Divergence and contact in Cappadocian concessive conditionals

In this talk we present preliminary results from an ongoing investigation into concessive conditionals (CCs) in Cappadocian, a near-extinct variety of Greek that was heavily influenced by Turkish when it was spoken in Asia Minor from Byzantine times until the Greek-Turkish population exchange in 1923–1924. We investigate whether Cappadocian CCs deviate from their Standard Modern Greek counterparts and, if so, whether the deviations can be attributed to language contact with Turkish.

CCs are a special type of conditionals which express not one antecedent p, but a set of antecedents that all lead to the same consequent q: 'if $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, …\}$, then q' (König 1986; Leuschner 2006, 2020). Three quantificational strategies to evoke this set are distinguished (ibid.): scalar concessive conditionals (SCCs) mention an extreme value p_n and imply that q also holds for other, less extreme values (cf. English *even if p_n*); alternative concessive conditionals (ACCs) express a disjunction which exhausts the scale at hand (cf. English *whether p_1 or p_2*); universal concessive conditionals (UCCs) express free-choice quantification over instantiations of a variable, often realized as an interrogative-like pronoun (cf. English *WH-ever*).

Under Haspelmath & König's (1998) typology of CCs in European languages, Turkish qualifies as uniformly-coding, i.e. as a language that encodes all CCs as conditionals, while Standard Modern Greek is differentially-coding, i.e. a language in which only SCCs have overt conditional coding, while ACCs and UCCs have primarily quantificational, e.g. interrogative-like, coding. This typological divide makes Cappadocian an interesting case study.

We investigate the coding strategies of Cappadocian CCs in a corpus of 58 folktales from 11 villages (ca. 50,000 words, the largest corpus of Cappadocian to date). While Cappadocian CCs are differentially coded like their Standard Modern Greek counterparts, the actual coding is distinct between both varieties. In part, these differences are due to Turkish influence, as Turkish loan words are found in ACCs, e.g. *jáxot ... jákot ...* 'whether … or …' < Tr. *yahut* 'or, else' and sporadically in UCCs, e.g. *-dak* in *ótia-dak* 'whatever' < Tr. *dek* 'until, as far as'. Mostly, however, Cappadocian CCs differ from their Standard Modern Greek equivalents in ways that cannot be attributed to Turkish. In Cappadocian SCCs, the focus particle *ke* 'even' invariably follows the conditional conjunction *an* 'if', whereas *ke* precedes *an* in SCCs in Standard Modern Greek (where *an ke* is purely concessive). And whereas Haspelmath & König (1998) suggest that Standard Modern Greek UCCs usually contain focus particles like *-ðipote* 'ever' or *ke* 'even' and/or conditional *an*, Cappadocian UCCs lack any overt coding other than the WH-word in 68% of all instances.

Future studies should investigate whether these differences are a consequence of changes in Modern Greek, with Cappadocian preserving coding strategies from earlier stages of Greek due to its relative isolation from mainstream Greek since the defeat of the Byzantine Empire by the Seljuk Empire at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. Future research should also try to account for SCCs in the Floïta dialect, which are introduced by *an ki* like exceptive conditionals. To our knowledge, concessive and exceptive conditionals are not coded identically in any other varieties of Greek nor, indeed, any other languages. We suggest this overlap can be explained either in terms of accidental homonymy or as scale/polarity reversal.

References

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