

## DIALECTAL VARIATION IN VERBAL ASPECT

1. While a very considerable amount of work has been published on the phonology and morphology of individual dialects of Modern Greek and while considerable attention has been paid to such inter-dialectal variation as involves these two components of the language, yet little appears to be known about syntactic variation, with the exception of certain fairly salient features such as the use in northern Greek of the accusative case for the genitive found generally elsewhere ( $\nu\acute{\alpha}$   $\sigma\acute{\epsilon}$   $\pi\acute{\omega}$  etc.)<sup>1</sup>. There is a particular one very important phenomenon highly characteristic of Modern Greek which has, as far as I can judge, never been investigated from the dialectological standpoint—the phenomenon of verbal aspect or that grammatical rule system which obligatorily assigns to all finite verb forms either the feature ‘perfective’ (as in what are traditionally labelled the ‘aorist indicative’, ‘aorist subjunctive’, and ‘punctual future’) or its ‘imperfective’ counterpart (as in the ‘present’ and ‘imperfect indicative’, the ‘continuous subjunctive’ and the ‘continuous future’). It is of course clear that aspectual choice does not depend on purely grammatical factors and that in most instances semantic considerations play a crucial role; that is, there is an intuitively clear sense in which, while the imperfective aspect of the subordinate verb in  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\iota\sigma\epsilon$   $\nu\acute{\alpha}$   $\mu\iota\lambda\acute{\alpha}\epsilon\iota$  may be claimed to be syntactically determined by the rules prohibiting a perfective selection after phasal verbs, the  $\mu\iota\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon$  of  $\delta\tau\alpha\nu$   $\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$   $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\delta\alpha$   $\mu\iota\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon$  is selected in preference to the  $\mu\iota\lambda\eta\sigma\epsilon$  with which it is in this case in paradigmatic opposition because of the message conveyed (roughly to the effect that the talking extended over a stretch of time enclosing the point at which I saw the individual in question).

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1. I am grateful to the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation for the award of a Fellowship enabling me to devote the academic year 1974-75 to the study of Modern Greek verbal aspect, and to the Canada Council for enabling me to continue this research in the Fall of 1978 in Greece and Cyprus. My thanks are also due to the staff and students of the First and Second Gymnasias, Paphos, Cyprus, and of the Linguistics Seminar, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki.

In cases such as that just cited the factors underlying particular choices are relatively easy to indentify and describe, but there is one class of structure in which there appears to be widespread interpersonal variation of a type which does not lend itself to an entirely obvious analysis in terms of semantic, let alone syntactic determinants. I refer to structures in which the modal verbs *μπορῶ* and *πρέπει* or others with similar meaning such as *ἐπιτρέπω*, *ἀφήνω*, *ἀναγκάζω*, *καταφέρνω* introduce a *νὰ* clause, and in which there is overt or covert reference to the frequency of mentioned events. For instance, in the following items if a given group of speakers is asked to select what they deem to represent the most appropriate aspectual choice, responses will be found to be about equally split:

- (1) Καταφέρνω πάντα νὰ ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς.
- (2) Ἡ κυβέρνηση ἀφήνει πάντα τίς κοπέλλες νὰ παντρεύονται/παντρευτοῦν μικρές.
- (3) Τὰ πλούσια παιδιά μποροῦν πάντα νὰ τελειώνουν/τελειώσουν τὸ πανεπιστήμιο.

If it is in fact the case that aspectual choice is subject to dialectal, as well as to nondialectal interpersonal variation, it would appear that structures of this type might provide a suitable starting point for the investigation of such variation. A preliminary examination of the question was carried out in the autumn of 1978. A series of questionnaires containing items such as the above was administered to groups of respondents in Thessaloniki and Paphos, Cyprus. The purpose of the present paper is to report and attempt to analyse the responses obtained from 79 final year students at the First and Second Gymnasia of Paphos in October 1978, and from a group of 44 students at the University of Thessaloniki during the following month. Respondents were asked to underline in each sentence the form which they regarded as more natural for the particular context; they were also given the option of underlining both forms where they seemed equally natural or of marking the item with an interrogation mark where neither seemed well-formed. There were 153 items in the version of the questionnaire used in Paphos and these were pruned down to 100 in that used in Thessaloniki. However those items which seemed to provide the main evidence of interdialectal variation turned out to be 16 in number and they are listed here with the proportion of respondents who chose the perfective ('aorist subjunctive') in Paphos ('P') and Thessaloniki ('T'). In calculating the scores one point

was assigned when the perfective alone was underlined, and half a point where both forms selected, then these points were summed and divided by the total number of items.

