Languages may resemble or differ in terms of their grammar. Languages may also resemble or differ in terms of their vocabulary. Now that the basic Modern Greek grammar is practically over, let me bring the Modern Greek vocabulary into foreground. For the last few pages of this grammar book, we shall leave the grammar aside and focus on vocabulary units (single words or periphrases) as such, and not as parts of an example used to illustrate the grammar. The emphasis will be on the peculiarities of the Modern Greek vocabulary, which usually cause confusion to learners of Modern Greek. The point of departure will be the English vocabulary, but I believe you will be able to find analogies with your mother tongue.

11.1 Lexical Asymmetries
Most words from English seem to have an equivalent in Modern Greek. *Expensive* is ακριβός, *table* is equivalent to τραπέζι, etc. etc. Let’s now check the following examples:

(1a) Έχασα τα κλειδιά μου.
    “I lost my keys.”

(1b) Έχασα το λεωφορείο.
    “I missed the bus.”

In this case two English words correspond to just one Modern Greek word. This is an instance of lexical asymmetry between the two languages. This kind of asymmetry can be found in *count* and *measure* (both are equivalent to μετράω), *hear* and *listen* (ακούω stands for both of them), or *sorry* and *excuse me* (both are represented by συγγνώμη). This kind of asymmetry is not a problem for you. You can simply enjoy the fact that you have to learn only one new word instead of two (or more). But still you need to know which words to equal to this new word.

Let’s now see the following sentences:

(2a) Σκέφτομαι τον Πέτρο.
    “I am thinking of/about Peter.”

(2b) Νομίζω ότι έχει δίκιο.
    “I think he is right.”
Now one English word corresponds to two Modern Greek words. This is again a lexical asymmetry. But this time the asymmetry is not that easy to handle. You must have some sort of directions in order to determine how to use each Modern Greek word properly.

The previous examples illustrate only some clear cases of lexical asymmetries. I believe they were enough to make you realize what we are talking about. Having these in mind, let’s now turn to some basic cases of lexical asymmetry between English and Modern Greek:

**ακόμα**

*ακόμα* is a word with several meanings depending on the context:

- In affirmative sentences, *ακόμα* means *still*:

  \[(3) \quad Είμαι ακόμα στην Αθήνα.\]
  
  “I am still in Athens.”

- In negative sentences it is equivalent to *yet*:

  \[(4) \quad Δεν έφτασα ακόμα στην Αθήνα.\]
  
  “I have not arrived to Athens yet.”

- Finally, taken together with a quantifier, *ακόμα* is equivalent to *more*:

  \[(5) \quad Θα ήθελα λίγο καφέ ακόμα.\]
  
  “I would like some more coffee.”

**άντρας - γυναίκα - παιδί**

Apart from their primary biological meaning (“man”, “woman”, “child” / “kid”), in everyday language these words are widely used with different meanings.

- The words *άντρας - γυναίκα* equal to “husband” and “wife”. In this case they are usually followed by a possessive pronoun:

  \[(6) \quad Χαιρετίσματα στον άντρα σου.\]
  
  “My regards to your husband.”

- The word *παιδί* usually is equivalent to “guy”, “champ”, “fellow”:

  \[(7) \quad Ο Γιάννης είναι καλό παιδί.\]
  
  “Giannis is a good fellow.”

Notice that unlike the English *man*, the word *άντρας* cannot refer to human beings in gen-
eral, but only to males. There is another word equal to *human being*: ἄνθρωπος. ἄνθρωπος may look better than *man* regarding sex discrimination, but is it? Its gender is masculine, not feminine or neuter.

**γιατί - επειδή**

Clauses of cause/reason in Modern Greek may be introduced either by *γιατί* or by *επειδή*. The two words basically differ in terms of syntax: A clause introduced by *επειδή* may precede or follow the main clause, but a clause introduced by *γιατί* can only follow it:

(8a) Πέρασε το τεστ γιατί / επειδή διάβασε πολύ.

“She/He passed the test because she/he studied hard.”

(8b) Επειδή / γιατί διάβασε πολύ, πέρασε το τεστ.

