

# *Introduction*

by Annamaria Bartolotta

Using modern linguistic theory to describe ‘dead’ languages is one of the theoretical and methodological challenges in contemporary linguistic research. In fact, theories of the twentieth century mostly aimed to account for speakers’ linguistic competence, thus basing their analysis on live speakers and their intuitions. However, drawing on evidence from languages such as Vedic, Greek, Latin, Hittite, Gothic, Celtic and Proto-Indo-European itself, the relevance of the ancient Indo-European languages to contemporary linguistic theory has been constantly shown, since the rise of the linguistic sciences in the early nineteenth century. The observation of ancient Indo-European languages and their descendants can indeed prove useful as source of data for testing scientific hypotheses. In particular, as language universals should by definition be true of all human languages, linguists can examine not only languages spoken today, but also attested extinct languages as well (Song, 2001, p. 16). The processes we observe in living languages can help us to gain knowledge about processes in the extinct languages and, vice versa, the analysis of data taken from extinct languages provide further insight that may either confirm or disprove hypotheses and patterns of development proposed for living languages. As is well-known, according to the so-called ‘Uniformitarian Principle’, language universals discovered in contemporary languages should also apply to ancient and reconstructed languages, based on the fact that languages of the past are not essentially different from those of the present (see Croft, 2003).

This volume is devoted to the study of ancient Indo-European languages from the perspective of modern linguistics, within diverse theoretical or analytical frameworks, and aims to deepen our understanding of the basic mechanisms underlying the language

system, thanks to both the exploitation of texts and advances in linguistic methodology (see already Lehmann, 1972, p. 976). It is a special issue that has come about to attract increasing attention and work among linguists working on this field. It provides both synchronic and diachronic studies of old Indo-European languages, drawing upon the findings of cognitive linguistics, historical and comparative linguistics, variationist sociolinguistics, history of linguistics, including problems related to the reconstruction of proto-Indo-European. It contains contributions dealing with phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of ancient Indo-European languages, including contributions with a focus on more ‘traditional’ topics such as etymology, but which have implications for linguistic theory or general issues related to language use and change.

The articles are arranged alphabetically. A traditional approach combined with insights from cognitive linguistics is considered in *Etymology and Conceptual Metaphor: The case of ‘in vain’ in Greek and Latin*, in which Maria Lucia Aliffi proposes a new etymological interpretation of the Greek adverbs meaning ‘in vain’ μάτην, ἐτός, and compares them with the Latin adverbs *nēquiquam* and *frūstrā*. The latter have in fact the same meaning as their Greek counterparts, but derive from different lexical Indo-European roots. The author examines data taken from Greek and Latin texts, focusing on the semantic shift that takes place from the concrete spatial domain to the abstract domain related to the adverbial meaning under investigation. She goes back to the Indo-European root from which those adverbs derive, thus giving a possible solution for an etymology that is left unexplained in traditional etymological dictionaries.

In my article on *Spatial representations of future in Homeric Greek*, I investigate the space-time mapping from a cognitive linguistic perspective. Mostly based on the scholia, it has been traditionally assumed that, since the very beginning, time was represented in Ancient Greek by means of spatial adverbs according to a tripartite mapping split into three parts, namely, past, present, and future. Such a metaphorical mapping, in which LATER IS BEHIND and EARLIER IS IN FRONT with relation to the speaker, corresponds to what, in cognitive terms, is called Ego-RP model, in which the future is seen behind a deictic Ego-experiencer located at the ‘here and now’ of the speech-time. This article attempts to answer the following questions: *i*) is it true that there is a tripartite space-time mapping in Homeric Greek? *ii*) is it true that there is a deictic Ego-RP metaphor since the very beginning? A closer scrutiny of the uses and the meanings of spatial adverbs

and prepositions that refer to the future in the Homeric poems (and focusing in particular on *πρό* ‘in front’) shows the traces of a peculiar spatiotemporal metaphor, in which the temporal sequence has the opposite mapping LATER IS IN FRONT and EARLIER IS BEHIND. Also based on recent advances in psycholinguistic studies, it is argued how such a cognitive model is used in Homeric Greek, without disregarding a cross-linguistic perspective.