	P	T
(4) Πρέπει πάντα να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.07	.01
(5) Δεν πρέπει ποτέ να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.16	.40
(6) Καταφέρνω πάντα να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.10	.07
(7) Δεν καταφέρνω ποτέ να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.38	.79
(8) 'Η μάνα μου μ' αφήνει πάντα να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.12	.09
(9) 'Η μάνα μου δέ μ' αφήνει ποτέ να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.54	.70
(10) Μπορώ πάντα να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.13	.07
(11) Δεν μπορώ ποτέ να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω ναυρίς.	.58	.95
(12) Οί κοπέλλες πρέπει πάντα να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.16	.02
(13) Οί κοπέλλες δεν πρέπει ποτέ να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.15	.12
(14) Οί κοπέλλες καταφέρνουν πάντα να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.23	.22
(15) Οί κοπέλλες δεν καταφέρνουν ποτέ να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.62	.75
(16) 'Η κυβέρνηση αφήνει πάντα τις κοπέλλες να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.36	.23
(17) 'Η κυβέρνηση δεν αφήνει ποτέ τις κοπέλλες να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.55	.48
(18) Οί κοπέλλες μπορούν πάντα να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.37	.25
(19) Οί κοπέλλες δεν μπορούν ποτέ να παντρεύονται/παντρευτούν μικρές.	.71	.85

A casual glance at the above data will indicate that there are some quite striking differences in the scores for our two groups of speakers, and it is the purpose of this paper to identify and account for the divergences. However, the sometimes widely different figures should not obscure the quite remarkable similarities.

(a) In both groups there is close agreement as to the relative effect of the main verbs; if we consider the first eight items, which refer to habitual action, we note that in the positive sentences in both groups perfective responses were elicited with generally increasing frequency as we move from *πρέπει* to *καταφέρνω*, *αφήνω* and *μπορώ*. Furthermore,

we find exactly the same ordering in the negative counterparts; this agreement is striking, and must surely dispell any suspicion that the results of this type of enquiry are due to purely random factors. Although the reason for the observed ordering is not completely clear to me, it would appear that it follows the principle (to be examined in more detail later) that a perfective choice is increasingly likely with event rarity. For instance we may assume that while *πρέπει πάντα να ξυπνώ νωρίς* implies that the subject in fact does wake early every day, the use of *μπορώ* may indicate that the subject's ability to wake early is not necessarily always implemented. By the same token we would expect *καταφέρνω πάντα* to favour an imperfective choice more frequently than *μπορώ πάντα* in so far as it belongs to that class of verbs which are referred to in modern linguistics as 'implicative', and which are such that any temporal adverbial qualifying them must also be applicable to their complement verb. Thus *καταφέρνω πάντα να ξυπνώ νωρίς* implies *πάντα ξυπνώ νωρίς*. The generic items (12) to (19) do not show quite the same degree of consistency but the differences would not appear to be significant.

(b) The positive generic sentences in both groups are more likely to favour a perfective choice than the corresponding habituais.

(c) The sentences with *ποτέ* are more likely in both groups to elicit a perfective response than the corresponding ones with *πάντα*. To make the data for observations (b) and (c) more perspicuous let us ignore the varying effect of *μπορώ*, *πρέπει*, *καταφέρνω* and *άφήνω* and average out the scores for each set of four sentences characterizable as 'habitual, πάντα' (4,6,8,10), 'habitual, ποτέ' (5,7,9,11), 'generic, πάντα' (12,14,16,18) and 'generic, ποτέ' (13,15,17,19). The scores are then as in *Table 1*.

