Verbal collocations in Modern Greek and English: Common patterns

Paraskevi Thomou
University of Crete

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η δυνατότητα συνάψεων ρήματος με ουσιαστικό ως άμεσο αντικείμενο διαφέρει από γλώσσα σε γλώσσα (π.χ. *have/take a look* στα Αγγλικά, σε αντίθεση με *ρίχνω μια ματιά* στα Ελληνικά). Το γεγονός αυτό οδήγησε στην άποψη ότι οι λεξικές συνάψεις είναι αυθαίρετες (Smadja 1993). Στο άρθρο αυτό αμφισβητούμε την άποψη αυτή, υποστηρίζοντας ότι η συνεμφάνιση των λέξεων είναι περιορισμένη αλλά όχι αυθαίρετη. Το συμπέρασμα αυτό προκύπτει από την παρατήρηση της εσωτερικής κανονικότητας που διέπει το σχηματισμό ρηματικών συνάψεων, όσον αφορά τα σημασιολογικά συστατικά της σύναψης (το ρήμα και το ουσιαστικό που αποτελεί το άμεσο αντικείμενό του) και τη διαδικασία της σημασιολογικής αλλαγής. Η συγκριτική ανάλυση ρηματικών συνάψεων στη Νέα Ελληνική και Αγγλική βοηθά να εντοπιστεί ο μηχανισμός του δομικού σχήματος της σύναψης, το οποίο εμφανίζει ευρεία συναψιμότητα, που περιορίζεται καθώς το ρήμα σταδιακά χάνει το σημασιολογικό του περιεχόμενο.

KEYWORDS: collocational pattern, lexical decomposition, regularity

1. Introduction

Predicates formed with the same verb are not all of the same status. For instance, predicates formed with the verb *put* such as

> (1) put the car in the garage
> (2) don't put the blame on my wife

differ in their argument structure, since the former is a full verb predicate, whereas the latter forms a periphrasis or a lexical collocation. Lexicology deals with phraseology in general and, more specifically, with collocations (Cowie 1981, 1998, Benson et al. 1986, Benson 1990, Granger & Meunier 2008).

This paper focuses on verbal collocations (V + N object) in Modern Greek (MG) and English. Lexicology provides the tools for defining verbal collocations, but such a definition is not sufficient for the theoretical treatment of collocations. Light verb constructions such as verb + noun (object) constructions, in which the verb is empty of semantic content, while the noun transfers its arguments to the verb structure, have been the object of research in Generative Grammar (e.g. Grimshaw & Mester 1988). However, verbal collocations are not light verb constructions, since the verb in collocations is not empty of content, as our analysis will show. Thus, Generative Grammar is not sufficient in dealing with verbal collocations and this is the reason why it has not been adopted in this paper.[1]

A better candidate for dealing with verbal collocations is Lexicon theory, as advocated by Pustejovsky (1992, 1995), Levin & Rappaport (1991), Rappaport et al. (1993), Levin & Rappaport-Hovav (2005). Lexicon theory is based on the lexical representation of verbal predicates in terms of arguments and the lexical conceptual structure of predicates. However, it only deals with full verb predicates but not with verbal collocations. In this paper we treat verbal collocations by means of the theory developed for full verbs, in order to investigate the nature of collocations in relation to the nature of their full verb counterparts. In our view, the formation of verbal collocations is a gradient phenomenon. The paper provides a contrastive analysis of Modern Greek and English collocations in order to investigate the regularities concerning collocations in these two languages, based on the assumption that there are similarities in the way the two languages form collocations.

---

[1] A full analysis of why light verb constructions analysis does not cover verbal collocation analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

2. Verbal collocations in lexicology

There are certain very common verbs in all languages which have acquired extremely wide collocability with nouns. The predicates produced with these verbs vary from free and compositional predicates (free phrases) to expressions that are absolutely fixed and opaque in meaning (idioms), thus forming a continuum with many intermediate cases (Howarth 1998), as shown in the following Table for Modern Greek and English.

Table 1. The phrase continuum

	free phrase	verbal collocation	idiom
δino	*δino* to vivlio se kapjon (= give the book to sb)	*δino* prosoçi se kapjon/kati (= 'give attention to sb/sth', pay attention to sb/sth)	*δino* ta paputsja sto çeri (= 'give the shoes on the hand', kick out sb)
give	give the book to sb	give a lecture on	give a hand to sb
perno	*perno* to vivlio apo kapjon (= take the book from sb)	*perno* jefsi apo kapjon/kati (= 'take taste from sb/sth', take taste of sb/sth)	*perno* poδi apo kapu (= 'take foot from a place', to be kicked out)
take	take the book from sb	take a look at	take the bitter with the sweet

In this paper we will not deal with predicates which are fixed and opaque in meaning (idioms), but we are particularly interested in the continuum formed from predicates that are free, compositional and extremely productive (free phrases)[2] to those which are loosely fixed in form and meaning (collocations).[3] Verbal collocations are neither free, nor absolutely fixed word combinations.

A collocation AB is a word combination whose meaning X derives from the meaning of one of its two constituent parts (e.g. A) and from a meaning C [X=A+C], which is expressed by the lexeme B contingent on A (Thomou 2006, based on Mel´čuk 1998: 30).[4] Such combinations are shown below:

(3)   B   A
           land   a job
           do   a favour
           launch   an attack
           stand   comparison

More recent definitions for lexical collocations keep stressing the semantic dependency of their constituent parts. Granger & Paquot, for instance, argue that they are "usage-determined or preferred syntagmatic relations between two lexemes in a specific syntactic pattern. Both lexemes make an isolable semantic contribution to the word combination but they do not have the same status. Semantically autonomous the 'base' of a collocation is selected first by a language user for its independent meaning. The second element, i.e. the 'collocate' or 'collocator', is selected by and semantically dependent on the 'base'" (2008: 43). Siepmann also points out that "collocations are typically made up of two constituents

---

[2] Otherwise, full verb predicates (see 4.1).