“Because she/he studied hard, she/he passed the test.”

*Γιατί* (unlike *επειδή*) is also used in direct or indirect questions (see Unit 7.3 on page 109).

Apart from syntax, *γιατί* and *επειδή* seem to differ in terms of meaning. Let me introduce an elementary scenario. Peter’s mother is talking to her mother in law. She is saying that John is Peter’s best friend. Peter, who is present, interrupts his mother saying:

(Ia) Δεν είναι (ο Γιάννης) ο πιο καλός μου φίλος, γιατί / επειδή μαλώσαμε.

“John is not my best friend, because we had a fight.”

(Ib) Δεν είναι (ο Γιάννης) ο πιο καλός μου φίλος, γιατί / επειδή ο πιο καλός μου φίλος είναι ο Κώστας.

“John is not my best friend, because my best friend is Costas.”

The clause introduced by *γιατί*/*επειδή* (Ia) represents a clear case of cause-effect relations. Peter had a fight with John, so John is not Peter’s best friend. The clause introduced by *γιατί* (Ib) represents a more elaborated cause-effect relation. Costas is Peter’s best friend, *therefore* the mother cannot claim that John is Peter’s best friend.

**διαβάζω - σπουδάζω - μαθαίνω**

- The verb *διαβάζω* refers to any activity involving reading, i.e. reading for fun or reading for learning:

(9a) Διαβάζω εφημερίδα / ένα βιβλίο.

“I am reading the paper / a book.”

(9b) Διαβάζω Φιλοσοφία γιατί έχουμε τεστ.

“I am studying Philosophy because we are writing a test.”
• The verb \( \sigmaπουδάζω \) does not refer to any reading activity. The following sentence

(10) \( \Sigmaπουδάζω \) Φιλοσοφία.

means simply that the speaker is a student of the Department of Philosophy.

• The verb \( \muαθαίνω \) refers mostly to new information acquired by someone:

(11a) \( \Εμαθα \) ότι αύριο δεν \( \epsilonξουμε \) μάθημα.
       “I heard we are not having class tomorrow.”

(11b) \( \Εμαθα \) να κάνω κέικ.
       “I learnt how to make a cake.”

(11c) \( \Εμαθα \) ελληνικά σε δύο χρόνια.
       “I learnt Modern Greek in two years.”

Acquiring new information in this respect may be the result of a mental ability:

(12) \( \Deltaιαβάζει \) πολύ, αλλά δεν \( \muαθαίνει \) εύκολα.
       “She/He studies hard, but she/he does not learn easily.”

Acquiring new information is usually facilitated by a teacher:

(13a) \( \Μαθαίνουμε \) ισπανικά στο Πανεπιστήμιο.

(13b) \( \Μαθαίνω \) ισπανικά στο σπίτι.

(13c) \( \Μαθαίνω \) τον Πέτρο ισπανικά.

Sentence 13a presupposes a class (if you study at the Library, then choose \( \deltaιαβάζω \)). Sentence 13b sounds normal if I have someone to help me with Spanish: a private teacher, a friend who speaks Spanish or even a method of individual learning (if you want to say that you study at home, choose again \( \deltaιαβάζω \)). Finally in sentence 13c the verb \( \muαθαίνω \) simply means “to teach”.

\( \deltaίκιο/\άδικο - \σωστό/\λάθος \)

\( \Deltaίκιο \) and \( \σωστό \) correspond to the English right, and the same holds for their opposites and their relationship to the word wrong.

• \( \Sigmaωστό/\λάθος \) are related to correctness as a result of verification. They are then related to
all kinds of verifiable statements: A sentence or a mathematical problem may be σωστό or λάθος:

(14a) Αυτή η πρόταση είναι σωστή / λάθος.
     “This sentence is right / wrong.”

(14b) Αυτό το πρόβλημα είναι σωστό / λάθος.
     “This problem is right / wrong.”

• Δίκιο/άδικο are related to correctness as a result of judgement. Judgement is a property of humans. Therefore only humans may have δίκιο or άδικο.

