

Successful referring using different morphosyntactic patterns in the course of time

Susann Fischer – Universität Hamburg
susann.fischer@uni-hamburg.de

1 Introduction

One of the most important components of speaking or writing texts is the ability of referring. Successful referring forces the speaker to choose between different types of referents. In order to decide which expression to choose multiple factors are involved. Silverstein's (1976: 113) "hierarchy of inherent lexical content" is the first scalar representation of referring expressions or types of referents that are ranked according to their deictic, semantic, and or discourse-pragmatic properties, and as such the first attempt to explain the decisions that are made by speakers in order to successfully refer (for an overview see e.g. Arnold 2010). Nowadays the different features are often ranked in sub-hierarchies like the definiteness scale, animacy scale, accessibility scale, discourse prominence etc. This has the advantage that the various scales are logically independent, despite of being closely linked, e.g. animate, especially human referents are more likely to be discourse-prominent, and hence to be referred to by a pronoun, as thus they are more accessible than a definite description. In order to explain this interaction of the independent scales, a combination of the scales by harmonic alignment (borrowed from Optimality Theory) has been proposed, which was argued to be appropriate if e.g. a two-part scale with a many part scale with similar orientation or markedness are combined (von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003: 63), seeking to lessen the complex interaction. Irrespective of how the hierarchies are represented, the idea that such hierarchies can explain morpho-syntactic patterns has been widely accepted (cf. e.g. von Heusinger 2007, 2011, 2013, 2019, Haude & Witzlack-Makarevich 2016). One of the most interesting issues in this respect is how languages change the morpho-syntactic patterns for referring. This directly leads to the non-trivial matter of how to uncloak why speakers use which morphosyntactic pattern in which grammatical context, and more precisely to the question of why they should change successful patterns over time: in other words, to the interaction between successful referring and syntactical issues.

2 Changing patterns

One very famous example of a morpho-syntactic pattern expressing referring properties is clitic doubling (CLD), which has been thoroughly investigated also with respect to the Romance languages (e.g. von Heusinger 2018, von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003, 2005, von Heusinger, Romero & Kaiser 2016, von Heusinger & Tigău 2019). CLD is said to depend on syntactic, morphological, pragmatic and semantic factors, like definiteness, specificity, animacy, CASE, and on the use of the preposition "a", i.e. differential object marking (for a discussion see von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003). Thus, the morpho-syntactic pattern of CLD of the modern Romance languages clearly depends on the interaction of several scales, several grammatical levels.

Briefly capitulating the diachronic development of CLD in Spanish and Catalan based on written texts, it becomes immediately obvious that CLD was not always part of the two languages. CLD has been analysed as a cyclic process, since it has developed in a systematic manner and direction (cf. Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019). In Latin and Proto-Romance CLD is not attested (stage 1), in Old Spanish and Old Catalan CLD emerges with full pronouns, but is still optional (stage 2). Only from the 16th century onwards doubling was obligatory with full pronouns and optionally started with [+definite, +specific] indirect nominal objects (stage 3), since only personal pronouns and nominal indirect objects are doubled during

this period, all instances of doubling are [+animate] (Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019: 57). In Buenos Aires Spanish, Judeo-Spanish and other contact varieties we find CLD with direct objects. Beginning with the doubling of [+animate, +definite] direct objects (stage 4) and going on to CLD with inanimate objects, see examples in (1).

- (1) a. Patagonian Spanish:
 Lo tomé el colectivo.
 it.ACC.MASC took.1SG the.SG.MASC bus.SG.MASC
 ‘I took the bus.’
- b. Andean Spanish:
 Eso también lo mata a las lantás.
 that too it.ACC.MASC kills.3SG. to the.PL.FEM plants.PL.FEM
 ‘That too kills the plants.’