[3] Other verbal predicates that vary from free to fixed are formed with the verbs *vazo* (to put), *vγazo* (to take out), *rixno* (to throw), *travao* (to pull), *pjano/arpazo* (to catch), *krato* (to hold), *afino* (to leave), *ferno* (to bring), *δixno* (to show), *vrisko* (to find) in Modern Greek and *get, put, drop, catch, keep, find* in English.

[4] An idiom AB has a meaning C, which is not a function of the meanings A+B. In fact, it does not include either the meaning A or the meaning B (see Mel´čuk 1998: 29). Idioms such as *to spill the beans, to pull sb's leg* have traditionally been assumed to be non-compositional, i.e. opaque in meaning, since their meaning is not a function of the meanings of their parts (Gibbs et al. 1989, Nunberg et al. 1994, Gläser 1998, Mel´čuk 1998).

which differ in their semantic status: a semantically autonomous base such as *compliment* combines with a semantically dependent collocate such as *pay*, such that the collocate take on a specific meaning ('offer') contingent on the base" (2008: 186).

Following Mel´čuk's (1998) definition, semantic changes are noticed in the meaning of a collocation (a meaning C expressed by lexeme B contingent on A), whose meaning does not exactly reflect the meaning of the constituent parts. The verb acquires a specialized sense, contingent on its direct object noun, whereas the direct object noun carries its literal sense or its sense stays intact. A kind of meaning dependency appears between the verb and the noun. The meaning dependency issue is not efficient for theoretical treatment, because not all verbal collocations are of the same nature. Here we will deal with this meaning dependency and investigate its nature, by particularly examining whether semantic changes reflect regularities.

3. Lexicon theory

The lexicon has typically been viewed as a list of lexical entries containing (both syntactic and semantic) idiosyncratic information, associated with individual words. Recent approaches to lexicon have paid more attention to the internal structure of lexical entries, that is their argument structure (with thematic roles) (Pustejovsky 1995) and the lexical conceptual structure of the verb (Levin & Rappaport 1991, Pustejovsky 1992, Rappaport et al. 1993). According to Pustejovsky, "a generative [computational] theory of the Lexicon includes multiple levels of representation for the different types of lexical information needed. Among such levels are: Argument structure (for the representation of adicity information for functional elements), Event structure (for the representation of information related to Aktionsarten and event type" (1995: 2-3). For example, for a verb like *put* the lexical entry would consist of its argument structure

(4) PUT: agent, theme, goal

and its lexical conceptual structure containing its event structure: transition

(5) PUT: [x cause [y to be at z]].

This kind of analysis provides us with a rich representation for verb meaning and is adopted in this paper, since it can account for semantic changes.

3.1. Arguments-thematic roles

The argument structure of a verb can be seen as a minimal specification of its lexical semantics (Pustejovsky 1995: 63). Every predicate has its argument structure, i.e. it is specified for the number of arguments it requires. The arguments are the participants minimally involved in the activity or state expressed by the predicate (Haegeman 1991: 36). A verb's semantics determines the syntactic realization of its arguments. There is a close connection between verb meaning and syntactic structure (Levin & Rappaport-Hovav 2005). Therefore, the argument structure is a lexico-syntactic representation of the verb meaning. For example, the argument structure of the verb *announce* is the following (Grimshaw 1990):

(6) announce
    Mary announced John the good news   (agent (goal (theme)))

The more specific semantic relationships between verbs and their arguments are referred to in terms of thematic roles or theta roles, which are lexical conceptual labels that are not projected at the syntax of the predicate. The theta roles generally distinguished are the following (Haegeman 1991: 41-42):

Agent: the one who intentionally initiates the action expressed by the predicate
Patient: the person or thing undergoing the action expressed by the predicate
Theme: the person or thing moved by the action expressed by the predicate
Experiencer: the entity that experiences some (psychological) state expressed by the
        predicate
Beneficiary: the entity that benefits from the action expressed by the predicate
Goal: the entity towards which the activity expressed by the predicate is directed
Source: the entity from which something is moved as a result of the activity expressed
        by the predicate
Location: the place in which the action or state expressed by the predicate is situated

3.2. Lexical conceptual structure

Pustejovsky (1995: 63) and Levin & Rappaport-Hovav (2005) have shown that the argument structure of a verb, though a necessary component for the semantic characterization of the predicate, is in itself inadequate for capturing the meaning of specific predicates. Verbs very often have multiple argument realizations, as in:

(7) Pat ran
    Pat ran herself ragged
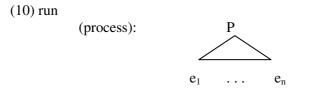   Pat ran her shoes to shreds   (Levin & Rappaport-Hovav 2005: 188).

This is the reason a predicate decomposition approach is preferred for the predicate's event structure, in order to capture all the meaning facets of the predicate. Lexical Conceptual Structure (LCS) is a lexico-semantic representation of the predicate, based on the participants in the action (arguments) and the way in which the action is structured, i.e. the event structure of the predicate (Pustejovsky 1992), as shown in (8):

(8) PUT: [x cause [y come to be at z]]   (Rappaport et al. 1993: 48).

Event structure is related to the verb action. Event types comprise state, process and transition (Dowty 1979, Pustejovsky 1992). A state involves a single event which is evaluated relative to no other event, as shown in (9).
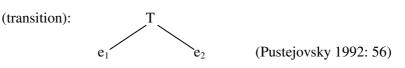
(9) be sick, love, know
                    (state):   S
                                 |
                                 e

Process is a sequence of events identifying the same semantic expression, as shown in (10).

(10) run
        (process):   P
                              /   \
                            /   \
                          e$_1$ . . .   e$_n$

Transition involves an event identifying a semantic expression, which is evaluated relative to its opposition (sb opens sth and this sth is closed). A transition involves a final point of change.