	<i>Paphos</i>		<i>Thessaloniki</i>	
	Habitual	Generic	Habitual	Generic
<i>πάντα</i>	.11	.28	.06	.18
<i>ποτέ</i>	.42	.51	.71	.55

*Table 1.* The frequencies of perfective selection in various sentence frames.

We notice on casual inspection of *Table I* that the effect of habitual in relation to generic sentences is roughly comparable in both groups. For positive sentences generics are roughly three times more likely to

elicit perfective responses than are habituals; for the *ποτέ* items the results appear puzzling; however, we may note at this point that the irregularity appears to reside in the considerably higher score of .71 for the habituals in the Thessaloniki group. It may be noted in passing that the comparison made here is between habitual nongenerics and nonhabitual generics; that is, the generic sentences here discussed involve a verb phrase *παντρεύομαι μικρή* which refers to an action performable once only in the lifetime of an individual (women may remarry but the expression in question would not normally be applied to marriages other than the first). But, as may be expected, when comparison is made between a nongeneric and generic sentence involving a phrase applicable to a given individual on an indefinite number of occasions, the generic is found to elicit more imperfective responses. For example more informants have been found to choose imperfective in *οί νησιώτες μπορούν πάντα να ξυπνήσουν/ξυπνήσουν νωρίς* than in *έγώ μπορώ πάντα να ξυπνώ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς*.

By far the most striking difference between the two groups involves the effect of replacing *πάντα* by *ποτέ*. Thus, for the Paphos group the score for habitual sentences goes up from .11 to .42, representing a factor of about 4; for the Thessaloniki group the corresponding factor is about 12 (from .06 to .71). There are grounds for believing that this difference is by no means random but reflects a deepseated source of variation, both interpersonal and interdialectal, and the remainder of this paper is devoted to the problems posed by it.

2. Let us turn first briefly to certain theoretical points of aspectology relevant to our data. The item *πάντα* belongs to a wide range of temporal adverbials which specify the relative (*συχνά, συνήθως, σπανίως*) or absolute (*μια φορά την εβδομάδα*) frequency of events. These expressions (which we shall term 'rate expressions') have as their most important syntactic feature that they cooccur only with imperfective verbs. Thus sentences such as *\*συνήθως ήρθε στις 7, \*μιας επισκέφτηκε μια φορά την εβδομάδα* are unacceptable to virtually all speakers. However, as illustrated in sentences (14) to (19) these rate expressions may occur freely in sentences containing a main verb + sentential object consisting of *να* + complement verb phrase; then the question arises as to which of the two verbs the rate expressions modifies. For instance in *άποφάσιζα να την επισκεφθώ κάθε Σάββατο* the *κάθε Σάββατο* must of necessity modify the *άποφάσιζα* so that the sense is 'what I did every Saturday was to decide to visit her', while *άποφάσισα να τη επισκέπτομαι κάθε Σάββατο* would mean rather

'what I decided to do was to visit her every Saturday', with the *κάθε Σάββατο* modifying *επισκέπτομαι*. In *ἀποφάσισα νὰ τὴν ἐπισκεφτῶ κάθε Σάββατο* the adverbial cannot modify either verb, so that the sentence is not acceptable. The fourth possibility concerns cases in which both verbs are in the imperfective aspect, and it is here that ambiguity arises. For instance *ἀποφάσιζα νὰ τὴν ἐπισκέπτομαι κάθε Σάββατο* could mean either 'what I decided every Saturday was to visit (or be visiting) her' or 'what I was deciding was to visit her every Saturday'. Therefore when a respondent is asked to perform the task imposed by the questionnaire (that is, to assign what he regards as the most appropriate aspect to a complement verb) he is in fact being asked to determine the most likely phrase structure of the sentence, and in particular to group the rate expression with one or the other of the two verbs; only when this is accomplished can he proceed to make the most suitable aspectual choice. For instance, when asked to select the most likely form in *προσπαθεῖ νὰ ἀυτοκτονεῖ/ἀυτοκτονήσει κάθε Πάσχα* he must first ask whether the most likely interpretation is that what the referent of the subject tries to do is to commit suicide every Easter, *προσπαθεῖ [νὰ ἀυτοκτονεῖ / ἀυτοκτονήσει κάθε Πάσχα]* or what he tries to do every Easter is to commit suicide, [*προσπαθεῖ νὰ ἀυτοκτονεῖ / ἀυτοκτονήσει*] *κάθε Πάσχα*. Because attempted suicide is repeatable but not its successful conclusion only the second parsing is possible; and because the rate expression is now disassociated from the subordinate clause (and suicide represents a momentary event, so that a progressive sense 'be committing suicide') is unlikely, the perfective *ἀυτοκτονήσει* will be selected. If the reader will consider items (4) to (19) with this point in mind he will note that the complement event is in all cases repeatable either in the sense that a given individual may participate in it an indefinite number of times (*ξυπνωῶ χωρίς*) or the subject at least on the generic interpretation refers to an open set of individuals (e.g. if *οἱ κοπέλλες* is read 'girls' rather than 'the girls'). (It may be added that in the Thessaloniki version of the questionnaire the subject phrase was expanded to *οἱ σημερινές κοπέλλες*, thus making a definite interpretation ('the girls who came today') particularly implausible).