In her paper *Periphrastic constructions, phasal verbs, and Aktionsart in Hittite*, Paola Cotticelli Kurras examines aspectual verbs in Hittite. In particular, she focuses on functional verbs used in periphrastic constructions, which convey different semantic, aspectual and Aktionsart meanings, taking into consideration the grammaticalization process in which they are involved. Such constructions consist of the functional verb combined with specific verbal forms, such as the participle, the infinitive, or the supine. More in detail, the author examines the following functional or ‘phasal’ verbs: *eš-* “to be”, *hark-* “to hold, to have”, *iya-* “to make”, *tarna-* “to let”, *epp-/app-* “to take”, *ar-* “to stay; remain”, *handai-* “to establish”, *zinnai-* “to finish”, *irhai-* “to conclude”, *dai-/tiya-* “to begin”. An explanation of constraints limiting the formation of periphrastic constructions is given, based on the inherent semantic features of both phasal verbs and selected arguments. The author addresses issues concerning the role of periphrastic constructions within the Hittite verbal system, their complementary distribution relatively to finite verbal forms, and the existence of a relationship with typologically similar constructions in other Indo-European languages.

*The pre-history and latter history of the infinitive in Greek and some relevant issues in grammatical analysis* by Brian Joseph is a study on the infinitive in the history of Greek. On a more general level, the article provides heuristics for studying morphosyntactic categories in ancient languages. The author examines the linguistic status of the ‘part-of-speech category’ of the infinitive, paying special attention to the grammatical functions involved, and focusing on the characterization of its non-finiteness and finiteness from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. He provides a reconstruction of the Proto-Indo-European origin of the infinitive by means of a comparative analysis of its descendants in ancient Indo-European languages such as Vedic, Homeric Greek, Latin and Old Church Slavonic. Then, he traces its developments in the latter history of Greek, dwelling upon its change from nominal to verbal categorial status, and its incorporation into the language verbal system. The

author examines the infinitive formations from both morphological and syntactic perspectives, showing the gradual loss of the category, and the way in which other competing formations replaced it starting from the Hellenistic period and continuing through Medieval Greek to Modern Greek. The historical-comparative analysis of the so-called ‘inflected infinitive’ in Portuguese and the future formations in Medieval Greek allows the author to try an explanation for infinitival forms in Pontic Greek.

The role of the telic/atelic distinction within the verbal system of Vedic Sanskrit is investigated in Leonid Kulikov’s paper *Quelques notes sur les formes dites ‘itératives’ indo-européennes: Le type patáyati et les présents redoublés en védique*. Specifically, the author concentrates on a particular case study, namely the Vedic present formations with the suffix *-áya-* and their distribution in the present system. After distinguishing between causatives and non-causatives *-áya-*formations according to the different apophonic grades of the verbal root, this paper is devoted to a synchronic analysis of the morphological, syntactic and semantic uses of the non-causative *-áya-*present formations, which trace back to Indo-European. More in detail, the author demonstrates how the iterative meaning traditionally ascribed to the IE suffix *\*-eye/o* must have been derived from an original atelic meaning, as it is shown by the distribution of *-áya-*presents and other present-formations from one and the same verbal root in the Rig Veda. Evidence for this analysis comes from *a)* the verb argument structure, *b)* the type of subject, *c)* the morphological case selection, *d)* the combination with specific preverbs, and *e)* the parallel function of reduplicated present-formations.

Romano Lazzeroni investigates the phonetic phenomenon of the so-called ‘stress-minimal word pairs’ in his article *On the law of appellatives in Greek and Vedic: Markedness and transcategorization*. The author concentrates on the transcategorization process, i.e. the categorial shift of a lexical item, that is encoded by the change of stress position in Vedic Sanskrit and Ancient Greek minimal word pairs whose only distinguishing feature is lexical stress. In particular, starting from Vendryès’ “law of appellatives” of Greek and Sanskrit, which applies to the distinction between adjective and noun, those word pairs are analyzed which oppose abstract to concrete nouns, agent/instrument to action nouns, common to proper names, nominal cases to adverbs, nominative to vocative. A unitary principle that underlies the stress shift in all these minimal pairs is proposed, according to a prototype-based account that replaces the traditional

discrete category of markedness. Lexical classes are in fact represented as graded categories, of which the properties are described according to a crosslinguistic valid hierarchy.

