

Carminu Pintore (Università degli studi di Cagliari)
The clitic [ɲkɛ] in Orgolesu Sardinian: from deixis to aspect

This research focuses mainly on the function of the clitic [ɲkɛ] and its use in ‘Orgolesu’, a dialect of the Sardinian language. The purpose of this study is to provide an initial overview of the function, semantics and grammaticalization of this clitic, which ranges from the spatial to the actional and the aspectual domains. The research framework chosen for this research is the theory of grammaticalization, defined as “an approach to language study, one that highlights the interaction of use with structure, and the non-discreteness of many properties of language (HOPPER & TRAUGOTT 2003: xvi)”.

The clitic [ɲkɛ] is an example of ‘polygrammaticalization’ as it has developed different grammatical functions in different constructions. Indeed, it can encode ‘distance’ in locative and existential constructions as well as directional meanings such as ‘motion from’ and ‘motion towards’. According to WAGNER (1960-64: sub voce), the clitic [ɲkɛ] stems from the Latin adverb *HINC*, which encodes directional meaning, namely ‘from here’. In Orgolesu, the clitic [ɲkɛ] has expanded the range of its meaning to include all directional meanings. Once the clitic has generalized its meaning, it has taken a step forward along the grammaticalization path.

Grammaticalization can also be defined as the process whereby concrete linguistic elements become gradually abstract. In this case, we go from deixis to aspect, from reference to concrete places and spaces to reference to abstract concepts like grammatical aspects. In the aspectual domain, the clitic [ɲkɛ] (which codifies telic meaning) is used to express change of state and perfective meaning. In some languages, it is possible to derive verbs to specifically telic situations from verbs that do not necessarily refer to telic situations, usually as part of the derivational morphology (COMRIE 1976: 46). In Latin, for instance, there is a contrast between *facere* ‘make, do’ and its derivative *conficere* ‘complete’. In Orgolesu, a similar difference exists between *apo fatu* ‘I did’ and *nch’apo fatu* ‘I have finished’ (cfr. 1). The first form needs complementation to be considered grammatical, whereas the cliticized one is correct.

- 1) a. *[’a-ppɔ ’attu]
 have-PRS.1SG done
- b. [’k a-ppɔ ’attu]
 [ɲkɛ] have-PRS.1SG done
 “‘I have finished”

The perfective function of the clitic [ɲkɛ] works even with states, which are typically atelic and imperfective. The combination of perfectivity and stativity can only have a rather restricted semantic range – reference to a state with its inception and termination (COMRIE 1976: 50). Accordingly, we can draw a distinction between the sentence *est un òmine* and the sentence *nch’est un òmine*. The first sentence meaning ‘he is a man’, contrasts with the marked form *nch’est un òmine* which means ‘he has become a man through a change of state’ (cfr. also 2).

- 2) a. [’ɛstɛ m’mannu]
 is big
 ‘(he) is big/tall’
- b. [’k ɛstɛ m’mannu]
 [ɲkɛ] is big
 ‘(he) has grown bigger/taller”

If the lexical item [ɲkɛ] is considered out of context, we could state that it has grammaticalized to a perfective aspectual particle. But it was not [ɲkɛ] that grammaticalized, three different constructions did:

- (3) (a) [ɲkɛ] + àere + PP
- (b) [ɲkɛ] + èssere + PP
- (c) [ɲkɛ] + èssere + N/adj

The aim of this research is to show that the multi-functionality and polysemy of the clitic [ɲkɛ] can be explained diachronically by examining its original meaning, and synchronically through its diverse uses. From an originally deictic basic meaning, the clitic [ɲkɛ] has grammaticalized and has spread to perform actional, temporal and aspectual functions.

References

- BERTINETTO, Pier Marco (1997), *Il dominio tempo-aspettuale. Demarcazioni, intersezioni, contrasti*, Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier.
- COMRIE, Bernard (1976), *Aspect*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- DA MILANO, Federica (2005), *La Deissi Spaziale Nelle Lingue D'Europa*. Milano, Franco Angeli Editore.
- ENFIELD, N. J. (2003), "Demonstratives in Space and Interaction: Data from Lao Speakers and Implications for Semantic Analysis", «Language», Vol. 79, N°1 (Mar. 2003) 82-117, Linguistic Society of America.
- HOPPER, Paul J.; TRAUGOTT, Elisabeth Closs (1993), *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- JONES, Michael Allan (2003 [1993]), *Sintassi della lingua sarda*. Traduzione a cura di R. Bolognesi. Cagliari, *Condaghes*.
- LENZ, F. (ed.) (2003), *Deictic Conceptualization of Space, Time, and Person*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins.
- VENDLER, Zeno (1967), "Verbs and times", *Linguistics in Philosophy*, Vol. 66, No. 2., 97-121.
- VIRDIS, Maurizio (1988), "Sardisch: Areallinguistik (Aree linguistiche)", in Günter Holtus, Michael Metzeltin, Christian Schmitt (Hrsg.): *Lexikon der Romanistischen Linguistik*. Vol. IV.: Italienisch, Korsisch, Sardisch. Tübingen 1988, S. 897–913.
- WAGNER, Max Leopold (1997 [1950]), *La lingua sarda. Storia , spirito e forma*, Nuoro, Ilisso.
- WAGNER, Max Leopold (1960-1964), *Dizionario etimologico sardo*. Heidelberg, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.