Identity and semantic change
Aspects of T/V usage in Cyprus

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The quantitative and qualitative analysis of spontaneous conversational data reveals that T/V usage in Cypriot Greek (CG) is realised sometimes as a code-switch into Standard Modern Greek (SMG), and sometimes as an integral part of the Cypriot code. Moreover, a consideration of the interactional motivations underlying particular types of exchanges supports an analysis in terms of form-function reanalysis, in which the ongoing grammaticalisation of V forms is realised as the subjectification of their semantics. This analysis has important theoretical implications for the distinction between standardisation and conventionalisation, and for the question of the gradualness of semantic change.

1. Introduction

The existence of a T/V distinction to signal power/distance cross-culturally is a well-documented and relatively well-studied phenomenon (cf. Brown and Gilman 1960; but see Braun 1988: 24ff.). According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 187ff.), this distinction falls under a general pattern in which the speaker attempts to dissociate him/herself and/or the addressee from the FTA performed, by means of impersonalising them. One means of achieving this is pluralisation. The general pattern guiding the use of this “social plural” is shown in Figure 1 (adapted from Bakakou-Orfanou 1989: 183). Syntactically, this pattern of usage correlates with a peculiar agreement pattern, wherein only the verb agrees with its logical subject, while the noun and/or adjective across the copula agree with the real subject, resulting in surface forms such as French: vous êtes fatiguée? In this case, we may speak of a grammaticalised usage, whereby what is communicated is the grammatical meaning of the second person singular accompanied by the honorary element. This pattern, where the T/V distinction constitutes, in Gricean terms, a conventional implicature (Levinson 1983: 128–9) is also found in Standard Modern Greek (taking the Athenian norm as the model).
The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the current state of the T/V distinction in Cypriot Greek, defined as the variety of Greek spoken today in urban areas of Cyprus. Data are drawn from an extensive corpus of spontaneous offers and requests taking place between native Cypriot Greek speakers of both sexes and various ages and socio-economic backgrounds, recorded in a variety of urban settings, ranging from formal (on radio/TV) to informal (at home). Investigating T/V usage in these data, one finds several indications that this does not constitute a conventional implicature in Cypriot Greek in the same way as in Standard Modern Greek; yet, this state of affairs may currently be changing.

More specifically, joint consideration of structural/grammatical and usage aspects supports the claim that contextual support is needed, in the case of non-literal use of the second person plural, for the implicature of “honorification” to go through. At the same time, looking at the situational contexts in which this implicature does go through, it is possible to discern the seeds of its potential generalisation across contexts. The motivating force, it will be argued, is participants’ wish to present themselves in a certain way, along the lines of Le Page and Tabouret Keller’s (1985: 182) notion of an “act of identity”. Such acts set in motion a process of form-function reanalysis (Croft 2000: 117 ff.): a shift of functions can be observed in the data from the first person plural to the second person plural. The passage from (potentially) literal use of the first person plural to (unequivocally) non-literal use of the second person plural “increase[s] the informativeness to the interlocutor of what is being said” (Traugott 1995: 49) — in this case more clearly communicating the speaker’s formal/honouring attitude — resulting in the kind of pragmatically motivated semantic change termed “subjectification” (ibid.).

Yet, inasmuch as this process is contextually-conditioned, even in the speech of the same speaker, it is gradual. That is, although the inference may be conventionalised in relation to some contexts, expansion of the implicated meaning to new contexts requires a more elaborate inference, also bringing to bear upon the

![Figure 1. Pragmatic functions of the social plural](image-url)
current situation the speaker/hearer’s knowledge of other situations. So long as the cognitive association between V forms and the honorary element remains speaker-dependent (or subjective) in this way, it is a matter of standardisation (Bach 1998: 713), hence cannot be reduced to knowledge of the applicable conventions. What this points to is that, contrary to claims of abruptness in the semantics of grammaticalising expressions (Nicolle 1998: 7ff.), the ability to make the (novel) cognitive association between form and function does not amount to a change in the semantics of the expression. Wishing to keep semantics as that part of meaning which remains stable across contexts, to be further specified each time with the help of pragmatics, one is compelled to differentiate between the ability to make the cognitive association between form and function on an occasion of use, and the generalisation of this association over the population at large.

2. V usage as switching into the standard code

To illustrate the current state of the T/V distinction in Cypriot Greek, the structure of the discourse provides a useful starting point. When using the second person plural toward a single addressee, speakers routinely fluctuate between T and V, often switching between the two several times.³

(1) [On TV; Speaker: male, 31–50, middle-class. Addressee: female, over 51, middle-class; Relationship: interviewer to interviewee]

S: ciria vasiliu kliste mas aftin ti sizitisi. ti θα leyate
‘MrsVasiliou, close this discussion for us. What \textit{would you say}?’
A: ((one turn))
S: na se διακοψω? ixa δjavasi akrivos afto pu lete…
‘May I interrupt you? I had read exactly what you are saying…’
>> parakalo olokliroste
Please \textit{do conclude}.

(2) [In school secretariat; Speaker 1: female, over 51, middle-class; Speaker 2: female, 18–30, middle-class; Addressee: Mainland Greek; Relationship (S1–A, S2–A): acquaintances]

S1: katsete
‘Have a seat’
((some turns))
S2: θελετε na parete enαn, paksimaδi? (.) e:: kolokoti⁴
‘Would you like a biscuit? er, a kolokoti
((a few turns))
S2: *ise apo el:aða? jati* ( )

‘Are you from Greece? Because…’

A: ((one turn))

S2: *eci jenibîces?*

‘Were you born there?’

A: ((one turn))

S2: *ne? i yonis su cipreî?*

‘Yes? Are your parents Cypriot?’