(15) Α: Πρέπει να φύγουμε. Θα αργήσουμε. “We must go. We’ll be late.”
    B: Έχεις δίκιο. Πάμε. “You are right. Let’s go.”

People in Modern Greek cannot be σωστό/λάθος but can lead themselves to something right or wrong:

(16) Έκανα μόνο ένα λάθος στο τεστ.
     “I made only one mistake in the test”.

καινούριος - παλιός

The adjectives καινούριος and παλιός do what the English adjectives new and old do:

(17a) τα καινούρια παπούτσια / τα παλιά παπούτσια
     “the new shoes” / “the old shoes”

(17b) ο καινούριος γιατρός / ο παλιός γιατρός
     “the new doctor” / “the old doctor”

What these adjectives cannot do is refer to someone’s age (“someone” here includes humans and animals):

(18a) Η Ελένη είναι πιο μικρή / νέα από τον Πέτρο.
     “Helen is younger than Peter.”

(18b) Η Ελένη είναι πιο μεγάλη από τον Πέτρο.
     “Helen is older than Peter.”

The use of νέος (“young”) is pretty clear. The adjectives μικρός / μεγάλος (which originally
mean “small” and “big”) are the basic adjectives which refer to a person’s age. The metaphor is based on the original meaning of the words: children are smaller than adults and they grow up to become like them. These words are widely used to denote age, sometimes instead of νέος and definitely instead of the derogatory γέρος (“old”), or the politically correct term ηλικιωμένος (“elderly”).

μήπως - ἵσως
Many dictionaries translate μήπως as “perhaps”. This is only half the truth, because μήπως is a polite “perhaps” / “maybe”, used only in questions. The true “perhaps” is ἵσως, used in every type of sentence:

(19a) Μήπως θέλεις καφέ;
     “Perhaps you need a coffee?”

(19b) Ησως θα πάμε για καφέ το απόγευμα.
     “Perhaps we’ll go for a coffee this afternoon.”

πότε - ὅταν
There are two types of “when” in Modern Greek. Πότε is used only in questions, direct or indirect, while ὅταν is used in temporal clauses (see Unit 7.3 on page 108):

(20a) Πότε φεύγεις;
     “When are you leaving?”

(20b) Με ρώτησε πότε θα φύγω.
     “She/He asked me when I was going to leave.”

(20c) Όταν γυρίζω σπίτι βγάζω τα παπούτσια μου.
     “When I come home I take my shoes off.”

ρέστα - ψιλά
These two words represent the word change in Modern Greek. Ρέστα represents the 8 euros you get back when you pay 10 euros for a chocolate bar that costs 2 euros:

(21) Ἐδώσα 10 ευρώ και πήρα ρέστα 8 ευρώ.
     “I paid 10 euros and the change was 8 euros.”

Ψιλά represents small change (cents, 1 or 2 euros) as opposed to large currency units (5, 10, 20 euros etc.). This is what a kiosk woman/man will ask you if you try to buy a 2-euro chocolate
bar with 50 euros:

(22) Μήπως έχετε ψιλά;
     "Perhaps you have change?"

σκέφτομαι - νομίζω
What is thinking? The term refers to a mental, non-verbal process that might conclude with the verbal expression of an opinion. The verb σκέφτομαι refers mainly to the mental process itself, while νομίζω associates mostly with the product of this process:

(23a) Σκέφτομαι τον Πέτρο.
     "I am thinking of/about Peter."

(23b) Σκέφτομαι να πάω σινεμά.
     "I am thinking of going to the cinema."

(23c) Νομίζω ότι θα έρθει.
     "I think she/he will come."

φεύγω - αφήνω
Let’s see the following sentences:

(24a) Φεύγω στις 08.00.
     "I am leaving at 08.00."

(24b) Αφήνω το βιβλίο στο τραπέζι.
     "I am leaving the book on the table."

Φεύγω is always an intransitive verb, that is a verb without an object. Αφήνω is a transitive verb, a verb that needs an object. Therefore, φεύγω is more like leave in the sense of “depart”, “abandon”, and αφήνω is more like let, in the sense of “putting down”, “depositing”, “permitting”.

