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Author: Koier, Elizabeth

Title: Interpreting particles in dead and living languages : a construction grammar approach to the semantics of Dutch *ergens* and Ancient Greek *που*

Issue Date: 2013-03-28

CHAPTER 13

Back to the literature

13.1 Introduction

In section 8.3 above, an overview was given of the literature and descriptions of $\pi\omicron\upsilon$. In this section, I will come back to the observations and examples mentioned in the literature and show that many of these observations fit the findings presented above.

As we saw in section 8.3, there are several domains in which modal $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ may have had a function according to the descriptions in the literature. These domains are repeated below.

1. the epistemic domain of (un)certainly (Denniston, Wakker, Sicking, Wackernagel /Bolling, Schwyzer-Debrunner)
2. the evidential domain (i.e. proof) (Wackernagel)
3. the irony domain (Denniston, Bodin & Mazon)
4. the domain of interpersonal relations between speaker and addressee (Sicking)
5. the accessibility of the content of the proposition for the addressee (obviousness/triviality) (Sicking, Bodin & Mazon)
6. the amount of specification/detail provided (*irgendwie*) (Schwyzer-Debrunner, Sicking, Slater, Italie)

We will now discuss these domains one by one.

13.2 The observations in the secondary literature in the light of the new findings

13.2.1 The epistemic domain

Already in section 8.3, I introduced the distinction between argumentative orientation and argumentative strength (Verhagen, 2005). The main reason we need that distinction is that, as was noted by Sicking (1993), many instances of *που* were not likely only to be connected to the (un)certainty of the speaker about the truth of the proposition. As was discussed in section 9.3.2, the argumentative orientation of *που* also seemed to be relevant (e.g. example (1)).

- (1) Στρογγύλον γέ πού ἐστι τοῦτο οὗ ἄν τὰ
 round ptcl που is this of which ptcl the
 NOM.SG FOC.PTCL που 3SG.PRS NOM.SG REL.GEN.SG PTCL NOM.PL
 ἔσχατα πανταχῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου ἴσον ἀπέχῃ.
 extremes everywhere from the middle equally be away from.
 NOM.PL ADV PREP ART.GEN.SG GEN.SG ADV 3SG.PRS.SUBJ.
 Ναί.

English: “The round, of course, is that of which the extremes are everywhere equally distant from the center.” “Yes.”

Pl. *Prm.* 137e

It was found that modal *που* seems to have a positive argumentative orientation in general. That is, the speaker is guiding the addressee in the direction of accepting his statement as true. In this respect, I am following Wackernagel (1885), who claimed that *που* was used in sentences which the speaker was convinced were true. There are even examples in which *που*'s argumentative orientation is not only positive, but also its argumentative strength is very high.

Both the argumentative orientation and the argumentative strength may have been a(n) (rhetorical) effect of a more general function of modal *που*. This more general function seems to be to present the content of the *που*-clause as accessible to the addressee, either via reasoning, or because the information has been given previously, or because it is part of the common knowledge and world views of both the speaker and the addressee. This may be used for rhetorical purposes in arguments, since marking information as already accessible makes it very hard for the addressee to question that information.

In LSJ it is said that in some cases *που* is strengthened by epistemic adverbs like ἴσως ‘perhaps’ and τάχα ‘probably, perhaps’. If this is the case, this would of course be a good argument in favor of an epistemic modal (i.e. concerning the truth of the proposition) value for *που*. I will discuss the examples given by LSJ below, but first we will see whether *που* is commonly combined with these adverbs. In all texts up to the classical period, ἴσως and *που* are found in the same clause 5 times of which only 3 times in each other's direct surroundings (i.e. within two words of each other). The combination of τάχα and *που* is even less frequent: They are only found in the same

clause 2 times (example (2) below and Pl. *Phdr.* 256c). This suggests that if *που* was used as a way of strengthening the epistemic interpretation, it was not conventional to do so.

LSJ mention the following examples as instances of strengthening.

- (2) Oidipous: (εἰ χρή τι κάμῃ μὴ συναλλάξαντά πω,
πρέσβεις, σταθμᾶσθαι, τὸν βοτῆρ' ὄρᾱν δοκῶ,
ὄνπερ πάλαι ζητοῦμεν: ἔν τε γὰρ μακρῶ
γῆρα ξυνάδει τῷδε τάνδρῳ σύμμετρος,
ἄλλως τε τοὺς ἄγοντας ὡσπερ οἰκέτας
ἔγνωκ' ἔμαυτοῦ:)

τῆ	δ'	ἐπιστήμη	σύ	μου/	προύχοις	τάχ'
the	but	knowledge	you	me	have and advantage over	probably
DAT.SG	CONJ	DAT.SG	NOM.SG	GEN.SG	2SG.PRS.OPT	ADV

ἄν	που,	τὸν	βοτῆρ'	ἰδῶν	πάρους.
ptcl	που,	the	man	having seen	before.
PTCL	που,	ACC.SG	ACC.SG	PTC.AOR.NOM.SG.	ADV.