((some turns))

S1: *mbori na ecete dicen…*

‘Perhaps you are right’…

((some turns))

S1: ((laughing)): *ise tis lemesu esi i tis lefkosias esi?*

‘Are you from Lemesos {you} or Lefkosia yourself?’

Such examples suggest that V forms are felt by Cypriot Greeks to belong to the Standard Modern Greek code and hence occur when this code is called for, i.e. in formal settings and when the addressee is (classified as) a Mainland Greek. Their occurrence may therefore be interpreted as an instance of code-switching.

This hypothesis is supported in three ways. First, V forms only combine with the Standard Modern Greek future particle *θa*, not with its Cypriot Greek counterpart *ena*. This co-occurrence restriction is not only evident in clear cases of V usage, which always take the form *θa+V* (example 3), but may also underlie the speaker’s reluctance to conjoin the two forms (*ena’saste*) and final opting for the Standard Modern Greek particle (*θa sineryazeste*) in (4), even though the second person plural is now literal (addressed to two Cypriot addressees, A1 and A2).6

(3) [In insurance company offices; Speaker: female, 18–30; middle-class; Addresssee=Mainland Greek; Relationship: acquaintances]

S: *θa pite kati? na sas cerasume?*

‘Will you have something to drink? May we offer you something?’

(4) [At the local newsagent’s; Speaker: male, 31–50, middle-class; Addressee 1 (‘Mrs Maro’): female, 31–50, middle-class; Addressee 2 (‘Mrs Athina’): female, over 51, working class; Relationship (S–A1): employer to new employee; Relationship (S–A2): long-standing customer to service-provider]

S: ((to all)) *kalimera. ((to A1)) me tin ciri’aðina na ynoristite. ((to A2)) ‘G’morning. ((to A1)) With Mrs Athina you should*

BECOME ACQUAINTED

>> i ciri maro i ciri’aðina. *ena’saste jitonis'es θa sineryazeste*
Under Joshi’s (1985) constraint on closed-class items, code-switching between the future particle and the verb is not possible. Since *en:a* is a salient feature of Cypriot Greek (Auer et al. 1998: 163–7), the observed restriction against co-occurrence of *en:a* with V forms is evidence that V forms are felt by Cypriot Greek speakers to belong to the Standard Modern Greek code.

A similar argument can be made for negated V forms. Again, the Cypriot Greek negative particles *men* and *endʒe* give way to the corresponding Standard Modern Greek ones, *min* and *δen*. Interestingly, in (5) and (6) below, this replacement takes place even though the negated verb forms themselves follow Cypriot Greek morpho-phonological rules (long consonants in *alːasete* — Newton 1972: 32–5; /i/ prothesis on *ikserete* — Newton 1972: 83; we shall return to this point in the next section).  

(5) [On the radio; Speaker: male, 31–50; middle-class; Addressee: male, 31–50; middle-class; Relationship: interviewee to interviewer]

\[ \text{S: } \textit{min alːasete ecina ta opia leyo} \]

‘Don’t change what I am saying.’

(6) [Philately society’s meeting; Speaker: female, over 51, middle-class; Addressee: male, over 51, middle-class; Relationship: acquaintances]

\[ \text{S: } \textit{mu kamni endiposi pu δen ikserete akoma tipota} \]

‘It surprises me that you don’t know anything yet’

Finally, evidence of the standardising flavour of V usage comes from combinations of the second person singular/plural with address terms, and addressees’ replies. Both title+LN+2sg. (example 7), and FN+2pl. (example 8) diverge from Standard Modern Greek usage (Sifianou 1992: 64; Bakakou-Orfanou 1989: 175), as do replies in the first person plural (example 9). Attributing V usage to code-switching accounts for such divergences: speakers may perform less than optimally when using a code for which they do not have native-speaker intuitions.

(7) [On TV; Speaker: male, 31–50, middle-class; Addressee: male, 31–50, middle-class; Relationship: interviewer to interviewee]

\[ \text{S: } \textit{şefxaristo cirie feta} \]

‘Thank you Mr Fetas.’

(8) [Formal discussion; Speaker: female, 31–50, middle-class; Addressee: male, 31–50, middle-class; Relationship: speaker to member of the audience]

\[ \text{S: } \textit{cirie panajo-ciriako ｔa mu epitrepete, aplos ｔelo} \]

‘Mr Panayo-Kyriakos, you will allow me, I’d just like
>> na mas to anaptiksete afto
YOU TO ELABORATE on this for us'

(9) [Headmistress’s office; Speaker 1: female, over 51, middle-class; Speaker 2: male, over 51, middle-class; Relationship: new colleagues; S2 has just walked into S1’s office and is not accompanied by anyone]

S1: sas cerasumen kati?
‘May we offer YOU something?’

S2: imasten endaksi
‘WE’RE fine.’

Quantitatively, V usage is typical of formal settings (radio and TV interviews, discussions in front of a live audience), where it predominates in interviewers’, rather than interviewees’, speech (Table 1).