11.2 “Natural” Greek
Languages often use different ways to refer to the same simple fact. Let me start with an elementary example. Greek people have coffee, beer or wine, like people in the English-speaking world do. They also enjoy a sandwich at lunch break. But these basic facts are described in different terms:
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(25a) Πίνω καφέ / μπίρα.
   “I have a coffee / a beer.”

(25b) Τρώω ένα σάντουιτς.
   “I have a sandwich.”

Is it a mistake to say Έχω ένα σάντουιτς in Modern Greek? Well, it’s not the end of communication. Everybody will get what you mean. But it doesn’t sound Greek at all. Let me give you another example. Here is what someone would say on a hot or a cold day respectively:

(26a) Ζεσταίνομαι.
   “I am hot.”

(26b) Κρύωνω.
   “I am cold.”

The two languages again take a very simple fact and put it differently. Lots of absolute beginners, though, start from the assumption that languages see things the same way and translate directly into Modern Greek. People again will understand, but is this enough? No, it is not.

The same differences hold in the field of elementary needs as expressed in English and Modern Greek:

(IΙa) Θέλω καφέ.
   “I need coffee.”

(IΙb) Πεινάω.
   “I am hungry.”

(IΙc) Διψάω.
   “I am thirsty.”

(IΙd) Νυστάζω.
   “I am sleepy.”

Let’s focus now on some everyday periphrases, consisting of a verb and a noun, like to have a shower or to do the shopping. This area is problematic in language learning, because there seems to be a list of basic verbs to choose from, but every language makes different choices. As far as Modern Greek is concerned, κάνω is perhaps the most powerful verb of this list. Κάνω often stands for the English verbs to be, to do, to have or to take.
(27a) Τι κάνεις;
“How are you?”

(27b) Τι δουλειά κάνεις;
“What do you do for a living?”

(27c) Κάνω ψώνια.
“I do the shopping.”

(27d) Κάνω μπάνιο.
“I have a shower.” / “I take a bath.” / “I swim.”

In some periphrases the verb κάνω may be replaced by the verb έχω:

(28a) Κάνω / έχω διακοπές.
“I take / have holidays.”

(28b) Κάνω / έχω πάρτι.
“I have a party.”

(28c) Κάνω / έχω διάλειμμα.
“I take a break.”

(28d) Κάνω / έχω μάθημα.
“I have class.”

(28e) Κάνει / έχει κρύο. / Κάνει / έχει ζέστη.
“It is hot.” / “It is cold.”

(28f) Πόσο κάνει / έχει ο καφές;
“How much is the coffee?”

The two verbs are not totally equivalent. Let’s take 28b: Κάνω πάρτι means that I am the one who is organizing the event. Έχω πάρτι means that I am just invited to the event.

Another powerful verb is παίρνω. Παίρνω relates to the English take and get, as it has become a necessary constituent of numerous everyday expressions:

(29a) Παίρνω (τηλέφωνο) τον Πέτρο αλλά δεν απαντάει.
“I call Peter but he does not answer the phone.”
(29b) Πήγα στο σούπερ μάρκετ και πήρα καφέ.
    “I went to the super market and got some coffee.”

(29c) Παίρνω / Βγάζω φωτογραφίες.
    “I take pictures.”

The above discussion was not exhaustive of course. There is a lot to be said, but it won’t be. The point of this unit was to help you realize that each language represents a slightly different way to see things, even the most common and evident ones. Having acquired the basics, I believe you must start seeing Modern Greek as insiders. It is time to let yourselves merge into the Modern Greek language and hope that study and practice will eventually turn you from an absolute beginner to an absolutely stunning advanced learner.
Μιλάω ελληνικά

Τώρα ξέρετε τα βασικά ελληνικά και νομίζω ότι μπορείτε να καταλάβετε αυτά που θα γράψω:

Στα ελληνικά ένας άντρας από την Ελλάδα είναι Έλληνας, και μια γυναίκα από την Ελλάδα είναι Ελληνίδα:

(IIIa) Ο Πέτρος είναι Έλληνας.
(IIIb) Η Ελένη είναι Ελληνίδα.

