

Heterogeneity in Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: Evidence from Modern Greek in a Cross-Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

This study adopts a cross-linguistic perspective to investigate non-prototypical evaluative constructions. Using Modern Greek as a case study, it identifies the main types of these constructions, analyzes their formal and semantic properties, and proposes a classification of evaluative morphological constructions along a continuum of prototypicality. The analysis is restricted to constructions formed through affixation, which is the most productive process cross-linguistically in terms of evaluative morphology. Our findings reveal that non-prototypical evaluative constructions do not constitute a uniform category, with some constructions being more peripheral and displaying distinct semantic and grammatical features. Evaluative constructions derived from markers that merge evaluative and non-evaluative meanings within a single lexeme are generally more peripheral than those derived from polyfunctional markers, which can also produce formations with non-evaluative meanings. The analysis also shows that non-prototypical evaluative constructions typically express qualitative evaluations and are systematically linked to specific semantico-pragmatic features. In addition, the data show that evaluative markers with mixed semantics fail to form a single, uniform category. In some instances, they exhibit a degree of semantic exocentricity, in that their denotation is not straightforwardly recoverable from the semantics of the base.

Keywords: *affixation; evaluative morphology; Greek; prototypicality; non-prototypical constructions; semantic exocentricity.*

1 Introduction

Research on evaluative morphology has primarily focused on the properties and range of evaluative word-formation strategies, their distinction from non-evaluative derivation, and the semantic categories expressed by evaluative markers. Emphasis has been placed on identifying the defining conditions that establish membership in the category of evaluative morphological constructions. However, considerably less attention has been paid to affixes that fail to satisfy all these defining conditions, namely non-prototypical instances of evaluative morphology. Grandi & Körtevelyessy (2015) highlight non-prototypical evaluative constructions, including lexicalized diminutives and formations with mixed semantics (e.g. It. *mangione* ‘hearty eater’), and emphasize the need for a more comprehensive analysis of such cases.

This study examines non-prototypical evaluative constructions from a cross-linguistic perspective. Drawing on data from Modern Greek, it identifies their different types, describes their formal and semantic properties, and proposes a classification of evaluative morphological constructions along a continuum of prototypicality. The data of the study are collected from dictionaries and grammars of the language, and Google searches. The article is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the fundamental notion of the prototype and its application to morphological theory, with reference to evaluative morphology. Section 3 addresses definitional and characterization issues, outlining our theoretical foundations concerning evaluative morphology and prototypical evaluative constructions. Section 4 builds on the group-defining conditions of prototypical evaluative constructions and develops a refined

analysis of non-prototypical constructions, supported by evidence from Modern Greek. Section 5 explores whether all group defining conditions of evaluative constructions are equally susceptible to violation, and it further examines the semantico-pragmatic properties of non-prototypical constructions. The final section is dedicated to summarizing the main findings and presenting the conclusions.

2 Prototypical and non-prototypical morphological categories: The case of Evaluative Morphology

The notion of the prototype is well established in morphology and, more generally, in linguistics. It originates from prototype theory, which was developed in cognitive psychology (e.g. Berlin & Kay 1969; Rosch 1973) and subsequently adopted in cognitive linguistics (e.g. Langacker 1987; Taylor 1989) and morphological frameworks such as Natural Morphology (e.g. Dressler 1989, 2009; Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1993). Rather than viewing (morphological) categories as defined by rigid boundaries and a fixed set of necessary and sufficient features, prototype theory proposes that they are structured around their most typical or representative members, while other members occupy more peripheral positions depending on the extent to which they resemble the prototype (e.g. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1993; Langacker 1987). The idea of classifying morphological constructions with reference to a norm is also adopted in other morphological frameworks, most notably Canonical Morphology (Corbett 2010), although in a different way. Although both approaches use a central reference point and account for gradience, they differ in the nature of the reference point. A prototype is the most typical or cognitively representative member of a category, whereas a canonical instance is an idealized construct defined by the convergence of a set of criteria and may not be realized in any actual language. Linguistic forms are then assessed according to the extent to which they approximate this canonical ideal.

One of the most well-known applications of prototype theory in morphology concerns the distinction between derivation and inflection. Dressler and other scholars have developed a set of criteria (including change of word class, obligatoriness, transparency, semantic contribution, syntactic relevance, and recursivity) to differentiate between these two morphological processes (e.g. Dressler 1989; Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1993; Booij 2006). Based on these criteria, they identify prototypical examples of derivational morphology (e.g. denominal adjective formation and verb formation) and inflectional morphology (e.g. case, gender, and tense marking). Categories that do not fully meet the criteria for classification as either inflection or derivation are considered less prototypical members of the respective categories. For example, gradation (such as comparative and superlative forms) is treated as a non-prototypical type of inflection, while diminutive and augmentative formations are regarded as non-prototypical instances of derivation.