Interviewers adopt V forms in their offers 26.7 per cent of the time, and in their requests 34.6 per cent of the time; in the latter case, V forms outscore all other person/number combinations, emerging as interviewers’ preferred means for performing requests. Looking more closely at interviewers’ requests, we find that 17 out of 54 V forms (31.5 per cent, i.e. 1 in 3) use the verb epitrepo, ‘allow’; eleven of these are phrased in the imperative, epitrepste (cf. French permettez), a form which, interviewers’ requests notwithstanding, occurs in the data only two other times. This suggests that use of the particular V form by interviewers is not fully creative; rather, interviewers would appear to be retrieving epitrepste in a holistic fashion (cf. Wray 2002) as a convenient way of performing a request addressed to an interviewee in the context of an interview.9

In the examples in this section V usage is conditioned by the formality of the setting, or the Mainland Greek identity of the addressee. Subjects’ elicited attitudes to V usage confirm this: when occurring in a different context, subjects commented on this usage as “stand-offish”, or “inappropriate”. Indeed, in (10) below, given

| Table 1. Number/person in offers and requests in formal settings |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                      | Interviewer to interviewee |                      | Interviewee to interviewer |
|                      | Requests | Offers | Requests | Offers |
| 1st singular         | 53 (34%) | 6 (20%) | 31 (56.4%) | 12 (70.6%) |
| 2nd singular         | 7 (4.5%) | 2 (6.7%) | –         | –         |
| 3rd singular         | 6 (3.8%) | 2 (6.7%) | 6 (10.9%) | 1 (5.9%) |
| 1st plural           | 31 (19.9%) | 9 (30%) | 8 (14.5%) | 3 (17.6%) |
| 2nd plural           | 54 (34.6%) | 8 (26.7%) | 9 (16.4%) | –         |
| 3rd plural           | –        | –       | –         | 1 (5.9%) |
| no verb used         | 5 (3.2%) | 3 (10%) | –         | –         |
| nonverbal            | –        | –       | 1 (1.8%)  | –         |
| Total                | 156 (100%) | 30 (100%) | 55 (100%) | 17 (100%) |
S1’s preservation of several dialectal features (final /n/ retention in sifonian; /k/ softening to [tʃ] before a front vowel (/e/, here elided) in tf’an; intervocalic /ð/ deletion in ‘en, to mention but some), S2’s concern for “non-authenticity” voiced at the end of the exchange can only be put down to S1’s extensive V usage (for which she, notably, has a full inflectional paradigm including indicative and subjunctive past tense forms).  

(10) [Dental practice; Speaker 1: female, 18–30, middle-class; Speaker 2: male, over 51, middle-class; Relationship: long-standing customer to service-provider]

S1: kanume mja sifonian cirie kupate?
‘Shall we strike a deal Mr Kupatos?’

S2: oti thelis
‘Whatever you like’

S1: ama sas po pono stamatate na stamatate
‘When I tell you I’m in pain stop you stop’

S2: endaksi
‘Alright’

S1: molis sas po pono na stamatate
‘As soon as I tell you I’m in pain you stop’

S2: amesos
‘Immediately’

S1: tin al:i fora ‘en eponusete ‘en estamatuse te
‘Last time you were not in pain you didn’t stop’

S2: tora ponis?
‘Now are you in pain?’

S1: tf’an evrete, sfrajizman i tipote ‘e tha to valume simera …
‘And if you find a filling or anything we won’t do it today’ …

S2: kala. (.) esi poßen ige?
‘OK. Where are you from?’

S1: ime i kori tu neofitu
‘I am Neofytos’ daughter’

S2: ne. pu meyaloses omos?
‘Yes. But where did you grow up?’

S1: notion africi
‘In South Africa’

S2: ((to me)) e tora katayrafis notion africi a …
((to me)) ‘Well, now you’re recording South Africa …

>> … e δioti ‘en en’ topici i δialektos
… because the dialect isn’t local’
What all this points to, then, is that V usage in the examples above does not constitute part of the Cypriot Greek code, but is realised as a switch to the Standard Modern Greek code.

3. V usage as part of the Cypriot Greek code

However, not all V occurrences in the data can be straightforwardly accounted for as instances of code-switching, suggesting that V usage has begun to “infiltrate”, so to speak, the Cypriot Greek code. In terms of form, V usage does not preclude verbal inflection according to Cypriot Greek morpho-phonological rules, indicating — contrary to formulaic use of epitrepste in formal settings noted earlier — that V usage is now being creatively manipulated by speakers (mostly at work settings). Non-standard V verb-forms in formal settings include (i) indicative kamnete/kamete (SMG kanete, ‘you do’), and (ii) imperative alasete (retaining long consonants; SMG alazete, ‘you change’), while in work settings, one finds in addition (iii) past tense forms: evalete (retaining syllabic augment; SMG valate, ‘you put’), milisete (SMG milisate, ‘you spoke’) (iv) one future form (addressed to a Mainland Greek): θα fkalete (exhibiting manner dissimilation of obstruent+obstruent into fricative+stop; SMG θα vyalete, ‘you will bring out’) (v) further imperatives: yrapsete (SMG yrapste, ‘write’), δete (SMG δite, ‘look’), pete (SMG pite, ‘tell’), valete (SMG valte, ‘put’), katsete (SMG kaθiste, ‘sit’), some of which occur in alternation with the Standard Modern Greek form.

Creative manipulation of V forms is also noted at the level of syntax, where V forms can co-occur with clitic post-position, a prominent feature distinguishing Cypriot Greek from Standard Modern Greek (Terzi 1999):

(11) [Speaker: a female student; Addressee: a male professor; both Cypriot Greeks]

S: ifete mas pi …
YOU HAD TOLD US

In terms of topic, V forms can accompany an argumentative, rather than convivial, attitude. The speaker’s emotional involvement may then override co-occurrence restrictions on V forms with non-standard elements (see previous section) as in (12), where the Cypriot Greek negative particle men occurs alongside the V form epimenete.

(12) [Formal discussion; Speaker: male, 31–50, middle-class; Addressee female, 31–50, middle-class; Relationship: member of the audience to speaker]

S: na men epimenete, δen ine ((name)) ta eyrapse. esis kamnete parusiasi
'DO NOT INSIST. it's not ((name)) wrote them YOU ARE PRESENTING'

Similarly, in (13), the speaker switches into and out of V usage depending on momentary shifts of allegiance between himself and the addressee.

