Control in Greek gerunds:
Implicit arguments and other factors

George Kotzoglou

University of the Aegean
gkotz@rhodes.aegean.gr

Abstract
This paper discusses the control properties of the subjects of Greek gerunds. First, we discuss the control properties of overt subjects that are disjoint in reference from matrix arguments and we conclude that these subjects constitute only apparent counterexamples to the requirement that only controlled null elements appear as subjects of non-finite forms in non-case-marked positions. Then, we focus on covert subjects that are non-coreferential with matrix overt arguments. We conclude that such subjects can only be present when controlled by an implicit argument of the matrix clause. Finally, we point out some problematic aspects of the proposal put forth here.

Keywords: gerunds, control, implicit argument, Greek

1. Introduction

The issue of the structure, interpretation and control properties of Greek gerunds had largely been neglected in the literature (with the exception of the descriptive account of Tzartzanos [1946]1989) till quite recently. However, recent work by Rivero (1994), Tsoulas (1996), Tsimpli (2000), Haidou & Sitaridou (2002), Sitaridou & Haidou (2002), Tantalou (2004), Manolessou (2005), Moser (2006), Panagiotidis (2010), Kapetangianni (2010), among others, has shed light onto the formal properties of Greek -ondas forms, which are the only undisputed non-finite environments in Greek.

In this paper I discuss the control properties of Greek gerunds and I evaluate the claim that the presence of nominative subjects or null subjects that are disjoint in reference with the matrix surface subject advocates in favour of a pro/DP[+Structural Case] analysis. It will be shown that a number of apparently uncontrolled empty subjects of gerund clauses are actually controlled by implicit arguments of the matrix clause.

1 I would like to thank Vassilios Spyropoulos, Dimitris Micheliodakis, Panayota Samioti, Giorgos Spathas, and an anonymous ISTAL reviewer for helpful comments. Remaining errors are my own, of course.
2. Properties of Greek gerunds

Greek gerunds (traditionally called active participles, cf. Tzartzanos [1946]1989, due to their historical origin, cf. Manolessou 2005²) are nonfinite forms formed by affixing –ondas to the imperfective verbal stem (1).

(1) graf-ondas / *grap-s-ondas
write-Ger write-Perf-Ger

Gerunds cannot appear in argument positions (2), cannot be nominalized (3), and cannot be complements of prepositions (4):

(2a) *[akuïyondas διinata μusiki] μu efere ponokefalo
listen.Ger loudly music cl.1sg.Gen bring.Past.3sg headache
‘Listening to loud music gave me a headache.’

(2b) *θelo [γrafondas καθαρα γramata]
want.1sg write.Ger clear letters
‘I want to write clearly.’

(3) *to διavazondas
the read-Ger
‘reading’

(4) *kurastike apo [(to) δiavazontas ena vivlio]
get.tired from the read-Ger a book
‘(S)he got tired from reading a book.’

Recent literature converges on the conclusion that Greek gerunds split into two distinct types: (a) manner gerunds and (b) absolute gerunds (also called: temporal gerunds), which may have a number of different interpretations (most notably temporal, but also conditional, causal etc., cf. Bouboulides 1946). Apart from their semantic differences, the two types diverge in a number of syntactic respects: First of all, manner gerunds are incompatible with negation (5) and cannot have a time reference that is independent from that of the matrix predicate/T (6).

² I’m adopting the term ‘gerund’ here for convenience, considering the fact that the bulk of recent literature seems to converge on it. However, nothing in my analysis hinges on the use of this specific term. See Nakas (2012) for the claim that -ondas forms are active participles and esp. Moser (2006), who argues –quite convincingly to my mind– that both ‘participle’ and ‘gerund’ are inadequate terms and that -ondas forms are converbs.
What is more, absolute gerunds are compatible with the negation particle *mi(n)* (7) and can be modified by temporal adjuncts that denote different time than that denoted by the matrix predicate (8).

(5)  *i maria anikse tin porta [min
the Maria.Nom open.3sg.Perf.Past. the door.Acc Neg
trvondas]
pull.Ger
‘Maria opened the door without pulling it.’

