

Papers of the Linguistic Society of Belgium

19 | 2025

Patterns of intensification with prefixes/prefixoids in Modern Greek taboo nouns

Eva Sissamperi

University of Patras

URL: <https://sites.uclouvain.be/bkl-cbl/en/journals/papers-of-the-lsb/volume-19-2025/sissamperi>

Electronic reference:

Sissamperi, Eva (2025). Patterns of intensification with prefixes/prefixoids in Modern Greek taboo nouns. In Lobke Ghesquière, Tiffany Jandrain, Charlène Meyers and Gudrun Vanderbauwhede (eds.), *Papers of the Linguistic Society of Belgium* [online] 19, 52-71. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61430/WSWU7528>

Patterns of intensification with prefixes/prefixoids in Modern Greek taboo nouns

Eva Sissamperi

University of Patras

This paper deals with the patterns of prefixes and prefixoids that indicate intensification of the meaning of the base in Modern Greek taboo nouns. I present the methodology used for the collection of my dataset that was analyzed for the aim of the paper, and the features of the intensifying elements attested with Modern Greek taboo nouns. I argue that there are various patterns with intensifying prefixes/prefixoids regarding the number and combinations of elements. I also show that there is a graphemic variation in the spelling of these structures.

1. Introduction

In Modern Greek, several affixes and affixoids that express a high degree (intensification) of the meaning of the base are attested (cf. Christopoulou 2016; Efthymiou 2015; Gavriilidou 2016). These elements can be attached to taboo words, that is, words that are emotionally arousing and negatively valenced, because through them, speakers express their emotions and transmit feelings to others that can cause harm (Jay 2009: 153-154; Jay 2018: 54), e.g., *arxi-karióla* INT-slut ‘extreme slut’, *píst-aros* faggot-INT ‘extreme faggot’. Affixation in these structures can be considered a strategy for expressing qualitative evaluation, as speakers assess someone or something based on subjective, individual criteria (Grandi 2017; Grandi and Körtvélyessy 2015: 9-10). When intensifying affixes are attached to bases of taboo vocabulary, the notion of offensiveness is increased (Christopoulou et al. 2022).

This paper aims to present different patterns of combinations of prefixes and prefixoids (intermediate category between stems and prefixes) used for

intensification with Modern Greek taboo nouns.¹ To the best of my knowledge, there is no previous extensive research on this topic, namely, on the accumulation of intensifying prefixes/prefixoids with taboo nouns, as previous studies have mostly focused on the properties of the individual intensifying elements both in general and taboo vocabulary.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, the definition and characteristics of intensification and taboo words are presented, both cross-linguistically and in Modern Greek. In Section 3, the sources and methods for collecting intensifying elements and data are presented. In section 4, an analysis of these elements is carried out, as regards their morphological and semantic properties. In the same section, patterns of combinations are presented and analyzed, regarding the number of intensifying elements, the different strategies of accumulation, and the variation of specific characteristics in combinations. Finally, section 5 includes a discussion of the results of the study and a conclusion regarding the future steps of the research.

2. The notion of intensification and taboo words

Intensification refers to the expression of a high degree and, more specifically, to the increase of quality (very/extremely X), so it has an upward direction (Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994: 416; Hendrikx 2019; Hendrikx et al. 2024; Rainer 2015: 1340). Intensification constitutes a semantic function of evaluative morphology (approximation, diminution, augmentation, etc.) and is expressed through several formal strategies such as affixation, compounding, and reduplication (Grandi 2017). In this paper, intensification has a qualitative meaning with the semantic primitives of Good/Bad. According to this function, a speaker assesses his/her feelings and evaluates an item based on subjective/individual criteria (Grandi 2017; Grandi and Körtvélyessy 2015: 9-10).

From a morphological perspective, affixes/affixoids that are used for the expression of intensification constitute evaluative affixes/affixoids (prefixes/prefixoids and suffixes) (Grandi 2017). Indicatively, intensification can be expressed through prefixation, e.g., *hyper-power* INT-power in English (Andor 2005), and suffixation, e.g., *bell-issimo* bello-INT ‘very beautiful’ < bello ‘beautiful’ in Italian (Grandi 2017).

Several linguists have conducted research on evaluative morphology and intensification through affixation in Modern Greek. Some studies address evaluative affixes that denote intensification and are attached to verbs and

¹ The parameters that determine the position and ordering of elements within combinations lie beyond the scope of the present study.

adjectives (Efthymiou 2015, 2017), and others focus only on intensifying prefixes/prefixoids (Gavriilidou 2016). Other studies include the intensifying function of certain elements, beyond their augmentative meaning (cf. Minas 1978).

In Modern Greek, intensification is realized through several morphological strategies. More specifically, an intensifying structure can be realized through the addition of a prefix (see subsection 4.1), e.g., *kata-kurázo* INT-tire ‘(to) tire completely’, or a prefixoid (see subsection 4.1), e.g., *theó-ftoxos* INT-poor ‘completely poor’. Intensification is also realized through the addition of suffixes (Ralli 2022: 218), e.g., *kleft-arás* thief-INT ‘extreme thief’.²

Modern Greek taboo words have been analyzed in several studies that focus on different aspects of their linguistic behavior. Some examine their semantic and pragmatic function (Kamilaki et al. 2016; Xydopoulos 2008), others apply a lexicographic approach (cf. Efthymiou et al. 2014). Taboo words, which are also known as swear words, curses, vulgarity, obscenity, etc., diverge from non-taboo words, since their use provokes emotional arousal and negative feelings (Jay 2018: 54). In English, taboo words can refer to female genitalia (e.g., *cunt*) or religion (e.g., *goddamn*) (Jay 2018: 54). Taboo words are very often intensified. For example, taboo words can also obtain an intensive function with the addition of an affix, e.g. *de-fuckin-fence* de-INT-fence < defence in English Slang where an expletive infix (affix is inserted in the middle of the word) is added (Mattiello 2008: 123).