(13) [Hardware shop; Speaker 1: male, 18–30, middle-class; Speaker 2: female, 31–50, middle-class; Relationship: new customer to service-provider]
S1: ela na su po, ipa mu oti tuta en:e mes tin prosfora,
   'Listen, they told me that these aren’t on offer'
S2: ne,
   'Yes'
S1: a: pale jinete ekptosi trianda tis ekato
   'but still a discount of thirty percent is given'
S2: a: ute na to scepfi-
   'Ah, don’t even consid-

>> [jinete an δen in’mes tin prosfora tora pos en:a to
   ['is it possible if they’re not on offer now how is it to
S1: [e:: na milisete ipa mu me to::
   ['Er, YOU SHOULD SPEAK they said with'
S2: pjo
   'Who'
S1: tora pjos en’ o proistamenos sas ((laughs)) ksero yo? …
   'Now who’s YOUR superior ((laughs)) I dunno'
(S2 calls superior, matter is sorted))
S1: evala se se fasaria
   'I put you to trouble'

Moving on from specific examples to a quantitative analysis of the data, we find V forms being preferred in two extra-linguistic contexts where they arguably secure specific interactional advantages for the speaker. The first concerns transactions between new customers and service-providers (Table 2).

Compared to transactions with familiar service-providers, the former are characterised by a global increase in V forms: from five out of 138 occurrences (3.623 per cent), V forms now jump to ten out of 59 (just over one in six, 16.95 per cent). Especially for male middle-class customers, V forms now outscore all other number/person combinations. This cannot be attributed to lack of familiarity alone, since lack of familiarity does not prompt a preference of comparable magnitude when passing from friends to acquaintances (Table 3). Rather, the increase in V forms in transactions with unfamiliar salespersons ought to be explained in terms of the dynamics specific to commercial transactions.

Inasmuch as it marks standardising speech, as argued above, and in line with Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) four constraints on acts of identity,12 V usage
in Cypriot Greek is constrained by both having access to the standard code, and the extent to which the speaker finds identifying him/herself with “the group of standard speakers” desirable in the situation at hand. Compared to working-class speakers, middle-class speakers have greater access to the standard code, since they have more opportunities to interact with Mainland Greeks, either in Greece, where they travel regularly for study/business or leisure, or in Cyprus, where Mainland Greeks often hold short-term white-collar jobs. Being socially stratified as a result,
V usage becomes an opportune “badge” of middle-class identity to be “pinned on” when asserting this identity is judged desirable, such as when requesting something for the first time from a service-provider with whom one is not familiar. That this tendency is particularly pronounced amongst middle-class men only confirms men's perception of service encounters as primarily transactional (Antonopoulou 2001): men now opted for V forms six out of 26 times (i.e. almost one in four, 23 per cent), while women only four out of 33 times (i.e. half as frequently as men, 12.12 per cent).

This situation is reversed when the direction of the exchange is from service-provider to customer (Table 4). Not only is V usage now lower across the board, but women have recourse to it twice as often as men. V usage by women service-providers occurred in a secretarial office, an insurance company, a legal firm, and several shops fewer than half of which may be considered “upmarket”. Speakers were younger than 50 years of age; in fact, 71.43 per cent were 30 years old or younger.

This finding may be interpreted against the backdrop of Cyprus’s recent transformation into a primarily service-oriented economy (Christodoulou 1994: 614). The new financial conditions place an emphasis on professional competence, prompting a desire to display such competence by emulating external norms seen as more sophisticated. This desire may well underlie female service-providers’ V usage, contrary to male new customers’ corresponding usage, which is guided by their desire to display a middle-class identity. It is therefore possible that, in line with Labov’s (1994: 156) findings regarding phonological change in the United States, young working (not necessarily working-class) women are leading a change pertaining to V usage in Cypriot Greek. In generalising its use to settings which are not formal, and addressees who are not Mainland Greeks, young working women are dissociating this from the Standard Modern Greek code, and introducing it into the Cypriot Greek code as a conventional marker of an honouring attitude.

**Table 4. Number/person in offers and requests by service-providers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st singular</td>
<td>18 (17.3%)</td>
<td>62 (35.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd singular</td>
<td>55 (52.9%)</td>
<td>81 (46.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd singular</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>3 (1.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st plural</td>
<td>13 (12.5%)</td>
<td>12 (6.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd plural</td>
<td>3 (2.9%)</td>
<td>10 (5.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd plural</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no verb used</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104 (100%)</td>
<td>173 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. V usage as a result of form-function reanalysis

As is often the case with language change, a stabilised T/V system introduces neither new, previously non-existing forms to the inflectional paradigm of Cypriot Greek, nor wholly new functions. Rather, what appears to be happening is a reanalysis of form and function (Croft 2000: 117ff.), such that functions previously fulfilled by the first person plural are now taken over by the second person plural.

In Cypriot Greek, polite use of the first person plural (examples 14 and 15) is a stable feature of men's speech (Tables 2 and 4): overall, men use it twice as much as women, both in requests and in offers (Table 5).

(14) [Hardware shop; Speaker 1: male, 31–50, middle-class; Addressee: female, 31–50, middle-class; Relationship: old customer to service-provider]
S: *ksilon* _exumen_ _pu mbeni apano?*
‘Wood _DO WE HAVE_ that goes on top?’

(15) [On the radio; Speaker: female, 31–50, middle-class. Addressee: male, 31–50, middle-class; Relationship: interviewer to interviewee]
S: *ë::cini _ti fisarmonika_ _mborume na ti sxoliasume_ liyo?*
‘That, harmonica _CAN WE COMMENT ON IT_ briefly?’

