

Case attraction on Ancient Greek Infinitive Clauses

Caio B. A. Geraldles

Key-words: syntax; case attraction; quantitative methods

Case attraction on infinitive clauses (contrast item (1-a) with item (1-b) below) has been analysed over the recent years as a idiosyncratic and strictly syntactic construction (Tantalou 2003, Spyropoulos 2005 and Sevdali 2013a; Sevdali 2013b), lacking many parallels across either ancient or modern languages and across other linguistic *phenomena*. Previously (Geraldles 2020), I have tried to show that case attraction is similar in nature and distribution to *agreement / concord*, namely similar to the cases of *non-canonical agreement* and *long distance agreement* (as discussed in Corbett 2006), due to its association with semantic and pragmatic features, using a *corpus* comprised of Herodotus, Plato and Xenophon. Effects of authorship, genre and dialect were also identified, with philosophical dialogues and attic presenting a higher likelihood to display case attraction. The issues with the evidence and analysis made available was the sample size, which limited what conclusions could be drawn from the data collected, and the sole use of single variate methods to estimate the effects and association between variables and the occurrence of attraction, which made it impossible to untangle structural linguistic effects from extra-linguistic factors.

- (1) a. συμβουλεύει τῷ Ξενοφῶντι ἐλθόντα εἰς Δελφοὺς ἀνακοινοῶσαι
advice.3SG X.DAT.SG going.ACC.SG to-Delphi ask.INF
τῷ θεῷ περὶ τῆς πορείας.
the-god.DAT.SG about-the-travel
He advices Xenophon to go to Delphi and ask the god about the travel.
(Xen. Anab. 3 1 5)
- b. ἀφῆκε μοι ἐλθόντι πρὸς ὑμᾶς λέγειν
allowed.3SG PRON.1SG.DAT going.DAT.SG in-front-of-you say.INF
τᾶληθῇ.
the-truth.ACC.
He allowed me to go and speak the truth in front of you. (Xen. Hell. 6 1 13)

Expanding on the aforementioned work, this aims to further the analysis of case attraction of infinitival predicates of Ancient Greek, specifically on attic and ionic literary sources. The new *corpus* includes oratory, dramatic and historiographic literature from Classical Athens and a revised version of the corpus of sentences drawn from Herodotus, Plato and Xenophon (published as Geraldles 2021).

The nucleus of this work lies on a new quantitative analysis of the data built as to adequately estimate the direct effects of linguistic factors (class of main verb and

infinitival verb, constituent distance, and part-of-speech of the predicates) on the occurrence of case attraction accounting also for the interaction between such factors and extralinguistic factors such as authorship and genre. This analysis relies on the graphical causal analysis (e.g. Pearl 2009) and Bayesian modeling (e.g. McElreath 2020), which I argue could enhance the results of data driven linguistic research by including at the quantitative analysis the qualitative knowledge built on the Ancient Greek and general linguistics. This is particularly important as semantic and pragmatic features often can only be represented in the data by proxies (word classes, constituent distance and word order).

Furthermore, the evidence gathered reinforces the conclusion that case attraction was strongly conditioned by the semantic and pragmatic features of the sentence.

References

- Corbett, G. G. (2006). *Agreement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McElreath, R. (2020). *Statistical Rethinking*. Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
- Pearl, J. (2009). *Causality: Models, Reasoning, and Inference: Models, Reasoning, and Inference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sevdali, C. (2013a). “Ancient Greek Infinitives and Phases”. In: *Syntax* 16.4, pp. 324–361. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/synt.12004>.
- (2013b). “Case Transmission beyond Control and the Role of Person”. In: *Journal of Historical Syntax* 2.4, pp. 1–52.
- Spyropoulos, V. (2005). “The syntax of Classical Greek infinitive”. In: *Universal Grammar in the Reconstruction of Ancient Languages*. Ed. by K. Kiss. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 295–337.
- Tantalou, N. (2003). “Infinitives with overt subjects in Classical Greek”. In: *Μελέτες για την ελληνική γλώσσα: πρακτικά της 23ης ετήσιας συνάντησης του τμήματος φιλολογίας του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, 17-19 Μαΐου, 2002*. Θεσσαλονίκη: Αφοί Κυριακίδη, pp. 358–365.