Thus in the case of both the habitual sentences (items (4) to (11)) and the generic ones (12) to (19) the repeated event interpretation is virtually guaranteed and is strongly reinforced by the adverbials *πάντα* and *ποτέ*. This means that, in contrast to the *ἀυτοκτονεῖ/ἀυτοκτονήσει* case above, the sentences as they stand, with aspectual choice open,

are structurally ambiguous. Item (10) for instance, may be read either as *μπορῶ πάντα* [*νά ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς*], in which case either choice is possible, or as *μπορῶ πάντα* [*νά ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς*] in which case the selection of *ξυπνῶ* is automatic as *πάντα* obligatorily governs imperfective aspect in its verb. With regard to the *ποτέ* sentence corresponding to this (11), let us note first of all that *ποτέ* is quite compatible with an imperfective verb (e.g. *δὲν τὸν ἄκουα ποτέ* 'I never listened to him (on the occasions on which he spoke)'). The reason however for the striking increase in perfective responses when *ποτέ* replaces *πάντα* would appear to be not that *ποτέ*, if taken with the subordinate clause does not necessarily, as does *πάντα*, select imperfective, but that it is in fact impossible in the first place to take it with the subordinate clause; for were it to be so taken ('What I am able to do is to never wake early') we would have *μπορῶ νά μὴν ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω ποτέ νωρίς*. This means that the subordinate clause in (11) will automatically lack an overt rate expression so that there will be no motivation to obligatorily assign it imperfective aspect; in the *πάντα* form, on the contrary, the adverb, which invariably selects imperfective, may be taken quite readily with the subordinate clause. The claim implicit in this account is therefore that the observed variation in aspect assignment arises from the respondents' uncertainty as to the most appropriate parsing; however, it may be objected that the reason behind the predilection for the perfective in the case of *ποτέ* is not that it is automatically associated with the main verb, leaving the subordinate one open to either aspectual assignment but that even in simple sentences *ποτέ* differs from other rate expressions in allowing either perfective or imperfective. Thus *δὲν τὸν μάλωσα ποτέ* and *δὲν τὸν μάλωνα ποτέ* are both grammatical, while with *πάντα*, *συχνά*, *σπανίως*, *μιὰ φορά τὴν ἐβδομάδα* virtually all speakers accept only *μάλωνα*. As long as we confine our attention to *πάντα* and *ποτέ* this view does not lack plausibility. However, the questionnaire data I shall now present indicate that this cannot be the whole story.

The following questionnaire items illustrate the effect of rate expressions other than the 'conventional' quantifiers 'always' and 'never'.