Table 5. Occurrences of the first person plural in offers and requests by men and by women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Requests</th>
<th>Offers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>101/931 (10.84%)</td>
<td>47/347 (13.54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>38/555 (6.85%)</td>
<td>25/354 (7.06%)</td>
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</table>

Use of the first person plural to convey respect is ambiguous. As Brown and Levinson point out, two variants of this, inclusive and exclusive “we”, are found cross-linguistically, with some languages, such as Tamil, lexicalising the difference between the two. By including, at least notionally, both speaker and addressee in the activity at hand — though only one actually carries the responsibility for seeing it through — inclusive “we” can be used as either a positive politeness marker (a familiar usage in English; Brown and Levinson 1987: 127–8), or a negative politeness one (as in some instances in Tamil, Quechua and Malagasy; ibid.: 202–3). Exclusive “we”, on the other hand, marks negative politeness, by presenting the speaker as speaking on behalf of a group whose support the speaker enjoys (ibid.). In both cases, the membership of “we” remains open: whether it invokes a partnership between the two interlocutors in the exchange, or a partnership between the speaker and another group, a plural referent for “we” is available, such that “we” could potentially be literal.
This is not the case with grammaticalised V usage: overt marking of the addressee as singular in the accompanying noun and/or adjective simply excludes a plural referent in this case. As a result, the non-literalness of V forms is brought to the fore, and the speaker’s honouring attitude unambiguously communicated. The passage from non-literal “we” to V forms then amounts to a passage from a “primarily concrete, lexical, and objective” meaning — the plurality of the referent remains potentially objectively verifiable with both inclusive and exclusive “we” — to an “increasingly abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based” one (Traugott 1995: 32) — the plurality of the referent is excluded in grammaticalised V usage. In this sense, it constitutes a case of “subjectification”, wherein “what is strengthened is specifically the subjective stance of the speaker” (Traugott 1995: 49). Indeed, since what is strengthened in this case is the subjective stance of the speaker toward the addressee, the observed change in the semantics of V forms may be considered a case of intersubjectification, which constitutes a step further than subjectification, in that meanings which were more deeply centred on the speaker now become more centred on the addressee (Traugott 1999b: 3).14

Seen in this light, female service-providers’ V usage acquires a particular new significance: compared with male middle-class new customers’ V usage, which was modulated by the recipient’s class (Table 6), female service-providers’ V usage remains relatively more stable across recipient classes (Table 7).

It thus cannot be associated with an ego-centred tendency to exhibit a particular class identity, which would be advantageous in some contexts, but not in others. It remains doubtful whether such an ego-centred tendency is sufficiently stable across contexts and over time to yield the frequency patterns necessary for grammaticalisation of this usage. Contrary to male middle-class new customers’ V usage, where attention paid to the addressee’s self is mitigated by ego-driven concerns, female service-providers’ V usage is wholly directed toward the addressee’s self, attention being now paid to the wants of the addressee’s role as a customer in the encounter quite independently of his/her specific identity. This is why, while both men’s and women’s V usage have a role to play in implementing the passage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>... to MC service-providers</th>
<th>... to WC service-providers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st singular</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd singular</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd plural</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no verb used</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to a fully stabilised T/V system, women’s, but not necessarily men’s, usage can be interpreted as a precursor of stabilisation in this direction.

5. Standardisation, conventionalisation, and Cypriot Greek T/V usage

Standardisation, i.e. the “short-circuiting” of intended inferences, may be outlined as follows (Bach 1998: 713; emphasis added)

A form of words is standardised for a certain use if this use, though regularised, goes beyond literal meaning and yet can be explained without special conventions. … there is a certain core of linguistic meaning attributable on compositional grounds but a common use that cannot be explained in terms of linguistic meaning alone. The familiarity of the form of words, together with a familiar inference route … streamlines the process of identifying what the speaker is conveying. The inference is compressed by precedent. But were there no such precedent, in which case a more elaborate inference would be required, there would still be enough contextual information available to the hearer for figuring out what is being conveyed.

Based on the essentially rational (capable of being worked out) vs. conventional (requiring knowledge of linguistic conventions, which must be learnt) character of the inferences involved each time, standardisation has been distinguished from conventionalisation (Bach and Harnish 1979: 192–202, Zegarač 1998: 341ff.). The question arising with respect to V usage in Cypriot Greek is whether the inference involved in understanding this as expressing an honorary element is of the standardised or the conventionalised kind.

In Sections 2 and 3, I argued that in formal settings and in exchanges with Mainland Greeks, V usage is realised as a code-switch into Standard Modern Greek, whereas in transactional exchanges it constitutes an integral part of the Cypriot Greek code. Nevertheless, to infer the honorary element in the latter type of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>…to MC customers</th>
<th>…to WC customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st singular</td>
<td>34 (38.6%)</td>
<td>26 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd singular</td>
<td>40 (45.5%)</td>
<td>38 (48.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd singular</td>
<td>3 (3.4%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st plural</td>
<td>5 (5.7%)</td>
<td>7 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd plural</td>
<td>5 (5.7%)</td>
<td>3 (3.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd plural</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no verb used</td>
<td>1 (1.1%)</td>
<td>1 (1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88 (100%)</td>
<td>78 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
exchanges, the speaker/hearer must be familiar with V usage in the former type of exchanges. Indeed, familiarity is not sufficient: a favourable assessment of, if not a genuine desire to abide by, Standard Modern Greek norms seems to be involved.

Both highly educated subjects’ negative attitude to V usage when explicitly questioned, and my own experience while collecting data on Cyprus argue in favour of this. A middle-aged Cypriot uncle’s reprimanding me for addressing an aunt older than myself with a V form — abiding by the established Standard Modern Greek usage, where V is typically given to people older than oneself — in the face of my aunt’s defence of my usage can thus only be explained by attributing to her (the V recipient) but not to him (the reprimander) such a favourable assessment of the standard code. Not acknowledging V usage as part of the Cypriot Greek code, my uncle found my usage overly formal, hence inappropriate given the informality of the setting. However, being prepared to admit V usage into the Cypriot Greek code, my aunt saw it as a generalised expression of respect, and therefore appropriate irrespective of setting.