Intensification in Modern Greek taboo words has been studied in various studies, mostly focusing on augmentative affixes (cf. Christopoulou 2016) or pejorative elements (e.g., *palio-*, *skato-*) functioning as intensifiers when attached to bases of taboo vocabulary (cf. Kallergi et al. 2023). Other studies deal with the semantic interpretation of taboo words and the degree of offensiveness when combined with evaluative affixes (cf. Christopoulou et al. 2022). Intensification in Modern Greek taboo words can be expressed by several morphological means, such as the addition of a prefix, e.g., *iper-malákas* INT-jerk ‘extreme wanker’, or a prefixoid, e.g., *palio-skrófa* INT-bitch ‘extreme bitch’, or a suffix, e.g., *pust-ára* faggot-INT ‘extreme faggot’. Intensification can also be realized in several parts of speech, like verbs, e.g., *kse-xézo* INT-poo ‘I’m cursing someone out intensely’ < *xézo* ‘LIT to poo’ adjectives, e.g., *kara-γamáτος* INT-awesome ‘very awesome’, participles, e.g., *tri-γamiménos* INT-fucked ‘extremely fucked’, and nouns, e.g., *arxi-putána* INT-whore ‘extreme whore’.

² In order to maintain clarity in the presentation, inflectional morphemes are not indicated, as they are not directly relevant to the present analysis.

This paper presents the affixational patterns through which intensification is realized in Modern Greek taboo nouns by approaching the topic from a morphological perspective.

3. Research methodology

3.1 *Collection of intensifying prefixes/prefixoids*

At the first stage of my research, I collected all the elements analyzed in literature as intensifying elements, besides their other meanings. More specifically, the sources included Grammars of Modern Greek (Eleftheriades 1993; Mackridge 1985), printed and online Dictionaries (Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek,³ and Babiniotis 2008's Dictionary of Modern Greek), as well as studies on prefixoids, intensification, augmentation, pejoration, and taboo vocabulary in Modern Greek (Giannouloupoulou 2003; Gavriilidou 2016, Efthymiou 2015, 2017; Minas 1978; Kallergi et al. 2023; Kamilaki et al. 2016; Christopoulou 2016). The elements collected are attached to various parts of speech (e.g., verbs, adjectives, nouns, participles), and primarily to bases that belong to the general vocabulary.

At the second stage, I retained only those elements that combine with nouns and form words belonging to the taboo vocabulary. To compile the final list of intensifying elements that are attached to nouns within the taboo vocabulary, in addition to the aforementioned literature, I also drew on sources such as Sketch Engine (elTenTen19), the website for the Greek Slang 'slang.gr', as well as social media platforms (e.g., X formerly Twitter, Facebook), and Google.gr. Thus, I compiled a final list of intensifying elements, including both more and less productive constituents following the previous literature, and excluded elements that are no longer productive in Modern Greek, such as prefixes from Ancient Greek (e.g., *περι-* [peri-] 'very'). Due to space limitations, the complete list of elements will not be presented in the present paper; only those elements found in the dataset will be presented and analyzed in the next chapter.⁴

3.2 *Collection of combinations of intensifying prefixes/prefixoids*

The collection of intensifying structures, e.g., combinations of intensifying prefixes and prefixoids with nouns belonging to the taboo vocabulary in Modern Greek, was compiled exclusively through online sources from February to August

³ Online edition:

https://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?lq=

⁴ See also the Appendix of the present paper for a complete presentation of my dataset.

2024. Data sources included social media platforms (e.g., X formerly Twitter, Facebook), the search engine Google.gr, websites with sexual, sport-related, and news content, as well as the online dictionary for Greek Slang 'slang.gr. The exclusive focus on online sources was due to the absence of the targeted structures in printed lexicographic or academic material. Selected sources are characterized by a low degree of formality, as they provide spaces where users tend to express themselves freely, often employing taboo vocabulary with ease. The same combinations were also checked on corpora containing edited text, such as Sketch Engine.gr (elTenTen19). However, this search gave scarce results for the structures that I was looking for.

Data collection was conducted through the 'morpheme by morpheme' method (cf. Manova and Winternitz 2011: 121). This means that each element was selected individually and was combined with the rest of the elements of the set in turn. For example, the element *arxi-* was taken, and all possible combinations with it as the first element were searched, such as *arxi-arxi-*, *arxi-kara-*, *arxi-kata-*, and so on. This process was carried out with the help of the concordance table that was created, in which elements were registered vertically and horizontally, forming a guide to find possible combinations. In other words, 841 searches were carried out.

Google search allows for the retrieval of data through the 'morpheme by morpheme' method and often directs users to specific websites that contain informal or sexual content, as well as to various social media platforms, such as Facebook. On 'X', we also find several structures of taboo words. I assume this happens because users can hide behind their anonymity and express their feelings about people and situations freely. Most data comes from 'X', which is the only social media platform that allows the search for either of individual elements or combinations of them and provides a timestamp for each post that indicates when a given structure appears. This option gives an indication of the frequency of a specific structure.