(11) give, open

(transition):

$$
\begin{array}{c}
T \\
\diagup \quad \diagdown \\
e_1 \qquad e_2
\end{array}
$$

(Pustejovsky 1992: 56)

Events denoting transition have sub-event structure, that is there are sub-events composing the final event. For example, the lexical conceptual structure of the causatives consists of two sub-events:

(12) cause ([act(x,y)], become (Q(y)))
    John closed the door
    LCS: cause ([act(the-door)], become ([closed(the-door)]))
    (Pustejovsky 1992: 58-59)

The argument structure and event structure of verbal predicates constitute the semantics of the predicate. Our analysis is interested in these two levels of decomposition in order to identify the changes predicates go through from full verb predicates (free phrases) to verbal collocations.

4. Analysis of verbal predicates

In this section we closely examine verbal predicates in Modern Greek and English in order to identify the internal process developed. The lexical decomposition of verbal predicates focuses on a) argument structure in interface with the syntax of the verb and b) lexical conceptual structure. Although there is a plethora of verbs forming collocations in Modern Greek and English, we will analyze three verbs in each language and the collocations they form. The verbs are *δino* (give), *perno* (take), *vazo* (put) and *give, take, put* respectively. Our methodology involves first an analysis of full verb predicates and then an analysis of verbal collocations.

4.1. Lexical decomposition of full verb predicates
4.1.1. Modern Greek

The verb *δino* requires two complements, a direct object in the accusative case and an indirect object in a prepositional phrase (preposition *se* phrase). These two complements map onto two arguments, a theme[5] (*ti bala*) and a goal (*se kapjon*) respectively. The external argument of the verb is an agent.

(13) [*δino*] [*ti bala*] [*se kapjon*]
        give (1st sing.) the ball (acc.) to sb
(14) argument structure: [agent, theme, goal]

The event structure of the verb in its full sense is a transition, the transfer of a concrete entity (theme) from an agent to a goal. Namely, the agent causes the transfer of the theme to the goal. In the second and final sub-event, the theme ends at the goal.

(15) LCS: *δino* (GIVE) [agent causes theme moved to goal, theme ends at goal]

The verb *perno* requires two complements, a direct object in the accusative case and an indirect object in a prepositional phrase (preposition *apo* phrase). These two complements

---

[5] In terms of the theme-role in the "affected entity" sense (see Rappaport et al. 1993: 46).

map onto two arguments, a theme (*ti bala*) and a source (*apo kapjon*) respectively. The external argument is an agent.

> (16) [*perno*] [*ti bala*] [*apo kapjon*]
>   take (1st sing.) the ball (acc.) from sb
> (17) argument structure: [agent, theme, source]

The event structure of the full verb is a transition, the transfer of a concrete entity from a source to an agent. The agent causes the transfer of the theme from a source to the agent. In the final sub-event the agent possesses the theme.

> (18) LCS: *perno* (TAKE) [agent causes theme moved from source, agent possesses theme]

The verb *vazo* requires two complements, a direct object in the accusative case and an adverbial complement in a prepositional phrase (preposition *se* phrase). These two complements map onto two arguments, a theme (*ti bala)* and a goal (*sto kuti*) respectively. The external argument is an agent.

> (19) [*vazo*] [*ti bala*] [*sto kuti*]
>   put (1st sing.) the ball (acc.) in the box
> (20) argument structure: [agent, theme, goal]

The action of this verb is also transition, the transfer of a concrete entity to a goal. The agent causes the transfer of the theme to a goal. At the final sub-event the theme is placed at the goal.

> (21) LCS: *vazo* (PUT) [agent causes theme moved to goal, theme ends at goal]

4.1.2. English
The argument structure and the lexical conceptual structure of *give, take* and *put* are the same as that of their Modern Greek counterparts. Thus, the verb *give* requires two complements, a direct object and an indirect object in a prepositional phrase (preposition *to* phrase). A theme and a goal argument are mapped onto this syntactic realization.

> (22) [I give] [the ball] [to John]

The verb *take* attributes two complements, a direct object and an indirect object, in a prepositional phrase (preposition *from* phrase). A theme and a source are mapped onto this syntactic distribution.

> (23) [I take] [the ball] [from John]

The verb *put* attributes a direct object and an adverbial complement, in a prepositional phrase (preposition *in*, *at* phrase). A goal and a theme argument are selected by the verb.

> (24) [I put] [the pen] [in the box]

4.1.3. Full verb predicates in Modern Greek and English
The analysis presented leads to the conclusion that these three verbs in Modern Greek and English have acquired common lexical features, their argument structure. Referring to the full

verb of the predicates analyzed in the two languages we can remark that the full verb is ditransitive (two complements are required) and requires two internal arguments, a theme on one side and a goal or source on the other. The external argument is an agent, as seen in (25):

> (25) GIVE, *δino*: [agent, theme, goal]
>   TAKE, *perno*: [agent, theme, source]
>   PUT, *vazo*: [agent, theme, goal]

In addition, the verb action is a transition, the event is divided into two sub-events, the second of which involves a final point of change. The agent causes the transfer of the theme to a goal or from a source; in the second and final sub-event the theme ends at the goal (person, place), as shown in:

> (26) LCS: GIVE [agent causes theme moved to goal, theme ends at goal (person other than agent]
> (27) LCS: TAKE [agent causes theme moved from source, agent possesses theme/theme ends at goal (agent)]
> (28) LCS: PUT [agent causes theme moved to goal, theme ends at goal (place)]

Finally, the verb action refers to the physical world, since the theme is a concrete entity.