The possibility of V usage provoking different reactions from native speakers in the same context indicates that it is in a state of flux. Pragmatically, V usage seems to be sometimes a matter of standardised inference (as for my aunt), and sometimes a matter of conventionalised inference (as for my uncle). For him (and speakers for whom V usage represents a code-switch into the standard), the link between V usage and the honorary element is mediated (if you prefer, qualified) by the formality of the setting. It is a conventional (i.e. learnt as opposed to inferred) link, which takes the form “When one wishes to convey an honorary attitude in a formal setting, one uses a V form”. By implication, when V forms are used, they always invoke formality, which may clash with the informality of the actual setting. Inasmuch as his experience of V forms is homogeneous, and consists in V forms being consistently used as code-switches in formal settings (admittedly, V usage as part of the Cypriot Greek code is more recent), he has never actually calculated the intended inference from V usage to the honorary element per se, so as to isolate the honorary element as an ingredient of V usage irrespective of setting and proceed to apply this in novel settings where the expression of an honorary attitude is called for. Rather than being “compressed by precedent” (cf. Bach’s quotation above), the path from V usage to the honorary element is actually so far untrodden by him. As a result, what few occurrences of V usage do not match his previous experience (such as the one I uttered), are discarded as inappropriate. This is not to say that the compositional core allowing the inference to take place is missing, but that it is not sufficient. Inasmuch as “other items of background knowledge” play a part in active (full-scale as opposed to short-circuited) inferencing, which is thus indeterminate (Grice 1989 [1975]: 31ff.), for my uncle (and similarly-minded speakers) an unwillingness to emulate standard norms may well be blocking, or at least prejudicing, the inference from V usage to the honorary element in other than formal settings: in the words of a highly educated middle-aged man, V usage is now felt to be “stand-offish”, “cold” and “hypocritical”.
However, given a favourable take on standard norms, one may infer the honorary element in informal settings also, as seems to be the case with my aunt (and speakers who admit V usage into the Cypriot Greek code in general). Once the honorary element has been actively inferred as an ingredient of V usage, it can be creatively applied to new environments calling for the expression of respect, resulting in the expansion of V usage to the full inflectional paradigm of the verb and to novel settings as witnessed above. That is, the inference to the honorary element is now a standardised (i.e. ultimately rational) one.

In sum, in Cypriot Greek, V usage is conventionalised relative to formal settings and exchanges with Mainland Greeks. This is simply how one speaks on such occasions, that is, conventionalisation, is defined as a relationship between expressions and contexts, which is a correlate of the (statistical) frequency with which an expression is used in one’s experience in a particular context. It is thus a matter of degree, and may well vary for different speakers, as well as for the same speaker over time. This potential for variation keeps conventionalised inferences apart from conventional ones (Strawson 1964).16 If V usage were a conventional implicature in Cypriot Greek, it ought to unambiguously communicate “the grammatical meaning of the 2sg. accompanied by the honorary element” (Levinson 1983: 128–9). Replies in the first person plural (example 9) suggest that this is not so, and that some (pretended?) ambiguity may be still lingering as to the intended referent of the V form. Hence V usage does not constitute a conventional implicature in Cypriot Greek.

If conventionalised inferences differ from conventional ones (and hence are more like standardised ones) in the potential for variation which they engender, they also differ from standardised inferences in that they are learnt (being akin to conventional ones in this respect). Indeed, the (admittedly fine) line between conventionalisation and standardisation hinges on their manner of acquisition. To the extent that an individual speaker’s experience of the use of a particular expression is consistent, s/he may well derive a particular inference upon hearing the expression — an inference which can indeed be rationally derived from it — without having ever actively calculated this inference. Association of V usage with the honorary element in formal settings appears to be conventionalised for all speakers of Cypriot Greek in this last way.

Furthermore, Cypriot Greek speakers coming into contact (cf. Kerswill 1996: 179) with the extensive V usage of Standard Modern Greek are prompted to engage in a full-scale inferential process. Depending on their allegiances (how they construct their social persona, with which groups they identify themselves, and from which they differentiate themselves), the outcome of this inferential process may or may not be the now conscious/explicit association of V forms with the honorary element irrespective of setting. If they do associate the two, they may begin to use V to express the honorary element in novel settings irrespective of their formality. To the extent that this new, expanded V usage catches on, it may well, in turn, be learnt as conventionalised relative to these new settings by new speakers. V usage may
then continue to spread across settings and speakers in this way, until it becomes a “convention” of the language (see note 16). One hypothesis for future research is that, at that point, the association of V forms with the grammaticalised agreement pattern of fully stabilised T/V systems will be at its most robust.

6. Evidence in support of the gradualness of semantic change

The distinction between standardisation and conventionalisation drawn in the previous section shows that the ability to make a cognitive link between an expression and its function in a particular context does not amount to a change in the semantics of this expression. This is in contrast to Nicolle’s claim (1998: 7ff.) that grammaticalisation is actually not semantically, but only formally, gradual. Adopting a relevance-theoretic framework, Nicolle views grammaticalisation as an expression’s coming to encode a procedural meaning, whereas previously it only encoded conceptual meaning. The two meanings may co-exist in the same expression — indeed, such co-existence is what underlies semantic retention; however, the development of a procedural meaning component is not gradual, but instantaneous, and as such, the change in the semantics of the expression must also be considered instantaneous.