(6)  *i maria piye sto sxolio stis oxto to
The Maria.Nom go.3sg.Perf.Past at.the school at.the eight the
proi [trewondas apo tis efta]
morning run.Ger from the seven
‘Maria went to the school at eight o’ clock in the morning running from seven o’ clock.’

Kapetanganni (2010: 200)

(7)  [min exondas ekplirosi tis ipoxreosis tis]
Neg have.Ger fulfilled the obligations.Acc her
i maria dein borese na pari
the Maria.Nom Neg can.3sg.Perf.Past Subj get.3sg.Imperf.
proayogi
promotion
‘As Maria had not fulfilled her obligations, she could not get a promotion.’

(8)  [telionondas ti dulia tis stis eksi] i maria
finish.Ger the work.Acc her at.the six the Maria
piye gia kafe me tis files tis stis
go.3sg.Perf.Past for coffee with the friends her at.the
efta seven
‘Having finished work at six o’ clock, Mary went out for a coffee with her friends at seven o’clock.’
What is crucial for the purposes of this paper is the fact that manner gerunds do not seem to tolerate overt DP-subjects or null subjects that are not controlled by the surface subject of the matrix clause (9), while absolute gerunds do (10).

(9) [ο nikos], kitakse [τι maria]
the Nick.Nom look.at.3sg.Perf.Past the Maria.Acc
[<ec>v/jrk (/³[i sofia]) yelondas]
the Sophia laughing
‘Nick, laughing, looked at Mary.’

(10a) [γιρίζοντας i eleni apo tis διακόπες]
return.Ger the Helen.Nom from the holidays
efiya evo
leave.1sg.Perf.Past I.Nom
‘I left as soon as Helen returned from her holidays.’

(10b) [vγενοντας o nikos apo to mayazi]
come.out.Ger the Nick.Nom. from the shop
arxise na xionizi
start.3sg.Perf.Past Subj. rain.3sg.Imperf.
‘As Nick came out of the shop, it started snowing.’

(Moser 2006: 50)

The contrast in (9-10) has been explained by positing that absolute gerunds project a TP—or, in any case by positing that it contains the temporal properties required for licencing a DP[+Nom]-subject or a pro—(Haidou & Sitaridou 2002; Sitaridou & Haidou 2002; Tantalou 2004; Kapetangianni 2010), while manner gerunds don’t.

In what follows, I will argue that the situation is not as clear-cut as it seems. For one thing, the subjects of manner gerunds are not necessarily controlled by the matrix subject. What is more, the distribution of nominative-case marked overt and covert subjects in absolute gerunds is more limited than is widely assumed.

3. On overt nominative subjects in Greek gerund clauses

The presence of overt nominative subjects in gerund clauses seems to be given wisdom. As observed by Tzartzanos ([1946]1989), non-coreferential nominative subjects of gerunds are indeed possible, especially in literary contexts. Judgements on
the data under consideration are extremely subtle, as Moser (2006) correctly observes, but at least a number of speakers accept sentences like the ones below.

(11)  [ksimeronondas kiriaki] oli
     begin.to.dawn.Ger Sunday.Nom everyone.Nom
     vγikan stus ὀδόμυς
     get.out.3pl.Perf.Past at.the street.Pl

‘As Sunday began to dawn, everyone got out on the streets.’

(12)  [plisiazondas epetios] me piani
     approaching.Ger anniversary.nom cl.acc catch.3rd.sg
     ponokefalos
     headache.nom

‘Whenever/As an anniversary approaches, I’m getting a headache.’

[Δημήτρης Πουλιάκος: «Άνες οςζίαρ, άνες ζημαζίαρ» (1976)]

(13)  [fevondas o δασκάλος] διέλυσε i taksī
     leaving.Ger the.Nom teacher.Nom scattered the.Nom class

‘When the teacher left, the class scattered.’

Given that gerunds are non-finite verbal forms, the question that examples like (11-13) pose is how nominative Case on the subject is assigned/checked.

First of all, we observe that a number of cases mentioned in the literature as evidence for the presence of uncontrolled overt nominative subjects of gerunds can find alternative interpretations. Let us first examine constructions involving a full DP-subject in the gerund clause coindexed with a null pronominal in the matrix.