	P	T
(20) Πάντα τὴν ἀφήνει ἡ μάνα της νά βγαίνει/βγῆ τὸ βράδυ	.16	.19
(21) Συχνά τὴν ἀφήνει ἡ μάνα της νά βγαίνει/βγῆ τὸ βράδυ	.26	.31
(22) Κάθε τόσο τὴν ἀφήνει ἡ μάνα της νά βγαίνει/βγῆ τὸ βράδυ	.19	.23
(23) Σπανίως τὴν ἀφήνει ἡ μάνα της νά βγαίνει/βγῆ τὸ βράδυ	.43	.66
(24) Ποτέ δὲν τὴν ἀφήνει ἡ μάνα της νά βγαίνει/βγῆ τὸ βράδυ	.36	.69

If we compare our two groups of respondents we again find a quite remarkable agreement in the matter of the *relative* effects of context; in the case of the Thessaloniki group the perfective is selected with increasing frequency as we move through the adverbials πάντα, κάθε τόσο, συχνά, σπανίως, ποτέ. The ordering for the Paphos group is πάντα, κάθε τόσο, συχνά, ποτέ, σπανίως. That is, the only difference lies in the relative ordering of σπανίως and ποτέ, and even this difference can hardly be regarded as significant. What is more interesting is that while both groups follow a general rule whereby imperfective is selected with increasing frequency as event frequency increase, for some reason while κάθε τόσο would seem intuitively to denote a lower frequency than συχνά it attracts more imperfective choices. This is puzzling, and perhaps due to the presence of κάθε, which suggests lack of exception (cf. κάθε μέρα), thus giving it a clear affinity to πάντα. In any case the virtual unanimity in the ranking is remarkable; the difference lies in the degree to which the adverbials make their presence felt. In the Thessaloniki group their effect is much more pronounced. Were we to graph the degree of event rarity against the proportion of perfective responses we would find the slope for our Thessaloniki speakers to be roughly twice as steep as for our Paphos informants.

3. It will be recalled that in the sort of structures under discussion rate expressions may be taken as modifying either the main verb, in which case the subordinate one may be in either aspect but preferentially in the perfective; or it may modify the subordinate verb, which will then be obligatorily imperfective. Thus one possible explanation for such putative interdialectal variation as we have noted may lie in the differential tendencies of rate expressions to influence what speakers perceive as the most likely passing <sup>1</sup>; a particular rate expression may then on the average be more likely to be taken, say, with the main verb in one dialect than in another. That is, a speaker who selects the perfective form in μπορῶ πάντα νά ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς has parsed the sentence in such a way that the πάντα is taken to modify the μπορῶ, while all or most speakers who select the imperfective take the πάντα with the subordinate verb. Moreover we have suggested that irrespective of dialect the chance that

1. For some discussion of this point see B. Newton and I. Veloudis, Necessity, Obligation and Modern Greek verbal aspect, *Lingua* 50 (1980) 25-43, and for a general account of the relative scope of modals and rate expressions, B. Newton, Scenarios, modality and verbal aspect in Greek, *Language* 55 (1979) 139-167.



a speaker will chose the first alternative (i.e. perfective) will increase as the events indicated are understood to occur more rarely. In fact there are further questionnaire data which may be construed as lending support to this hypothesis. For instance, in another questionnaire administered in 1978 to 88 students of the University of Athens items (25) and (26) were presented.

- (25) Ένας ζητιάνος τῆς Καλκούτας εἶναι τυχερός ἂν μπορεῖ νὰ τρώει/φάει κρέας μιὰ φορά τὸν μῆνα.  
 (26) Ὁ φίλος μου χρειάζεται πολλή πρωτεΐνη. Εὐτυχῶς ἔχει λεφτὰ καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ τρώει/φάει κρέας τρεῖς φορές τὴν ἡμέρα.

While 39% of the respondents selected the perfective in (25), which refers to a relatively rare event, only 15% made this choice in the second sentence, where the event is described as being frequent. The reason for this difference in informant response is not far to seek. The first sentence means that a beggar is lucky if he happens once a month to be in possession of sufficient funds to eat, an interpretation which requires that the rate expression modify the *μπορεῖ* rather than that he has a steady but low income which enables him to eat once a month at a time of his choosing. In the second case the referent of the subject is asserted to enjoy the permanent financial capacity to eat meat three times a day, so that the rate expression here modifies the subordinate verb. For some reason certain speakers are more influenced by this effect of relative event frequency than others.