On this view, the change in Cypriot Greek T/V usage discussed above may be explained as the emergence of procedural meaning in Cypriot Greek second person plural forms. At an earlier stage, second person plural forms as part of the Cypriot code could only be literal (encoding conceptual meaning), and V usage (i.e. non-literal use of the second person plural, cases where the second person plural encodes procedural meaning) by Cypriot Greeks was realised as a switch into the standard code. However, nowadays non-literal use of the second person plural is extending into the Cypriot code, such that second person plural forms encode procedural meaning (an instruction along the lines of “Look for something in the context that justifies the expression of respect/distance”) as part of the Cypriot code. Taking Nicolle’s argument to its natural conclusion, however, we would have to claim that Cypriot Greek speakers have different semantics for V usage, depending on whether they link this to the honorary element unconditionally or not, that is, depending on whether the corresponding inference is standardised or conventionalised for them.

Such a move contrasts with a common conception of semantics as conventions of meaning shared among members of a community, as opposed to pragmatics, the domain of individual speakers’ intentions. What is more, being a matter of personal allegiances underlying individual identity displays, as outlined above, whether V usage is conventionalised or standardised to any particular speaker on any particular occasion of use is ultimately a matter of his/her experience of similar situations and wish to align him/herself with particular groups under the circumstances. While the dynamics of this choice can be spelt out, any prediction as to
its outcome is necessarily probabilistic. Consequently, the semantics of V forms would differ not only among speakers, but also for the same speaker on different occasions of use. Clearly, if we want to retain any sense of generality for our semantics, it is better to consider that what is changing every time is not the semantics of V usage, but rather its pragmatic exploitation.

Alternatively, it is possible to consider that the semantics of V usage changed globally, that is, for all Cypriot Greek speakers, the first time a Cypriot Greek speaker used this to convey the honorary element outside a formal/standardising setting. From that moment on, V forms have been endowed with the potential to express both conceptual (i.e. literal plural) and procedural (i.e. non-literal, honouring) meaning. What is changing is simply the balance between “how much” of each is expressed each time: primarily “conceptual” uses will yield readings closer to the literal (plural) sense, while primarily “procedural” uses will foreground the non-literal, interpersonal component. Indeed, this is what Nicolle (1998: 15) is claiming with respect to grammaticalising expressions. This may seem not so much of a problem for well-documented cases of grammaticalisation such as V usage, which are played out time and again in the world’s languages. However, to suggest that the first time a speaker of a language uses a particular form procedurally, the procedural meaning becomes part of its meaning for all speakers of the language, is to open Pandora’s box. For then, one must explain why every time a speaker makes a novel cognitive link of this kind, the inference is not thereby generalised to all contexts which allow this inference, i.e. with which the inference is compatible, but initially occurs in contexts in which sufficient clues are available for inferring it, requiring progressively less and less contextual support until it ultimately generalises to quite unrelated contexts along Traugott’s (1999a) Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change. Recent work on the notion of “bridging contexts” (Evans and Wilkins 2000) provides further evidence of the importance of contextual input to the spread of novel interpretations.

In sum, it appears that an individual speaker having used an expression procedurally is not sufficient for procedural meaning to be encoded in the expression. While the particular speaker’s having made the link between the two once means s/he can retrace his/her steps and make the link again much more easily — and presumably increasingly fast — in future and in novel contexts, partly drawing on his/her knowledge of what s/he has done before, an unsuspecting addressee, no matter how cooperative, cannot be expected to follow stock, inasmuch as past experience is now lacking. The latter must be guided through the inference, in order to make the link for him/herself. In terms of the distinction between standardisation and conventionalisation, unless an inference is conventionalised, in which case a link between form and function is available \emph{a priori} (i.e. learnt, not questioned or problematised), a precedent cannot be created (such as is necessary to lead to standardisation via short-circuiting) unless enough clues are available in the context for the addressee to actively calculate that link. Nicolle’s view, then, can only apply at the level of the individual speaker: the cognitive link must be
made anew by each speaker, based on his/her individual experience and subjective stance. From the moment the link is made, V usage may encode both conceptual and procedural meaning but only in the particular speaker’s speech. In turn, his/her procedural use of V may, but need not, motivate other speakers to make the link between the two, provided enough contextual clues are available for them to make this link. Otherwise, miscommunication can, and does, occur. In any case, a change in the semantics of V forms, wishing to keep this uniform across contexts, has not occurred until these spread to all contexts to which expression of an honorary element is pertinent, and generalise across the lexicon and the inflectional paradigm of the verb. By this stage, V forms are also likely to exhibit a fully grammaticalised usage, i.e. be recorded in the syntax via the agreement pattern noted at the outset. Formal and semantic change would then proceed gradually, if not necessarily hand in hand, and while they may never be completed, cognitive change, a prerequisite for both, necessarily precedes them.

7. Conclusion

The quantitative and qualitative evidence presented in this paper substantiates the claim that Cypriot Greek T/V usage is realised in two distinct ways: as a switch into the Standard Modern Greek code, and as an integral part of the Cypriot Greek code. Instances of the latter constitute an extension of the standard usage into novel settings by speakers seeking to secure specific, though each time different, interactional advantages. Such individual acts of identity on behalf of speakers set in motion a shift from first person plural to V forms, in a classical case of form-function reanalysis prompted by contact between varieties. This shift also constitutes a case of subjectification, resulting in the speaker communicating his/her intended meaning unambiguously.