(14)  [exondas bi o γιάνησι] stο spiti tu]
     have.Ger enter the John.Nom at.the house his
     anakalipse oti ton ixan klepsi
     find.out.Past.Perf that he.Acc have.3pl.Past stolen

‘John, after having entered his house, found out that it had been stolen.’

(Tantalou 2004: 10)

(15)  [vlepondas xtes o manos ti nina
     see.Ger yesterday the Manos.Nom the Nina.Acc
     eki] εφίγε σιμέρα
     there leave.3sg.Perf.Past today
‘Manos, seeing Nina there yesterday, left today.’

(Panagiotidis 2010: 173)

It might well be the case that such constructions merely instantiate *backward control*, as in familiar cases discussed by Polinsky & Potsdam (2002, 2006), cf. Alexiadou et al. (2010) and Spyropoulos & Philippaki-Warburton (2010) for discussion of such constructions in Greek (whatever it ultimate theoretical explanation of backward control might be).

The conclusion that backward control rather might be at work is strengthened by the fact that manner adverbs can also have such nominative subjects that are coreferential with a matrix apparently null one, once those clauses are preposed (or, in the grammars of the speakers who tolerate preposed manner gerund clauses):

(16) [trɔyɔndas o nikοs payoτο] mas
eat.Ger the Nick.Nom ice-cream.Acc clitic.1pl.Acc
pliiasi
come.near.3sg.Perf.Past
‘Nick came near us, eating an ice-cream.’

(17) [travɔndas o xɔndros ki o liγnos to
pull.Ger the fact.Nom and the thin.Nom the
piano me ena skini] to anevasan
piano.Acc with a rope cl.3sg.Acc lift.3pl.Perf.Past
ston ekto orofo
at.the sixth floor
‘Laurel and Hardy lifted the piano to the sixth floor by pulling it with a piece of rope.’

Note that, once preposed, gerund clauses tend to be amenable to other interpretations as well (temporal and otherwise), but I think that (16-17) are still good with a manner reading.

Let us now turn to constructions involving (quasi-)weather predicates. Most of the examples provided by Tzartzanos ([1946]1989) either involve subject-predicate collocations (such as ‘vγenondas o ilios’, ‘peftondas to vraδi/i nixta’) or/and are

---

An anonymous reviewer observes that (16) may include movement of the gerund and require a special comma intonation after *payoto* to be accepted. The judgment is too subtle for me to get, but if this is indeed the case, then (16) might involve (forward-) control of the gerund subjects in its base position.
gerunds of predicates that don’t assign any thematic roles, i.e. predicates that do not have a (thematic) subject⁴ and, hence, it might be argued that their sole nominative subject is akin to a default pleonastic:

(18) [vyenondas o ilios] iðan i turki
rise.Ger the sun.Nom see.3pl.Perf.Past the Turks.Nom
piasmeno to xorio
caught.Acc the village.Acc
‘As the sun rose, the Turks saw the village occupied.’

(19=11)[ksimeronondas kiriaki] oli výikan
stus dromus
at.the street.Pl
‘As Sunday began to dawn, everyone got out on the streets.’

In other words, I would like to extend to cases such as the above Eriksen, Kittilä & Kolehmainen’s (2012) conclusion that ‘meteorological events do not involve genuine semantic participants, such as agent and patient, which cause or initiate the given meteorological event, or which are directly affected by it’ (for a similar treatment of apparent ‘subjects’ of atmospheric predicates, see Mettouchi & Tosco 2011). Thus, collocations such as (18-19) might be reanalyzed as subjectless predicates in the speakers’ grammars. In fact, it might even be the case that, especially in examples such as (19) the nominative is not the true subject of the gerund, but a mere modifier bearing default nominative (Alexiadou 1996). Bear in mind that gerunds like ksimeronondas, pernondas etc. can be used with what Tzartzanos calls genitive subjects (i.e. akin to the traditional notion of ‘absolute participle’), which are not genuine subjects:

(20) ksimeronondas tu ai yianiu, (...) lavame
begin.to.dawn.Ger the Saint John.Gen took.3pl.Perf.Past
tin apofasi...
the decision.Acc
‘As Saint John’s day began to dawn, we decided’

This conclusion runs counter to Tsimpli’s (2000) observation that prototypical weather predicates (21) cannot appear as gerunds, due to the fact that gerund clauses do not license pleonastic *pro*.

