Sandra Lucas. *Polarizing the Future—The development of an aspectual opposition in the Greek future tense.* University of Copenhagen, 2012.

[slucas@hum.ku.dk]

Keywords

historical linguistics; aspect; future; grammaticalization; paradigmaticization

1. Introduction

The expression of aspect in future forms is rare typologically. Like most languages Classical Greek lacked a systematic distinction between the expression of the perfective and the imperfective future. Arguably, some verbs did possess the possibility of overtly distinguishing aspect in the future, but these were few (see Jannaris 1968 (1897): 441, Schwyzler/Debrunner 1950: 265–267 and Wackernagel 2009 (1920–1924): I, 35 for differing viewpoints on these verbs).

In Modern Greek the future tense is periphrastic and distinguishes for aspect by means of an aoristic (AOR)/presential (PRES) stem variation. The thesis investigates what happened in the future forms between the synthetic non-aspectual Classical future, which began to lose territory as early as in Hellenistic-Roman Greek, and the Modern Greek future.

In connection with the empirical question outlined above, key concepts of *aspect* and *grammaticalization* are discussed and re-defined.

2. The Study

Preliminary quantitative investigations showed that the constitutive changes in the aspectual system are best observed in sources from Hellenistic-Roman and Early Byzantine Greek. The source material was taken from the Dukes Databank of Documentary Papyri, primarily from the 1st and the 6th centuries AD both because these two centuries display aspectual usages different from one another and from Classical and Modern Greek respectively, and because these differences in usage can be documented by sufficient source material.

Four periphrastic futures (or modal forms later to become futures) were investigated: $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ + infinitive (INF), $\xi\chi\omega$ + INF, $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\omega$ + INF, and $\xi\sigma\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ + participle (PTC). These four periphrases were studied in order to establish when aspect entered the category of the future in Greek, whether the aspectual patterns of these periphrases differed, and whether they changed over time. Also, a definition was sought as to the parameters that collaborate in bringing about either

the AOR or the PRES INF/PTC in these forms, i.e. the semantic content of the Greek perfective and imperfective aspects.

My theoretical approach to the empirical material is a structuralist approach; and more particularly it adheres to the principles laid down in Heltoft et al. 2005 and Nørgård-Sørensen et al. 2011 about the importance of binary structures as constituents in grammar and as driving force behind grammaticalization. Further, it views grammar as a discrete category not containing levels of prototypicality; this has consequences for the categorization of the future periphrases, which, I claim, have equal grammatical status even though they have differing levels of bondedness.

3. Conclusions

The conclusions to be drawn from my study fall into three main areas: aspect, the development of an aspectual distinction, and grammaticalization. I discuss these each in turn.

3.1. *Aspect*

Pertaining to the nature of aspect in Greek the thesis regards the primary aspectual opposition as binary, distinguishing between perfective and imperfective meanings by means of AOR and PRES forms. In this respect it agrees with the traditional approach of e.g. Comrie 1981. However, with regard to the actual semantics of the perfective/imperfective opposition in Greek, it was necessary to turn to the alternative approach of Hedin (2000). Even though I started out viewing the perfective/imperfective opposition through the traditional prism—adhering to the view that “perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a single whole (...) while the imperfective pays essential attention to the internal structure of the situation” (Comrie 1981: 4), it became clear that these definitions did not explain certain differences in usage that I found in the Classical and Hellenistic-Roman material. Hedin’s approach views the perfective/imperfective opposition as essentially a difference between *tokens* of action and *type* of action; and this particular viewpoint turned out to give a fully adequate explanation of otherwise inexplicable instances of aspectual usage, most notably the aspectual pattern of the INF following μέλλω (see the following).

3.2. *The Development of an Aspectual Distinction*

Regarding the implementations of obligatory aspectual choice in the periphrases, this thesis documents that the four periphrases follow quite different paths. Ἐσομαι + PTC never develops an aspectual distinction, given that only

ἔσομαι + PRES PTC has pure future meaning; ἔσομαι + AOR PTC expresses perfect future parallel to ἔσομαι + perfect PTC.