4.2. Lexical decomposition of verbal collocations

The collocational patterns for Modern Greek were drawn from general purpose dictionaries such as Babiniotis (1998) and LKN (1998). Authentic language uses were also retrieved from the Hellenic National Corpus[6] and the Google search engine. English collocational patterns were drawn from English general purpose dictionaries (e.g. Collins COBUILD 1991, Oxford Collocations Dictionary[7]), while authentic language uses were retrieved from Collins COBUILD (based on the Collins Birmingham University International Language Database) and Oxford Collocations Dictionary, whose source is the British National Corpus of English.[8]

4.2.1. Verbal collocations in Modern Greek

Some characteristic collocations of the verb *δino* (to give) can be seen in (29)-(33):

> (29) [*δino*] [*θaros*] [*se kapjon*]
>   give (1st sing.) courage (acc.) to sb
>
>   [*δino*] [*δinami*] [*se kapjon*]
>   give (1st sing.) strength (acc.) to sb

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb: direct object in the accusative case (*θaros*, *δinami*) and indirect object in a *se* prepositional phrase. The agent-theme-goal is the argument structure of collocations, the theme (*θaros*, *δinami*) is an abstract entity, while in the full verb predicates the theme is a concrete entity.

> (30) [*δino prosoçi*] [*se kapjon/kati*]
>   give (1st sing.) attention (acc.) to sb/sth
>   pay attention to sb/sth

---

[6] Available at: http://hnc.ilsp.gr.
[7] Available at: http://oxforddictionary.so8848.com.
[8] It must be noted that this is not a corpus-driven research. For corpus-based combinatorial profiles of words, see Hanks (2004).

[*δino lisi*] [*se kati*]
give (1st sing.) solution (acc.) to sth
provide a solution to sth

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb: a noun in the accusative case (*prosoçi, lisi*) and a *se* prepositional phrase, but the argument structure of the predicates is different. *Prosoçi, lisi* cannot be theme arguments attributed by the verb *δino*, as they are semantically incompatible[9] with the concept GIVE. Prototypically speaking, *prosoçi* and *lisi* are not entities to be given. Besides this, the theme argument is mapped onto another entity. Therefore, the Verb + Noun form a periphrasis. The periphrasis attributes the theme argument, which is mapped onto the prepositional phrase (*se kapjon/kati, se kati*), as shown in (31):

(31) *δino lisi* [*se kati*]
          theme argument

Therefore the theme argument is displaced one position later, whereas the goal argument (noted at the full verb predicate) is abolished. The collocations *δino prosoçi se kapjon/kati, δino lisi se kati* can be replaced by a one-word verb, namely *proseχo* (to attend) and *lino* (to solve), respectively.

(32) [*δino eksetasis*] [*stin istoria*]
          give (1st sing.) exams (acc.) to history
          take exams in history

In this collocation *eksetasis* cannot be an argument of the verb, because it is incompatible with the concept expressed by *give*. *Stin istoria* is an argument of the noun *eksetasis*, which is, due to the periphrasis formed, transferred to the V+N periphrasis. The noun *eksetasis* argument is attributed to the *δino eksetasis* periphrasis. In other words, an argument selected by the noun becomes the argument of the whole collocation. The collocation *δino eksetasis stin istoria* is equivalent to *to be examined in history*. Therefore, the external argument of the collocation is not an agent (causer of action), but an experiencer.

Collocations of the verb *perno* (to take) are given in (33)-(38):

(33) [*perno*] [*θaros*] [*apo kapjon*]
          take (1st sing.) courage (acc.) from sb

     [*perno*] [*δinami*] [*apo kapjon*]
      take (1st sing.) strengh (acc.) from sb

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb: direct object in the accusative case (*θaros, δinami*), indirect object in an *apo* prepositional phrase. The arguments attributed by the verb are theme (*θaros, δinami*: abstract entity) and source (*apo kapjon*) arguments.

(34) [*perno jefsi*] [*apo kati*]
          take (1st sing.) taste (acc.) from sth
          taste sth

---

[9] Semantically incompatible means that the noun argument of the predicate cannot fulfill the prototypical verb's (verb in literal sense) semantic requirements. We refer to the prototypical (full) verb, so that the reader realizes the loss of verbal semantics in the collocations formed.

The collocation follows the syntactic pattern of the full verb (a noun in accusative case, *jefsi*, an *apo* prepositional phrase), but the argument structure of the new predicate is different. *Jefsi* cannot be an argument selected by the verb, as it is incompatible with the concept TAKE, if the prototypical sense of *perno* is taken into consideration. On the other hand, *apo kati* forms the theme argument of the V+N periphrasis, as can be seen from the equivalent one word verb on the right.

(35) [*perno jefsi*] [*apo tin poli*] [*jevome*] [*tin poli*]
    take (1st sing.) taste (acc.) from the town taste (1st sing.) the town (acc.)

Therefore the theme argument is transferred one position later, whereas the source argument (noticed at the full verb predicate) is abolished.

(36) *perno jefsi [apo tin poli]*
    theme argument
(37) [*perno tilefono*] [*to Niko*]
    take (1st sing.) telephone (acc.) Nick (acc.)
    call Nick/ make a call to Nick

In this collocation a new idiosyncrasy can be seen. *Tilefono* is in the accusative case, the same as *to Niko*. This means that there are two accusatives following the verb, one after the other, which is ungrammatical in Modern Greek except for this kind of periphrasis. The first noun in the accusative cannot be the theme argument of the verb, as it is semantically incompatible with its meaning. The second accusative can be explained only as an argument newly generated to be an argument of the V+N periphrasis. This is the case that the second accusative is semantically and syntactically compatible with the predicate. Thus, *to Niko* is a newly generated argument. In such collocations a new event is generated due to the total reconstruction of the periphrasis. The collocation *perno tilefono to Niko* describes a process, an activity.

(38) [*perno anasa*]
    take (1st sing.) breath (acc.)

This collocation is a bare predicate, i.e. a predicate without obligatory internal arguments; *anasa* cannot be an argument selected by the verb *perno*.
   In all, in the collocations with the verb *perno* the external argument is not a clear agent, a causer of the action, but an agent-experiencer, an agent who at the same time experiences his action.
   Collocations of the verb *vazo* (to put) appear in (39)-(47) below.