(21) *[vrexondas] to spiti plimirise
    ‘As it rained, the house got flooded.’

(Tsimpli 2000: 150)

However, as Kapetangianni (2010) observes, null pleonastic subjects might be licit in such constructions (esp. with perfect gerunds).

(22) [exondas xionisi oli nixta] i ðromi
    have.Ger snow.3sg.Perf. all night the street.Pl
    itan epikinòini to proi
    be.3pl.Perf.Past dangerous the morning
    ‘Having snowed all night, the streets were dangerous in the morning.’

A further objection might be that, since the presence of expletive PRO is not a possibility in the languages of the world (Safir 1985; Ackema 2002), expletive *pro* is still supposed to be a case-marked nominative subject. However, its postulation a) means that –since *pro* is not a (freely) referential subject– examples like (18-19) do not instantiate true lack of coreference between the matrix subject and the gerund subject, and b) does not necessarily require the postulation of a nominative case assigner (on the featural deficiency of *pro*, see Biberauer 2010; on the claim that *there*-type expletives, but not *it*-type expletives, lack case, see Chomsky 1995).

Let us now turn to examples of overt subjects in gerund clauses drawn from literary texts. Tzartzanos ([1946]1989) provides a number of examples of gerunds with nominative subjects, mainly from 19\textsuperscript{th} century literature (i.e. Makriyannis (23), Solomos (24)), which most contemporary native speakers would find extremely odd.

(23) ?[aftos vyenondas apo tin porta] etimastika
    he.Nom get.out.Ger from the door get.ready.1sg.Perf.Past
    I.Nom
    ‘I got ready as soon as he got out the door.’
However, it is not at all clear that such examples are grammatical for the contemporary native speaker of Greek. Indeed, they seem highly artificial. We side with Moser (2006: 50) who notes that ‘a comparison between contemporary and older grammatical descriptions suggests that non-coreferential uses were more acceptable in the past.’

Let us now turn to the rest of the overt DP [+Nom] cases in gerunds. A number of speakers seem to accept referential overt subjects in absolute gerund clauses, subjects that are not coreferential with the matrix subject (or a matrix argument):

(25=13) [fevyondas o δασκάλος] διελίσει ταξί [fevyondas o δασκάλος] διελίσει ταξί
leaving.Ger the.Nom teacher.Nom scatter.3sg.Perf.Past the
taksi
class.Nom
‘When the teacher left, the pupils scattered.’

(26=10a) [γιρίζοντας ί έλενη από τις διακόπες]
return.Ger the Helen.Nom from the holidays
εφύγε [εγώ]
leave.1sg.Perf.Past I.Nom
‘I left as soon as Helen returned from her holidays.’

Leaving aside the observation that overt subjects tend to appear in the post-gerund position (Rivero 1994; Tsimpli 2000), let us turn to the properties of DP [+Nom]. We observe that the distribution of gerund clauses with overt subjects is largely inconsistent. For one thing, once postposed, the gerund clause may no longer license a nominative subject.
‘When the teacher left, the pupils scattered.’

(28) efiya evo [yirizondas i eleni
apo tis diakopes]
from the holidays

‘I left as soon as Helen returned from her holidays.’

Note that the explanation of the ungrammaticality of (27-28) cannot merely be the fact that absolute gerunds necessarily attach to a TP- or modal-related position of the left periphery (Tsoulas 1996), since full temporal indicative CPs with non-coreferential subjects are licit in the postverbal position:

(29) dialise i taksi [molis
scatter.3sg.Perf.Past the class.Nom as.soon.as
efiye o discussos]
leave.3sg.Perf.Past. the.Nom teacher.Nom

‘When the teacher left, the pupils scattered.’

(30) efiya evo [molis yirise i
leave.1sg.Perf.Past I.Nom as.soon.as return.3sg.Perf.Past the
eleni apo tis diakopes]
Helen.Nom from the holidays

‘I left as soon as Helen returned from her holidays.’