The data from Thessaloniki and Paphos suggest that in addition to purely interpersonal variation there may be dialectal tendencies at work, and in particular that the 'relative frequency effect' is stronger in the mainland group. Consider the following examples.

- (27) Πρέπει πάντα νὰ εἶμαι στὴ δουλειά μου ἀπὸ τὶς 7. Εὐτυχῶς μπορῶ πάντα νὰ ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς.  
 (28) Σπανίως χρειάζεται νὰ εἶμαι στὴ δουλειά μου πρὶν ἀπ' τὶς 7. Ἀλλὰ ἐὰν τύχει καὶ χρειαστεῖ, μπορῶ πάντα νὰ ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω νωρίς.

For the first item the scores were not significantly different (Paphos 9%, Thessaloniki 12%) but for the second, 'rare event' sentence, while the Paphos group selected the perfective in 38% of cases, the corresponding figure for Thessaloniki was 57%. We note again, that for common events there is virtual unanimity; the rate expression is taken by both

groups with the subordinate verb. It is in the sentences marking rarity of occurrence that the difference shows up. Thessaloniki speakers are significantly more likely to take into account considerations of frequency. Or again, consider the following two items:

(29) 'Η μάνα μου μ' ἀφήνει πάντα νά κοιμᾶμαι/κοιμηθῶ μετὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα.

(30) 'Η μάνα μου δὲν μ' ἀφήνει ποτὲ νά κοιμᾶμαι/κοιμηθῶ πρὶν τὰ μεσάνυχτα.

As our observations thus far might predict, in both groups the perfective *κοιμηθῶ* was selected for item (29) by relatively few informants (Paphos 24%, Thessaloniki 27%). In the second case, while 56% of the Paphos informants selected *κοιμηθῶ*, the score for our Thessaloniki group went up to 73%. It is interesting to note that these two sentences, although they elicit significantly different aspectual choices are, if not synonymous, clearly truth-functionally equivalent (i.e. each implies the other, as to be always allowed to perform an action after time *t* is never to be forced to perform it before *t*, at least in the 'forbear' sense of 'allow').

A rather interesting set of results involving rate expressions and *μπορῶ* was provided by items (31) to (33).

(31) Συχνά δὲν μπορῶ νά ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω πρὶν ἀπ' τὶς 6. (P .69, T .82).

(32) Σπανίως μπορῶ νά ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω πρὶν ἀπ' τὶς 6. (P .68, T .80).

(33) Δὲν μπορῶ συχνά νά ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω πρὶν ἀπ' τὶς 6. (P .31, T .55).

Items (31) and (32) elicited remarkably similar response patterns, with the Thessaloniki group showing a somewhat more pronounced preference in both cases for perfective, presumably, at least in the case of (32), which unambiguously describes the event of waking at 6 as rare, a result of the 'relative frequency effect', always as we have seen, more noticeable with this group. What is interesting is that the virtually identical score patterns for the two items reflect what by no means constitutes synonymy. The first sentence states that the speaker is often unable to wake before 6 while the second asserts that he is rarely able to do so. To show that the sentences are not in fact synonymous we have merely to point out that the first may be continued with *καὶ συχνά μπορῶ*, while the addition of this to (32) would result in a blatant contradiction. For (33) there is a much wider difference of opinion between two groups. Although it is by no means obvious why this should be so one suggestion might be that while the interpretations of both (31) and (32) are to all intents and purpose univocal, (33) is open to two quite distinct readings

