ZAMPETTA, Silvia

On the articulation degree of ho, hē, tó in the Homeric poems

The process of definite article emergence is crosslinguistically consistent: the definite article originates from a distal demonstrative pronoun and, through the stages first described by Greenberg (1978), it assumes independence and gradually develops its typical functions. Greenberg (1978) distinguished three stages in the development of definite article from demonstrative:

(1) definite article > (2) non-generic article > (3) noun marker.

Since Greenberg many authors have returned to the study of the definite article development, making fundamental contributions to our understanding of the process. The importance of these subsequent studies is dictated by the fact that the original description of the definite article cycle, given by Greenberg, lack both a detailed analysis of all the functions that the definite article covers before weakening (entering the second stage) and the order of their emergency. I relied mainly on the reworking of the Greenberg cycle accomplished by König (2018). He distinguished five stages, including the use of demonstrative as a separate stage:

(1) demonstrative > (2) strong article > (3) weak article > (4) generic article > (5) specific article.

An essential property of demonstratives is that they have a pointing contrastive use. In addition, demonstratives have also anaphoric and cataphoric uses. The difference between the two types of function is that the search for the referent «is transferred from an external situation to a search in the co-text» (König, 2018: 173). In the first stage of the development of demonstratives to definite articles they lose their contrastive meaning. It is only at this point that it is possible to speak about incipient definite article. The incipient definite article can be used to refer to elements present in the context or in the co-text, but it lacks contrastive value. At this stage, the label given to the definite article is "strong article". The next stage of the development involves the broadening of the referent identification frame. Indirect anaphora is the first other context in which the definite article is observable. Beginning with Hawkins 1978, the label "associative uses" is also used to refer to this function of the definite article. Subsequently, the definite article is released from both the context and the co-text, and the identification frame of the referent expands to general knowledge of the world or memorized elements. At this point of the development, the label used to refer to the definite article is "weak article". Following this, the definite article is used to define abstract names or names with generic reference: the label the author gives to the definite article at this point of evolution is "generic article". The final stage is highly controversial, and I will not focus on it, because it does not fit the functions by which Ancient Greek uses the definite article.

Ancient Greek makes no exception in following the latter evolutionary trajectory: the Homeric poems are the first texts where we can observe the form that in classical Greek will be employed as the proper definite article: ho, hē, tó.

«Associé à un substantif l'article conserve souvent une valeur proprement démonstrative» (Chantraine, 1953: 160). Chantraine's assessment of the predominantly demonstrative nature of ho, hē, tó in adnominal position profoundly influenced the judgment about the articulation degree achieved by that form in the Homeric poems. Since Chantraine, several authors have returned to the subject, and other possible functions of this form have been proposed.

Manolessou and Horrocks (2007) share Chantraine's suggestion that the definite article is associated, in some way, with an emphasis/contrast idea and, therefore, does not yet simply convey definiteness. Guardiano (2013) emphasizes the lack of obligatory expression of definiteness in the Homeric poems. In addition, she asserts that both common nouns, singular or plural, and proper nouns

may or may not be accompanied by definite article, with the presence of the latter being, in no way, predictable.

However, when deciding to make a more in-depth study of such behavior, we must settle for approximate numbering and paradigmatic examples. It was precisely this lack that encouraged the attempt to fill, as far as possible, this absence of systematicity regarding the function of ho, hē, tó in the Homeric corpus. An earlier attempt of systematization was made by Stawell (1909) who decides to compile a list of all instances in which, according to her observations, ho, hē, tó is used as a proper definite article. The author, however, does not indicate, for each of the occurrences, what is the function with which it is used. Her list represents the basis for the analysis carried out in my work.

Although Stawell's list is not very recent, it contains a significant number of occurrence (684) that allowed me to come to some meaningful conclusions. The key to my analysis was the Greenberg cycle, although I also referred to subsequent expansions of it. To carry out my analysis, as already mentioned, I relied mainly on König's elaboration of the trajectory of evolution of the definite article.

I therefore analyzed the forms of ho, hē, tó detected by Stawell (1909), to which I chose to add 11 occurrences not listed by the author but tracked during the analysis of the literatures and of the Homeric corpus itself. I arrived, finally, at a corpus of 695 instances.

As a first step, I chose to consider separately the occurrences in which ho, hē, tó acts as a nominalizer for quantifiers, numeral adjectives, possessive adjectives, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, participles, and infinitives. In fact, the definite article in Ancient Greek has a rather complex nominalizer function, and I judged that the latter cases would need their own study. I also considered separately the instances in which the article is employed with proper nouns and with the function of a possessive.