(39) [*vazo*] [*mja iδea*] [*se kapjon*]
    put (1st sing.) an idea (acc.) to sb

    [*vazo*] [*δulja*] [*se kapjon*]
    put (1st sing.) work (acc.) to sb
    put sb to work

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb: direct object in the accusative case (*iδea, δulja*) and adverbial complement in a *se* prepositional phrase. The arguments attributed by the verb are the theme argument (*iδea, δulja*: abstract entity) and the goal argument (*se kapjon*).

(40) [*vazo ipoγrafi*] [*se kati*]
   put (1st sing.) (a) signature (acc.) to sth

   [*vazo telos*] [*se kati*]
   put (1st sing.) (an) end (acc.) to sth

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb (a noun in the accusative case: *ipoγrafi*, *telos* and a *se* prepositional phrase), but the argument structure of the predicates is not the same. *Ipoγrafi, telos* cannot be the theme argument of the verb, since they are semantically incompatible with the prototypical concept of PUT. On the other hand, the prepositional phrase *se kati* is the theme argument of the V+N periphrasis, as can be seen from the one word verb in (41).

(41) *vazo ipoγrafi* [*se kati*]   [*ipoγrafo*] [*kati*]
   theme argument   sign (1st sing.) sth (acc.)
   vazo telos [*se kati*]   [*teljono*] [*kati*]
   theme argument   end (1st sing.) sth (acc.)

(42) [*vazo stiçima*] [*na kano kati*]
   put (1st sing.) bet (acc.) to do (1st sing.) sth
   bet to do sth

In this collocation, which describes a process, an activity, the phrase *na kano kati* (to do sth) is an argument of the noun *stiçima*, as can be seen in (43).

(43) *kerδisa to stiçima na pao stis δjakopes sto lonδino*
   won (1st sing.) the bet (acc.) to go on vacation to London
   I won a holiday to London on a bet

The argument of the noun *stiçima* in (42) is transferred to the V+N periphrasis. The verb on its own does not attribute any argument and a new event is generated, the *vazo stiçima na kano kati*.

(44) [*vazo ta klamata*]
   put (1st sing.) the cries (acc.)
   start to cry

This collocation is a bare phrase, without any obligatory internal arguments. *Ta klamata* cannot be an argument of the verb *vazo*, since it is incompatible with the concept PUT. The external argument of the collocation is an agent-experiencer.

4.2.2. Verbal collocations in English
Collocations for the verb GIVE are discussed in (45)-(55).

(45) [*give*] [*choice*] [*to sb*]
   [*give*] [*regards*] [*to sb*]

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb: a direct object in the accusative case and an indirect object in prepositional phrase (preposition *to* phrase). The verb attributes the theme (*choice*, *regards*) and goal (*to sb*) arguments, but the theme is an abstract entity.

(46) [*give a kick*] [*to sb/sth*]
     [*give a look*] [*to sb/sth*]

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb, a noun in the accusative case and a preposition *to* phrase. *Kick, look* cannot be the theme argument of the verb, since they are semantically incompatible with the verb. The theme argument maps onto the prepositional phrase selected by the periphrasis (V+N) as a whole.

(47) *give a kick* [*to sb*]
        theme argument

Therefore, the theme argument is displaced one position later, whereas the goal argument (noted at the full verb predicate) is abolished.

The collocations in (46) are not of the same nature as collocations in (45) for the following reasons:

a) the collocations in (46) can be replaced by a one-word verb, such as *to give a look to sb/sth-to look sb/sth, to give a kick to sb/sth-to kick sb/sth*, whereas the collocations in (45) cannot:

(48) *to give a choice to sb ≠ to choose*
     to give regards to sb ≠ to regard

b) the collocation *give a choice to* pairs with the verb *take*,

(49) *give a choice to sb-sb took the choice*

whereas the collocations *give a kick to sb, give a look to sb* do not pair with *take*:

(50) give a kick to sb-*sb took the kick
       give a look to sb-*sb took the look

In the collocations *give choice, regards, a kick, a look* dative alternation is still possible, whereas in the collocations in (51) and (52) this is not possible, because the goal argument is abolished and a new argument structure is present.

(51) give a choice to sb-give sb a choice
       give a look to sb-give sb a look
       give a kick to sb- give sb a kick
(52) [*he gave a lecture*] [*on the role of the United Nations in today's world*]

In (52) *lecture* cannot be the theme argument of the verb because it is semantically incompatible with it. The argument *on the role of the United Nations in today's world* is an argument attributed by the noun *lecture*, which is, due to the periphrasis formed, transferred to the V+N periphrasis, as can be seen in (53).

(53) *the lecture on the role of the United Nations in today's world was very interesting*

In other words, an argument attributed to the noun becomes the argument of the whole collocation:

(54) *he gave a lecture* [*on the role of the United Nations in today's world*]
        noun *lecture* argument attributed to the *give a lecture* periphrasis

In this collocation a new event is generated due to the total reconstruction of the periphrasis. The collocation *give a lecture on* describes a process, an activity.

(55) [*employers give a sigh*] [*of relief*]
   [*the dragon gave a loud scream*]

In the above cases *sigh* and *scream* cannot be arguments of the verb *give*. The collocations are bare phrases, without obligatory internal arguments. The external argument is an agent-experiencer.

Collocations of the verb TAKE are discussed in (56)-(64).

(56) [*take*] [*a hit*] [*from sb*]
   [*take*] [*advice*] [*from sb*]

These collocations follow the syntactic pattern of the full verb: a direct object in the accusative case and an indirect object in a prepositional phrase (preposition *from* phrase). The verb attributes the theme and source argument, the theme is an abstract entity (*hit*, *advice*).