Concerning evaluative affixation, scholars acknowledge its peculiar characteristics (such as the preservation of word class and the possibility of recursive application) that prevent it from being classified straightforwardly as either inflection or derivation. Therefore, evaluative formations have been analyzed as derivational, inflectional, or occupying an intermediate position, depending on the language under consideration. In general, evaluative affixation is considered a non-prototypical type of derivation, although its morphological status varies across languages (cf. Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1992; Stump 1993; Grandi 2015; Melissaropoulou & Ralli 2008; Körtvélyessy 2014). Nevertheless, scholars differ in their

classification of evaluative morphology. Anderson (1992), for example, argues that evaluative affixes in languages such as Fula are inflectional. From another standpoint, Scalise (1984) proposes that evaluative affixes have a special status, occupying an intermediate position between derivational and inflectional morphology. In contrast, Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1992: 21) treat evaluative suffixes as a non-prototypical instance of derivation. Likewise, Stump (1993) classifies evaluative morphology within derivation, arguing that although evaluative rules preserve lexical category, they are not sufficiently exceptional to warrant a separate morphological subcomponent. More recently, Grandi (2015) argues that although the inflectional–derivational distinction in evaluative morphology is not straightforward, this does not justify positing a third morphological category, contrary to Scalise (1984). Cross-linguistically, evaluative affixes may be derivational or inflectional, although evaluative formation generally favors derivation.

3 Evaluative Morphology and non-prototypical evaluative constructions: Issues of definition and characterization

In simple terms, evaluative morphology (‘expressive’ in another terminology) refers to the synthetic marking of features such as size and positive/negative emotional affect (Prieto 2005: 11), where the speaker’s subjective assessment is conveyed by means of various morphological transformations upon a base (Martín Calvo 2020: 134).¹ While diminutives and augmentatives, are usually considered the core domains of evaluative morphology (e.g., Bauer 1997: 5), evaluative constructions cover a range of word-formation processes (e.g. affixation, compounding, reduplication, etc.) which enable the formation of lexemes whose meaning involves an evaluative dimension relative to the base lexeme, including categories such as diminution, augmentation, pejoration, hypocorism, intensification, approximation etc. (cf. Scalise 1984; Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Bauer 1997; Prieto 2005; Grandi & Montermini 2005; Fradin & Montermini 2009; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015; Štekauer 2015 among others). A challenge in analyzing evaluative constructions, as illustrated in (1), is that their meanings often involve quantitative and qualitative dimensions that co-occur or change depending on context.

¹ I employ the term evaluative morphology, consistent with prior work in the field (e.g., e.g. Scalise 1984; Bauer 1997; Grandi 2002; Körtvélyessy 2015; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015), as a more comprehensive alternative, given that the term *expressive morphology* has primarily been associated with the qualitative perspective, rather than the quantitative perspective. For further discussion of the term *expressive morphology*, see Fortin (2011) and Gutzman (2015) among others.

(1) Modern Greek *ayóri* > *ayor-áci*

boy-evalm

‘boy’ ‘little boy / sweet boy/ unimportant boy’²

Štekauer (2015: 45), offers a highly comprehensive definition of evaluative morphology, suggesting that it includes “any and all morphological expressions meeting the condition of deviation from the default value” denoted by the base. In this approach, evaluative morphology is treated as a continuum, with prototypical cases expressing the meaning of quantity under or above a default value (Körtvélyessy 2015: 61). In particular, the evaluative construction is initially defined according to two main criteria: one formal and one functional-semantic (Grandi 2002, Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015, Körtvélyessy 2015). The formal condition implies that an evaluative construction must include the explicit expression that represents the standard value of a concept accompanied by an evaluative marker. The functional-semantic one indicates that an evaluative construction must have the function of assigning a value, which is different from the standard/ default of the concept in question. A construction that violates the semantic criterion is usually excluded from evaluative morphology, while a violation of the formal criterion does not lead to exclusion. This permits a gradient of membership, allowing for more peripheral or non-prototypical instances such as the Greek word *spir-járis* ‘pimply’, shown under (2) (< *spirí* ‘pimple’), in which evaluation is realized in combination with a possessive meaning.

(2) *spirí* > *spir-jári(s)*

pimple-evalm

‘pimple’

‘pimply, i.e. having pimples [+PEJ]’

Apart from Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015), other scholars, including Scalise (1984), Potts (2007), Dammel and Quindt (2016), Grandi (2017), Martín Calvo (2020), and Amiot & Stosic (2022) have also focused extensively on the group-defining conditions of evaluative constructions. According to their analyses, the fundamental features of evaluative constructions include, among others, the following:

- Expression of deviation from the standard value: An evaluative construction must assign a value which is different from that of the standard value.
- Morphological complexity: An evaluative construction must include at least the explicit expression of the standard value and an evaluative marker.
- Word-class maintenance: Evaluative affixes form lexemes which belong to the same lexical category as their base.
- Base lexeme-evaluative construction interchangeability: the use of an evaluative affix does not affect the denotative content of the lexeme.