Not all structures encountered during data collection met the criteria of the present study and were therefore excluded from the final dataset. Specifically, some combinations of intensifying elements were found attached to bases that were not nouns, for example, verbs, e.g., *kara-iper-spévdo* INT-INT-rush '(to) rush excessively', or to bases drawn from the general vocabulary of Modern Greek rather than the taboo vocabulary, e.g., *paliokato istorikós* INT-INT-historian 'shitty/fucking historian'.

4. Data analysis

4.1 Prefixes and prefixoids analysis

Prefixes belong to the category of bound morphemes, that is, they cannot appear independently in phrases and need to be combined with other morphemes. These elements are placed before the base and create derived words, participating in the process of derivation; they have an abstract meaning conveying a grammatical function (Ralli 2022: 54-57; Stevens 2005: 72).

Prefixoids constitute a special category of bound morphemes that originate from independent words and constitute an allomorph of these words (Giannouloupoulou 2003). These elements are in the process of grammaticalization, so they gradually acquire a grammatical function, abandoning their lexical status and standing between the category of stems and that of prefixes (Amiot and Dugas 2020: 17-18; Van Goethem 2020). They have undergone semantic reanalysis since their semantic meaning is bleaching and is more abstract than their lexemic correspondent (Ralli 2020; Stevens 2005: 73), e.g., *theó-kufos* INT-deaf ‘completely deaf’, *theo-* ‘very’ < *theós* ‘God’.

The intensifying elements under examination can be classified into two categories based on their semantic properties: bona fide intensifiers, which consistently convey intensification (e.g., *arxi-*, *iper-*),⁵ and pejorative intensifiers, which function as intensifiers specifically when attached to bases of taboo vocabulary (cf. Kallergi et al. 2023) (e.g., *palio-*, *skato-*) (see also the analysis below). Bona fide intensifiers of my research can be categorized into maximizers (totality modifiers) ‘complete/total X’, and boosters (scalar modifiers) ‘very/extreme X’ (Efthymiou 2015; Gavriilidou 2016; Rainer 2015). However, no distinction is drawn in this paper, as the matter lies beyond the scope of this study; analysis is conducted within the overarching framework of intensification.

Pejorative intensifiers convey the meaning ‘very/extreme X’, but the translation of these structures could also include expressions, such as ‘fucking/bloody/damn X’, ‘old X’ (e.g., *palio-skrófa* PEJ.INT-slut ‘old slut’), ‘filthy X’ (e.g., *vromo-malákas* PEJ.INT-wanker ‘filthy wanker’), ‘shitty X’ (e.g., *skato-fasístas* PEJ.INT-fascist ‘shitty fascist’) with metaphorical meaning (cf. Kallergi et al. 2023).

Table 1 illustrates the 16 intensifying prefixes and prefixoids found in combinations in my dataset.⁶

⁵ Cf. Efthymiou (2015) on a similar observation about intensifying/augmentative prefixes/prefixoids attached to adjectives.

⁶ These elements are polysemous and have other meanings besides the intensification.

Table 1: Intensifying prefixes and prefixoids with the meanings ‘very/extreme X’ and ‘total/complete X’

Prefixes and prefixoids
<i>αρχι-</i> [arxi-] (cf. <i>arch-</i> in English)
<i>υπερ-</i> [iper-] (cf. <i>hyper-</i> in English)
<i>καρα-</i> [kara-]
<i>κατα-</i> [kata-]
<i>σουπερ-</i> [super-]
<i>κολο-</i> [kolo-] (< κώλος [kólos] ‘ass’)
<i>κοπρο-</i> [kopro-] (< κοπριά [kopriá] ‘manure’)
<i>μεγαλο-</i> [megalo-] (< μεγάλος [megálos] ‘big’)
<i>παλιο-</i> [palio-] (< παλιός [paliós] ‘old’)
<i>πουστο-</i> [pusto-] (< πούστης [pústis] ‘faggot’)
<i>σκατο-</i> [skato-] (< σκατό [skató] ‘shit’)
<i>θεο-</i> [theo-] (< Θεός [theós] ‘God’)
<i>τρι(σ)-</i> [tri(s)-] (< τρία [tría] ‘three’)
<i>βλαχο-</i> [vlaxo-] (< Βλάχος [vláxos] ‘LIT Aromanian’, ‘MET hick’)
<i>βρωμο-/βρομο-</i> [vromo-] (< βρώμα/βρόμα [vróma] ‘stink’)
<i>χοντρο-</i> [xodro-] (< χοντρός [xodrós] ‘fat’)

Intensifying prefixes/prefixoids can be grouped according to their origin into (a) those that come from Ancient Greek (e.g., *arxi-* ‘arch-’), (b) those that are newly coined formations in Modern Greek (e.g., *kolo-* < kólos ‘ass’), and (c) those that are of non-native origin (loans) (e.g., *kara-*, from Turkish adjective *kara* ‘black’, *super-*) (cf. Ralli 2022: 58; Xydopoulos 2008: 179-180). In addition, intensifying elements originate from (a) nouns (e.g., *skato-* < skató ‘shit’), (b) adjectives (e.g., *megalo-* < megálos ‘big’), (c) prepositions and adverbs of Ancient Greek (e.g., *iper-* ‘hyper’), and (d) cardinal numerals (e.g., *tri(s)-* < tría ‘three’).