Chorus: ἔγνωκα γάρ, σάφ' ἴσθι: Λαΐου γὰρ ἦν
εἶπερ τις ἄλλος πιστὸς ὡς νομεὺς ἀνήρ.

Oidipous: (Elders, if it is right for me, who have never met the man, to guess, I think I see the herdsman we have been looking for for a long time. In his venerable old age he tallies with this stranger's years, and moreover I recognize those who bring him, I think, as servants of mine.) But you may have an advantage in knowledge over me probably *που*, having seen the herdsman before. Chorus: Yes, I know him, be sure. He was in the service of Laius—trustworthy as any shepherd.¹

S. *OT.* 1116

In example (2), Oidipous is talking to the chorus of elderly men from Thebes, the city in which they are and of which Oidipous is the new king. They are waiting for the arrival of the shepherd, who, according to another shepherd, once gave the abandoned child Oidipous to him. This other shepherd already told them that this man had been in the service of the previous king of Thebes, Laius. We find *τάχ' ἄν που* at the end of the clause according to the editor, who has placed a comma after *τάχ' ἄν που*. This position is remarkable since *τάχα* generally has a preference for the first position in the clause (Koier, 2007) and the particle *ἄν* is generally found in the second position after an intonation break (Goldstein, 2010). However, the particle *ἄν* seems to belong with the optative *προύχοις*, which is probably why the editor wanted to keep *τάχ' ἄν που* in the same clause as the verb. Therefore, there are two possible readings, one in which *που* belongs to the participle clause and one in which *που* is interpreted as part of the main clause. If we accept the possibility that *τάχ' ἄν που* belongs to the participle clause, the presence of the verb *ὄράω* 'to see' allows us to interpret *που*

¹The translation of this example was slightly modified.

as locative ‘having seen him somewhere’, but we also may interpret *που* modally as in ‘as we both know you have probably seen the man before’. This paraphrase may sound a bit awkward, but a particle with, as one of its functions, the marking of accessibility in Dutch, *immers*, is also used in combination with markers of epistemic uncertainty as can be seen from the following example.

- (3) Zij krijgen misschien immers straks weer zitting in het kabinet.
They get perhaps *immers* later again a place in the cabinet.
They will, as you know, later, be part of the cabinet again.²

In this Dutch example, *immers* marks that the speaker assumes that the addressee knows how the democracy works (after the elections the parties that are now part of the cabinet may become part of it again), but needs to remind the addressee of this fact in order for his argument to make sense. Whether the party they are talking about really becomes part of the cabinet again is not what is assumed to be shared, only the fact that this may be the case is presented as known information.

If we return to example (2), we see that if we want to keep *τάχ' ἄν που* with the main verb, a modal reading ‘in knowledge you may probably have an advantage over me as you know’ is also fine, since they both know that it is likely that the elderly men know a shepherd who was once a servant of Laius and they also know that Oidipous has not yet been king long enough to know this man. An extra reinforcement of the uncertainty expressed by *τάχα*, as is the interpretation of LSJ, is communicatively not necessary. It cannot be excluded, but this example cannot be seen as a strong argument in favor of an epistemic reading for *που*.

Example (4) is part of a conversation between Electra and an old man. This old man has come up to Electra’s house to tell her that there are fresh offerings at the grave of her father, who was murdered by the current king and her mother. For this reason, it is very dangerous to bring offerings to the grave. There is only one person who would have a strong enough connection to Agamemnon, Electra’s father, to defy this rule: Electra’s brother Orestes, who has grown up abroad because his father’s murderer threatened to kill him as well. With the offerings were locks of hair of the same color as Electra’s hair, which also points in the direction of a family member of Electra. After he has told Electra all this, the old man suggests that it may be that the offerings were made by Orestes.

- (4) (κάθαύμασ', ὧ παῖ, τίς ποτ' ἀνθρώπων ἔτλη
πρὸς τύμβον ἐλθεῖν: οὐ γὰρ Ἀργείων γέ τις.)