² Abbreviations used throughout the article adhere to the Leipzig Glossing Rules (available at <https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf>) with the addition of evalm for evaluative markers. The use of parentheses in evaluative markers signals the addition of inflectional markers, which is the norm of referring to derivational suffixes in highly inflected languages.

- Semantic subordination: The base-lexeme and the derived lexeme have the same referent.
- Perspective dependence: An evaluative construction communicates something about the speaker’s subjective perspective (i.e. reflects the speaker's emotions, opinions or judgments).

Based on and extending the criteria proposed by the previously referenced scholars, Table 1 presents nine defining features of evaluative constructions, illustrated by the Greek word *spit-áci* (house-evalm ‘little house’).

Table 1: Principal features of Prototypical Evaluative Constructions

Defining Characteristics of Prototypical Evaluative Constructions	
1. Expression of deviation from the standard value	‘little house’: smaller than the standard
2. Standard value represented by base	<i>spíti</i> ‘house’: base lexeme
3. Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	<i>-áci</i> : diminutive suffix
4. Evaluative marker limited in expressing evaluation, no merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning in the same construction	<i>-áci</i> : is restricted in conveying evaluative meanings
5. Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation, does not participate in constructions conveying non-evaluative meaning	<i>-áci</i> : consistently conveys diminution in size (negative/ positive attitude, politeness etc.)
6. Word-class maintenance ³	noun > noun
7. Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	a ‘little house’ is a house
8. Perspective dependence	‘small/non-functional/ beloved house’: reflects the speaker's emotions, opinions or judgments
9. Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional) ⁴	derivational suffix

In addition to the core defining features, further properties such as the interchangeability and the combinatorial capacity of evaluative markers support the identification of these constructions, though they are not exclusive to them (cf. Scalise 1984; Dammel & Quindt 2016; Martín Calvo 2019, 2020, among others).

³ The notion that homocategoriality constitutes a necessary condition for evaluative word-formation can be traced back to Scalise (1984). Although this requirement has been questioned over time, partly due to differing views on the scope of evaluation (cf. e.g. Bauer 1997; Grandi 2015; Stosic and Amiot 2023), I follow Schlücker (2026) in arguing that homocategoriality remains a defining condition, because it provides a clear distinction between evaluative word formation and other types of comparative morphology. For discussion of the differences between evaluation and comparison see also Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015).

⁴ As Grandi (2015) points out, the status of evaluative affixes varies cross-linguistically: they may be either derivational or inflectional, although evaluative formation more frequently exhibits derivational characteristics.

4 A refined account of non-prototypical evaluative constructions: evidence from Modern Greek

Building on the group-defining conditions of prototypical evaluative constructions discussed earlier, this section aims to develop a refined account of non-prototypical constructions and their types, supported by evidence from Modern Greek.⁵ The analysis is restricted to constructions formed through affixation, which is the most productive process cross-linguistically in terms of evaluative morphology. It specifically examines 32 suffixes and 9 prefixes, while excluding affix-like elements.

The first type identified (see Table 2) includes cases like *para-éx(o)* ‘to have something to excess’ and *kafedž-já* ‘a nice coffee’, shown under (3), and (4) which violate condition 5.

Table 2. Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type A)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: (para-éxo ‘to have something to excess’, kafeďjá ‘a nice coffee’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	+
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	+
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	-
6	Word-class maintenance	+
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	+
8	Perspective dependence	+
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+

(3)	éx(o) >	para-éx(o)
		evalm-load
	‘to have’	‘to have something to excess’
(4)	kafés >	kafeð-já
		coffee-evalm
	‘coffee’	‘a nice coffee’ ⁶

⁵ Greek evaluative morphology research has mainly focused on prototypical constructions (e.g. Stavrianaki 2002; Efthymiou 2015, 2024a; Melissaropoulou 2007, 2009; Vassilaki 2019, while non-prototypical constructions remain understudied, with only isolated cases or specific semantic aspects examined (e.g., Anastasiadis-Symeonidis 2000; Dangas & Manasis 2018; Efthymiou 2013; Kallergi et al 2023).

⁶ The suffix *-iá* follows the glide-formation rule: [ia] forms one syllable, with the preceding consonant or [i] becoming palatalized (Efthymiou 2013).