In *Some reflections on the Gothic optative*, Lucio Melazzo's analysis is based on the historical-comparative method. A careful reconstruction of morphological and semantic aspects of the Gothic optative endings is made by means of a comparison with the same formations in Ancient Greek and Vedic Sanskrit. Thus, the innovative Gothic passive optative ending *-au-* is explained, and the hypothesis is put forward on the origin of the emphasizing deictic particle *-u* that is added to this ending. In particular, the author argues how a formal alternation in verbal morphology might have indicated different semantic roles of the subject as an Agent or an Undergoer. The analysis of indicative, imperative and optative forms within the same Gothic verbal system, also compared to those attested in Sanskrit and Old Church Slavonic, allows the author to identify not only the morphological structure but also the basic semantic functions of Gothic passive optative.

The paper entitled *Edward Lhuyd's "archaeologism" and "philologism" in the observation of the nature of the Celtic languages* by Diego Poli focuses on the history of linguistics. As has been recently remarked, the eighteenth century prepared the stage for a rigorous scientific investigation of language before the rise of Comparative Linguistics in the nineteenth century (Jankowsky, 2013, p. 635). The author provides a careful reconstruction of the eighteenth-century British cultural background in which the Welsh scientist Edward Lhuyd conducted his own research, taking an interdisciplinary perspective that combined a philological and linguistic approach with a philosophical and natural analysis. He gave his contribution to the origin and growth of linguistics as a science. Following the methodological principles of the rational-empirical model of Francis Bacon, Lhuyd investigated on the origin of Celtic languages, based on a comparative perspective. Although we are still far from the formulation of a rigid methodology that characterized the foundation of the linguistic science, the author shows the contribution of this scientist to the creation of a method in the analysis of phonetic correspondences and changes.

The grammatical issues related to a peculiar use of the participle in Ancient Greek are addressed in Anna Pompei's paper, entitled *Participle constructions in Ancient Greek: Cosubordination, modification, and symmetry*. The author aims at analysing the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic features of the so-called 'conjunct participle', namely in the construction  $\lambda\alpha\nu\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$  plus participle, which codifies a symmetric

relationship with the inversed construction made of a main finite verb with λανθάνω in participle form. After describing the verbal or predicative functions of the participle, she dwells upon the different role of modification and ‘cosubordination’, considering conjunct participles as converbs. In particular, adopting a Functional Grammar perspective, the participle used in the construction with λανθάνω is described as a satellite, which conveys specific pragmatic information.

The article *Sociolinguistic variation and dialect identity: A case of Laconian rhotacization in the Lysistrata* is a study on the rhotacization of the word-final -s in Classical Greek from a sociolinguistic perspective. Domenica Romagno argues how, although epigraphic documents testifying such phonetic phenomenon date back to a later stage of the Greek language, the diastratic variations and their relationship with diatopic features shed light on the interaction between oral and written language. More specifically, the author hypothesizes that, differently from what can be observed in other geographical areas of Greece in the 5th century BC, such as Beotia or Elis, where it was diastratically high and ancient or even pertained to the standard language, the rhotacization of final -s was a low diastratic dialectal feature in Attica. It belonged to the oral language and was excluded from written language until it was revived in the Hellenistic period as an archaism. Besides a description of the phonotactic contexts that were crucial to the rhotacization of -s, it is shown that, contrarily to some philologists’ reconstructions, the passage from -p to -ç can be legitimately ascribed to the language of Aristophanes’ comedy. Furthermore, the principle of the implicational scales applied to sociolinguistic variation shows the hierarchical relationship between the rhotacization of -s and other Spartan dialect features in the Hellenistic period.

### *References*

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