ἀλλ' ἦλθ' ἴσως που σὸς κασίγνητος λάθρα,
but came perhaps που your brother secretly,
CONJ 3SG.AOR ADV ΠΟΥ POSS.NOM.SG NOM.SG ADV,

(μολὼν δ' ἐθαύμασ' ἄθλιον τύμβον πατρός.)
(And I wondered, child, who ever dared come to the the tomb; for it was no

²<http://www.goeievraag.nl/vraag/bestaat-fractie-tweede-kamer-kamerleden.85133>

Argive at least.) But perhaps your brother has somehow come secretly (and on his return has done honor to his father's wretched grave.)

E. *El.* 518

Example (4) is comparable to example (3) in that a possibility is presented as a known option to both speaker and addressee. In this case, it would communicatively be possible to strengthen ἴσως, for instance because the old man expects Electra will be skeptical and not inclined to believe this really is the case. However, there is little evidence that this is really the case and the interpretation 'but perhaps -as we both know- your brother has come secretly' is also possible. Therefore, this example in itself is not a reason to think που has an epistemic function.

From this discussion we can conclude the following. First, the examples of strengthening of the epistemic value of που mentioned in LSJ are exceptional, since they do not occur very frequently. Second, these examples do not need to be interpreted as cases of strengthening and therefore I don't consider them to be counterexamples to the view that was presented in this dissertation. The generally positive argumentative orientation of που together with collocations like δή, ἤ, πάντως and verbs of knowing, as well as the observation that has been made by several authors that που is frequently found in truisms are in my view strong indications that the main function of που is not in the epistemic domain.

13.2.2 The evidential domain

Wackernagel (1885) introduces the evidential domain in the discussion about the characteristics of modal που. His main observation is that, in Homer, που is frequently used in sentences in which the speaker has no proof that his statement is true. As Wackernagel observes, this is often the case in statements about the gods. Most of these sentences state something about the gods that is generally assumed in Greek religion as in (5).

- (5) εἰ μάλα καρτερός ἔσσι, θεός που σοὶ τό γ' ἔδωκεν
 if very strong you are, god που you the ptcl has given
 CONJ ADV NOM.SG 2SG.PRS, NOM.SG που DAT.SG ACC.SG PTCL 3SG.AOR
 If you are very strong, it was a god που who gave you this gift.³

Il. 1.178

As I have argued elaborately in section 9.3.3 and elsewhere, the main function of που seems to be that the information provided in the που-clause is already accessible to the addressee, either because he already knows it, because it is general knowledge of the world as it was seen in Greek society or because the addressee may arrive at a certain conclusion on the basis of the information that is presented. This means that που is generally found in statements for which no proof is needed or that function as arguments for a certain view themselves. Therefore, Wackernagel's observation fits this description very well. However, this lack of proof may not be a key property

³This translation was slightly modified to adapt it to our new findings.

of *που*-sentences, so much as an effect of the type of sentences in which a marker of accessibility is used.

13.2.3 The domain of irony

Although *που* certainly may occur in sentences which have an ironic nuance, this is not the case for *που*-sentences in general. Therefore, we may ask whether the ironic interpretation depends on the presence of *που* and if so, what interaction between *που* and the context makes it ironic, since *που* is not claimed to be a marker of irony. Generally, irony occurs if a form is used in a situation in which it is for some reason not considered appropriate or in accordance with Gricean maxims such as truthfulness (Walde and Erler, 2011). This means that to say that a form is used ironically, one needs to be very certain about what would constitute the ‘normal’ use of a form.

Denniston gives the following descriptions of ironic *που*:

‘From *που* meaning ‘somewhere’ is developed the sense ‘I suppose’, ‘I think’, the particle conveying a feeling of uncertainty in the speaker. Hence, further, *που* is used ironically, with assumed diffidence, by a speaker who is quite sure of his ground.’

In his description of *δήπου* he adds this:

‘strictly speaking, the certainty of *δή* is toned down by the doubtfulness of *που*. But often the doubt is only assumed, *μετ’ εἰρωνείας* (not always ‘ironically’ in the modern sense of the word), ‘presumably’, ‘I believe’, ‘I imagine’ being virtually equivalent to ‘of course’

It seems that the ironic use of *που* is mainly characterized by the use of the uncertainty marker *που* in situations in which for some reason uncertainty is not appropriate. This may be because the speaker is quite sure.

However, as was argued above, there are good reasons to think that the main function of *που* was not to express uncertainty. This implies that the use of *που* in situations in which uncertainty would not be appropriate need not be seen as ironical anymore. This does not mean that the context can’t be ironic, but that need not be linked to the use of *που*. I agree with Verdenius (1956) that the available material does not give us reason to think that there is some special ironic use of *που*. However, there are good reasons to think that modal *που* feels at home in sentences with a positive argumentative orientation as was argued in section 9.3. I will now discuss an example that is mentioned as an instance of ironic *που*.

