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USING ASPECTS OF GENERATIVE GRAMMAR IN L1 AND L2 GRAMMAR TEACHING

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Abstract: In this paper we propose that the concepts and findings of Theoretical Linguistics should inform language teaching, for both L1 and L2. In particular, with respect to grammar teaching, we suggest that the Generative Grammar framework (Chomsky, 1986, 1995, 2000) should be adopted for the description of language systems at school, given that it offers the appropriate theoretical background, i.e. the existence of universal principles, on the one hand, common across all natural languages, and parameters, on the other, which differentiate them with respect to their specific characteristics. Taking into consideration the significant differentiation in the description of language systems, which appears in descriptive/reference grammars of languages and consequently in grammar teaching, found in first and foreign language course books, we aim to overcome this discrepancy (by adopting basic principles and concepts of Generative Grammar), so that language/grammar teaching acquires a uniform, systematic and cross-linguistic character. In this respect, we draw our attention to three representative phenomena, namely a) the realisation (or not) of the pronominal subject, b) clause structure and c) question formation, in Greek (L1), English (L2) and German (L3).

Keywords: theoretical linguistics; generative grammar; grammar teaching; Greek as L1; English and German as L2.

**EL USO DE ASPECTOS DE LA GRAMÁTICA
GENERATIVA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA
GRAMÁTICA DE L1 Y L2**

Resumen: En este artículo proponemos que los conceptos y hallazgos de la Lingüística Teórica deben comunicar con la enseñanza de la lengua, tanto para L1 como para L2. En particular, con respecto a la enseñanza de la gramática, sugerimos que los marcos de la Gramática Generativa (Chomsky, 1986, 1995, 2000) se adopten para la descripción de los sistemas de lengua en la escuela, dado que ofrecen la base teórica adecuada, o sea, por un lado, la existencia de principios universales, comunes en todas las lenguas naturales, y por otro lado, los parámetros que los diferencian respecto a sus características específicas. Considerando la diferenciación significativa en la descripción de los sistemas de lengua que aparecen en las gramáticas descriptivas/ de referencia de la lengua y, por consiguiente, en la enseñanza de la gramática que se encuentra en los libros de cursos de lengua extranjera así como en los de lenguas primeras, nuestro objetivo es superar esta discrepancia (adoptando principios y conceptos básicos de Gramática Generativa), por lo que la enseñanza de la lengua/gramática adquiere un carácter constante, sistemático y translingüístico. A este respecto, destacamos tres fenómenos representativos: a) la realización (o no) del sujeto pronominal, b) la estructura de las cláusulas y c) la formación de preguntas, en griego (L1), inglés (L2) y alemán (L3).

Palabras clave: lingüística teórica; gramática generativa; enseñanza de la gramática; griego L1; inglés y alemán L2.

**L'ÚS D'ASPECTES DE LA GRAMÀTICA GENERATIVA
EN L'ENSENYAMENT DE LA GRAMÀTICA DE L1 I L2**

Resum: En aquest article proposem que els conceptes i troballes de la Lingüística Teòrica han de comunicar-se amb l'ensenyament de la llengua, tant L1 com L2. En particular, pel que fa a l'ensenyament de la gramàtica, suggerim que els marcs de la Gramàtica Generativa (Chomsky, 1986, 1995, 2000) s'adoptin per a la descripció dels sistemes de llengua a l'escola, ja que ofereixen la base teòrica adequada, o sigui, d'una banda, l'existència de principis universals, comuns a totes les llengües naturals, i de l'altra, els paràmetres que els diferencien respecte de les seves característiques específiques. Considerant la diferenciació significativa en la descripció dels sistemes de llengua que apareixen en les gramàtiques descriptives/de referència de la llengua i, per tant, en l'ensenyament de la gramàtica que es troba als llibres de cursos de llengua estrangera, així com en els de primeres llengües, el nostre objectiu és superar aquesta discrepància (adoptant principis i conceptes bàsics de Gramàtica Generativa), de manera que l'ensenyament de la llengua/gramàtica adquireix un caràcter constant, sistemàtic i translingüístic. En aquest sentit, destaquem tres fenòmens representatius: a) la realització (o no) del subjecte pronominal, b) l'estructura de les clàusules i c) la formació de preguntes, en grec (L1), anglès (L2) i alemany (L3).

Paraules clau: lingüística teòrica; gramàtica generativa; ensenyament de la gramàtica; grec L1; anglès i alemany L2.

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Introduction

Linguists have often noted that there is a gap between (grammatical) descriptions of Theoretical Linguistics and Grammar in Teaching. Theory internal differences which result from different approaches, on the one hand, and theoretical descriptions based on specific characteristics of each language, on the other, are mapped on descriptive/reference grammars and thus influence grammar teaching, with respect to both L1 and L2.

The present paper deals with grammar teaching in the Greek school system, where Greek is mainly the native language, while English and German are taught as first and second foreign language, respectively.

The picture drawn from the investigation we have conducted so far on descriptive/reference grammars shows that there is great differentiation with respect to language specific grammars and between grammars of different languages. On the other hand, research focusing on L1 and L2 language course books (see e.g. Klidi & Tsokoglou, 2014; Georgiafentis & Tsokoglou, 2017) shows that: a) the descriptions of grammatical phenomena, primarily based on traditional/descriptive grammars, are not always theoretically informed and, therefore, are descriptively inadequate, and b) significant differentiation is attested in the description of language systems. This fact makes teachers and learners believe that they deal with completely different systems/objects of teaching.

In this paper we propose that the concepts and findings of Theoretical Linguistics should inform language teaching, in general, and grammar teaching at school, in particular (see Catsimali, 2007; Georgiafentis *et al.*, 2011; cf. Underwood, 2017; van Rijt & Coppen, 2017). More specifically, in order to overcome the existing inconsistency and discrepancy, we suggest that the Generative Grammar framework (Chomsky, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2000) should be adopted as it offers the appropriate theoretical background, i.e. the existence of universal principles, which are common across all natural languages and predict their similarities, and parameters, which systematically differentiate them with respect to their specific characteristics (see, for instance, Hawkins, 2001; Philippaki-Warbuton, 1992; Theophanopoulou-Kontou, 2002; White, 2003).

Our aim is to reach two main goals, namely: a) to achieve descriptive adequacy of the language system(s) and b) to optimise language teaching,¹ by treating grammar as a uniform object of teaching.

