

From distal demonstrative to resultative marker (through definite article): evidence from Basque

1. Introduction

Demonstratives are at the origin of a variety of grammatical morphemes: definite articles, complementizers, conjunctions, etc. (see Diessel 1999: 39, Kuteva *et al.* 134-147). Some of these grammaticalization processes have also been described for Basque: for instance, it is beyond dispute that the definite nominal inflection emerged through the grammaticalization of demonstratives (Manterola 2015). This paper explores a grammaticalization path that to our knowledge is yet to be described in other languages, namely the one leading from demonstrative to resultative marker, through the intermediate stage of definite article.

2. Resultative constructions in Modern Basque

Resultative constructions in Basque consist of a predicative construction containing a past participle with the definite article and the auxiliary verb, as exemplified in (1). They are similar to adjectival predicates, in which the adjective appears also with the determiner (2):

- (1) a. Mikel iritsi-a da b. Mikel eta Ane iritsi-ak dira
Michael arrived-the is Michael and Ann arrived-the.PL are
'Michael has already arrived' 'Michael and Ann have already arrived'
- (2) a. Mikel handi-a da b. Mikel eta Ane handi-ak dira
Michael big-the is Michael and Ann big-the.PL are
'Michael is big' 'Michael and Ann are big'

Resultative constructions contrast with perfect analytic construction in that the latter do not attach the definite article to the past participle, see examples in (3):

- (3) a. Mikel iritsi da b. Mikel eta Ane etorri dira
Michael arrived is Michael and Ann arrived are
'Michael has arrived' 'Michael and Ann have arrived'

That the morphological origin of *-a* (plural *-ak*), the definite article, is to be found in the distal demonstrative *ba* 'that' is uncontroversial (Azkue 1923-1925, Trask 1997). It is however obvious that its modern functions range well beyond a simple definiteness marker, see examples in (2).

3. Historical data

In Old Basque, adjectives and nouns involved in predicative constructions were usually not marked with a definite article (3).

- (3) Eihera hon da dabileno (Oihenart, 1657, *Proverbes*, 206)
mill.the good is as.long.as.it.runs
"Le moulin est bon tandis que la meule se remue"

Likewise, the oldest Basque texts exhibit a language stage in which resultativeness may be expressed through sheer past participle forms, see (4):

- (4) Habia egin deneko, xori-a hil (Oihenart, 1657, *Proverbes*, 206)
cage.the done AUX.TEMP bird-the die
"Pour lors que la cage a été faite, l'oiseau est venu à mourir"

The spread of the definite article to contexts where no definite interpretation is allowed is observable on written records. This spread is most readily noticeable in predicative constructions (2), and is present already in texts of the 16th century (Manterola 2015).

4. The historical evolution of resultative phrases

The definite articles *-a/-ak* spread to resultative contexts only from the 16th century onwards (Mounole 2014). This paper argues that this spread occurred on the model of adjective predicates; the need for number marking may have played a role, since number is only morphologically overt in definite phrases.

References

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