(57) [*take a taste*] [*of sth*]
   [*take a look*] [*at sb/sth*]
   [*take a decision*] [*to do sth*]

In these collocations, the nouns *taste, look, decision* cannot be the theme argument of the verb, since they are semantically incompatible with the concept TAKE. The prepositional phrase below maps onto the theme argument of the periphrasis (V+N) as a whole, whereas no source argument is attributed by the verb (in contrast to the full meaning *take*), as can be seen in (58):

(58) *take a taste* [*of Andalusia*]
                     theme argument
   local unemployed take a look [*at health-care jobs*]
                                     theme argument
   to take a decision [*on the issue of advertisement*]
                     theme argument

At the same time, the collocation can be replaced by a one-word verb: *to taste, to look at, to decide to*, whereas the prepositional phrase complement of the collocations is required by the noun of the periphrasis as can be seen in the non-periphrastic examples:

(59) *the taste* of *Andalusia is still in my heart*
   the close look at *the manuscript made me*
   the ministerial decision on Trade and Environment
(60) [*take pity*] [*on poor patients*]

For the collocation *take pity on* things are different, because the *on* prepositional phrase is an argument developed only with the *take/have pity* periphrasis, as can be seen in the examples:

(61) *take pity* on *poor patients*
   don't take pity on *me*

but

> (62) *a person can feel pity* for *another human*
>   *it's a pity you can't come with us*

This means that the argument of the *on* prepositional phrase is a totally new argument, generated to fulfil the requirements of the periphrasis *take/have pity*:

> (63) *take pity* [*on poor patients*]
>   newly generated argument
> (64) [*I usually take a shower*] *at night before I go to bed*
>   [*They take a walk*] *in the park*
>   [*Take a deep breath*]

Such collocations with *take* are bare phrases, without obligatory internal arguments. The nouns *shower, walk, breath* are not arguments of the verb *take*. In such collocations the external argument is an agent-experiencer.

Collocations of the verb PUT are discussed in (65)-(67).

> (65) *fewer Scots youngsters* [*put*] [*effort*] [*into sport*]

This collocation follows the syntactic pattern of the full verb (direct object in the accusative case and adverbial complement in a prepositional phrase), while the verb attributes the theme (*effort*) and goal (*sport*) argument. The difference with the full verb is that the theme is an abstract entity.

> (66) [*put an end*] [*to any kind of violence*]
>   [*put pressure*] [*on internet companies*]
>   [*put the blame*] [*on my wife*]
>   [*put questions*] [*to Mr Marples*]

In these collocations, the noun (*end, pressure, blame, questions*) cannot be the theme argument of the verb. The theme is displaced one position later, in the prepositional phrase. The argument mapped onto the prepositional phrase is selected by the V+N periphrasis:

> (67) *put an end* [*to any kind of violence*]
>   theme argument
>   *put pressure* [*on internet companies*]
>   theme argument
>   *don't put the blame* [*on my wife*]
>   theme argument
>   *he did not put a question* [*to Mr Marples*]
>   theme argument

The periphrasis is equivalent to a one-word verb: *to end, to press, to blame, to question*. The goal argument seen in the full verb predicates is abolished in the periphrases in (66).

5. Regularity and semantic change in verbal collocations
The way the analysis proceeded (section 4) has shown that collocations do not form a flat and arbitrary group of verbal predicates, but several internal changes can be noticed, concerning the verb and the overall formation of the predicates. These semantic changes happen in a regular way. The verb gradually and systematically loses its semantic content (arguments-

thematic roles) and the periphrasis replaces it. This mechanism of regular change concerns verbal collocations in both Modern Greek and English, which generate parallel forms. These parallel forms concern different verbs in the same language. In the following sections, the parallel and common phases in the two languages verbal collocations are identified and described.

5.1. Phase/level 1: Event unchanged (Metaphor)
The following example illustrates the relation between English and Modern Greek:

> (68) English: *give a choice to sb, give regards to sb*
> *take a hit from, take advice from*
> *put effort into*

> Modern Greek: *δino δinami se kapjon*
> give (1st sing.) strength (acc.) to sb

> *perno θaros apo kapjon*
> take (1st sing.) courage (acc.) from sb

> *vazo mja iδea se kapjon*
> put (1st sing.) an idea (acc.) to sb

The argument structure of the collocations is the same as that of the full verb:

> GIVE: agent, theme, goal
> TAKE: recipient, theme, source
> PUT: agent, theme, goal

The verb selects the theme. The only difference is that the theme is not a concrete entity (*ball, fork, gift*, etc), but an abstract entity (*strength, idea, question, effort*, etc).

The event is also the same. The verb action is a transition; the main participant (the agent) causes the action, the transfer of the theme (abstract entity) to a goal or from a source. The event is metaphorically structured. In cognitive theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1993, Croft & Cruse 2004), metaphor is a phenomenon of conceptualizing one concept (concept B) in terms of another concept (concept A). Conceptual elements of a source domain are mapped onto a target domain:

> (69) *My mind doesn't work*
> B concept   is   A concept
> TARGET DOMAIN   IS   SOURCE DOMAIN
> Mind   is   machine

In our case an abstract entity is conceptualized in terms of a concrete entity. No other semantic change is seen. The external argument, the main participant of the event, the agent, is enriched in a way and becomes an agent-experiencer. The agent both causes and experiences his action.

5.2. Phase/level 2: Event shift
Example (70) illustrates the relation between English and Modern Greek:

> (70) English: *give a kick to sb, give a look to sb*
> *take a taste of, take a look at, take a decision to*

put an end to, put pressure on, put the blame on, put questions to

Modern Greek: *δino prosoçi se kapjon/kati*
                  give (1st sing.) attention (acc.) to sb/sth

                  perno jefsi apo kapjon/kati
                  take (1st sing.) taste (acc.) from sb/sth

                  vazo ipoγrafi se kati
                  put (1st sing.) (a) signature (acc.) to sth

In the 2nd phase the verb becomes semantically weaker. The direct object noun of the verb cannot be its theme argument. The theme argument is mapped onto the prepositional phrase following and it is selected by the V+N periphrasis.