The present paper is organised as follows: In section 1, we briefly sketch how reference grammars describe grammatical phenomena. In section 2, we examine language course books and grammar books currently used in Greek (state) schools, drawing our attention to three representative phenomena, namely: a) the (in)omissibility of the pronominal subject, b) clause structure and c) question formation, in Greek, English and German, and we trace the problematic areas that arise. In section 3 we provide some basic principles and concepts of Generative Grammar, on which our suggestions in section 4 are based, and show that the problems mentioned can be easily overcome along those lines. In section 5, we present an example of teaching implementation

¹ On language teaching, see, among others, Mitsis (1998), Baslis (2006), van Rijt & Coppen (2017).

with respect to the subject of the sentence on the basis of clause structure. Last, we summarise the discussion with some concluding remarks.²

1. Descriptive grammars / Reference grammars (clause structure)

The phenomena discussed in this paper are interrelated and directly linked to the structure of the clause. In particular, subjects are obligatory constituents of the clause, whether or not they are lexically realised, and questions are built uniformly out of declaratives through movement. However, in this section, due to space limitations, we will restrict our presentation to clause structure to give a rough picture of how descriptive/reference grammars describe grammatical phenomena.

1.1 Greek clause structure

In Greek grammars, one can hardly find anything on how the Greek clause/sentence is structured. One reasonable explanation could be that Greek has free word order.³ In traditional grammars (see for example Tzartanos, 1991/1945:35ff) the sentence is defined as the combination of a subject and a predicate. In modern descriptive grammars, which are structurally oriented (see e.g. Holton, Mackridge & Philippaki-Warburton, 1997:409; Holton, Mackridge & Philippaki-Warburton, 2012:500), we find the following definition: “The clause is the smallest syntactic unit which contains (explicitly or implicitly) a subject and a verb phrase”.

In another grammar (bearing the title *Structural-functional – communicative grammar* by Clairis, Babiniotis *et al.*, 2005), we observe a combination of different approaches, i.e. a functional-communicative one, where the sentence is identical to the notion of “message” (μήνυμα), and a structural one based mainly on dependency grammar and valency theory, where the core is the verbal element (έχει δανείσει ‘has lent’) and the participant(s) nominal element(s) (ο διπλανός μου ‘the person next to me’, το μολύβι του ‘his pencil’, στη Μαρία ‘to Maria’), as we observe in Figure 1 in the Appendix. According to the authors, the core of the message and the participants constitute the main body of the information provided by the sentence (see Clairis, Babiniotis *et al.*, 2005:551-553).

1.2 English clause structure

In reference grammars of English, we find different and diverging accounts of clause structure. We present here a small sample from three grammars widely used in Greece as L2 grammars (namely

² Note that in this paper we focus on the teaching of language viewed as a system; our aim is not to develop a model of teaching methodology for language teaching. Yet, we present an example of teaching implementation in class (see section 5). For an extensive review of Greek language teaching methodology see Koutsogiannis (2017).

³ It is not surprising that all grammars deal with word order in Greek, since every pattern of S-V-O yields grammatical sentences. Therefore, in order to explain the differences of word order patterns, in modern grammars we observe detailed presentations based on functional-communicative approaches using notions of information structure, namely topic and comment-(focus) (see Clairis, Babiniotis *et al.*, 2005:682ff; Holton, Mackridge, & Philippaki-Warburton, 1997:426ff and Holton, Mackridge, & Philippaki-Warburton, 2012:518ff).

Huddleston & Pullum, 2005; Leech & Svartvik, 2002; Parrot, 2003), which is characteristic of the dissimilarities attested.

According to Leech and Svartvik (2002:191), the clause can be analysed into five types of elements, namely subject, verb (or verb phrase), complement, object and adverbial, as can be seen in Figure 2 in the Appendix.

In Parrot (2003:303), we observe a rather traditional description according to which the clause consists of a subject and a predicate. Furthermore, there are five types of predicate depending on the constituents contained, as seen in Figure 3 in the Appendix. What is worth mentioning here is that the verb (without its objects/complements) is termed “verb phrase”!

Finally, in Huddleston and Pullum (2005:64-65), we find two tree-diagrams (see Figures 4 and 5 in the Appendix), based on phrase-structure grammar, which represent the structure of the clause. What is interesting to note in the second diagram is that in the case of the ditransitive verb “give”, the verb is accompanied by an object and a complement (instead of the “classic” assumption that it requires two objects or two complements!).

1.3 German clause structure

For the description of the German sentence, all reference grammars examined⁴ – despite their differences⁵ – refer to the clause type, where in each one of them the verb occupies a fixed position, that is: a) verb-second for main clauses and wh-questions, b) verb-first for yes/no questions and imperatives and c) verb-last types for subordinate clauses (1-3):

a) Verb-second type: main clauses and wh-questions

- (1) a. Peter **liest** ein Buch.
- b. Was **liest** er?

b) Verb-first type: yes/no questions and imperatives

- (2) a. **Liest** er das Buch?
- b. **Lies** das Buch!

c) Verb-last type: subordinate clauses

- (3) a. Ich weiß, dass er das Buch **liest**.
- b. Ich habe ihn gefragt, wann er das Buch endlich **liest**.

⁴ The reference grammars chosen for German are as follows: Drosdowski, Müller, Scholze-Stubenrecht, & Wermke: *Duden Grammatik* (1995:784-785), Eisenberg (1989:408-415), Heidolph, Flämig, & Motsch: *Akademie-Grammatik* (1984:702ff), Helbig & Buscha (1993:564-569) and Zifonun, Hoffman, & Strecker (1997:1498ff). These constitute essential grammar tools widely used in Greece in foreign language teaching.

⁵ Some of the grammars additionally provide clause structures based on syntactic models such as the dependency grammar and valency theory or the phrase-structure grammar; see for example Helbig & Buscha (1993:625ff) and Drosdowski *et al.* (1995:653ff) respectively.

A further idiosyncratic phenomenon of the language, the so-called verbal frame or sentence/clause bracket, creates fixed positions for the discontinuous verbal complex, which in the main clause denotes the second and the last position of the sentence (4):

d) Verbal frame or sentence/clause bracket

- (4) a. Peter **hat** gestern ein Buch **gelesen**.
 b. Peter **schreibt** heute einen Text **ab**.

As a result of this phenomenon, the German clause structure is described on the basis of the so called topological model, as illustrated in Table 1 for the main clause, providing the following positions: a) the left and right sentence/clause bracket for the finite and non-finite verb respectively, b) the pre-field position for only one constituent, c) the middle field for all other constituents, and d) the post-field, which is not obligatorily occupied, for extraposed elements.