The intensifying prefixes, when attached to nominal bases, always result in derived words, e.g., *kara-putána* INT-whore ‘extreme whore’. Contrarily, the prefixoids used for intensification may have an ambivalent morphological status depending on the structure, so they can either form the first constituent of a compound word when the meaning of the element is literal or function as an affixoid in derived words with an intensifying meaning. Specifically, the element functions as first constituent of compound words, and -o- serves as a compound marker (cf. Christopoulou 2016; Ralli 2022), for example, *skat-o-kóftis* shit-CM-cut ‘thong female underwear’ < skato- ‘shit’. On the contrary, when the meaning of the element is figurative and diverges from its original sense, the element is considered prefixoid and the -o- is a part of the first element (cf. Christopoulou

2016; Ralli 2022: 267), for instance, *skato-karióla* INT-slut ‘extreme slut’ < *skató* ‘shit’.

Regarding the semantic function of elements in combinations, some elements indicate intensification of the meaning of the base when attached to nominal bases of taboo vocabulary (e.g., *iper-*, *arxi-*, *kara-*) for example, *arxi-yamiólis* INT-fucker ‘total fucker’, as well as bases of general vocabulary for instance, *arxi-pséftis* INT-liar ‘a complete liar’ (Gavriilidou 2016). However, some elements only indicate intensification when combined with bases of taboo vocabulary (pejorative intensifiers), but disapproval/rejection/frustration when combined with bases of general vocabulary or [-animate] (e.g., *kolo-*, *skato-*, *vromo-*) (cf. Christopoulou 2016; Kallergi et al. 2023), e.g., *vromo-putána* INT-whore ‘extreme whore’, *koló-miγa* PEJ-fly ‘annoying fly’ respectively.

4.2 Analysis of combinations of intensifying prefixes/prefixoids

In this section, I present the elements that are combined for intensification and the different strategies in combinations of intensifying elements that are attached to taboo nouns. I will also analyze the attested variation in spelling of elements and bases. Cross-linguistically, the accumulation of different or the same evaluative elements before the base in general vocabulary, for example, in Italian and Spanish, has attracted research attention, e.g., *super iper extra mega divertente* ‘enjoyable’ and *archi-archi-conocido* ‘extremely famous’ respectively (Merlini Barbaresi 2012, Martín García 1998:112).

In my dataset, the number of intensifying elements that are attested in combinations is 16, while the existing different combinations are 37. It is noteworthy that the attested combinations are extremely fewer than the possible combinations (at least 841 combinations).⁷ The number of intensifying structures that were found is 68.⁸

In my dataset, the following patterns of combinations of intensifying elements that combine with taboo nouns were found:

- a) **Combination of two different prefixes/prefixoids** (recursion of intensifying elements),⁹ e.g., *palio skato rufiána* INT-INT-rat

⁷ For a similar observation (Manova and Winternitz 2011).

⁸ In the Appendix, all combinations of intensifying elements and all intensifying structures with the original spelling from the sources in which they were found are presented. For each structure, the relevant meaning is provided.

⁹ In literature, the terms ‘recursion’ and ‘repetition’ often overlap, as both refer to the repetition of elements (cf. Štekauer et al. 2012). In this paper, the term ‘recursion’ describes the combination of different intensifying elements (*arxi-kara-*), and the term ‘repetition’ refers to the combination of the same intensifying element (*arxi-arxi-*).

‘extreme/fucking rat’. This combination is the most frequent in the data (25 combinations in 49 structures).

- b) **Combination of three different prefixes/prefixoids** (recursion of intensifying elements), e.g., *arxi-iper-super-vlaks* INT-INT-INT-idiot ‘extreme idiot’. This combination was rare in the data (4 combinations in 4 structures).
- c) **Combination of the same prefix/prefixoid twice** (repetition of intensifying elements), e.g., *arxi-arxi-papáras* INT-INT-blusterer ‘extreme blusterer’. This strategy is frequent in data (3 combinations in 10 structures).
- d) **Combination of the same element three times** (repetition of intensifying elements), e.g., *iper-iper-iper...karyiólis* INT-INT-motherfucker ‘extreme motherfucker’. This strategy was found only in 3 structures (3 combinations).
- e) **Combination of repetition of the same prefix/prefixoid plus a different one** (combination of repetition and recursion), e.g., *arxi-arxi-kara-malákas* INT-INT-INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’. This strategy was not so frequent in the data (2 combinations in 2 structures). It is noticed that structures with reverse order, namely, the combination of recursion and repetition, were not found, e.g., **arxi-kara-kara-malákas*.

Thus, the most frequent combination involves two intensifying elements (28 combinations), while the maximum number of elements that can be attached to a base is three (9 combinations).

I will proceed with some general observations regarding these patterns. First, intensifying elements differ concerning their frequency in combinations; some appear with high frequency (e.g., *arxi-* in 15 combinations), while others show medium (e.g., *vromo-* in 7 combinations), or low frequency (e.g., *kata-* in 2 combinations). Furthermore, some combinations appear in many structures (e.g., *palia-skato-* in 6 structures), while others appear in fewer (e.g., *kara-kara-* in 3 structures). The majority of the combinations (26 combinations) appear in only one case (e.g., *iper-arxi-*).

Moreover, there are combinations of which the elements may appear in a specific order, but they can also be reversed (permutation of elements), e.g., *arxi-kara-* and *kara-arxi-*, and combinations that do not allow for permutation, e.g., *kara-kata-* and not **kata-kara-*. In addition, data show that bona fide intensifiers (see subsection 4.1) tend to combine (21 combinations), for example, *iperkaramalákas* INT-INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’. The same holds for pejorative intensifiers (e.g., *palia-*, *vromo-*, *skato-*) which exhibit the same

tendency (11 combinations), for instance, *vromopaliokátharma* INT-INT-bastard ‘extreme/fucking bastard’. Mixed combinations of bona fide intensifiers and pejorative intensifiers (cf. Kallergi et al. 2023) appear with low frequency in the data (in 5 combinations), for example, *palia tri bourðelo*¹⁰ INT-INT-hellhole ‘extreme/fucking ‘hellhole’.