The three periphrases with INFs all develop an aspectual distinction, but both the chronology and the analogical paths of these developments differ among the three periphrases: θέλω + INF distinguishes for aspect as early as the Classical period, but does not have future meaning until considerably later, probably not until the Late Byzantine period (it has been argued earlier that the periphrasis does have future meaning in Classical Greek, see Markopoulos 2009 and Lee 2010, but this thesis disagrees with that particular conclusion). Ἐχω + INF develops future meaning in Early Byzantine Greek, but during this period the INF of the periphrasis is invariably an AOR INF whenever the function is future time reference. Ἐχω + INF as a future periphrasis does not develop aspectual distinction until Late Byzantine Greek. Μέλλω + INF has future meaning right from Homeric Greek. In Classical Greek μέλλω is primarily followed by a PRES INF (or a future INF) and the periphrasis does not express the distinction between imperfective and perfective future (Markopoulos 2009). This thesis argues that the preference of μέλλω for an PRES INF rather than an AOR INF is related to the low level of bondedness between μέλλω and the INF, given that the low level of bondedness is highly compatible with a type-referring INF (the PRES INF), whereas the high level of bondedness, which obtains between the auxiliaries θέλω and ἔχω and their respective infinitival complementation, is more compatible with a token-referring INF (AOR INF). The low level of bondedness between μέλλω and the INF is caused by the fact that with this periphrasis the future meaning is embedded in μέλλω alone and not, as is the case with θέλω + INF and ἔχω + INF, in the entirety of the periphrasis. In the 1st century AD papyri, incipient overt aspectual differentiation can be witnessed in the future periphrasis μέλλω + INF and by 6th century AD the aspectual differentiation is firmly established in μέλλω + INF; this development is helped along by the general increase in aoristic verbal forms.

3.3. *Grammaticalization*

The thesis may be seen as a comment to the ongoing discussion about grammaticalization. At least one of the forms, μέλλω + PRES INF and, as it seems, also ἔχω + AOR INF, develops counter to the hypothesized unidirectionality of grammaticalization, i.e. it develops in the direction of semantic specialization rather than semantic generalization, from a situation where the use of a particular aspectual stem had only covert aspectual meaning to a situation where it had overt aspectual meaning. Accordingly, the unidirectionality hypothesis, it is argued, should be seen not as a prediction about language change but rather as a description of frequent scenarios within language change.

References

- Comrie, Bernard. 1981. *Aspect*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge (2nd edn., 1st edn. 1976).
- Hedin, Eva. 2000. The type-referring function of the Imperfective. In: *Tense and Aspect in the Languages of Europe*. Östen Dahl, ed., 227–264. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Heltoft, Lars, Jens Nørgård-Sørensen, and Lene Schøsler. 2005. Grammatikalisering som strukturforandring. In: *Grammatikalisering og struktur*. Lars Heltoft, Jens Nørgård-Sørensen, and Lene Schøsler (eds.), 9–30. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.
- Jannaris, A.N. 1968 (1897). *An historical Greek Grammar Chiefly of the Attic Dialect*. Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Lee, John A.L. 2010. Auxiliary ᾑλω. In: *The Language of the Papyri*. T.V. Evans and D.D. Obbink. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Markopoulos, Theodore. 2009. *The Future in Greek—from Ancient to Medieval*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nørgård-Sørensen, Jens, Lars Heltoft, and Lene Schøsler. 2011. *Connecting Grammaticalisation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Schwyzler, Eduard and Albert Debrunner. 1950. *Griechische Grammatik auf der Grundlage von Karl Brugmanns griechischer Grammatik II*. Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Wackernagel, Jakob. 2009 (1920–1924). *Lectures on Syntax—With Special Reference to Greek, Latin, and Germanic*. Edited and translated by David Langslow. Oxford: Oxford University Press (published to Oxford Scholarship Online: September 2009; read at <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com>).