In example (6), Klytaimnestra is explaining why she has a very mixed feeling about the message she just received that her son Orestes is dead. On the one hand, a mother is never glad that her child is dead, on the other hand this means that Orestes can’t revenge his father, whom she murdered together with her new partner.

- (6) (οὔτοι μάτην γε: πῶς γὰρ ἂν μάτην λέγοις,
εἴ μοι θανόντος πίστ' ἔχων τεκμήρια
προσηλθες, ὅστις τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς γεγώς,
μαστῶν ἀποστάς καὶ τροφῆς ἐμῆς, φυγὰς
ἀπεξενοῦτο καὶ μ', ἐπεὶ τῆσδε χθονὸς
ἐξῆλθεν, οὐκέτ' εἶδεν, ἐγκαλῶν δέ μοι
φόνους πατρώους δεῖν' ἐπηπείλει τελεῖν;
ὥστ' οὔτε νυκτὸς ὕπνον οὔτ' ἐξ ἡμέρας
ἐμὲ στεγάζειν ἠδύν, ἀλλ' ὁ προστατῶν
χρόνος διηγέ μ' αἰὲν ὡς θανουμένην.
νῦν δ'—ἡμέρα γὰρ τῆδ' ἀπήλλαγμαὶ φόβου
πρὸς τῆσδ' ἐκείνου θ': ἦδε γὰρ μείζων βλάβη
ξύνοικος ἦν μοι, τοῦμόν ἐκπίνουσ' αἰὲν
ψυχῆς ἄκρατον αἶμα—

νῦν δ' ἔκηλά που/ τῶν τῆσδ' ἀπειλῶν οὔνεχ'
now but without anxiety που the of her threats because of
ADV CONN ADV ΠΟΥ GEN.PL GEN.SG GEN.PL POST

ἡμερεύσομεν.
we will pass our days
1PL.FUT

(No, not in vain; how can you say “in vain” when you have brought me sure proofs of his death? He sprang from my own life, yet deserting my breast and my nurture he became a fugitive, completely alien from me. And me, once he left this land, he saw no more; but, charging me with the murder of his father, he made terrible threats, so that neither by night nor by day could sweet sleep cover me, but the imminent moment made me live always as if I were about to die. Now, however, since today I am rid of terror of him and of this girl—that greater plague who shared my home while consuming undiluted my life-blood—) now for all her threats που, I shall pass my days in peace.

S. El. 786

In reality, Orestes is not dead, but this message is part of his plan to murder his mother, in which he will succeed. Therefore, we may call this statement tragic irony, but that is not due to the presence of που, since the tragic irony would also be present without the use of που in this sentence. Since Klytaimnestra's addressee is (because of her explanation) fully aware of the implications of the death of Orestes, Klytaimnestra presents deducible information in her last sentence: since the threat that made her life unpeaceful has disappeared, the news of Orestes' death has made it possible to have a peaceful life.

13.2.4 The accessibility of the content of the proposition for the addressee (obviousness/triviality)

One of Sicking's observations is that *που* frequently occurs in obvious or trivial statements, an example of which we already saw in example (4). In my view, this is a very important observation, because the examples of this use have several characteristics that are present in many other examples of modal *που* as well. First, obvious and trivial statements contain information that is generally known or deducible information and second, it is very clear that the speaker does not doubt the content of his statement and that these sentences have a positive argumentative orientation (i.e. the speaker wants the addressee to believe that what he says is true). These characteristics are found in many instances of *που* and together with the collocational evidence they form an important indication for the functions that *που* may have had.

In the following example, Socrates has been asking the same type of obvious questions for a while, which is shown by the use of *πάντως δή που*. At some point he states that a just man does what is just. This is almost tautological and can thus be marked as known or at least deducible information. It had to be said anyway to be marked explicitly as part of the common ground so as to function as the basis for Socrates' following syllogistic argument. The function of *που* is to show that Socrates knows that he is stating something that is obvious and that it is already part of the common ground. However, by using *που* he also marks that he is deliberately bringing it to the foreground.

- (7) ΣΩ. Καὶ ὁ τὰ ἰατρικὰ ἰατρικός; καὶ τᾶλλα οὕτω κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, ὁ μεμαθηκῶς ἕκαστα τοιοῦτός ἐστιν οἷον ἡ ἐπιστήμη ἕκαστον ἀπεργάζεται;
 ΓΟΡ. Πάνυ γε.
 ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον καὶ ὁ τὰ δίκαια μεμαθηκῶς δίκαιος;
 ΓΟΡ. Πάντως δή που.