Examples (3) – (4) both illustrate a ‘deviation from a standard value’. In Example (3) the deviation involves both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions, as the word *para-éx(o)* ‘to have something to excess’, conveys semantic values associated with both excess and pejoration.

On the other hand, in example (4) the deviation concerns only the qualitative (socio-pragmatic) dimension since the word *kafēð-já* ‘a nice coffee’ can only be used in a colloquial or informal register (Efthymiou 1999a, c). What is common and particularly interesting in both cases is that evaluative constructions of this type utilize polyfunctional markers, such as *para-* and *-iá*, that also produce formations with non-evaluative meanings. The prefix *para-* conveys both locational meanings and non-locational meanings related to unofficial parallel existence, divergence, and excess (e.g. *para-plé(o)* ‘to sail by’, *para-krát(os)* ‘deep state’, *para-plirofórisi* ‘misinformation’, *para-kán(o)* ‘over-do’) (cf. Anastassiadi-Symeonidi 1986; Ralli 2004; Efthymiou et al 2015).

The suffix *-iá* likewise derives deverbal, deadjectival and denominal nouns expressing meanings such as ‘single instantiation of an action’, ‘blow’, ‘typical action of someone’ etc. (e.g. *sfir-já* ‘blow with a hammer’, *babes-já* ‘treachery, an instance of treachery’, *sproks-já* ‘an instance of jostling’). According to Efthymiou (1999a, c, 2013), it conveys expressive meanings (i.e. it expresses an informal relationship between the speaker and the addressee) when it attaches to neutral (i.e. non-negatively connotated) nominal bases which denote certain semantic categories (e.g. concrete nouns denoting drinks, clothes, etc.).⁷

The second type (see Table 3), illustrated in example (5), comprises cases formed with evaluative markers, such as the so-called absolute superlative (or elative) suffix *-tatos*, whose derivational status is ambiguous (cf. Kallergi 2013, among others). These cases satisfy all conditions except the final one.

Table 3: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type B)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: (oreó-tatos ‘very nice’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	+
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	+
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	+
6	Word-class maintenance	+
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	+
8	Perspective dependence	+
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	-

- (5) a. oreó(s) > oreó-tatos
 nice-evalm
 ‘nice’ ‘very nice’

⁷ See also Efthymiou (1999, 2026b) on *-iá* in Modern Greek and the Modern Lesbian dialect.

- | | | |
|----|-------------|--------------|
| b. | malak(ós) > | malak-ótatos |
| | | soft-evalm |
| | ‘soft’ | ‘very soft’ |

The suffix *-tatos* originates from an Ancient Greek superlative marker and is traditionally treated as inflectional rather than derivational. The treatment of the Greek superlative as an inflectional phenomenon has a long-established tradition, particularly in grammatical analyses of both Ancient and Modern Greek. The central argument is that the superlative is generally not regarded as forming a new lexical item; instead, it is viewed as expressing the grammatical category of degree within an adjective and as constituting a regular part of the adjective's inflectional paradigm. Interestingly, not all scholars share this view. Dressler (1989), for instance, considers superlative forms to constitute a non-prototypical type of inflection. Furthermore, the morphological status of *-tatos* remains debated, as this suffix exhibits several characteristics typically associated with derivational morphology. According to Kallergi's (2013) analysis, *-tatos* bears a [+learned] feature, attaches to adjectives with ultimate stress, and occurs in several lexicalized forms. These idiosyncratic properties support its classification as derivational rather than inflectional, in contrast to the Italian elative suffix *-issimo*, which has been argued to be more inflectional in nature. Moreover, *-tatos* may express the speaker's certainty, appreciation, or an opposing viewpoint (see Kallergi 2013 and example 6). Consequently, some scholars argue that *-tatos* should be analyzed as a derivational suffix (cf. Joseph and Philippaki 1987 and Kallergi 2013, among others).

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|-------|------------|-------------|
| (6) | A: To | psomí | íne | skliró |
| | The | bread | bePRS-3SG. | stale |
| | ‘The bread is hard’ | | | |
| | B: To | psomí | íne | malak-ótato |
| | The | bread | bePRS-3SG. | soft-evalm |
| | “(No,) the bread is very soft” | | | |

The third type identified (see Table 4) includes cases like *siyeno-lói* ‘a pack of relatives’ and *jineko-máni* ‘a pack of women’, shown under (7), which violate conditions 4 and 7.