Pre-field	Left bracket	Middle field	Right bracket	Post-field
Vater	hat	den Kindern eine Geschichte	erzählt	(im Bett)
<i>father</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>the kids a story</i>	<i>told</i>	<i>(in bed)</i>

Table 1. The topological model: The German clause structure – main clause.

As for the other two clause types, they take the following positions, as illustrated in Table 2:

	Pre-field	Left bracket	Middle field	Right bracket
Verb-first	∅	Hat <i>has</i>	Vater den Kindern eine Geschichte <i>father the kids a story</i>	erzählt? <i>told</i>
Verb-last	∅	...dass <i>...that</i>	Vater den Kindern eine Geschichte <i>father the kids a story</i>	erzählt hat. <i>told has</i>

Table 2. The topological model: The structure of questions and subordinate clauses.

Before moving to the next section (Teaching grammar), we briefly note the following with respect to the other two phenomena mentioned earlier: a) For questions, in the grammars of all three languages we find the distinction of wh-questions, yes/no questions and indirect questions, with considerable similarities and differences in the presentation of their formation. b) For the subject, among others, we find mentions in Greek grammars that it can be omitted, when pronominal or “understood”, while in English and German information about the role of the expletives “there” and “it” and “es”, respectively.

2. Teaching grammar: Descriptions in language course books

In this section we demonstrate how the three interrelated phenomena i.e. subject (in)omissibility, clause structure, and question formation are presented in the course books and school grammars of the three languages, namely Greek, English and German⁶. We note that Greek is taught as L1, while English as a first foreign language and German as a second foreign language in both primary and secondary school.

2.1 Subject (in)omissibility

2.1.1 Greek

According to the grammar of primary school, the pronominal subject in nominative can be identified from the verb inflection and thus can be omitted, as illustrated in Figure 6 in the Appendix; it only appears when used emphatically.

2.1.2 English

In language course books, English is not presented as a language that necessarily requires a pronoun in subject position, unlike Greek. What is more, impersonal verbs are not taught at all, and thus the fact that a pleonastic subject is necessarily required in English (5) does not become clear or evident. As a result, a number of interference errors are attested in the written performance of Greek students of English, even at an advanced level, as in (6):

- (5) It is raining at the moment. / *is raining at the moment.
- (6) a. *In this sentence is clear that I refer to...
b. *If we substitute one phoneme for another, will result in...

The only mention that we managed to trace about this topic is the presentation of “there is/are” (see Figures 7-9 in the Appendix). Yet, it is worth pointing out that: a) “there” is associated with the verb as if it were a fixed expression in singular or plural, b) there is no explanation about its syntactic role or the role of the noun phrase responsible for number agreement.

2.1.3 German

In the German course books, the information that the language does not allow for subject omission is nowhere to find either. Marginally, we find the expressions “es regnet” (it rains) and “es ist kalt” (it is cold), while, when the impersonal expression “es gibt” (there is) is presented, there is no explanation about the role of the expletive “es” (it) and subsequently why an existential appears with an object in accusative (see Figure 10 in the Appendix).

⁶ All course books and school grammars are available electronically at: <http://www.pi-schools.gr/books/>

2.2 Clause structure: Main declarative clauses

2.2.1 Greek

In primary school language course books of Greek, we see that the sentence/clause is presented for the first time with the verb being its main constituent. In the primary school grammar the sentence/clause is defined in line with current linguistic theory, i.e. it consists of a subject NP, which is further analysed into an Article (το ‘the’), an Adjective (λαίμαργο ‘greedy’) and a Noun (σκυλί ‘dog’), and a VP which consists of a Verb (έφαγε ‘ate’) and an object NP, which is further analysed into an Article (το ‘the’) and a Noun (μελομακάρονα ‘cookies’); what is more, its constituents are hierarchically structured, as we see in Figure 11 in the Appendix.

A somewhat similar picture arises in the secondary school language course books where the sentence/clause is divided into NP (Το Υπουργείο Υγείας ‘The Ministry of Health’) and VP (συνέταξε διατροφικές οδηγίες ‘issued dietary guidelines’) (see Figure 12, Appendix), without reference though to the hierarchical structure we find in the primary school grammar.

In the secondary school grammar, however, the sentence/clause definition appears to be more “traditional”, since the sentence/clause is defined as consisting of a subject and a predicate.

In view of the above, it appears that there is a clear divergence with respect to both sentence/clause description and terminology in the primary and the secondary school language course books and grammar books, which leads to confusion as far as the definition and the structuring of the sentence is concerned⁷.

This becomes even worse if we also put the foreign languages into the picture.

2.2.2 English

Examining the English primary school course books, we note that the only indirect mention of English sentence/clause structure traced is the one illustrated in the following two Tables taken from the Appendix of the relevant book, where the sentence/clause is divided into linear positions (Figures 13 and 14)⁸.

Present Continuous			
+	I am	speaking	to you.
	You are	reading	this.
-	She is	not	staying in London.
	We are		playing football.
?	Is he	watching	TV?
	Are they	waiting	for John?

Figure 13. Primary School Book, Appendix III, Grammar File.

⁷ One potential explanation for this divergence stems from the fact that the primary and the secondary school language course books and grammar books have been authored by different teams with different viewpoints as far as linguistic analysis is concerned.

⁸ It is worth noting that in another Table of the Appendix (6th Grade, Appendix III, Grammar File, p. 155) “has/have” are still termed subjects even when they appear at the beginning of the sentence (initial position of the sentence)!

Past Continuous

FORM

+	I / he / she	was		watching	TV.
	You	were		working	hard.
-	I / he / she	was	not	helping	Mary.
	We	were		joking.	
?	Was	he / she		studying	Maths?
	Were	you / they		playing	football?

Figure 14. Primary School Book, Appendix III, Grammar File.

If one compares the two Tables, he/she immediately realises that the presentation is different in the two tenses. More specifically, in the *present continuous*, in the first position we find the subject together with the auxiliary verb, while in the *past continuous* these two elements occupy separate positions. It is not at all clear why this differentiation takes place.

The fact that the subject and the auxiliary verb appear as one constituent in the first Table is equally problematic, something that goes against any of the well-known grammatical descriptions, being “traditional” (subject – predicate) or modern (e.g. $S \rightarrow NP-VP$).

What is more, the following excerpt that refers to the position of adverbs of frequency, which are claimed to be “in the middle of sentence”, and to two verbs is problematic, too, given that this position is not clearly designated:

We can use adverbs of frequency [...]. These words are often with the verb in the middle of the sentence, e.g. He’s always late. [...] If there are two verbs, they come between them, e.g. It doesn’t usually rain here (Primary School Book, 5th Grade, Appendix, Discover Grammar, 154).

