *cip-aci*_{NEU} (cf. Melissaropoulou & Ralli f.c. a). In Pontic, the masculine diminutive suffix *-itsi(s)* attaches only to bases marked as [+human]. In other words, masculine gender is realized only when there is a need to serve a specific function, the preservation and realization of natural gender.

Examining the mechanisms of augmentation along with its counterpart, diminution, we can observe that in dialectal variation these two processes of evaluative morphology behave symmetrically. Both aspects of dialectal evaluative morphology share the same characteristics. For both processes the number of suffixes is smaller, their alternation is more limited and, when it is attested, it can be accounted for in terms of different distribution, or in terms of differentiation (intensification) in meaning. Moreover, the assignment of grammatical gender values is perfectly symmetric. Contrary to SMG, where in diminution we can observe all three genders and (according to Daltas 1985) feminine is the most probable gender for augmentation, there is a very strong tendency in Modern Greek dialects to assign masculine gender in augmentation. According to Grandi (2002: 136-137,182), masculine is the typical indicator of the feature [+human] and is semantically related with the process of augmentation. In dialectal variation masculine becomes the typical gender for augmentation, neuter is the typical, and thus unmarked, gender for diminution (Melissaropoulou 2006; Ralli & Melissaropoulou 2007), while feminine is present in both processes. The situation is shown schematically in Figure 1.

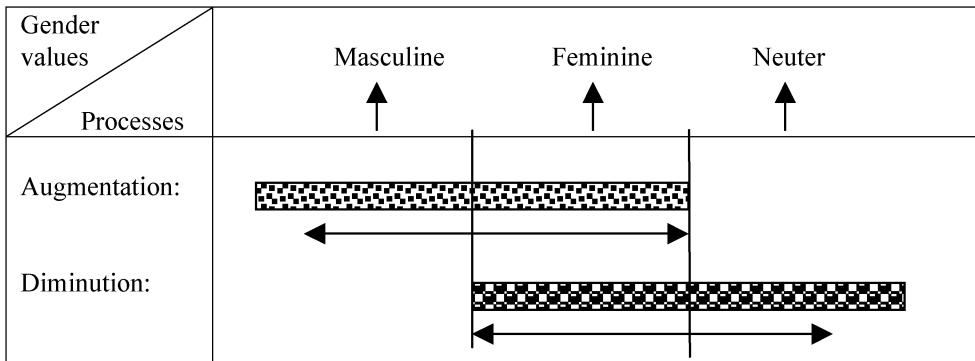


Figure 1

(Adapted from Melissaropoulou 2007: 226 on a cross-dialectal basis)

4. Conclusion

All the above observations on the common characteristics and strategies for diminution and augmentation reinforce and widen the domain of application of the general claim made by Melissaropoulou & Ralli (2008) about the derivational status of evaluative morphology on a cross-dialectal basis, since evaluative suffixes –diminutive and augmentative- transmit the morphosyntactic features of gender and inflectional class and are subject to selectional and subcategorization criteria. Moreover, augmentative and diminutive suffixes share some characteristics: a) the number of suffixes in use is very restricted; b) the possibility of alternation is much smaller compared with SMG and in some cases almost null; c) gender assignment is becoming symmetric in the two processes. In dialectal variation masculine is becoming the typical gender for augmentation, while neuter is the typical, and thus unmarked, gender for diminution.

On the basis of these observations, we would like to propose that the described dialectal variation, which provides evidence in favor of the derivational status of evaluative morphology (cf. Melissaropoulou & Ralli 2008) can be accounted for as a tendency of the dialects examined towards ‘grammar optimization’ (cf. Melissaropoulou & Ralli f.c. a, b, for diminution; Melissaropoulou 2007 for the whole suffixal derivational system of Aivaliot). This term was first introduced by Kiparsky (1982) in historical linguistics, in order to account for the appearance of analogical formations and their contribution to the creation of a more economical grammatical system. We propose extending this term to a synchronic analysis of evaluative morphology and we consider that the variation observed for both strategies of evaluation, augmentation and diminution, is not accidental, but can be seen as a contribution to grammar optimization. More specifically, what we observe is: a) a small number of suffixes with the same function and distribution; b) a low degree or a total absence of alternation among suffixes; c) an absence of suffixal cumulation in diminution; d) a symmetric gender assignment for the two processes. All these features contribute to the configuration of a grammatical system with less morphological complexity, a smaller number of rules, thus a more stable, more economic, and in that sense optimal system.

The reasons for the differences observed between Standard Modern Greek and its dialectal varieties seem to be particularly interesting and deserve further investigation. A hypothesis we could formulate – but which needs further observation and verification on historical grounds – is that this divergence lies in extralinguistic factors, and more specifically in the fact that SMG, as opposed to the regional dialects considered, was heavily influenced by the learned vocabulary of the language which contributed to the system’s present form. From this point of view, the past and present situation in the dialectal varieties that served as basis for the formation of Modern Greek Koine appears to be one of the most interesting points to investigate, and this is the direction in which this research is moving.

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