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Contrastive analysis of modern Greek and French converbs

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My research is a contrastive analysis of modern Greek and French converbs. The modern Greek converb is a descendant of the ancient Greek active present participle, which has become a non-finite verbal adverb, while the present participle has almost been lost. On the other hand, in French there are two verbal forms that can act as converbs, the gerund and (some uses of) the present participle. They both end with the suffix *-ant*, although they originate from distinct Latin verbal forms: the gerund comes from the ablative case of Latin gerund, while the present participle comes from Latin present participle; the two forms were confused until 17th century.

Although there is a rich bibliography as far as the two French verbal forms are concerned, the existent bibliography on Greek verbal adverb focuses mostly on its syntactic properties, while its meaning properties are not adequately explored. This seems to be a complicated issue, due to the verbal adverb's innate polysemy or vague meaning. Its interpretation in any utterance is accomplished along with other factors as well, such as the syntactic position, the informational weight, the tense, and the aspect of the main verb, the Aktionsart of the two interacting verbal forms and other pragmatic factors.

Therefore, the method I used was to make a list of possible interpretations of French gerund and present participle, according to the aforementioned co-textual factors. Then I analyzed a corpus of approximately 200 occurrences of Greek written and oral utterances containing a verbal adverb, in order to find out if they match the French meanings. The result is that Greek verbal adverbs have a very wide variety of semantic nuances (temporal, causal, resultative, intentional, conditional, concessional, concomitant meaning), which match the meanings of the French gerund, but also include the meanings of the French present participle, except from when it is used as a nominal modifier.

References

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