At this point, I will present some points about the spelling of intensifying elements in combinations and the spelling of the bases of structures, since the intensifying elements keep their original spelling in my data. Prefixes and prefixoids differ from suffixes, which always appear as a unit with the base, and they usually are rather word-like in that they have stress, and do not fuse syllabically with the bases (Zirkel 2010: 251). Thus, users can be more creative in the way they represent words due to the context of colloquial language use.

More specifically, as far as the spelling of intensifying elements is concerned, they can appear:

- a) **as one word with the base**, e.g., *arxipaliópustas* INT-INT-faggot ‘extreme/fucking faggot’,
- b) **graphically separated with a gap**, e.g., *kara kata kariólis* INT-INT-motherfucker ‘extreme motherfucker’,
- c) **graphically separated with punctuation marks**, for example, hyphens ‘-’, e.g., *arxi-kara-kathiki* INT-INT-bastard ‘extreme bastard’, or dots ‘.’ (in 1 structure), e.g., *arxi..arxi..malákas* INT-INT-wanker ‘extreme wanker’,¹¹
- d) **with different combinations of the above spelling**, e.g., *arxi-karalamóyio* INT-INT-bilker ‘extreme bilker’, *tri palio-mlks* INT-INT-wanker (mlks = malákas) ‘extreme/fucking wanker’.

This variation in spelling of intensifying elements aligns cross-linguistically with the study of Cacchiani (2011: 775-776) about general vocabulary, in which it is noted that in both languages, English and Italian, prefixes can be represented graphically separated: for example, in Italian they appear as separate words, e.g., *super iper mega ultra felice* ‘extremely happy’, and in English with hyphens, e.g., *super-ultra-mega-awesomely cool excellent* ‘extremely impressively perfect’.

¹⁰ The accent mark is omitted, as this is how the data was attested. The same holds for some data in the Appendix.

¹¹ The structure *arxi..arxi..malákas* was found in sources with three variant spellings, *arxi-arxi-malákas*, *arxi arxi malákas*, and *arxiarximalákas*. The structure *palia-skato-karióla* it was also attested as *paliorskato karióla* and *palia-skatokarióla*.

Regarding the spelling of the bases of intensifying structures, it is evident that in 9 formations users employ an alternative method instead of the representation of the whole base, for example:

- a) **punctuation marks and symbols**, for instance, dots '.', or the *at* symbol '@', for the whole word, e.g., *arxikara.....* INT-INT-.... (.... = wanker) 'extreme wanker', *vromokolo@@* INT-INT-.... 'extreme/filthy wanker' respectively, or a part of the base, e.g., *vromo skato p..sta* INT-INT-p..sta (p..sta = *pústa* < *pústis* 'faggot') 'extreme/fucking faggot', *kara-tri-m@l@kas* INT-INT-wanker 'extreme wanker',
- b) **only the first letter of the taboo word**, e.g., *palio vromo p* INT-INT-p (p = *pústis* 'faggot') 'extreme/fucking faggot'.

It is interesting that in some cases, the use of these symbols does not help readers recognize the base of the structure. The fact that users resort to this strategy is particularly interesting, and a characteristic of written colloquial speech, as they could use the full taboo word since the online platforms on which they post are not subject to censorship.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In this paper, intensifying prefixes/prefixoids and the different patterns of combinations of these elements when attached to Modern Greek taboo nouns were presented. Particularly, it has been argued that intensification through evaluative affixes, especially prefixes/prefixoids, is very frequent in Modern Greek taboo vocabulary. Some intensifying prefixoids have an ambivalent status between compound constituents and derivational elements, but in my dataset they appear as derivational elements. Additionally, it has been shown that some elements may only denote intensification (*bona fide* intensifiers), while others (*pejorative* intensifiers) denote intensification only when combined with bases from taboo vocabulary. Moreover, these elements differ in their origin and may derive from different parts of speech.

Regarding the number and the variety of patterns of combinations of intensifying elements, I have shown that the maximum number of elements that can accumulate onto bases is three elements, with the most frequent number of elements being two. The different strategies for intensification include (a) the combination of two different elements, (b) the combination of three different

elements, (c) the repetition of the same element two times, (d) the repetition of the same element three times, and (e) the combination of recursion and repetition of elements. Moreover, in some combinations, permutation of elements is allowed, while in others it is not.

In addition, some intensifying elements appear with high, medium, or low frequency in combinations, as well as some combinations appear in many or fewer intensifying structures. Bona fide intensifiers also tend to be combined, and the same holds for pejorative intensifiers, while their mixed combinations appear with low frequency. Lastly, intensifying structures exhibit spelling variations; in some cases, they appear as one word with the base, while in others, they are separated with gaps or hyphens. The bases may also show spelling variations, as I notice the replacement of some letters with punctuation marks or symbols for the base, or the first letter of the base.

The next steps of this research involve examining the underlying factors that determine the positional preferences of intensifying prefixes/prefixoids within combinations (affix ordering) and the analysis of combinations between intensifying prefixes/prefixoids and suffixes of Modern Greek taboo nouns. Finally, a contrastive analysis could also shed light on the perplexing issue of affix ordering.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments, which significantly contributed to improving this article. I am also grateful to Kristel Van Goethem for her guidance during my research stay at UCLouvain. My thanks go as well to Nikos Koutsoukos, with whom part of this research was presented at the *Linguists' Day 2024* conference, and to the conference audience for their valuable feedback. All remaining errors are my own.