Table 4: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type C)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: (siyeno-lói ‘a pack of relatives’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	+
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	-

5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	+
6	Word-class maintenance	+
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	-
8	Perspective dependence	+
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+

(7)	a.	sijení(s) >	sijeno-lói
			relative-evalm
		‘relative’	‘a pack of relatives’
	b.	jinéka >	jineko-máni
			woman-evalm
		‘woman’	‘a pack of women’
	c.	fitití(s) >	fitit-arjó
			student-evalm
		‘university student’	‘a student lot’

These mixed semantic cases convey both evaluative and non-evaluative (e.g. collective) meanings, with a base that represents the default value. According to Efthymiou (1999b), the suffixes *-arjó*, *-lói* and *-máni*, exemplified in (6), specialize in conveying the meaning ‘too many entities aggregated in the same place’ (see also Xioufis 2014; Kallergi et al 2023).⁸

The fourth type (see Table 5) also includes cases with mixed semantics, such as *mam-ákja(s)* ‘a person attached to his mother’ and *ipurj-ilíci* ‘ministership, typical behavior of a minister [+PEJ]’, shown under (8), which violates conditions 4, 7, and partially 2.

Table 5: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type D)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: (<i>mam-ákjas</i> ‘a person attached to his mother’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	+/-
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	-
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	+
6	Word-class maintenance	+
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	-
8	Perspective dependence	+

⁸ Formations with *-lói* and *-máni* exhibit the linking element *-o-*, which is characteristic of Modern Greek suffixoids (cf. Ralli 2020). Nevertheless, standard dictionaries and grammars classify *-lói* and *-máni* as suffixes. The present study does not address this issue.

9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+
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- | | | | |
|-----|----|-------------|--|
| (8) | a. | mamá > | mam-ákja(s) |
| | | | mother-evalm |
| | | ‘mother’ | ‘a person attached to his mother [+PEJ]’ |
| | b. | ipurj(ós) > | ipurj-ilíci |
| | | | minister-evalm |
| | | minister’ | ‘ministership, typical behaviour of a minister [+PEJ]’ |

Examples (8a) – (8b) convey both evaluative (e.g. pejorative) and non-evaluative (e.g. possessive, iterative, property-related) meanings, with a base that relates to, but does not directly denote the default value. According to Dangas and Manasis (2018), the suffix *-ákja(s)* derives nouns that consistently carry a pejorative meaning and denote individuals characterized by an excessive tendency or inclination toward a particular activity. The suffix *-ilíci* likewise, exemplified in (8b), frequently derives nouns referring to a profession or occupation, while simultaneously conveying an ironic disposition on the part of the speaker (Kiranoudis 2001, Dangas 2012, Kallergi et al 2023).

The fifth type identified (see Table 6) includes cases like *spirj-ári(s)* ‘pimply’, *gam-jári(s)* ‘womanizer’, *paramiθ-jáz(o)* ‘to tell fairytales, cheat’ and *θron-jáz(o)* ‘to enthrone (ironically)’, shown under (9) and (10), which violate conditions 4, 6, 7, and partially 2.

Table 6: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type E)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: (spir-járis ‘pimply’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	+/-
3	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	+
4	Evaluative marker limited in expressing evaluation	-
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	+
6	Word-class maintenance	-
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	-
8	Perspective dependence	+
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+

- (9) a. spirí > spir-jári(s)
pimple-evalm
'pimple' 'pimply, i.e. having pimples [+PEJ]'

- | | | | |
|----|----------|--|--|
| b. | γam(ó) > | γam-jári(s)
fuck-evalm
‘to fuck’ | γam-jári(s)
fuck-evalm
‘womanizing (typically characterizing a person as
someone who pursues many women)’ [+PEJ]’ |
| c. | kókalo > | kokal-jári(s)
bone-evalm
‘bone’ | kokal-jári(s)
bone-evalm
‘skinny’ (typically describing a person) [+PEJ]’ |
-
- | | | | |
|---------|------------|--|---|
| (10) a. | paramíθi > | paramiθ-jáz(o)
fairytale, lie-evalm
‘fairytale, lie’ | paramiθ-jáz(o)
fairytale, lie-evalm
‘to tell fairytales, cheat’ |
| b. | θrón(os) > | θron-jáz(o)
throne-evalm
‘throne’ | θron-jáz(o)
throne-evalm
‘to enthrone’ (ironically) |

These mixed semantic cases use connotative markers (e.g. Fortin 2011; Efthymiou 2013; Kallergi et al 2023 et al) to convey both evaluative and non-evaluative (e.g. agentive, causative, collective, iterative) meanings, with a base that relates to but does not directly represent the default value. In example (8), denominal adjectives derived with the suffix *-iári(s)* attribute a degrading quality to a noun in a permanent way and express a pejorative value (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 2000).⁹ Furthermore, in the word *spirjári(s)* ‘pimply, having a pimply complexion’ illustrated in (8), identifying the expression of the standard form in the base word is not always straightforward. The base of *spirjári(s)* ‘pimply’ is the noun *spirí* ‘pimple’, which does not express the standard meaning (i.e. a person with a small number of pimples or no pimples at all) (see also Efthymiou 2013). Similar remarks can be made about [–learned] denominal verbs derived with *-iáz(o)*, as illustrated in example (9), which express locative or ornative meanings while simultaneously conveying pejorative values (cf. Efthymiou 2010, 2011; Charitonidis 2011).