These adverbs appear to “violate” the S-V-O order of English. However, this is neither expressed explicitly nor explained clearly in the book. As a result, a learner may understand that this position in the “middle” of the sentence can host many different elements.

2.2.3 German

In German course books clause/sentence structure is taught systematically, due to its specific characteristics, as we discussed above (section 1.3). Its description follows more or less the descriptive grammars of the language.

As we can observe in the following excerpt (Figure 15), the visualised first contact with the structure of main clause emphasises the rule of verb-second and implies the existence of topological fields. We note, however, that the third example, which illustrates coordinated clauses, is misleading in this respect since it fails to present a solid rule. Thus, according to the rule, the verb in main clauses is always found in the second position of the clause, yet in coordinated main clauses, if their subject is the same, there is no need to have it twice.

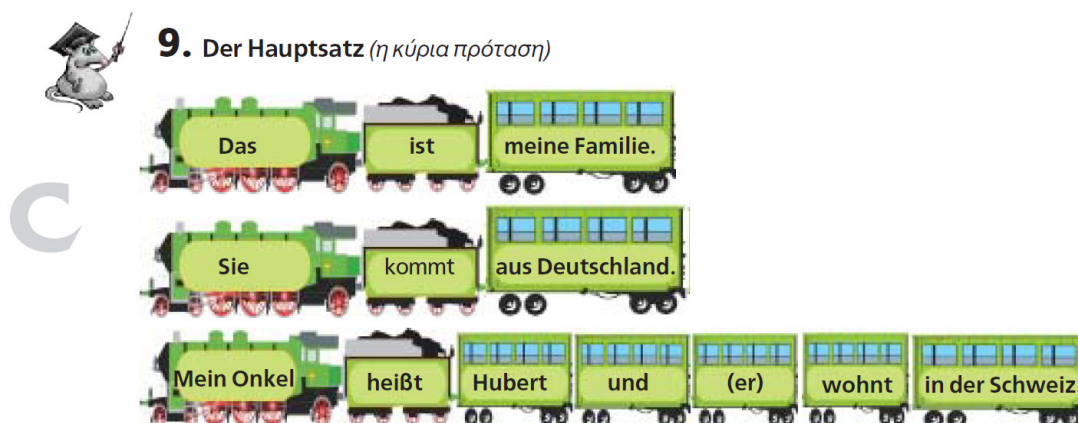


Figure 15. Secondary School book: The structure of the sentence – main clause.

Furthermore, in Figure 16 (see Appendix) the so-called left and right sentence bracket is taught with a visualised example, which indicates the second position of the modal and the last of the infinitival, followed by the rule. What is stressed there is the position of the modal, the position of the second verb (infinitival) and the fact that only the modal and not the infinitival conjugates.

In addition, in a Table given in the course book, we observe how the syntax of perfect tense is depicted, where the complex verb (*haben gezeitet* ‘have camped’ / *habe gespielt* ‘have played’) occupies the second and last position of the sentence (see Figure 17 in the Appendix). What is problematic here, though, is that a 4th position is introduced, cancelling in this respect the notion of the middle field. This 4th position disappears later in the same course book, as can be seen in Figure 18 in the Appendix, giving rise to questions such as how the sentence is constructed and how many positions it contains.

2.3 Questions

2.3.1 Greek

With respect to questions, there is great differentiation in presentation between the primary and the secondary school books of Greek. In the secondary school books the distinction between yes/no questions and *wh*-questions is present, among a number of other categorisations; yet there is no mention about how a question is structured. What is worth pointing out here is that the notion of “constituent” is nowhere to be found in the respective presentation of *wh*-questions. Furthermore, *wh*-elements appear as devices that introduce *wh*-questions without reference, though, to their original structural position in the main declarative clause.

2.3.2 English

As for English, we focus here only on the presentation of *wh*-questions. In primary school books, a *wh*-element is referred to as “question word/phrase” (see Figure 19, Appendix). In the Appendix of the same book (Appendix II – My Grammar Corner), the auxiliary verb is presented as the “words *do* and *does*”.

In the secondary school, wh-elements are called “wh-words”, while the auxiliary “do” is called “question form” (see Figure 20, Appendix).

We observe that question formation is presented differently, and different terminology is used. In particular, the distinction between the use of the terms “question word” and “question form” is not transparent at all.

With respect to the structure of questions, in the primary school book we find a Table that comprises linear positions (see Figure 21, Appendix). It is worth noting here (as was the case for main declarative clauses, too) that the auxiliary verb appears together with the subject (in inverted order) as if they were one constituent. This means that the auxiliary is somehow associated with the subject and not with the wh-element as we would expect.

2.3.3 German

In German course books, questions are taught from the very beginning. First and second positions are emphasised, which is important for German (see Figure 22, Appendix). Verb-second applies for the wh-questions, but the yes/no questions are presented as subject-verb inversion contrary to the fixed position of the verb, which is assumed considering the topological model description, adopted by the course book.

2.4 Interim conclusions

To recapitulate, the following conclusions are in place:

First, it appears that, paradoxically, the pronominal subject (in)omissibility is taught in L1 Greek, but not in L2 English and L3 German. We consider that it is a great oversight that the languages under discussion are not categorised on the basis of this fundamental parameter of pronominal subject (in)omissibility, which could cause great difficulties in foreign language learning.

Second, we reach the conclusion that clause structure is taught differently in the three languages: either it is based on a specific model, as in Greek (NP-VP) and German (topological model), or it is nonexistent or arbitrary, as in English. Thus, students get the wrong impression that sentences are structured differently in the three languages. It goes without saying that the three languages have their own specific characteristics⁹. However, in the language course books, especially in the foreign language ones, there is no discussion about it or comparison among the languages.

Last, questions are not taught uniformly in the three languages and their structure and their derivation from and association with main declaratives is not taught at all.

⁹ These are associated with the degree of word order flexibility (see e.g. Tsokoglou, 2011, for a comparison of Greek and German).

3. Clause structure in the generative framework

As we mentioned in section 1, the descriptions of the phenomena under investigation in the respective reference grammars of each language often do not converge. Thus, it is not always easy to reach comparative conclusions on this basis and come up with suggestions about description and teaching. For this reason, we adopt Generative Grammar, which is a framework that provides, on the one hand, a common description and common structural patterns for all natural languages and, on the other, parameters that differentiate them (see, for instance, Philippaki-Warbuton, 1992; Roussou, 2015 and Theophanopoulou-Kontou, 2002, for Greek; Haegeman, 1994; Haegeman & Guéron, 1999 and Radford, 1988; for English; Grewendorf, 1988 and 2002 for German).