Abbreviations

CM = compound marker
INT = intensifying/intensifier
LIT = literally
MET = metaphorically
PEJ = pejorative

References

- Amiot, D. and Dugas, E. (2020). 'Combining Forms and Affixoids in Morphology'. In Amiot, D. and E. Dugas, eds., *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Andor, J. (2005). 'A Lexical Semantic-Pragmatic Analysis of the Meaning Potentials of Amplifying Prefixes in English and Hungarian. A Corpus-based Case Study of Near Synonymy'. *Corpus Linguistics Conference*. 14-17 July 2005. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- Babiniotis, G. (2008). *Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας* [Dictionary of Modern Greek] (3rd edition). Athens: Lexicology Centre.
- Cacchiani, S. (2011). 'Intensifying affixes across Italian and English'. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 47(4), 758–794.
- Christopoulou, K. (2016). *Μια λεξικολογική προσέγγιση στο περιθωριακό λεξιλόγιο της Νέας Ελληνικής* [A lexicological approach to the slang vocabulary in Modern Greek]. PhD dissertation, University of Patras, Patras.
- Christopoulou, K., Xydopoulos, G. J. and Tsangalidis, A. (2022). 'Grammatical gender and offensiveness in Modern Greek slang vocabulary'. In N. Knoblock, ed., *The Grammar of Hate: Morphosyntactic Features of Hateful, Aggressive, and Dehumanizing Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 82-96.
- Dressler, W. U. and Merlini Barbaresi, L. (1994). *Morphopragmatics. Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Efthymiou, A. (2015). 'Modern Greek diminutive and augmentative adjectives (in a cross-linguistic perspective)'. *Skase Journal of Theoretical Linguistics* 21(1), 57-71.
- Efthymiou, A. (2017). 'Intensification and deintensification in Modern Greek verbs'. *Lexis-Journal in English Lexicology*.
- Efthymiou, A., Gavriilidou Z. and Papadopoulou E. (2014). 'Labeling of derogatory words in Modern Greek Dictionaries'. In N. Lavidas, ed., *Major Trends in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*. Selected Papers from the 20th ISTAL. London: Versita de Gruyter (2), 27-40.
- Eleftheriades, O. (1993). *Modern Greek Word Formation*. Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs.
- Gavriilidou, Z. (2016). *Όψεις επίτασης στη νέα ελληνική* [Aspects of intensification in Modern Greek] (second edition). Thessaloniki: Kyriakides.
- Giannouloupoulou, G. (2003). 'Μορφήματα στα όρια ανάμεσα στην παραγωγή και τη σύνθεση: Η περίπτωση των θεο-, ψιλο- και -φερνω' [Morphemes between derivation and compounding: the case of θεο-, psilo- and -ferno]. In *proceedings of the 6th International Conference of Greek Linguistics*.

- Grandi, N. (2017). 'Evaluatives in Morphology'. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1 – 21.
- Grandi, N. and Körtvélyessy L. (2015). 'Introduction: Why evaluative morphology?'. In N. Grandi and L. Körtvélyessy, eds., *The Edinburgh handbook of evaluative morphology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 3-20.
- Hendriks, I. (2019). *The acquisition of intensifying constructions in Dutch and English by French-speaking CLIL and non-CLIL students: Cross-linguistic influence and exposure effects*. PhD dissertation, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve.
- Hendriks, I., Van Goethem, K. and Buntinx, N. (2024). 'Intensification strength in speech: language-specific preferences and differences between native and learner language'. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics* 13.
- Jay, T. (2009). 'The Utility and Ubiquity of Taboo Words'. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4 (2), 153-161.
- Jay, T. (2018). 'The psychology of expressing and interpreting linguistic taboos'. In K. Allan, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Taboo Words and Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 54-74.
- Kallergi, H., Katsouda, G., Konstantinidou, M. and Tsangalidis A. (2023). 'Expressivity in Modern Greek: Some morphological mechanisms for the expression of negative emotions'. In J. Williams, ed., *Expressivity in European Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 123-228.
- Kamilaki, M., Katsouda, G. and Vrachionidou M. (2016). *Πιπέρι στο στόμα! Όψεις των λέξεων-ταμπού στη Νέα Ελληνική* [Pepper in the mouth! Aspects of taboo words in Modern Greek] (2nd edition). Athens: Kalligrafos.
- Mackridge, P. (1985). *The Modern Greek Language: A Descriptive Analysis of Standard Modern Greek*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Manova, S. and Winternitz, K. (2011). 'Suffix order in double and multiple diminutives: with data from Polish and Bulgarian'. *Studies in Polish Linguistics* 6, 115-138.
- Martín García, J. (1998). 'Los prefijos intensivos del español: caracterización morfo-semántica'. *Estudios de Lingüística. Universidad de Alicante* 12, 103-116.
- Mattiello, E. (2008). *An Introduction to English Slang: A Description of its Morphology, Semantics and Sociology*. Milano: Polimetrica.
- Merlini Barbaresi, L. (2012). 'Combinatorial patterns among Italian evaluative affixes'. In *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics* 9(1), 1-14.
- Minas, K. (1978). *Η μορφολογία της μεγεθύνσεως στην ελληνική γλώσσα* [The morphology of augmentation in Greek language]. Ioannina: University of Ioannina.