No such restriction holds in cases of gerunds that (I have claimed) have an expletive subject:

(31) idan i turki piasmeno to xorio
see.3pl.Perf.Past the Turks.Nom caught.Acc the village.Acc
[vyenondas o ilios]
rise.Ger the sun.Nom

‘As the sun rose, the Turks saw the village occupied.’

(32) oli vyikan stus dorumus
everyone.Nom get.out.3pl.Perf.Past at.the street.Pl
[ksimeronondas kiriaki]
begin.to.dawn.Ger sunday.Nom
'As Sunday began to dawn, everyone got out on the streets.'

What is more, it is not the case that overt subjects of gerund clauses are always licit. For a number of speakers, the temporal simultaneity of the events denoted by the two clauses (or the anteriority of the event denoted by the gerund clause with respect to the one denoted by the main clause, cf. Tsimpi 2000) is not sufficient in and of itself. If the events are causally unrelated, gerund clauses with an overt subject become awkward.


‘While Carlsen was winning the challengers’ tournament, I was writing the handout.

or

Once Carlsen won the challengers’ tournament, I wrote the handout.’

No such restriction holds in fully finite subordinate temporal clauses:

(34) [kaθos nikuse o karlsen sto turnua as win.3sg.Imperf.Past the Carlsen.Nom at.the tournament ton διεκόδικιτον] εγραφα εγό to handout the challenger.Pl.Gen write.1sg.Imperf.Past I.Nom the handout

‘While Carlsen was winning the challengers’ tournament, I was writing the handout.’

In other words, the presence of an overt nominative subjects in gerund clauses seems to be facilitated by the interpretations whereby either the subject is an implicit participant in the event denoted by the matrix clause (as in the 'fev'yondas o δασκαλος διαλισε i τακσι'case, but more on implicit arguments below) or the gerund clause itself may obtain the interpretation either being a presupposition (in the non-technical use of the term) for the fulfillment of the main clause event or of causing it (as in the 'γιριζινδας i ελειν aπo τις διακοπες, εφία eγό'-case).
The aforementioned limitations in the distribution (and interpretation) of the overt DP-subjects points toward the conclusion that these are not really elements licensed by a T head and similar to DP-subjects of finite subordinate clauses. Bearing in mind that nominative seems to be the default case in Greek (Alexiadou 2006), I conclude that non-controlled overt subjects of gerunds constitute at least as much a problem to the nominative assignment/independent T account as they do to control accounts.

4. On the referential properties of null subjects in Greek gerund clauses

Let us now turn to the referential properties of the covert subjects of gerund clauses. The presence of non-coreferential null subjects in gerund clauses is quite restricted, even when contextual cues force a specific pragmatic reading.

(35)  sto spiti mas o mesimerianos ipnos ton γονιον mu itan prαγμα iero…
     ‘In our house, my parents’ siesta was a thing to respect…’
     [ala kσιpnondas] evaza tin tileorasi sti
     but wake.up.Ger put.1sg.Imperf.Past the television.Acc at.the
     διαπason
     loudest
     ‘…but once they woke up, I used to turn the volume of the television up.’

It might be argued that the agentive subject of ‘evaza’ acts as a preferred controller. However, we observe that a) the interpretation of (35) is not a matter of preference—the reading whereby the empty subject of the gerund means ‘my parents’ simply does not exist, and b) even when the agentive subject of (35) is out of the way, still the intended pragmatic reading does not arise:

(36)  sto spiti mas o mesimerianos ipnos ton γονιον mu itan prαγμα iero…
     ‘In our house, my parents’ siesta was a thing to respect…’
     [ala kσιpnondas] i tileorasi anιγε sti
     but wake.up.Ger the television.Acc open.3sg.Imperf.Past at.the
     διαπason
     loudest
     ‘…but once they woke up, the volume of the television used to be turned up.’

Cf. also (37), which is parallel to (35):
(37) to iðaniko ine ena zevýari na zí ston iðio topo…

‘The ideal situation for a couple is to live together in the same place…’

? [ala pernondas to ptixio mu apo to panepistimio

but take.Ger the degree my from the university

eyeu] estilan ton andra mu

Aegean.Gen send.3pl.Perf.Past the husband.Acc my

fandaro sti θraki

soldier.Acc at.the Thrace

‘..but as soon as I obtained my degree from the University of the Aegean, my

husband was sent to serve as a soldier in Thrace.’

