

Summary

Greek has **three classes of masculine-feminine (M-F) noun pairs** that differ in whether nominal ellipsis with a gender mismatch is possible (Merchant 2014). Building on the observation that **different classes of gendered nouns show different behaviour in certain focus constructions**, we claim that **some genders are presuppositional in nature, while others are both presupposed and asserted**, and develop an analysis of nominal ellipsis with gender mismatches in Greek.

1 Three Classes of Gendered Nouns

Three classes of M(asculine)-F(eminine) noun pairs in Greek with respect to nominal ellipsis with gender mismatches (Merchant 2014; see Bobaljik & Zocca 2011 for other languages).

		M→⟨F⟩	F→⟨M⟩
Class I	<i>adherfos-adherfi</i> (brother-sister)	*	*
Class II	<i>jatros</i> (doctor)	ok	ok
Class III	<i>dhaskalos-dhaskala</i> (teacher)	ok	*

- (1) a. *O Petros episkefthike enan **aderfo** tu sti Veria, ke mia ⟨aderfi⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.m brother his in.the Veria, and one.F sister in.the Katerini
(intended) 'Petros visited a brother of his in Veria, and a (sister) in Katerini.'¹
b. *O Petros episkefthike mia **aderfi** tu sti Veria, ke enan ⟨aderfo⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.f sister his in.the Veria, and one.m brother in.the Katerini
(intended) 'Petros visited a sister of his in Veria, and a (brother) in Katerini.'
- (2) a. O Petros episkefthike enan **jatros** sti Veria, ke mia ⟨jatro⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.m doctor in.the Veria, and one.f doctor in.the Katerini
'Petros visited a male doctor in Veria, and a female doctor in Katerini.'
b. O Petros episkefthike mia **jatros** sti Veria, ke enan ⟨jatro⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.f doctor in.the Veria, and one.m doctor in.the Katerini
'Petros visited a female doctor of his in Veria, and a male doctor in Katerini.'
- (3) a. O Petros episkefthike enan **dhaskalos** sti Veria, ke mia ⟨dhaskala⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.m teacher.m in.the Veria, and one.f teacher in.the Katerini
'Petros visited a male teacher in Veria, and a female teacher in Katerini.'
b. *O Petros episkefthike mia **dhaskala** sti Veria, ke enan ⟨dhaskalos⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.f teacher.f in.the Veria, and one.m teacher in.the Katerini
(intended) 'Petros visited a female teacher of his in Veria, and a male teacher in Katerini.'

(These examples are problematic for Merchant 2014, who claims that nominal ellipsis with a gender mismatch is unavailable across the board in an argument position; see Sudo & Spathas (ms))

We claim that these patterns are partly explained by the semantics of the gendered nouns: **Some genders are only presuppositional, others are both assertive (and presuppositional).**

- (4) a. $\llbracket \text{aderfos} \rrbracket = \lambda x_e. \text{male}(x) \wedge \text{sibling}(x)$
b. $\llbracket \text{aderfi} \rrbracket = \lambda x_e. \text{female}(x). \text{female}(x) \wedge \text{sibling}(x)$
- (5) $\llbracket \text{jatros} \rrbracket = \lambda x_e. \text{doctor}(x)$
- (6) a. $\llbracket \text{dhaskalos} \rrbracket = \lambda x_e. \text{teacher}(x)$
b. $\llbracket \text{dhaskala} \rrbracket = \lambda x_e. \text{female}(x). \text{female}(x) \wedge \text{teacher}(x)$

Class II nouns and **Class III masculine nouns** don't have any gender specification. This is independently motivated by the **unmarkedness** of these nouns relative to their feminine counterparts:

- Masculine plural nouns in Class II and III can refer to mixed gender groups.
- Negative existentials with Class II and III masculine nouns include both genders.

- (7) a. Mono o Petros ine **aderfos** tu Jani.
only the Petros is brother the.gen Janis.gen
'Only Petros is a brother of Janis.'
⇒ Maria is not Janis's sister.
b. Mono i Maria ine **aderfi** tu Jani.
only the Maria is sister the.gen Janis.gen
'Only Maria is a sister of Janis.'
⇒ Petros is not Janis's brother.
- (8) a. Mono o Petros ine kalos **jatros**.
only the Petros is good.m doctor
'Only Petros is a good doctor.'
⇒ Maria is not a good doctor.
b. Mono i Maria ine kali **jatros**.
only the Maria is good.f doctor
'Only Maria is a good doctor.'
⇒ Petros is not a good doctor.
- (9) a. Mono o Petros ine **dhaskalos**.
only the Petros is teacher.m
'Only Petros is a teacher.'
⇒ Maria is not a good teacher.
b. Mono i Maria ine **dhaskala**.
only the Maria is teacher.f
'Only Maria is a teacher.'
⇒ Petros is not a good teacher.