(71) *give a kick* [*to sb*]
     take taste [*of sth*]
     put an end [*to sth*]   theme argument
     δino prosoçi [*se kapjon/kati*]
     perno jefsi [*apo kapjon/kati*]
     vazo ipoγrafi [*se kati*]

The argument structure of the new predicates is different. The goal/source argument (see the full verb argument structure) is abolished, is not present anymore. The new predicates have a two-place argument structure instead of a three-place one.

The event is a transition: it involves a final point of change. The transition event is displaced one argument position further but it does not describe a transfer any more.

5.3. Phase/level 3: New event generation

Three internal phases/levels are established according to the lexical decomposition of the collocations.

Level 3.1.

(72) English: *give a lecture on …*

Modern Greek: *δino eksetasis stin istoria*
                  give (1st sing.) exams (acc.) to history
                  take exams in history

                  perno apofasi na …
                  take (1st sing.) (a) decision (acc.) to

                  vazo stiçima na kano kati
                  put (1st sing.) bet (acc.) to do sth
                  bet to do sth

In the 3rd phase the verb is semantically bleached. It does not control any internal arguments, but only gives case to its direct object noun. However, the noun is not its argument. The internal argument attributed to the periphrasis (*on …, stin istoria, na …, na …*) is an argument transferred by the noun (*lecture, eksetasis, apofasi, stiçima*) to the periphrasis.

(73) *give a lecture* [*on …*]   noun argument attributed to the V+N periphrasis
     δino eksetasis [*stin istoria*]
     perno apofasi [*na …*]
     vazo stiçima [*na kano kati*]

A new event is generated due to the reconstruction of the predicate. In the cases above the event developed is a process.

Level 3.2.

(74) English: *take pity on sb*

     Modern Greek: *perno tilefono to Niko*
                  take (1st sing.) telephone (acc.) Nick (acc.)
                  call Nick

In (74) the generation of a totally new argument can be seen. The argument talked about is not an argument of the noun attributed to the periphrasis (see level 3.1). The prepositional phrase *on sb* and the accusative phrase *to Niko* are arguments developed after the periphrasis construction.

(75) *take pity* [*on sb*]   newly generated argument
     perno tilefono [*to Niko*]

Level 3.3.

(76) English: *give a sigh (of)*
              take a walk, take a shower

     Modern Greek: *perno anasa*
                  take (1st sing.) (a) breath (acc.)

                  vazo ta klamata
                  put (1st sing.) the cries (acc.)
                  start to cry

In (76) above no obligatory internal arguments are developed; the periphrasis is bare. A new event is generated due to the reconstruction of the periphrasis. In these periphrases the evolution of the external argument, of the agent, into agent-experiencer can be seen to occur in a regular way. The agent acts and at the same time experiences his action. The experiencer is the only participant in the action. The predicates developed refer to the emotional or physical state of the experiencer. The regular semantic changes of collocations and the patterns developed are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. Patterns of verbal collocations

	FULL VERB	COLLOCATIONS				
		LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3.1	LEVEL 3.2	LEVEL 3.3
ARGUMENT STRUCTURE	3- place argument structure	3-place argument structure	2-place argument structure	noun argument transfer to periphrasis	new argument generation	no internal argument - external argument (agent-experiencer)
EVENT STRUCTURE	transition	transition (metaphor)	event shift transition	new event	new event	new event

Level 2 collocations differ from level 1 collocations, because one argument is lost, but the event is not changed. Level 3 collocations differ from level 2 collocations, because the event described is a totally new event. Examples of Modern Greek and English collocations can be seen in Tables 3 and 4, according to the pattern they follow.

Table 3. Modern Greek collocations

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3		
			3.1.	3.2.	3.3.
δino	δino δinami se give strength to sb	δino prosoçi se give attention to sb/sth	δino eksetasis se give exams to (take exams in)		
perno	perno θaros apo take courage from sb	perno jefsi apo take taste from sb/sth	perno apofasi na take (a) decision to	perno tilefono to Niko take telephone Nick (call Nick)	perno anasa take (a) breath
vazo	vazo mja iδea se put an idea to sb	vazo ipoγrafi se put (a) signature to sth	vazo stiçima na put bet to do sth (bet to do sth)		vazo ta klamata put the cries (start to cry)

Table 4. English collocations

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3		
			3.1.	3.2.	3.3.
give	give a choice, regards, … to	give a kick, a look to	give a lecture on		give a cry, a sigh, a scream
take	take advice, a hit, … from	take a taste of, a look at, a decision to		take pity on	take a shower, a walk, a breath
put	put effort into	put pressure on, the blame on, an end to, questions to			

The pattern indicates wide collocability, which is narrowed and restricted, as the verb gradually loses its semantic content.[10]

6. Language specific features
The regularities in verbal collocations between Modern Greek and English point to the internal process of semantic bleaching of the verb. The process is common to both languages and concerns all the verbs analyzed. Despite common regularities, a couple of language specific features can be noted.

First of all, verb alternation differs in the two languages:

---

[10] For the non arbitrary nature of collocations based on corpus evidence, see the work of Walker (2008).

(77) take/have a look at sth
    take/have pity on sb
    take/have a shower
    take/have a sip of tea

In the cases above an alternation between verb *take* and verb *have* is evident. In Modern Greek verbal collocations this alternation is not found and no regular alternations between the verbs in collocations are found.