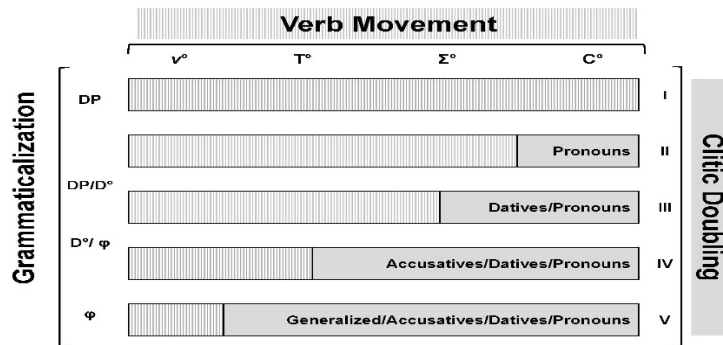
(Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019: 69)

The end of this cyclic process is reached when the clitic no longer agrees with the direct object in phi-features (stage 5), as illustrated in (1b). One could propose that at this stage it is no longer clitic doubling what we observe, but agreement on the verb. Thus, CLD in this stage no longer depends on discourse-pragmatic or semantic properties, but merely on grammatical function.

The interesting question is why CLD has undergone this cyclic process. Why did it evolve in Spanish and Catalan and why did the discourse pragmatic properties of CLD change over time? It has been argued that CLD directly depends on the categorial status of the clitic (Fontana 1993), i.e. as long as clitics are phrases, doubling was not possible. Only with clitics becoming heads CLD appeared. The spread of CLD from full pronouns, to datives and finally to accusative objects has been explained with the accessibility hierarchy (Fischer & Rinke 2013, Leonetti 2008). However, when correlating the different stages of CLD with the categorial status of clitics and the accessibility hierarchy of objects, it becomes obvious that something additional must have played a role in this cyclic process.

The change from Old Romance to Modern Romance has often been called a change from a topic prominent to subject-prominent languages (Lehmann 1976: 455, Givón 1979: 109). Topic prominent languages are commonly analysed in generative grammar with additional functional material in the left periphery, which among other things can be seen in how high the verb moves, i.e. where in a sentence the verb appears. In Verb-Second languages like German the verb moves as high as C°, thereby generating an A'-position in its Spec,CP, where not only subjects, but also objects, or adverbs etc. can appear. In Creole languages the verb with some exceptions, does not leave the VP, thus showing a strict SVO language. In Old Spanish and Old Catalan several additional functional categories for the verb to move into were available (Fischer 2002, 2010), allowing in their Spec-positions the most accessible DPs. When these positions were lost, accessible objects could no longer be marked by word-order but had to be marked by CLD.

Figure 1: The CLD cycle (Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019: 66)



Thus, what we perceive concerning the CLD-cycle is the interaction of three factors: the categorial status of the clitic, how high the verbs move, and by this defining what is in need to be marked for accessibility (Fig. 1). The more positions in the left periphery of the sentence – hosting accessible DPs – were lost, the more CLD was extended: first to accessible but after some time also to less accessible objects with respect to the accessibility hierarchy (Fischer, Navarro & Vega Vilanova 2019: 66) by this of course showing effects concerning the definiteness scale, animacy, and DOM (vgl. Von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003, 2005, von Heusinger, Romero & Kaiser 2016 etc.).

3 Conclusion

The interaction of the three factors (Fig. 1) seems like a good explanation for the evolution of clitic doubling and its spread to accusatives. Open for further research is the question of the apparent optionality concerning dative clitic doubling, which might be even more interesting to investigate, since it seems to be even more diverse in the varieties of Spanish and Catalan (von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003, 2005, Fischer et al. to appear).

Author Note

Without the invitation to a workshop on specificity at the University of Konstanz in 2003, and without the abundant research of Klaus (and his colleagues) concerning all different aspects of referring: definiteness, accessibility, indefiniteness, specificity in DOM and CLD constructions, we (Mario Navarro, Jorge Vega Vilanova and myself) might have not carried out this thorough diachronic investigation of clitic doubling in Spanish and Catalan (DFG-project FI 875, 3-1, 3-2).

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