With respect to the (in)omissibility of the pronominal subject, in Generative Grammar the well-known *pro-drop* parameter categorises languages into *pro-drop* and non *pro-drop*, claiming that the syntactic subject (position) is universally present.

As for the clause, the following universal structure has been put forward, a simplified version of which we present in Figure 23. This structural configuration assumes particular syntactic positions for the lexical and functional categories of the main clausal elements.

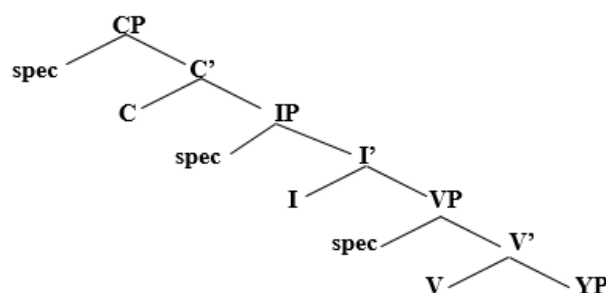


Figure 23. The generative framework: Clause structure.

Furthermore, questions are universally derived in terms of movement. In yes/no questions the finite verb moves to C, while in wh-questions the wh-phrase moves from its original position to the [Spec, CP] as can be seen in Figure 24 in the Appendix.

4. Teaching suggestions

4.1 Clause structure – main declarative clauses

The proposed structure offers both descriptive and explanatory adequacy to a great extent. However, given that we would like, on the one hand, to avoid the use of abstract categories in teaching and, on the other, to follow the description of Greek clause structure currently existing in the primary school, we can adopt an older version of the theory, for all three languages, according to which the sentence consists of an NP and a VP¹⁰.

¹⁰ Despite this, we believe that both the I category that has to do with finiteness (Tense and Agreement) and the C category (that relates to subordination and question formation) should be systematically introduced in grammar teaching at school for all three languages, thus offering greater descriptive adequacy.

Thus, a simple common structural configuration for the description of the Greek, the English and the German clause is illustrated in Figure 25:

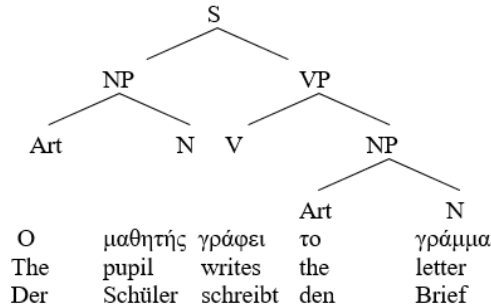


Figure 25. Common clause structure for the three languages.

If there is an auxiliary, the structure for Greek and English is as in Figure 26 in the Appendix. The structure in Figure 27 (Appendix) presents the special feature of German that is associated with the existence of the verb frame (i.e. the second and the last position of the finite and infinite verbal element, respectively). We can easily conclude that there is a great advantage if we use a common structure and terminology for all languages, upon which the similarities and differences are clearly illustrated, compared and taught.

4.2 Questions

Furthermore, questions in all three languages can be taught as deriving from the main declarative clause, where the verb and the wh-element move to a question phrase right above the existing structure (Figure 28). This proposal captures both the universality of this phenomenon and the native speaker's intuition as well.

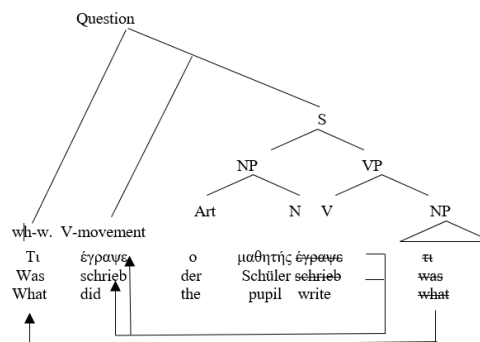


Figure 28. Derivation of questions.

In this way the presence of the auxiliary “do” in English, which is inserted in the case of questions, can be justified, given that in this language (unlike Greek and German) the verb does not move from the verb phrase.

4.3 Subject (in)omissibility

Finally, with respect to the (in)omissibility of the pronominal subject, we think that the native and the foreign languages should necessarily be distinguished into the two categories, so that, from the very beginning, students realise parameterisation of languages we mentioned earlier.

5. Teaching implementation

In this section we present an example of teaching Greek, using descriptions within the framework of Theoretical Linguistics suggested in section 4, as well as some results of the application in the classroom. The school where this approach was implemented functions unofficially as a pilot school called Arsakeio¹¹, in which new teaching methods and new teaching material are attested in all courses. In the Greek secondary school, Greek is taught two hours weekly and is examined at the end of the school year. The lessons are supported by a grammar (for teachers and optionally for pupils) which is in line with modern linguistic findings and an electronic platform¹² that hosts exercises and texts for teachers and pupils to be used either as teaching material in the classroom or as homework, respectively. In addition, lesson plans have been created in order to assist teachers with less experience in this domain, as well as to achieve uniformity among courses.

5.1 Teaching (about) the subject of a sentence

The implementation takes place in the first classes of the gymnasium with pupils aged between 12-15 years. Previous knowledge of the syntax of the sentence is a prerequisite. In the specific classes, the structure is presented hierarchically on the basis of phrase structure grammar, as it has been shown in 2.2.1 and suggested in 4.1.

The main goal of the lessons consists in the following: students a) becoming conscious and adequate readers of various text genres, b) being able to read “between the lines”, c) activating an ability to talk about language and d) supporting their (critical) literacy.

The specific educational goal involves: a) understanding the function of a subject in language in general, b) realising that Greek is (among and opposed to others) a *pro-drop* language and c) becoming conscious of the use of subject in reaching various goals in different conditions of communication.

The didactic approach falls within the communicative method, is text-centred and supports mainly teamwork. Thus, the class is divided into groups and the lesson starts by using texts of different genres. The pupils are asked to discover the sender, the receiver and the goal of the sender, while they encounter sentences with and without realised/overt subjects, on the one hand, and mismatches between grammatical and semantic subjects, on the other.

¹¹ Arsakeio is the general name of the Arsakeia – Tositseia Schools, a group of co-ed private schools in Greece, administered by the Society for Promoting Education and Learning, which is a non-profit educational organisation. Arsakeio comprises six schools, with campuses in Psychiko (Attica), Ekali (Attica), Thessaloniki, Patras, Ioannina, and also Tirana, Albania. More information can be found at: <https://www.arsakeio.gr/en/>

¹² <http://www.e-arsakeio.gr/>

The structure of the lesson comprises the following steps:

Step 1: The pupils are provided with various titles of newspapers about a contemporary subject of their interest. A discussion is initiated about what happened and why.