Secondly, the syntax of collocations at Level 2 differs. In Modern Greek collocations being at the 2nd verb desemantization phase (event shift), the verb collocate syntax and the noun collocate syntax coincide, as in (78):

(78) *δino prosoçi* se *kapjon/kati*
    give attention to sb/sth

    δino kati se *kapjon*   *i prosoçi mou* se *kapjon/kati*
    give sth to sb   the attention (nom.) mine to sb/sth

(79) *perno jefsi* apo *kapjion/kati*
    take taste from sb/sth

    perno kati apo *kapjon*   *i jefsi* apo *kati*
    take sth from sb   the taste (nom.) of sth

(80) *vazo ipoγrafi* se *kati*
    put signature to sth

    vazo kati se *ena meros*   *i ipoγrafi mou* s*to eŋγrafo*
    put sth at a place   the signature(nom.) mine on the document

The common syntax of the two collocate parts (V, N) helps with the preservation of the syntactic pattern of the full verb even if the transition event is displaced one position later. This helps with the smooth transition to the third level, where the syntax of the full verb is abolished and the transition event does not exist anymore.

In English collocations the process is not the same. At the 2nd verb desemantization phase the syntax of the full verb is already abolished and the argument of the collocation is attributed in most cases by the noun collocate part:

(81) take a taste *of*
    take a look *at*
    put pressure *on*
    put the blame *on*

Of course, there are cases where this is not the rule and the complement is assigned by the verb:

(82) give a kick *to* sb
    give a look *to* sb
    put an end *to* sth

7. Conclusions

The analysis of verbal collocations with the verbs *give, take, put* in English and their counterparts in Modern Greek has indicated basic similarities in a process of desemantization. The process is absolutely systematic and involves gradual semantic bleaching of the verb and consequent gradual change at the predicate event.

At the first level, the predicate event is the same to the full verb event but is metaphorically structured. The verb selects the arguments of the predicate. At the next level, the event is shifted one argument position later and one internal argument (goal, source) is lost. At the following level, a new event is generated according to the new lexicosyntactic demands of the periphrasis. The verb by itself does not select any argument. Three cases can be seen:

a) the noun transfers its argument to the periphrasis,

b) a totally new argument is generated,

c) the periphrasis is bare without any obligatory internal arguments.

These patterns are found in the collocations of three different verbs in both languages. Therefore, it can be assumed that collocations are not arbitrarily formed, but the predicates are motivated by the semantics of the constituent parts, the verb and the noun.

The analysis of verbal collocations establishes the validity of Lexicon theory and the need for a richer lexical representation in terms of arguments, participants and event. A rich lexical representation can account for the non-arbitrary character of verbal collocations and the mechanism of formation can thus be explained.

References

Babiniotis/Μπαμπινιώτης, Γ. 1998. *Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας* [Dictionary of Modern Greek]. Αθήνα: Κέντρο Λεξικολογίας.

Benson, M. 1990. Collocations and general purpose dictionaries. *International Journal of Lexicography* 3, 23-34.

Benson, M., Benson E. & Ilson, R. 1986. *The BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English. A Guide to Word Combinations*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Collins COBUILD. 1991. *English Language Dictionary*. Glasgow: HarperCollins.

Cowie, A. P. 1981. The treatment of collocations and idioms in learners' dictionaries. *Applied Linguistics* 2 (3), 223-235.

Cowie, A. P. (ed.). 1998. *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis and Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Croft, W. & Cruse, D. A. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dowty, D. 1979. *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Gibbs, R., Nayak, N. & Cutting, C. 1989. How to kick the bucket and not decompose: Analyzability and idiom processing. *Journal of Memory and Language* 28, 576-593.

Gläser, R. 1998. The stylistic potential of phraseological units in the light of genre analysis. In A. P. Cowie (ed.), *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis and Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 125-144.

Granger, S. & Meunier, F. (eds) 2008. *Phraseology: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Granger, S. & Paquot, M. 2008. Disentangling the phraseological web. In S. Granger & F. Meunier (eds), *Phraseology: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 27-49.

Grimshaw, J. 1990. *Argument Structure*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Grimshaw, J. & Mester, A. 1988. Light verbs and θ-marking. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19 (2), 205-232.

Haegeman, L. 1991. *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hanks, P. 2004. The syntagmatics of metaphor and idiom. *International Journal of Lexicography* 17 (3), 245-274.

Howarth, P. 1998. Phraseology and second language proficiency. *Applied Linguistics* 19 (1), 24-44.

Lakoff, G. 1993. The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 202-251.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1980. *Metaphors we Live by.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Levin, B. & Rappaport, M. 1991. Wiping the slate clean: A lexical semantic exploration. In B. Levin & S. Pinker (eds), *Lexical and Conceptual Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 123-151.

Levin, B. & Rappaport-Hovav, M. 2005. *Argument Realization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LKN/*Λεξικό της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής* [Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek]. 1998. Θεσσαλονίκη: Ινστιτούτο Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 1987. London: Longman.

Mel´čuk, I. 1998. Collocations and lexical functions. In A. P. Cowie (ed.), *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis and Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 23-54.

Nunberg, G., Sag, I. & Wasow T. 1994. Idioms. *Language* 70 (3), 491-538.

Pustejovsky, J. 1992. The syntax of event structure. In B. Levin & S. Pinker (eds), *Lexical and Conceptual Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 47-80.

Pustejovsky, J. 1995. *The Generative Lexicon*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Rappaport, M., Levin, B. & Laughren, M. 1993. Levels of lexical representation. In J. Pustejovsky (ed.), *Semantics and the Lexicon*. Dortrecht: Kluwer, 37-54.

Siepmann, D. 2008. Phraseology in learners' dictionaries. In F. Meunier & S. Granger (eds), *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 185-202.

Smadja, F. 1993. Retrieving collocations from text: Xtract. *Computational Linguistics* 19 (1), 143-177.

Thomou/ Θώμου, Π. 2006. Λεξι(λογι)κές συνάψεις στη Νέα Ελληνική ως ξένη γλώσσα [Lexical collocations in Modern Greek as a foreign language]. Διδακτορική διατριβή. Τμήμα Φιλολογίας, Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης.

Walker, C. 2008. Factors which influence the process of collocation. In F. Boers & S. Lindstromberg (eds), *Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Teaching Vocabulary and Phraseology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 291-308.