I therefore analyzed and divided the adnominal occurrences of ho, hē, tó in strong, weak, and generic articles, using the terminology of König (2018). All cases in which the referent of ho, hē, tó is linked to the situational, linguistic, or extra-linguistic context, are considered strong articles (e.g., Iliad XXIII, v. 257; Iliad XIII, v. 164). Weak article includes all cases in which the referent is familiar whether because it has been memorized (therefore already introduced in the speech, even if distant), or because it falls within shared general knowledge. Weak articles also include all cases in which the reference to a person, an object or an entity is understandable through associations with other elements explicitly named, therefore indirectly known (e.g., Iliad XI, v. 69; Odyssey XII, v. 252; Odyssey XIX, v. 142; Iliad IV, v. 1). I included under the generic article label the cases in which the referent is generic and non-specific (e.g., Iliad IX, v.309; Iliad IX, 320; Odyssey IX, 339). At the end of the analysis, I observed that the strong article quantitatively dominates over the other functions (29%). The weak article covers a smaller but still important number of instances (20%). The generic article has only a few attestations (2%). The remaining 49% of the instances fall within the separately analyzed cases I referred to earlier, and which are not included in this discussion. I merely point out that the article as a nominalizer recurs in 41% of the instances. The definite article accompanies proper nouns in 5% of the cases and it performs the function of possessive 3% of the times.

Diachronically, as mentioned, the three types of articles – strong, weak, and generic – are subsequent to each other. The generic article is, precisely, the last function that the definite article fills before expanding its uses to including contexts where the indefinite article would be required. Even Classical Greek, however, has not yet fully grammaticalized the use of ho, hē, tó with generic nouns. The presence of contexts in the Homeric poems in which the definite article is accompanied by such nouns is certainly significant, although these are only a few instances. Classical Greek, therefore, does not differ from Homeric Greek in using the definite article in a greater variety of functions. In fact, as it has been pointed out above, all of them are already observable in the Homeric poems. What changes is the number of instances in which these functions are observable, and the regularity of their occurrence.

References:

Bauer Brigitte L.M. 2007.
> *The definite article in Indo-European: emergence of a new grammatical category?* In: Stark E. & Leiss E. & Abraham W. (eds.), Nominal determination: typology, context, constraints, and historical emergence. Amsterdam- Philadelphia : John Benjamins, pp. 103-139.

Chantraine, Pierre. 1953.
> *Grammaire Homérique*. Paris: Collection de philologie classique IV. Tome II: Syntaxe. Paris: Klincksieck.

De Mulder Walter & Carlier Anne. 2011.
> *The grammaticalization of definite articles*. In: Heiko N. & Bernd H. (eds.), The Oxford handbook of grammaticalization. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 522-534.

Greenberg Joseph H. 1978.
> *How does a language acquire gender markers?* In: Greenberg J. H. & Ferguson C. A. & Moravcsik E. A. (eds.), Universals of human language, vol. 3: Word structure. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 47-82.

Guardiano Cristina. 2012.
> *Parametric changes in the history of the Greek article*. In: Jonas D. & Whitman J. & Garrett A (eds.), Grammatical Change: Origins, Nature, Outcomes. Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, pp. 179-197.

Guardiano Cristina. 2013.
> *The Greek definite article across time*. In: Studies in Greek Linguistics 33, pp. 76- 91.

Hawkins, John A. 1978.
> *Definiteness and indefiniteness: a study in reference and grammaticality prediction*. London: Croom Helm.

König Ekkehard. 2018.
> *Definite articles and their uses: Diversity and patterns of variation*. In: Van Olmen D. & Mortelmans T. & Brisard F. (eds.), Aspects of Linguistics Variation, pp. 165-184.

Manolessou Io & Horrocks Geoffrey. 2007.
> *The Development of the Definite Article in Greek*. In: Studies in Greek Linguistics 27, pp. 224-236.

Napoli Maria. 2009.
> *Aspects of definiteness in Greek*. In: Studies in Language 33, pp. 569- 611.

Napoli Maria. 2019.
> *Functions of the Definite Article from Classical Greek to New Testament Greek*. In: King D. (ed.), The Article in Post-Classical Greek. SIL International Publications, pp.14-55.

Scott John A. 1910.
> *Does Homer Use the Definite Article?* In: The Classical Journal Vol. 5, pp.220-222.

Stawell Florence M. 1909.
> *Homer and The Iliad. An Essay to Determine the Scope and Character of the Original Poem*. London: J. M. Dent & co.

Contact
Silvia Zampetta
Graduate Student
Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna
Italy
silvia.zampetta@studio.unibo.it