Step 2: The class is divided into groups of 3-4. Each group gets 2-3 texts (of different genres and with opposite/different points of view). They read the texts and have to discover the identity of the sender, the receiver and the goal of the sender/text. In the end, they present their findings to their classmates.

Step 3: Each group has to underline a sentence that indicates the writer's point of view. We write the sentence on the blackboard, beginning with a sentence like “Οι μαθητές κατέλαβαν το σχολείο” (‘the pupils occupied the school’) and we give the structure:

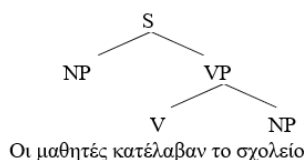


Figure 29. Structure given to the pupils on the board.

Step 4: We mention that Greek is a language in which the subject is not necessarily expressed, and we discuss these cases in which the subject may be omitted and those where it should be present. We further give structures with nominal and sentential objects.

Step 5: We continue with impersonal verbs (or expressions) like “Πρέπει να φύγουν” (‘They must go’) or “Είναι αδύνατον να φύγεις” (‘it is impossible to go’), showing that they have the same structure with the personal ones, that is, we describe the subordinate sentence as an object (see Appendix, Figure 30), contrary to traditional descriptions which consider it a subject.

At this point we explain the difference of Greek comparing it to English, German and French, where in impersonal verbs and expressions the dummy subject “it”, “es” and “il” is used, respectively (7):

- (7) a. ∅ Είναι φανερό ότι έφυγε.
- b. It is obvious that he left.
- c. Es ist offensichtlich, dass er ging.
- d. Il est évident qu’il est parti.

Step 6: We also notice that word-choice as well as sentence structure-choice of the writer/speaker changes the sender's perspective. In order to familiarise the pupils with the role of the subject (presence/absence), we ask them to compare the active voice “the pupils occupied their schools” with the passive voice “the schools were occupied”, while they discuss the role of the overt subject vs. a salient agent, respectively. Furthermore, we expose them to different situations, so that they

become aware of the difference between the grammatical and the semantic subject; for instance, we ask them to choose the appropriate sentence structure for each case (8):

- (8) a. You broke the vase. What do you prefer: “I broke the vase” or “The vase is broken”? Why?
 b. You got a good grade in maths. You say “I got an A in maths”. You got a bad grade in maths. You say “She gave me a C in maths”. Why?

5.2 The results

In view of the above, we presented the clause structure of all three languages in order for the pupils to realise not only the hierarchy of the structure in their mother tongue but also in English and German, which are taught as foreign languages. Thus, they became aware that the structure of a sentence is the same in the languages they know and the surface differences can be systematically explained.

With respect to the subject, it became clear that Greek (as opposed to English and German) is a *pro-drop* language, which explains automatically, why we do not have to use personal pronouns (as they learn to do in English and German) and why we do not have expletives (‘dummy’ elements) as in “It is interesting, It is raining / Es ist interessant, es regnet”.

The most important change that the introduction of current linguistics brought into teaching is the fact that pupils talk about language by making use of a ‘common language’, which further develops their critical literacy.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, in view of the above presentation, we can point out the following: There is considerable differentiation among the descriptive/reference grammars within a language and between languages, and as a result there is great divergence, descriptive inadequacies and dissimilarities in the description of the phenomena in the language course books. The incorporation of basic principles of Theoretical Linguistics into our teaching proposal shows that Generative Grammar can provide us with a useful tool for the description of the similarities and the differences among languages. If we make use of the findings of Generative Grammar in language teaching, we can achieve the following: a) Language and, thus, grammar teaching can be treated as a uniform object of teaching with common characteristics which represent the native speaker’s intuition. b) Cross-thematic and cross-linguistic teaching is advanced. c) It contributes to the development of language and metalanguage awareness of students, and thus d) promotes critical literacy and multilingualism, which are of great significance in the modern educational system.

Acknowledgements

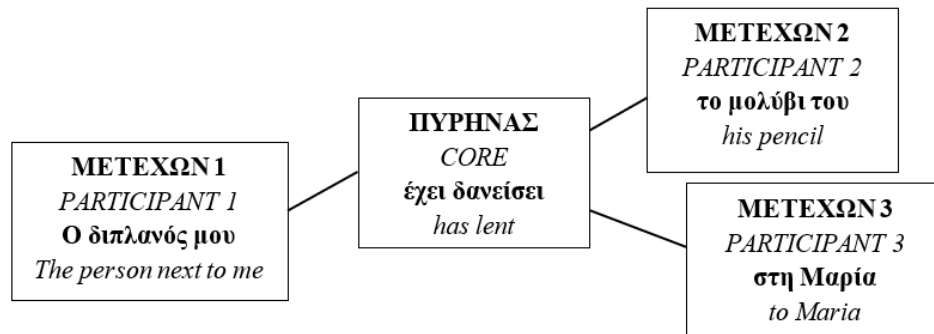
An earlier version of this paper was presented at the III International Conference on Teaching Grammar (Congram19) in Barcelona (23-25 January 2019, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). We wish to thank the audience and especially Xavier Fontich for stimulating discussions. We would also like to express our gratitude to the editors and directors of *Didacticae* for their valuable suggestions. Special thanks go to two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions. Needless to say, all inadequacies remain our own.

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Appendix



Ο διπλάνός μου έχει δανείσει το μολύβι του στη Μαρία.
 The person next to me has lent his pencil to Maria.

Figure 1. Simple clause, adapted from *Structural-functional – communicative grammar* (Clairis, Babiniotis et al., 2005).

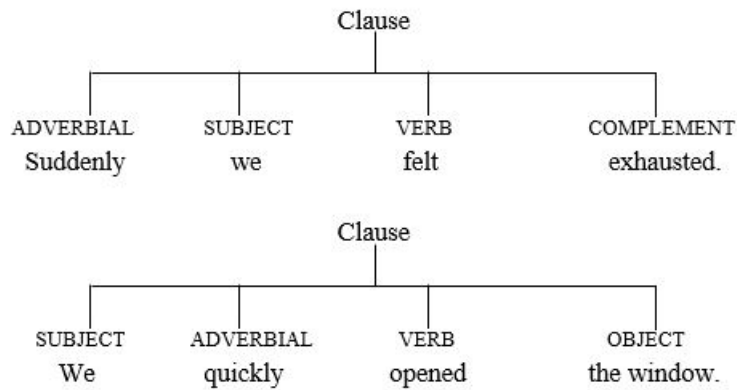


Figure 2. Clause elements, adapted from *A communicative grammar of English* (Leech & Svartvik, 2002).