- Rainer, F. (2015). 'Intensification'. In P. O. Müller, I. Ohnheiser, S. Olsen and F. Rainer, eds., *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 1340-1351.
- Ralli, A. (2020). 'Affixoids, an intriguing intermediate category'. In L. Körtvélyessy and P. Štekauer, eds., *Complex Words: Advances in Morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 217-238.
- Ralli, A. (2022). *Μορφολογία* [Morphology]. Athens: Patakis.
- Štekauer, P., Valera, S. and Körtvélyessy L. (2012). *Word-Formation in the World's Languages. A Typological Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stevens, C. M. (2005). 'Revisiting the affixoid debate: On the grammaticalization of the word'. In T. Leuschner, T. Mortelmans and S. De Groot, eds., *Grammatikalisierung im Deutschen*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 71-84.
- Van Goethem, K. (2020). 'Affixation in Morphology'. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Xydopoulos, G. J. (2008). *Λεξικολογία: Εισαγωγή στην ανάλυση της λέξης και του λεξικού* [Lexicology: Introduction in the analysis of the word and the lexicon]. Athens: Patakis.
- Zirkel, L. (2010). 'Prefix combinations in English'. *Morphology* 20, 239–266.

Online source

Λεξικό της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής [Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek] (second online edition): https://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?q=

Appendix 1: Combinations of intensifying prefixes/prefixoids and intensifying structures

Combinations of 2 different intensifiers
arxi-kara-: αρχι-καράβλαχος [arxi-karávɫaxos] ‘INT-INT-hick’ (from pare-dose.net)
arxi-kara-: αρχι-καρα-καθίκι [arxi-kara-kathíki] ‘INT-INT-bastard’ (from x.com)
arxi-kara-: αρχι-καραλαμόγιο [arxi-karalamóγιο] ‘INT-INT-bilker’ (from karate.gr)
arxi-kara-: αρχικαραμαλάκας [arxikaramalákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)
arxi-kara-: αρχικαρα..... [arxikara.....] (..... = malákas ‘wanker’) ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)
arxi-kara-: αρχι-καρα-μπατσος [arxi-kara-batsos] ‘INT-INT-cop’ (from thepressproject.gr)
arxi-kara-: αρχικαραπαπάρας [arxikarapapáras] ‘INT-INT-blusterer’ (from x.com)
arxi-iper-: αρχι-υπερ-γκόμενος [arxi-iper-gómenos] ‘INT-INT-squeeze’ (from x.com)
arxi-iper-: αρχι-υπερ-μπάτσος [arxi-iper-bátsos] ‘INT-INT-cop’ (from omniatv.com)
arxi-palio-: αρχιπαλιόπουστας [arxipaliópustas] (< pústis ‘faggot’) ‘INT-INT-faggot’ (from xaxa.gr)
arxi-theo-: αρχι-θεό-μουνο [arxi-theó-muno] (< LIT muni ‘pussy’) ‘INT-INT-sexpot’ (from x.com)
arxi-theo-: αρχι-θεόχαζος [arxi-theóxazos] ‘INT-INT-idiot’ (from x.com)
arxi-tri-: αρχιτρι@@@@ας [arxitri@@@@as] (@@@@as = malákas ‘wanker’) ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from bmvfans.gr)
arxi-xodro-: αρχι-χοντρο-μαλ@@@@κας [arxi-xodro-mal@@@@kas] (mal@@@@kas = malákas ‘wanker’) ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from makeleio.gr)
arxi-xodro-: αρχι-χοντρο-μαλακία [arxi-xodro-malakía] ‘INT-INT-crap’ (from bourdela.com)
iper-arxi-: υπερ-αρχι-μπάτσος [iper-arxi-bátsos] ‘INT-INT-cop’ (from omniatv.com)

iper-kara-: υπερκαρμαλάκας [iperkaramalákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from ask.fm.gr)
kara-arxi-: кара-αρχιμαλάκας [kara-arximalákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)
kara-kata-: кара-κατα-ηλίθια [kara-kata-ilíthia] ‘INT-INT-idiot’ (from x.com)
kara-kata-: кара κατα καργιόλης [kara kata karyiólis] ‘INT-INT-motherfucker’ (from x.com)
kara-kata-: काराकाताकेराτάς [karakatakeraτάς] ‘INT-INT-cuckold’ (from slang.gr)
kara-kata-: काराकातालेस्βία [karakatalesvía] ‘INT-INT-lesbian’ (from slang.gr)
kara-kata-: काराकातापुताना [karakataputána] ‘INT-INT-whore’ (from slang.gr)
kara-kata-: काराकाताकारिόला [karakatakarióla] ‘INT-INT-slut’ (from x.com)
kara-tri-: कारा-τρι-μαλάκας [kara-tri-malákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)
palio-skato-: παλιοσκατο βρωμιάρης [palioskato vromiáris] ‘INT-INT-scumbag’ (from x.com)
palio-skato-: παλιο σκατό कारागकिόζης [palio skató karagiózis] ‘INT-INT-buffoon’ (from x.com)
palio-skato-: παλιο-σκατο-कारिόला [palio-skato-karióla] ‘INT-INT-slut’ (from x.com)
palio-skato-: παλιοσκατό λεχρίτης [palioskató lexrítis] ‘INT-INT-bastard’ (from x.com)
palio-skato-: παλιοσκατομαλάκας [palioskatomalákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)
palio-skato-: παλιο σκατο ρουφιάννα [palio skato rufiána] ‘INT-INT-rat’ (from x.com)
palio-vromo-: παλιο βρωμο λαμόγιο [palio vromo lamóγιο] ‘INT-INT-bilker’ (from x.com)
palio-vromo-: παλιο βρομόμουνο [palio vromómouno] (< LIT muni ‘pussy’) ‘INT-INT-cunt’ (from x.com)