3 Maximize Presupposition and Ellipsis

Our semantics (5) and (6) do not account for:

- (12) *I Maria ine kalos **jatros**. the Maria is good.m doctor
(13) *I Maria ine **dhaskalos**. the Maria is teacher.m

Following previous literature, we analyse these data as violating the pragmatic principle **Maximize Presupposition (MP)**, which forces the use of the feminine form whenever possible (Percus 2006, Sauerland 2008, a.o.; cf. Heim 1991).

We claim that (3) is accounted for by assuming that **MP only targets overt material**.

- (14) **Maximize Presupposition (MP):**
S is infelicitous in (local) context c if $\exists S'$ such that:
a. The presuppositions triggered by overt items in S' are stronger than the presuppositions triggered by overt items in S; and
b. the presuppositions of S' are satisfied in c.

We analyse the elided noun in (3) is actually identical to the antecedent, and hence involves a **gender mismatch**, as in (15). The non-elliptical version of (15a) is ruled out by MP.

- (15) a. O Petros episkefthike enan **dhaskalos** sti Veria, ke mia ⟨dhaskala⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.m teacher.m in.the Veria, and one.f in.the Katerini
'Petros visited a male teacher in Veria, and a female teacher in Katerini.'
b. #O Petros episkefthike mia **dhaskala** sti Veria, ke enan ⟨dhaskalos⟩ stin Katerini.
the Petros visited one.f teacher.f in.the Veria, and one.m in.the Katerini
(intended) 'Petros visited a female teacher of his in Veria, and a male teacher in Katerini.'

A nice prediction of this account is that when nominal ellipsis occurs in a focus construction, the unmarkedness of the elided masculine noun shows up.

- (16) I perisoteri apo emas den ehun **dhaskalos** stin Katerini...
the more from us not have teacher.m in.the Katerini
'Most of us don't have a teacher in Katerini.'
a. Mono i Maria exi mia ⟨dhaskalos⟩.
only the Maria has one.f
'Only Maria has one.'
⇒ The rest don't have male or female teacher.
b. Mono i Maria exi mia **dhaskala**.
only the Maria has one.f teacher.f
'Only Maria has a female teacher.'
⇒ The rest don't have male or female teacher.

2 Gendered Nouns in Focus Constructions

- (7)–(9) suggest that φ -**presuppositions are ignored in focus alternatives**, but assertions are not (Spathas 2010, Jacobson 2012), giving independent support for our semantics. (Similar observations are made with superlatives)
- It is furthermore known that φ -**presuppositions are ignored under ellipsis**, but not assertions (Fiengo & May 1994).
(10) a. John did **his** homework. Mary didn't ⟨do her homework⟩.
b. John is a phonologist. *But Mary isn't ⟨a linguist⟩.
- Then, the lexical entries (4)–(5) account for the behaviour of **Class I nouns** and **Class II nouns** under nominal ellipsis, (1)–(2).
- So, **the problem is the asymmetric nature of Class III nouns**, (3), because ellipsis is usually not licensed under asymmetric entailment.
(11) a. John invited two phonologists. *Mary invited four ⟨linguists⟩.
b. John invited two linguists. *Mary invited four ⟨phonologists⟩.
- (8b) and (9b) also show that φ -features on other exponents (e.g. D, A) are only pre-suppositional (cf. Sauerland 2003) (see also (16)).

4 Natural vs. Grammatical Gender

Our analysis relies on the assumption that agreement mismatches within a DP are tolerated. However, grammatical gender behaves differently in this regard, as in (17).

- (17) *I Eleni ine **ena kalo koritsi**, ala i Maria ine mia kakia ⟨koritsi⟩.
the Eleni is a.n good.n girl.n, but the Maria is a.f bad.f girl
(intended) 'Eleni is a good girl, but Maria is a bad one.'

The ungrammaticality of this example does not follow from our account so far. Our tentative hypothesis is that **syntax forces DP-internal agreement with grammatical gender**. This presupposes that grammatical and natural gender have different status in syntax (cf. Alexiadou 2004, Kramer 2014).

Selected References:

- Bobaljik & Zocca (2011) Gender markedness: the anatomy of a counter-example. *Morphology*.
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