Pragmatically accounting for the two types of V usage, as a code-switch and as part of the Cypriot Greek code, requires us to draw a three-way distinction between conventional (uniform across contexts, not subject to variation), conventionalised (subject to variation across contexts but learnt) and standardised (short-circuited but productive, not fossilised) inferences. V usage as a code-switch being restricted both as to its syntagmatic and paradigmatic co-occurrence with other items in discourse, and as to its use in particular extra-linguistic contexts, appears to be of the conventionalised type. V usage as part of the Cypriot Greek code, on the other hand, exhibits the creativity expected of inferences whose rational origins have not been completely lost to speakers, i.e. which are standardised. While V usage can be used as part of the Cypriot Greek code, the possibility that this may also be realised as a code-switch argues against a change in its semantics. Until such time as V usage is fully integrated into the Cypriot Greek code and its creative use does not bring with it connotations of un-Cypriot-ness (example 10), the change in its meaning must be located at the cognitive level, wherein it is motivated by
individual speakers’ displays of identity. Semantic change can only occur as the cumulative effect of such individual displays of identity, but ought not to be confounded with any single one of them.

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Notes


2. Differences at all levels between Cypriot Greek and Standard Modern Greek are summarised in Terkourafi (forthcoming).

3. T/V pronoun and verb forms are underlined and typed in lower vs. upper case respectively in the translation. Transcription conventions: FN = first name; LN = last name; ( ) = brief pause; comma = flat intonation; full stop = falling intonation; question-mark = rising intonation; colon = elongated sound/stretched syllable (also indicates Cypriot Greek long consonant); [ ] = overlapping talk; ( ) = talk not audible or interpretable; … = talk omitted from the data segment; >> = continuation of speaker’s turn on new line; ( ) = transcriber comment; {you} = words added in the translation to improve readability, or to illustrate T/V usage.

4. Sweet pumpkin pie, a local delicacy outsiders are not expected to be familiar with.

5. Contemporary Cypriot Greek meets all nine criteria for diglossia proposed by Ferguson (1959: 328–336; cf. Terkourafi 2001: 76–78; Moschonas 2002). The High and Low varieties are, respectively, Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek (in the guise of an urban Cypriot koiné; Terkourafi forthcoming). Thus, register variation takes the form of a switch between local Cypriot forms and standard forms, with local Cypriot forms constituting the underlying forms, and increasing formality signalled through suspension of (local) rules yielding forms closer to the standard (Newton 1983). The formal register in Cypriot Greek is, then, a standardising register, and the occurrence of V forms in formal settings acts as an indication of the standardising flavour of these forms.

6. Further reasons for the speaker’s use of the Standard Modern Greek particle θα may lie with the High (Standard Modern Greek) origin of the particular lexical item with which it
collocates, *sineryzome*, lit. ‘to collaborate’, and the presence of the researcher (myself), an unfamiliar face at the local newsagent’s (potentially a member of the out-group?).

7. *en:a* meets five out of six criteria proposed by Auer et al. (1998: 163–7) to assess the objective and subjective salience of dialect forms: it is phonetically distant from its standard counterpart, the difference between the two being phonemic rather than phonetic, and lexicalised. Moreover, it is written differently (when written), and it is areally restricted to Cyprus.

8. The observed mixture of standard (cf. particles) and non-standard (cf. verbal morphophonology) elements makes it hard to classify these examples as either cases of code-switching, or part of the Cypriot code. Such ambiguities support an analysis in terms of change, rather than two homonymous V forms, one belonging to the standard code and another to the Cypriot one, with well-defined and separate domains of application.


10. This creative aspect places S1’s V usage itself under the Cypriot Greek code (see next section).

11. Thanks to Stavroula Tsiplakou for bringing this example to my attention.

12. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985: 182) set these out as follows: “We can only behave according to the behavioural patterns of groups we find it desirable to identify with to the extent that: (i) we can identify the groups; (ii) we have both adequate access to the groups and ability to analyse their behavioural patterns; (iii) the motivation to join the groups is sufficiently powerful, and is either reinforced or reversed by feedback from the groups; (iv) we have the ability to modify our behaviour.”

13. “Grammaticalised V usage” refers to cases instantiating the peculiar agreement pattern noted at the outset, i.e. when the singular referent of the V form is overtly marked in the sentence, as in French *Vous êtes fatigué?* The fact that a corresponding grammaticalised usage such as *Nous sommes fatigués* has not developed for the first person plural suggests the cognitive availability of a plural referent blocking grammaticalisation in the latter case. Nevertheless, when the form of the sentence does not require overt marking of the referent, as in French *Vous partez?*, ambiguity as to the referent of ‘you-pl.’ (such that ‘you-pl.’ could potentially be literal) may well persist into fully stabilised T/V systems.

14. Traugott defines intersubjectification as “the semasiological process whereby meanings come over time to encode or externalize implicatures regarding SP/W’s attention to the ‘self’ of AD/R in both an epistemic and a social sense” (1999b: 3).

15. According to Traugott (1999b: 2), intersubjectivity involves attention to the speaker and the addressee *qua* participants in the speech event, and to their particular roles therein.

16. Indeed, one could claim that what appear to be “conventions” of a language are indeed expressions conventionalised in a particular context for virtually all speakers of the language. This depends on the extent to which speakers’ experience is similar. Two factors are essential for this: their objective conditions of existence, and communication. Both are captured
under Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of the “habitus”. In this way, the proposed definition of conventionalisation highlights the rational bases of linguistic conventions (Lewis 1969).

17. Not everyone distinguishes between semantics and pragmatics in this way. Nicolle’s analysis draws on work by Givón (1991), who in turn seems not to draw the distinction at all (pp. 122–3): “one must distinguish rigorously between the two aspects of grammaticalisation: (a) functional analogical extension (semantics, pragmatics) (b) structural code adjustment (phonology, morpho-syntax) … The studies purporting to show the gradual nature of grammaticalisation have … reported on the protracted structural adjustment at the code level, adjustments [sic] that follow — sometimes long after — the original developments at the functional level”. Emphasising the antinomy between functional and structural levels, Givón lumps semantics and pragmatics together under the former. The problems highlighted above emerge only if one wishes to maintain a distinction between the two.

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