<p>paliao-vromo-: παλιο βρωμο πατσαβούρα [paliao vromo patsavúra] ‘INT-INT-skag’ (from x.com)</p> <p>paliao-vromo-: παλιο βρωμο π [paliao vromo p] (p = pústis ‘faggot’) ‘INT-INT-faggot’ (from x.com)</p> <p>paliao-tri-: παλιο τρι μπουρδελο [paliao tri burdelo] ‘INT-INT-hellhole’ (from x.com)</p> <p>pusto-kolo-: πουστοκωλο βρωμιάρης [pusto-kolo vromiáris] ‘INT-INT-scumbag’ (from x.com)</p> <p>skato-paliao-: σκατο παλιο καριώλης [skato palio kariólis] ‘INT-INT-motherfucker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>skato-vromo-: σκατο βρωμο μαλακία [skato vromo malakía] ‘INT-INT-crap’ (from x.com)</p> <p>super-iper-: σούπερ-υπέρ-γκόμενα [super-ipér-gómena] ‘INT-INT-bint’ (from x.com)</p> <p>tri-paliao-: τρι παλιο-μλκς [tri palio-mlks] (mlks = malákas ‘wanker’) ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-kolo-: βρωμοκωλο@@ [vromokolo@@] (@@ = malákas ‘wanker’) ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-kopro-: βρωμοκοπρο πισωσφυρίχτρα [vromokopro pisolfirixtra] ‘INT-INT-faggot’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-paliao-: βρωμοπαλιοκάθαρμα [vromopaliokátharma] ‘INT-INT-bastard’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-pusto-: βρωμοπουστο-σύχαμα [vromopusto-síxama] ‘INT-INT-slutty’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-skato-: βρωμο-σκατο-κουΜΟΥΝΙ [vromo-skato-kuMúni] (KuMúni < kumúni ‘communist’ and muní ‘cunt’) ‘INT-INT-communist/cunt’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-skato-: βρωμο σκατο π..στα [vromo skato p..sta] (p..sta = pusta < pústis ‘faggot’) ‘INT-INT-faggot’ (from x.com)</p> <p>vromo-skato-: βρωμοσκατό ρουφιάνος [vromoskato rufiános] ‘INT-INT-rat’ (from x.com)</p> <p>xodro-vlaxo-: χοντροβλαχο@@@@α [xodrovlaxo@@@@α] (@@@@@α = malakía) ‘INT-INT-crap’ (from x.com)</p>
Combinations of 3 different intensifiers

<p>arxi-iper-super-: αρχι-υπερ-σουπερ-βλαξ [arxi-iper-super-vlaks] ‘INT-INT-INT-idiot’ (from x.com)</p> <p>arxi-kara-kata-: αρχι кара κατα ρεμάλι [arxi kara kata remáli] ‘INT-INT-INT-deadbeat’ (from togethergreece.com)</p> <p>arxi-kara-meyalo-: αρχι-καρα-μεγαλο-μαλάκας [arxi-kara-meyalo-malákas] ‘INT-INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>kara-arxi-palio-: кара-αρχι-παλιο-μαλάκας [kara-arxi-palio-malákas] ‘INT-INT-INT-wanker’ (from petrolheads.gr)</p>
<p>Combinations of 2 same intensifiers</p> <p>arxi-arxi-: αρχι αρχι αυνάνας [arxi arxi avnánas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>arxi-arxi-: αρχι-αρχι-λαμόγιο [arxi-arxi-lamóγιο] ‘INT-INT-bilker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>arxi-arxi-: αρχι-αρχι-μαλάκας [arxi-arxi-malákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>arxi-arxi-: αρχι-αρχι-μαφιόζος [arxi-arxi-mafiózos] ‘INT-INT-gangster’ (from x.com)</p> <p>arxi-arxi-: αρχι αρχι παπάρας [arxi arxi papáras] ‘INT-INT-blusterer’ (from x.com)</p> <p>arxi-arxi-: αρχι-αρχι φασίστας [arxi- arxi fasístas] ‘INT-INT-fascist’ (from x.com)</p> <p>iper-iper-: υπερ υπερ ηλίθιος [iper iper ilíthios] ‘INT-INT-idiot’ (from x.com)</p> <p>kara-kara-: кара кара βλάχος [kara kara vláchos] ‘INT-INT-hick’ (from x.com)</p> <p>kara-kara-: кара-καρα-καραγκιόζης [kara-kara-karagiózis] ‘INT-INT-buffoon’ (from x.com)</p> <p>kara-kara-: кара..καρα μαλάκας [kara.. kara malákas] ‘INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p>
<p>Combinations of 3 same intensifiers</p> <p>arxi-arxi-arxi-: αρχι-αρχι-αρχι-μαλάκας [arxi-arxi-arxi-malákas] ‘INT-INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>iper-iper-iper-: υπερ-υπερ-υπερ...καργιόλης [iper-iper-iper... karyiólis] ‘INT-INT-INT-motherfucker’ (from x.com)</p> <p>kara-kara-kara-: кара кара кара μαλάκας [kara kara kara malákas] ‘INT-INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)</p>

Combinations of 2 same intensifiers plus 1 different
arxi-arxi-kara-: αρχι-αρχι-καραμαλάκας [arxi-arxi-karamalákas] ‘INT-INT-INT-wanker’ (from x.com)
arxi-arxi-tri-: αρχι-αρχι-τρίμπαζο [arxi-arxi-tríbazó] ‘INT-INT-INT-skag’ (from x.com)