Subject	Predicate			
	Verb phrase	Indirect object	Direct object	Complement
He	loves		pets	
She	has been			rather sad
He	told	his brother	the news	
She	calls		her dog	'Fluffy'
He	slept			

Figure 3. Types of predicate, adapted from *Grammar for English language teachers* (Parrot, 2003).

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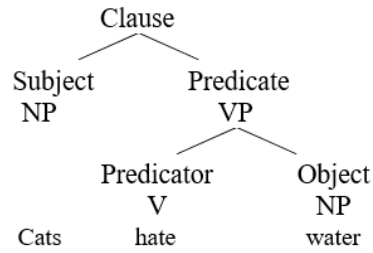


Figure 4. Clause structure, adapted from *A student's introduction to English grammar* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005).

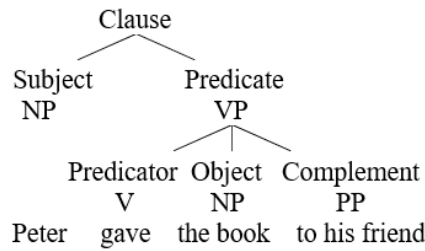



Figure 5. Clause structure, adapted from *A student's introduction to English grammar* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005).



Συνήθως, η ονομαστική της προσωπικής αντωνυμίας δε χρησιμοποιείται.

{Εγώ} τρώω μακαρόνια. {Εμείς} τρώμε μακαρόνια.
 {Εσύ} τρως μακαρόνια. {Εσείς} τρώτε μακαρόνια.
 {Αυτός} τρώει μακαρόνια. {Αυτοί} τρώνε μακαρόνια.

Καταλαβαίνουμε το πρόσωπο από τις καταλήξεις του ρήματος, άρα είναι περιττό να χρησιμοποιήσουμε και την προσωπική αντωνυμία. Την προσωπική αντωνυμία σε ονομαστική, λοιπόν, τη χρησιμοποιούμε μόνο για να τονίσουμε ποιος έκανε την πράξη που δηλώνει το ρήμα:

- **Εγώ** έφαγα τα μακαρόνια, όχι η Μαρία.
- Πέτρο, **εσύ** πρέπει να ξεκαθαρίσεις τι θα κάνεις από εδώ και πέρα και όχι οι γονείς σου.




Figure 6. Primary School grammar: Subject omission.

1.1. Η φράση **There is - There are**

	Affirmative		Negative		Interrogative
	Long form	Short form	Long form	Short form	
Singular	There is	There's	There is not	There isn't	Is there?
Plural	There are	There're	There are not	There aren't	Are there?

Η φράση **there is-there are** χρησιμοποιείται για να μιλήσουμε για το **τι υπάρχει κάπου**. Το **there is** είναι ενικός αριθμός και το **there are** είναι πληθυντικός αριθμός. e.g. **There is** a board in my classroom . **There are** twelve desks in my classroom. **Is there** a poster on your classroom wall? **Are there** maps on your classroom walls? **There isn't** a football field in my school. **There aren't** pictures on my classroom walls.

Figure 7. Primary School book (*My Grammar Corner*).

2 Look at the example sentences and complete the Grammar table.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a library. • There are two cinemas. • There are some night clubs in Plaka. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There isn't a bookshop. • There aren't any kiosks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a park? Yes, there is. • Are there any hotels? No, there aren't.
<p>We use There is / are to say that something exists.</p> <p>Match:</p> <p>There's/There isn't/Is there a. + plural nouns</p> <p>There are/There aren't/Are there b. + singular nouns</p> <p>How do we form questions and negatives?</p>		

Figure 8. Secondary School book.

THERE IS / THERE ARE - USE

- We use *there is / there are* to
 - say that something exists or doesn't exist
 - ask if something exists

e.g. There is an internet café.
 There aren't any cinemas.
 Is there a TV in your room?

Figure 9. Secondary School book: Grammar appendix.

6. Verbaler Ausdruck mit Akkusativ (έκφραση που συντάσσεται με αιτιατική)

Im Deutschen Museum gibt es **den** ersten Dieselmotor.
Es gibt auch alte Flugzeuge.

Figure 10. Secondary School book: The impersonal expression "es gibt" (there is).

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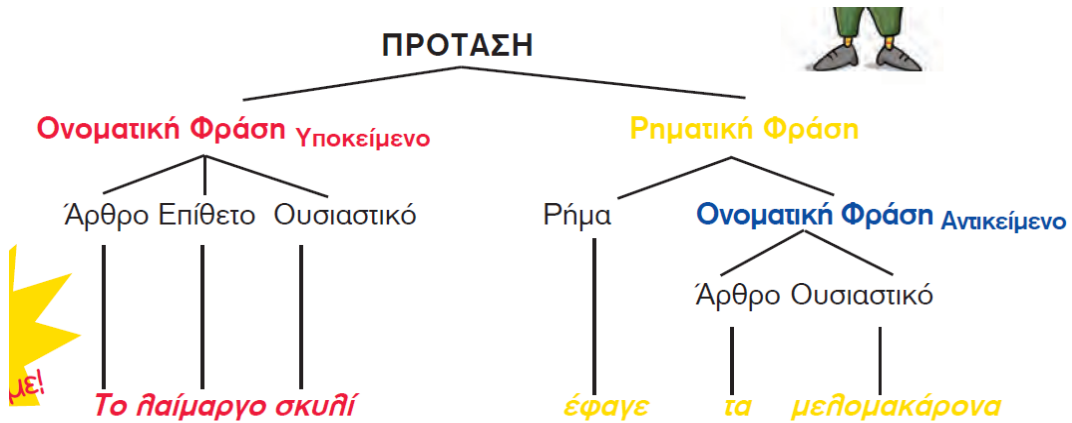


Figure 11. Primary School grammar: The structure of the sentence (S → NP VP).

Figure 12. Secondary School book: The structure of the sentence (NP – VP).

8. Die Modalverben: können, müssen, dürfen

Ich **muss** heute lange **arbeiten** .
 Wir **dürf** en erst nach der 6. Stunde **gehen** .

Können wir zusammen nach Hause gehen oder müsst ihr länger in der Schule bleiben?

Was ist richtig? Kreuze an!