Αυτό αλλάζει όταν μιλάμε για κάτι και όχι για κάποιον:

(IVa) Αυτός ο καφές είναι ελληνικός.
(IVb) Αυτή η σοκολάτα είναι ελληνική.
(IVc) Αυτό το βιβλίο είναι ελληνικό.
(IVd) Μιλάω ελληνικά.

Στα ελληνικά, λοιπόν, όταν λέμε από πού είναι κάτι ή κάποιος, δεν έχουμε μία μόνο λέξη αλλά τρεις. Αν είσαι από την Ιταλία, τότε είσαι Ιταλός ή Ιταλίδα, αλλά ο εσπρέσο είναι ιταλικός καφές. Αν είσαι από την Κίνα, τότε είσαι Κινέζος ή Κινέζα, αλλά μιλάς κινέζικα.

Όλα αυτά δεν είναι μεγάλο πρόβλημα για εσάς. Αν δεν ξέρετε τη λέξη Ιταλός, μπορείτε να πείτε Είμαι από την Ιταλία. Είναι ακριβώς το ίδιο. Και να θυμάστε:

• Στα ελληνικά υπάρχει πάντα μια λέξη για τους άντρες και τις γυναίκες, αλλά όχι για τα παιδιά. Αν μιλάμε για ένα παιδί μπορούμε μόνο να πούμε Αυτό το παιδί είναι από την Ελλάδα.
• Ένας σκύλος ή μια γάτα δεν είναι άνθρωπος. Αν ο σκύλος σας είναι τεριέ από την Σκοτία, μπορείτε να πείτε Ο σκύλος μου είναι σκοτσέζικο τεριέ.

SUMMARY

Chapter 11 takes English as a starting point in order to examine some aspects of the Modern Greek vocabulary that cause confusion to learners of Modern Greek. The first part of the chapter deals with lexical asymmetries between English and Modern Greek, while the second part focuses on periphrases and the main Modern Greek verbs that participate in such constructions.

KEY WORDS

vocabulary, lexical asymmetry, vocabulary units (single words, periphrases)
EXERCISES

1. Choose the correct verb.

1. Η αδερφή μου πρέπει να ______________ μαθηματικά γιατί γράφει τεστ αύριο.
a. διαβάσει b. σπουδάσει c. μάθει

2. Ο αδερφός μου ____________ Ιστορία στην Ιταλία.
a. διαβάζει b. σπουδάζει c. μαθαίνει

3. Χτες το βράδυ άρχισα ένα πολύ ωραίο βιβλίο και το _______________ όλο!
a. διάβασα b. σπούδασα c. έμαθα

4. ______________ ελληνικά σε έναν χρόνο γιατί έζησε στην Ελλάδα.
a. Διάβασε b. Σπούδασε c. Έμαθε

5. Αν θέλεις να περάσεις το τεστ πρέπει να ________________!
a. διαβάσεις b. σπουδάσεις c. μάθεις

6. Κάθε πρωί πίνω καφέ και _______________ την εφημερίδα μου.
a. διαβάζω b. σπουδάζω c. μαθαίνω

2. Fill in the blancs with the appropriate word.

1. Κάθε καλοκαίρι ________ σέρφινγκ.
a. έχω b. κάνω c. παίρνω

2. Ο Γιάννης δεν __________ πολλά λεφτά για αυτή τη δουλειά.
a. κάνει b. παίρνει c. έχει

3. Δεν μπορώ να έρθω τώρα, γιατί __________ δουλειά.
a. έχω b. παίρνω c. δίνω

4. Το καλοκαίρι __________ ζέστη στην Ελλάδα.
a. είναι b. κάνει c. δίνει
5. Πρέπει να ___________ τηλέφωνο τον μπαμπά μου.
   a. κάνω  
   b. δώσω  
   c. πάρω

6. Έδωσα 10 ευρώ και ___________ ρέστα 5 ευρώ.
   a. έκανα  
   b. είχα  
   c. πήρα

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