However, non-coreferential null subjects seem to be licit in examples such as the

ones in (38-43):

(38) to portokali kaðarizete [kratondas

the orange peel.3sg.Pass.Imperf.Pres. keep.Ger

to maxeri sto dêksi xeri ke to piruni

the knife.Acc at.the right hand and the fork.Acc

sto aristero]

at.the left

‘You peel the knife by holding the knife on your right and and the fork on

your left’

(39) kaðe sosivio exi atomiko fotaki pu

every life jacket have.3sg.Pres.Imperf. individual light Rel

anavi mesa sto nero [travondas aftin

light.3sg.Imperf.Pres.in at-the water pull.Ger this

tin akri]

the tab

‘Each life jacket has an individual light that turns on in the water by pulling

out this tab.’ 5

[Announcement: Aegean Airlines]

5 Evidence that examples like (38) are not (necessarily) transfers from English is provided by the fact

that the English translation provided in the actual announcement is the one provided in the gloss of

(38). It does not contain a gerund.
A possible explanation of the presence of apparently uncontrolled empty subject in (38) might be that it is actually controlled by an implicit argument of the matrix.
clause. The fact that middle verbs contain a generic operator is well-known (Condoravdi 1989; Steinbach 2002; Lekakou 2005, among many others). It is also widely assumed that middles contain an implicit arbitrary argument (Keyser & Roeper 1984; Iwata 1999) which contributes to the interpretation. If Landau (2010) is correct in assuming that implicit arguments are projected syntactically (cf. Sichel 2010 and the discussion in Bhatt & Pancheva 2006; see also Manzini & Roussou 2000 on the role of the generic operator in licensing arbitrary arguments in control environments), then the implicit arbitrary argument of the matrix clause controls the null subject of the gerund.

The conclusion that the implicit argument of the middle is the controller is strengthened by the fact that once the aspectual properties of the matrix clause are changed, say once the main verb surfaces in perfective morphology, in other words once the matrix subject is no more a middle (since imperfective morphology is a prerequisite for the middle), the arbitrary interpretation of the embedded null subject vanishes.

(44) *to portokali kaðaristike [kratondas to the orange peel.3sg.Pass.Perf.Pres. keep.Ger the maxeri sto ðeksi xeri ke to piruni knife.Acc at.the right hand and the fork.Acc sto aristero]
at.the left

‘You peel the knife by holding the knife on your right and and the fork on your left.’

However, null subjects of gerunds modifying matrix ergatives (39–40) and passives (41–43) also tend to be licit when controlled by matrix implicit arguments. As far as passives are concerned, positing an implicit agent is not out of the question. In fact, passives have been thought to also involve an implicit agent (Collins 2005; Bhatt & Pancheva 2006; cf. Lavidas 2009 for Greek), the one absorbed by the passive affix. So, (41–43) might instantiate control by the demoted agent of the passive, on a par with well-known English constructions such as (45):

(45) The boat was sunk [PRO to collect the insurance]
Examples (39-40) are challenging, though, as one among the things that have been claimed to distinguish between middles/passives and ergatives has been the fact that ergatives do not involve an implicit agent (Roep 1987). We have no proposal concerning examples (39) and (40). Still, the subject seems to be controlled by the (missing) agent of the opening-event (40) and of the pulling-event (41).

Let us turn to psych-predicates, which also seem to license null subjects. Landau (2010) argues that implicit arguments of psych-predicates might be syntactically represented and act as controllers (46):

(46) Mary said it was upsetting/amusing [PRO to present herself, as a gravedigger]

Again, subjects of Greek gerunds seem to be able to be controlled by the implicit experiencer of ‘itan enoxlitiko’ in (47), or by the overt accusative clitic pronoun bearing the experience 0-role in (48).

(47) [γραφόμενα to vivlio mas] itan enoxlitiko
write.Ger the book.Acc our be.3sg.Past. annoying
[που i aftoptes martires δεν milusan]
that the eyewitnesses Neg talk.3pl.Imperf.Past.
yia ta mavra xronia tis hundas]
for the black year.pl the military.junta.Gen
‘As we were writing our book, it was annoying that the eyewitnesses did not speak about the dark years of the military junta.’