1. Σε ποια θέση στην πρόταση βρίσκεται το Modalverb;
 - α) στην 1η θέση
 - β) στη 2η θέση
 - γ) στο τέλος της πρότασης.
2. Σε ποια θέση βρίσκεται το δεύτερο ρήμα;
 - α) στην 1η θέση
 - β) στη 2η θέση
 - γ) στο τέλος της πρότασης.
3. Ποιο ρήμα κλίνεται στην πρόταση;
 - α) το Modalverb
 - β) το ρήμα στο τέλος της πρότασης
 - γ) και τα δύο ρήματα.

Figure 16. Secondary School book: Left and right sentence bracket – the syntax of modals.

2. Syntax: Der Satz im Perfekt

1.	2. Hilfsverb (βοηθητικό ρήμα)	3.	4.	Partizip Perfekt
Wir	haben	gestern Abend	am Strand	gezeltet.
Am Strand	habe	ich	Gitarre	gespielt.

Figure 17. Secondary School book: Left and right sentence bracket – the syntax of perfect I.

Der Satz

1. a. Der Hauptsatz im Perfekt (η κύρια πρόταση σε χρόνο Perfekt)

1. Position	2. Position	3. Position		Endposition
Wir	haben	gestern	am Strand	gezeltet.
Am Strand	habe	ich	ein Buch	gelesen.
Am Wochenende	sind	wir	nach München	gefahren.

Figure 18. Secondary School book: Left and right sentence bracket – the syntax of perfect II.



Self-Assessment test

1 Write questions. Use the question words/phrases in the box:

What?
How often?
Where?
How much?
How many?

- ✓do you go to the cinema?
- ✓brothers and sisters have you got?
- ✓are you doing now?
- ✓sugar do you take in your milk?
- ✓does the caretta caretta live?

Points: / 10

Figure 19. Primary School book: wh-questions.

Lesson 3

WH- QUESTIONS

Who do you meet every morning?	My friend, John.
Who cooks at home?	My grandma.
Which is your favourite colour?	Green.
Where do you live?	In London.
What time do you get up?	At 7:00.
When is your birthday?	On 4 th January.
What is your telephone number?	210 - 3939202.
How do you go to school?	By bus.
How many thimbles have you got?	About 100.
How often do you play football?	Twice a week.

REMEMBER to use the question form after Wh-words **EXCEPT** when you are asking about the subject!

e.g. **Who** do you meet every morning? I meet **my friend**, John.
Who cooks at home? **My grandma** cooks every day.

Figure 20. Secondary School book: wh-questions.

Wh... questions / How... questions with Simple Present

EXAMPLES

What	do you / they	have	for breakfast?
What time		go	to school?
Where		spend	holidays?
When	does he / she / it	come home	from school?
Who		play	tennis with?
How often		meet	friends?

Figure 21. Primary School book, Appendix III – Grammar File: The structure of questions.

Der Satz

1. W-Fragen und Antworten (Ερωτήσεις μερικής άγνοιας και απαντήσεις)

1. Position	2. Position		1. Position	2. Position	
Wie	heiß t	du?	Ich	heiß e	Andreas.
Wo	wohn st	du?	Ich	wohn e	in Berlin.

2. Ja / Nein Fragen und Antworten (Ερωτήσεις ολικής άγνοιας και απαντήσεις)

1. Position	2. Position		1. Position	2. Position	
Wohn st	du	in Berlin?	Ja, ich	wohn e	in Berlin.
Komm st	du	aus Spanien?	Nein, ich	komm e	aus Deutschland.

3. Der Hauptsatz (Η κύρια πρόταση)

	2. Position	
Das	ist	meine Mutter.
Sie	kommt	aus Österreich.

Figure 22. Secondary School book: The structure of questions (wh- and yes/no questions).

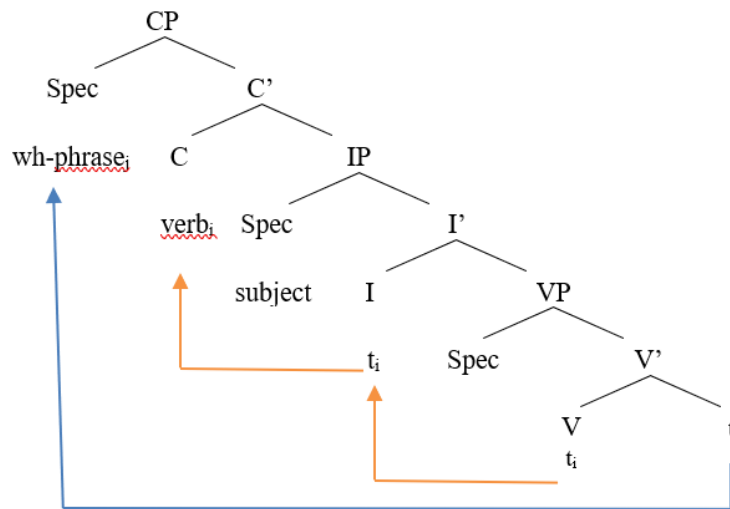


Figure 24. The Generative framework: Derivation of questions.

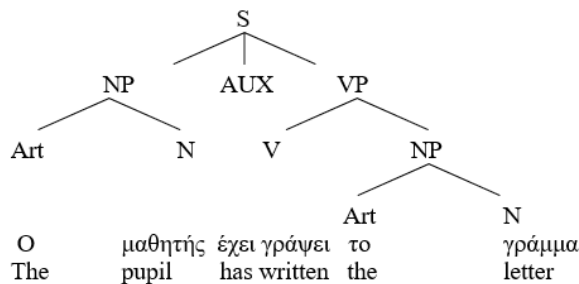


Figure 26. Clause structure with an auxiliary – Greek and English.

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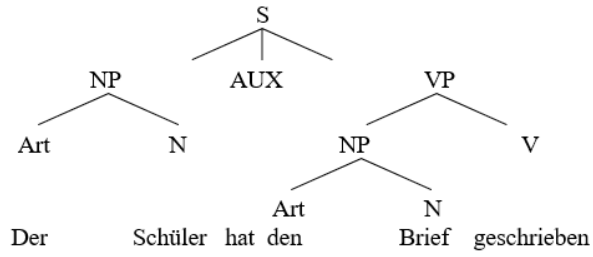


Figure 27. Clause structure with an auxiliary – German.

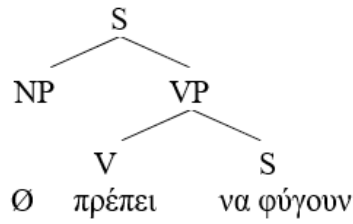


Figure 30. Impersonal verbs (or expressions).

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