⁹ Adjectives in *-jaris* can also function as nouns (or undergo nominalization), since the boundary between adjectival and nominal categories is often blurred for words referring to humans across languages (cf. Anastassiadis-Symeonidis, Efthymiou & Fliatouras 2012; Efthymiou 2024b).

The sixth type (see table 7) also includes cases with mixed semantics, such as *dzabadzis* ‘person who avoids paying [+PEJ]’, exemplified under (11), which violates conditions 2, 4, 5, 8 and 7, and partially 6.

Table 7: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type F)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: (dzaba-dzís ‘person who avoids paying’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	-
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	-
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	-
6	Word-class maintenance	+/-
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	-
8	Perspective dependence	+
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+

- | | | | |
|------|----|-------------|---|
| (11) | a. | dzába > | dzaba-dzí(s) |
| | | | for free-evalm |
| | | ‘for free’ | ‘person who avoids paying [+PEJ]’ |
| | b. | kataféрно > | katafer-dzí(s) |
| | | | succed-evalm |
| | | ‘succeed’ | ‘a shrewd, often manipulative person who gets their way [usually +PEJ]’ |
| | c. | aéras > | aer-idzí(s) |
| | | | air-evalm |
| | | ‘air’ | ‘someone who engages in dubious speculative activities without investing any capital of their own [+PEJ]’ |

d.	galop >	galop-adzí(s) ¹⁰
		poll-evalm
	‘poll’	‘pollster [+PEJ]’

These mixed semantic cases convey both evaluative (e.g. pejorative) and non-evaluative meanings (e.g. ‘belonging to group X’, ‘typical activity’), with a base that relates to but does not directly represent the default value. They also use polyfunctional markers that produce non-evaluative formations with non-evaluative meanings such as ‘descendance’ or ‘profession’ (e.g. *taxi-dzí(s)* ‘taxi driver’, see Kiranoudis 2001; Kallergi et al 2023).¹¹

The eighth type identified (see Table 8) includes cases like *parakrát(os)* ‘parastate’ and *para-ikonomía* ‘shadow economy’, shown under (12), and (13) which violate conditions 5 and 7.

Table 8: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type G)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: Type G (para-ikonomía ‘shadow economy’, para-krátos ‘parastate’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	+
2	Standard value represented by base	+
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	+
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	-
6	Word-class maintenance	+
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	-
8	Perspective dependence	+
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+

(12)	ikonomía >	para-ikonomía
		evalm-economy
	‘economy’	‘shadow economy’

(13)	krát(os) >	para-krát(os)
		evalm-state
	‘state’	‘parastate’

¹⁰ In these last examples, the suffix takes the allomorphic forms *-adzís* and *-idzís*

¹¹ As example (11) indicates, the eighth type comprises suffixes that can attach to bases with negative connotations, (cf. 11a), as well as to neutral bases (cf. 11b, c, d). Therefore, I acknowledge that, in these cases, the evaluative meaning of the constructions is primarily contributed by the affix (cf. also Kiranoudis 2001 and Kallergi et al 2023).

This type utilizes polyfunctional markers that also produce formations with non-evaluative meanings.¹² What is common and particularly interesting in both cases is that evaluative constructions of this type express both resemblance and difference with respect to an entity that serves as a norm, represented by the base conveying ‘disproximation’ (Masini et al 2023) and referring to a separate but related category (cf. Efthymiou 2026a; Schlücker 2026). According to Amiot and Stosic (2022) approximatives are not hyponymous to their base units and thus cannot be included in taxonomic hierarchies, since they do not denote autonomous conceptual categories (for discussion cf. also Schlücker 2026).

The ninth type (see Table 9) includes lexicalized evaluative constructions, exemplified under (14), which violate conditions 1, 2, 7, and 8.