(48) [ιπολογίζομενα osa exume zisi edo
taking.into-account.Ger as.much have.3pl.Imperf. lived here
κε ikosi xronia] i stasi tis me
and twenty years the stance her.Gen me.Acc
apopoitevi
disappoint.3sg.Imperf.Pres.
‘Taking into account our common experiences during the last twenty years, I find her behaviour disappointing.’

An example similar to (48) leads Anagnostopoulou (1999: 70) to the conclusion that ‘experiencers pattern with subjects [...] in this respect.’

So, as far as covert (null) subjects are concerned, the conclusion seems to be that a) referential null subjects that are totally thematically unrelated to the event denoted by
the main clause predicate are hardly licit as subjects of gerunds (35), and b) Felicitous null subjects of Greek gerunds might in fact be controlled by an (implicit) argument of the matrix middle (38), passive (41-43), ergative (39-40) or psych-predicate (47).

As a final touch, let us observe that the possibility of control by an implicit argument is found in yet another case. For those speakers who find DP modification by adverbs possible (cf. Alexiadou & Stavrou 1998) the null subject of gerund clauses modifying nouns might be controlled by an argument of N:

(49) i nixerini periplanisi tis i0opi (…) sta
    the night.Adj stroll the actress at the
    eksarxia anazitondas ton sindrofo tis (…) Exarchia search.Ger the companion.Acc her

‘The night stroll of the actress at Exarchia in search for her companion.’


So, the conclusion that surface nominative subjects are the sole controllers of the subjects of gerunds breaks down once more. Actually, such control patterns in DP are expected, as observed in work by Sichel (2010).

5. Problems in the formulation of control in gerunds - Conclusions

In the preceding sections we argued that non-coreferential null subjects of gerunds a) are not pro/DP_{+[Str. Case]} (i.e. nominative-case marked elements) and that b) even instances of apparent non-coreference most of the times involve some kind of control relationship. The question that arises is how this control relationship is to be defined and formulated.

Tsimpli (2000: 156) argues that ‘manner gerunds obligatorily require coreferentiality between the two subjects’ and, as for the residue, ‘null subjects of gerund clauses can be pragmatically controlled by subjects, objects, or salient discourse antecedents’. However, although in the majority of instances this seems to be the case, we provided examples that run counter to both arguments. So, we saw that a) a discourse antecedent cannot be the controller of the absolute gerund in (35), and b) subjects of manner gerunds may be bound by implicit arguments that are not subjects of the matrix clause (39). So, it looks as though the control conditions for manner gerunds need to be relaxed (so that control by other arguments is also possible), while the ones for absolute gerunds need to be strengthened.
However, the question that arises is why matrix implicit arguments (of passives, middles etc.) preempt control from the matrix surface nominative subject in the aforementioned cases, but fail to do so in other instances:

(50) [ο γαβροχή, δολοφονηθε] [impl. agent]
    [<ec> γαβροχή γου στραμάωνδας]
    sing.Ger
    ‘Gavroche was murdered while singing a song.’

(51) *[ι πόρτα ανιγγγι, πάνδα] [impl. agent]
    the door Nom open.3sg.Imperf.Pres. always
    [<ec> γελόωνδας]
    laugh.Ger
    ‘One opens the door always laughing.’

I leave the issue open, noting that the pragmatic control account needs refinement and a strictly syntactic (configurational) explanation of obligatory coreference is not easy to be formulated. Similar problems have been reported by Haspelmath (1995) to hold of the category *converb* in general.

References


Bouboulides, P. 1946. Η μετοχή στα Νεοελληνικά [The participle in Modern Greek]. Athens.


Nakas, T. 2012. Για το ελληνικό "γερούνδιο" ή "γερούντιο" ή "γερούντικο" (άλλως πως "far from the madding gerund") [On the Greek ‘gerund’ or ‘gerundivum’ or ‘gerundive’ (in other words “far from the madding gerund”)]. In Z. Gaviiriidou, A. Efthymiou, E. Thomadaki & P. Kambakis-Vougouklis (eds), *Selected papers from the 10th ICGL*. Komotini: Democritus University of Thrace.