ΣΩ. Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος δίκαιά που πράττει.
 the and just just things does
 NOM.SG CONN NOM.SG ACC.PL.N PTCL 3.SG.PRS

ΓΟΡ. Ναί.

Socrates: Then he who has learnt medicine is a medical man, and so on with the rest on the same principle; anyone who has learnt a certain art has the qualification acquired by his particular knowledge?

Gorgias: Certainly.

Socrates: And so, on this principle, he who has learnt what is just is just?

Gorgias: Certainly, obviously.

Socrates: And the just man *που* does what is just.

Gorgias: Yes.

13.2.5 The domain of interpersonal relations between speaker and addressee

As I said above, I agree with Sicking (1993) that interpersonal relations may have played a role in the use of modal *που*. However, as I have argued in section 9.3.3, the interpersonal functions of modal *που* may not have been so much in the area of the social relation between speaker and addressee but more in the area of expectation management. These two areas are of course closely related, but not completely the same. If a speaker plans to violate Grice's maxim of quantity, as is the case if he says something of which he presumes the addressee to be aware, he may mark this to cancel the implications from such a violation (i.e. that the addressee is stupid). Sicking (1993, 59) described cases like this as introducing in a casual way what is obvious or even trivial so as to avoid any impression of smugness or pedantry. He says that this is done by means of a particle that expresses that the statement is just a surmise so that disputing it need not impair the basis for an understanding between the partners in the conversation. The observation that these sentences do not seem appropriate without *που* is completely in line with the argument made above. However, the explanation of why the use of *που* cancels these implications is somewhat different. If a speaker presents something that is obvious or trivial as a surmise, this may even worsen the implicatures, because it suggests that the addressee could be stupid enough to be unfamiliar with basic facts or commonly shared knowledge. If we take example (8) below again as an example, we see that adding a particle that implies that the speaker is surmising would generally make the insult even worse, because it suggests that the speaker thinks it necessary to hedge this type of statement, presumably because he thinks the addressee may not be familiar with it. However, if *που* is taken to be a marker of accessibility, the implications are completely cancelled and do not play a role anymore, which is in line with the observation made above that *που*-clauses are generally not questioned and receive (strongly) positive answers.

- (8) Στρογγύλον γέ πού ἐστι τοῦτο οὗ ἄν τὰ
 round ptcl που is this of which ptcl the
 NOM.SG FOC.PTCL που 3SG.PRS NOM.SG REL.GEN.SG PTCL NOM.PL

ἔσχατα πανταχῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου ἴσον ἀπέχῃ.
 extremes everywhere from the middle equally be away from.
 NOM.PL ADV PREP ART.GEN.SG GEN.SG ADV 3SG.PRS.SUBJ.

Ναί.

English: "The round, of course, is that of which the extremes are everywhere equally distant from the center." "Yes."

13.2.6 The amount of specification/detail provided

There are several authors who mention the following descriptions and translations ‘irgendwie’, *acknowledgement of the lack of further specification* and ‘somehow’, although these translations and interpretations do not seem to have become part of the *communis opinio* on $\pi\omicron\upsilon$. These interpretations do not belong to one of the previous groups, but they do seem to have one thing in common, which we may call indefiniteness, vagueness or a generalizing function. In section 10.2.4, this category was discussed elaborately and it was argued that there is a clearly delimited group of instances of $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ (in conditional clauses, with the indefinite pronoun $\tau\iota\varsigma$ and in the poetic texts in *either...or...* sentences) that seem to have what will be called a generalizing (locative) function. That is, in many cases a locative interpretation is possible, although the main function of $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ in these cases seems to be to signal that it is not important where something happened. In a few cases this seems to be extended to a general marking of a lack of specification, which can be seen from the fact that the place in which it happened is specified in the direct context, although if this was not the case they would be perfect examples of a locative use.

Almost all instances of generalizing (locative) $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ may be linked to specific contexts (a.o. conditional clauses, the use of $\tau\iota\varsigma$) and although they cannot always be interpreted as locative, they do not seem to be connected to the modal uses of $\pi\omicron\upsilon$. This means that we may see this group as a third category, although most examples are in the classical period (still) clearly related to locative $\pi\omicron\upsilon$.

13.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the description of $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ as a marker of accessibility (either because the content of the $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ -clause is (generally) known, or because it is deducible from what is known) with a positive argumentative orientation allowed us to explain and connect many of the observations on $\pi\omicron\upsilon$ that have been made in the secondary literature on the particle. This way, the methods that were used have contributed to a more coherent view on the particle and its characteristics.