Table 9: Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions (Type H)

Non-Prototypical Evaluative Constructions: Type H (skon-áci ‘piece of paper using in cheating at the exams’)		
1	Expression of deviation from the standard value	-
2	Standard value represented by base	-
3	Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+
4	No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	+
5	Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	+
6	Word-class maintenance	+
7	Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	-
8	Perspective dependence	-
9	Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or typically inflectional)	+

- (14) a. skóni > skon-áci
dust-áci
‘dust’ ‘piece of paper using in cheating at the exams’
- b. γαρίδα > γariδ-áci
shrimp-áci
‘shrimp’ ‘cheese curl’

Notably, this type derives from the combination of a nominal stem and an evaluative suffix. However, it has become semantically opaque and no longer encodes an evaluative reading, making it the only type that fails to satisfy the first two conditions. This type is not homogeneous, as it includes members exhibiting different degrees of lexicalization. For example, the word *yariδ-áci* ‘cheese curl’ exemplified in (14b) does not refer to a small shrimp,

¹² Interestingly, the prefix *para-* occurs in two distinct construction types, namely Type A and Type G. The present study leaves open whether *para-* is a single polysemous prefix or two homonymous prefixes (cf. Efthymiou et al 2015).

but rather to an entity that resembles a shrimp in terms of its color and shape, indicating that the original semantic association is still partially recoverable. By contrast, the word *skón-áci* ‘piece of paper using in cheating at the exams’ in (14a) denotes a referent that bears no semantic relation to dust, reflecting a higher degree of lexicalization.

Overall, the analysis of the non-prototypical evaluative constructions in our data indicates that the qualitative (pragmatic) dimension consistently contributes to their meaning. It also highlights four broad categories:

- a. Those utilizing polyfunctional markers,
- b. Those involving evaluative markers that merge evaluative and non-evaluative meanings within a single lexeme,
- c. Those employing evaluative markers with an ambiguous derivational status, and
- d. lexicalized evaluative constructions.

Table 10 gives us a clear overview of the different types and key features of non-evaluative constructions, with lexicalized constructions (i.e. Type H) excluded.

Table 10: Overview of different types of non-prototypical evaluative constructions

Evaluative constructions (ECs)								
Defining features	Prototypical ECs	Types of non-prototypical ECs						
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g
1. Expression of deviation from the standard value	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
2. Standard value represented by base	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+
3. Realization of an explicit evaluative marker	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
4. No merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
5. Evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-
6. Word-class maintenance	+	+	+	+	+	-	+/-	+
7. Hyponymy (semantic subordination)	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
8. Perspective dependence	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
9. Evaluative marker: typically derivational (or inflectional)	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+

The analysis additionally highlights that evaluative constructions derived from evaluative markers with mixed semantics do not constitute a unified category. Constructions such as *mam-ákja(s)* ‘a person attached to his mother [+PEJ]’, *spir-jári(s)* ‘pimply [+PEJ]’ exhibit a degree of semantic exocentricity (e.g. Williams 1981; Zwicky 1985; Hoeksema 1992; Bauer 2008), in that their denotation is not straightforwardly recoverable from the semantics of the base; they signal deviation from a standard value, with the marker serving as the focus of evaluation, while the standard itself is only indirectly linked to the base.

Finally, lexicalized evaluative constructions (i.e., Type H) fail to satisfy the semantic criterion proposed by Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015) and should therefore either be excluded

from the domain of evaluative morphology or, in the case of less lexicalized forms, analyzed as weak evaluatives (Amiot & Stosic 2022), situated in the fuzzy area between core and evaluative morphology.

5 The continuum of non-prototypical evaluative constructions and their semantico-pragmatic features

This section builds on the previously discussed group-defining conditions of prototypical evaluative constructions, as well as the overview of the different types of non-evaluative constructions presented in the previous section, with the aim of examining whether all conditions are equally susceptible to violation. The data presented in Table 10, demonstrates that certain conditions (e.g., *no merge of evaluative and non-evaluative meaning*, *hyponymy*) appear easier to violate than others (e.g., *word-class maintenance*, *purely derivational marker*, *evaluative marker consistently expressing evaluation*), while some are entirely inviolable (e.g., *expression of deviation from the standard value*, *realization of an explicit evaluative marker*, *perspective dependence*). Furthermore, the data reveal an asymmetric relationship between conditions 6 and 7: although a violation of condition 6 (*word-class maintenance*) necessarily entails a violation of condition 7 (*hyponymy*), the converse does not hold. Specifically, many types violate Rule 6 while still preserving condition 7. Furthermore, the information found in Table 10 reveals that some construction types violate fewer conditions, suggesting a continuum, in line with Grandi & Körtvélyessy (2015) (refer to figure 1).