corresponding to the parsings (a) δὲν μπορῶ συχνά [νὰ ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω πρὶν ἅπ' τὶς 6], and (b) δὲν μπορῶ [συχνά νὰ ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω πρὶν ἅπ' τὶς 6]. While (a) is equivalent in meaning to (32), and means 'it rarely happens that I am able to wake before 6', (b) has a sense different both from this and from that of (31); it seems to indicate that for me to wake frequently before 6 is something of which I am incapable. That is, while (31) mentions the frequency with which the subject is incapable of a particular act and (32) the frequency with which he is capable of it, so that in both cases the ability itself is described as being present at discontinuous stretches of time, (33) on interpretation (b) treats the capacity itself as a permanent trait, and only its implementation (i.e. the events of waking before 6) as scattered along the time dimension. Alternatively, rather than taking the μπορῶ to refer to a permanent trait, we may assign it a deontic sense ('I have standing permission to wake often before 6'). In either case it is the waking itself rather than the ability whose rate of occurrence is specified by the συχνά. And, as we have observed, rate expressions such as συχνά obligatorily select imperfective aspect in the verb they modify. Thus an obvious explanation of the disparity in the responses to (33) is that the Paphos informants select interpretation (b), in which the temporal adverbial is taken with the subordinate verb, more frequently than does the Thessaloniki group. Assuming our samples to be typical we may even attempt a rough calculation of the proportion of (b) interpretations in each group. If we assume that roughly 70% of informants will select perfective for the (a) reading (i.e. that in which (33) is synonymous with (32)) and all who choose the (b) reading will select imperfective, the reader can easily convince himself that of the Paphos group, 4/7 or 57% must have assigned interpretation (b), while the corresponding figure for the Thessaloniki group would be 3/14, or only 21%<sup>1</sup>.

It may doubtless be objected that exact computations of the above type cannot be borne by the limited samples presented. The objection is well-taken; but the point of the discussion is not to come up with figures so much as to identify trends, and from this point of view the three sentences just discussed are very suggestive. For we began by

1. That is, the 57% of the Paphos group who supposedly chose the (b) interpretation, in which the συχνά qualifies ξυπνῶ/ξυπνήσω will in all cases select imperfective. The other 43% who take συχνά with μπορῶ will select perfective in 70% of cases.  $.7 \times .43$  gives roughly .3, the actual perfective score for this item. Similarly, for the Thessaloniki group  $.7 \times (1 - .21)$  gives roughly the reported 55% perfective response.

observing that of two regionally distinct groups of speakers of modern Greek one, consisting of students at the University of Thessaloniki, had a marked tendency to select a perfective verb in the subordinate clause of sentences containing a modal and rate expression when the rate expression indicated relative rarity; in a second group, consisting of high school students in Cyprus, although perfective selections again increased in rough proportion to event rarity, the effect was much less marked. The suggestion was made that variation in the frames discussed stems from alternative parsing in that those construals in which the rate expression is taken with the subordinate verb will automatically assign imperfective aspect to the latter, while a perfective choice implies that the respondent has taken the rate expression with the modal. The comparison of our two groups would therefore imply that where alternative parsings are possible dialectal tendencies may play some role in the individual speaker's decision. An examination of the responses to items (31), (32) and (33) may be taken to provide a confirmation of this. For it can surely be no accident that speakers of the Thessaloniki group not only (a) display more markedly what we have term the 'relative frequency effect', but also in cases where alternative parsings are correlated to considerable semantic differences, will choose that in which the rate expression modifies the main rather than the subordinate verb. The connection must presumably lie in the general preference of certain speakers, partly under the influence of dialectal trends, to associate rate expressions with modal verbs rather than their complements.

Let us note in conclusion that variation of the type mentioned in this paper is by no means of recent origin in the history of Greek. One need only mention, for instance, the hesitation between ἔξεστι τῷ σαββάτῳ θεραπεῦσαι ἡ οὐ; (Luke 14.3) and εἰ ἔξεστι τοῖς σάββασι θεραπεύειν; (Mathew 12.10). The first may be construed as taking the rate expression τῷ σαββάτῳ with the modal ἔξεστι while in the second case it appears to go rather with θεραπεύειν<sup>1</sup>. In arguing for the historical continuity of the Greek language it is normal to appeal to categorical features; what we may also point out is that areas of variation may also persist. What we are able to do in the case of the modern language far more easily is to investigate the dialectal basis for certain types of variation by actually eliciting informant responses. It would be interesting to collate data of the type

1. Brian Newton, Habitual aspect in Ancient and Modern Greek, *Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 5 (1979) 29-41.

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presented above from a much wider range of regional (and perhaps social) dialects in order to adumbrate some 'dialect atlas' of aspectual usage; but the purpose of this article has been simply to suggest that such interdialectal variation exists and that it may be described given an appropriate theoretical framework.

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