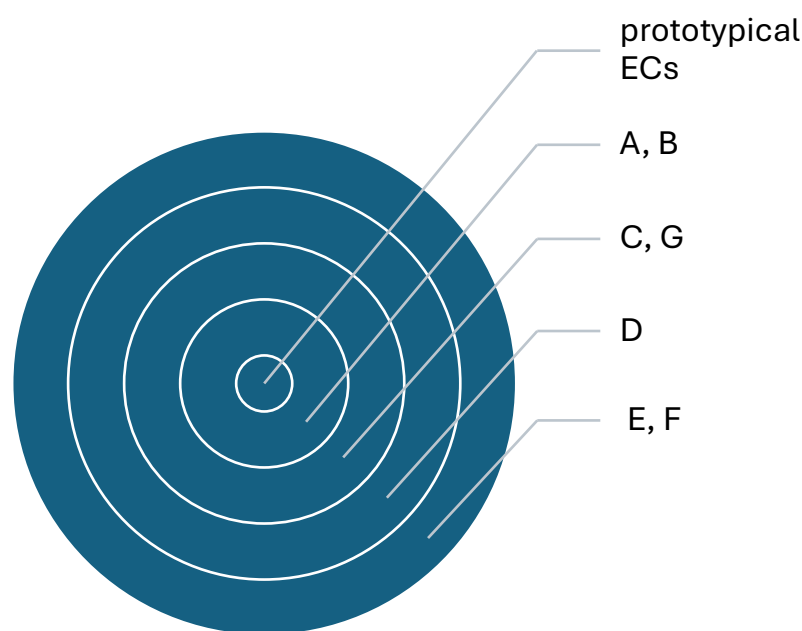


Figure 1. The continuum of evaluative constructions

The data also indicate that Types A and B (e.g. *like para-éx(o)* ‘to have something to excess’, *oreó-tatos* ‘very nice’), which exhibit fewer violations, are more central, whereas Type E

constructions (e.g. *spir-jári(s)* ‘pimply [+PEJ]’) are the most peripheral, satisfying only four of the nine established conditions. Furthermore, the most central types (A and B) meet the stricter condition 6 (*word class maintenance*), while Type E, being one of the most peripherals, tends to violate it. The data also highlight challenges associated with type D, E and F constructions (e.g. *mam-ákja(s)* ‘a person attached to his mother [+PEJ]’, *spir-jári(s)* ‘pimply [+PEJ]’, *dzaba-dzí(s)* ‘person who avoids paying [+PEJ]’), which exhibit a degree of semantic exocentricity and are derived from a base that relates to but does not directly represent the default value, with the derivational marker serving as the locus of evaluation. Furthermore, the interaction between evaluative and non-evaluative meanings in the least prototypical types of evaluation may suggest that these formations occupy a position closer to non-evaluative derivational processes than the other types examined in the study.

Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that non-prototypical evaluative constructions typically refer to the qualitative aspect of evaluation and display mixed semantics expressing both evaluative and non-evaluative meanings within the same lexeme. Furthermore, a preliminary analysis of the semantico-pragmatic features in these constructions indicates that they are commonly linked to pejoration, which frequently co-occurs with features such as collective, repetitive action, human property or propensity (e.g. *mam-ákja(s)* ‘a person attached to his mother [+PEJ]’, *sijeno-ló(i)* ‘a pack of relatives [+PEJ]’, *spir-jári(s)* ‘pimply [+PEJ]’, *γam-jári(s)* ‘womanizer [+PEJ]’). This pattern is consistent with the findings of Efthymiou (2013) and Kallergi et al (2023), while features such as ‘diminution’ are either rare or missing. This finding may suggest that the ‘marked’ category of non-prototypical constructions is not typically associated with the unmarked category of diminutives (Grandi 2005; Štekauer, Valera & Körtvélyessy 2012, among others) but instead tends to align with marked semantico-pragmatic categories. Overall, the data highlight a complex situation requiring further analysis.

6 Summary and conclusions

In this study, I developed a refined account of non-prototypical evaluative constructions and their various types, supported by empirical evidence from Modern Greek. The analysis has shown that non-prototypical evaluative constructions do not constitute a uniform category, with some constructions being more peripheral and displaying distinct semantic and grammatical features. Evaluative constructions derived from markers that merge evaluative and non-evaluative meanings within a single lexeme are generally more peripheral than those derived from polyfunctional markers, which can also produce formations with non-evaluative meanings. Furthermore, the most peripheral types are more likely to violate the condition of word-class maintenance, thus demonstrating a stronger tendency toward non-evaluative derivation.

The examination of non-prototypical evaluative constructions revealed consistent associations with specific semantico-pragmatic features, and a tendency to align with marked evaluative semantic categories rather than the unmarked category of diminutives. The analysis highlights challenges in semantically exocentric constructions that signal deviation from a standard value, where the marker encodes evaluation, while the standard is only indirectly linked to the base. Pragmatic features are consistently encoded in non-prototypical evaluative markers, aligning with Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi’s (1994) perspective on the primary pragmatic role of evaluative constructions.

These findings illuminate the complexity of non-prototypical evaluative morphology and the intricate connection between the locus of evaluation and the semantics of evaluative constructions. I hope this study will encourage further research on non-prototypical constructions and contribute to the advancement of more precise theoretical approaches.

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