Origins and change: on the evolution of articles with proper names

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According to Longobardi (1994), proper names in some Catalan varieties are introduced by a specialized article *en* (m.) or *na* (f.), which he labels 'expletive'. Unlike the typical case of N-to-D movement of bare proper names in Romance, proper names in Catalan remain in situ when the proper name is introduced by this article, which Longobardi takes to occupy D:

(1)   [$_{DP}$ [$_D$ en] [$_{NP}$ Joan]] va arribar tard   (Catalan)
             EN   Joan   arrived   late

        In this work we compare Catalan personal articles to regular definite articles, as well as to the honorific titles *don/doña*, to which they are etymologically related. Unlike honorific titles, personal articles encode a familiarity feature [+FAM]. We tie their emergence to this feature change, and their eventual shift and loss in some varieties of Catalan to contact with Spanish, where the specificity feature of definite articles overlaps with the familiarity feature of personal articles.

        Regular definite articles differ from these personal articles in the following ways:
a) Personal articles cannot be pluralized but regular articles can:

(2)   a. *ens* vs. *els* 'the' (M.PL)   (Catalan)
        b. *nes* vs. *les* 'the' (F.PL)

b) Prenominal adjectives (e.g., *propi* or *mateix*) cannot appear between personal article and noun, but can between regular article and noun:

(3)   a. *en propi Pere   (Catalan)
        b. el propi professor
            'the same professor'

 c) Personal articles cannot introduce relative clauses but regular articles can:

(4)   a. *en (Pere) que va arribar ahir   (Catalan)
        b.   el (Pere) que va arribar ahir
              the (Pere) that arrived yesterday

        On the other hand, Catalan *en-na* shows parallelisms with honorific titles like Spanish honorific *don-doña*. As we saw for *en-na* in (2)-(4), *don-doña* cannot be pluralized (5a), cannot be followed by a prenominal adjective (5b), and cannot introduce a relative clause (5c).

(5)   a.   *dones , *doñas   (Spanish)
        b.   *don mismo Luis
        c.   *Don Luis que llegó ayer

        We provide evidence that *en-na* corresponds to a functional category lower than D in the nominal structure, one we label Class(ifier)P:

(6)   [$_{DP}$ D …… [$_{ClassP}$ CL *en-na* / *don-doña* …… [$_{NP}$ N]]]

Support for (6) comes from the fact that D and CL can both be instantiated in a single DP.

        A series of phonological, syntactic, and semantic changes gave rise to the Catalan personal article (*en-na*) from its earlier use as an honorific title, whose origin is traced to the Latin noun *dominus* ('master'; see Ledgeway 2012). We characterize this evolution as a three-step process of grammaticalization (Roberts & Roussou 2003) internal to the DP (see (7)), parallel to the classic case of grammaticalization in the auxiliary system of English.

(7)DP: <u>step 1</u>: N (*dominus*)--><u>step 2</u>: Class-honorific (*don/doña*)--><u>step 3</u>: Class-familiar (*en/na*)

        The process by which Latin *dominus* (noun) gives way to Catalan *en* (personal article) is complex. As a first step, Old Catalan *dominus* conveys an honorific value and is used as a title:

(8) a. avia escrit   per manament de *domina* Guillelma (*Reconeixement de deutes a Pere Canet*, XIII)

        has written by order   of *domina* Guillelma

   b. Sanctissimo *domino* nostro Alexandro pape VI   (*Cartes triades dels Borja*, XIII)

       most holy   master ours   Alexandro

Even after phonological reduction of *domina* to *na*, we still find early examples of *na* used as an honorific:

(9) a. … una   dona   dita   *na*   Camps …   (*Dietari* [P. J. Porcar], XVII)

       a   woman   called Miss   Camps

   b. … una fembra, qui avia nom *na*   Drusiana…   (*Vides de Sants Rosselloneses*, XIII)

       a   woman, who is called Miss Drusiana

Medieval Catalan honorific *en* has lost its honorific value and starts to indicate familiarity ([+FAM]) with the speaker. This loss of the honorific interpretation in Catalan explains why the equivalent *dominus*-derived elements in Spanish, *don-doña*, still have different properties from Catalan *en-na*. With the loss of its honorific value and also a process of phonological reduction, *en-na* becomes more like a clitic or affix.

     The [+FAM] feature of the classifier indicates acquaintance with the speaker, a sense that is not unlike that expressed by definite articles [+SPEC, +DEF]. It is not surprising then that this feature redundancy in the DP system led to replacement of the classifier with the definite article (*el/la*) in many varieties of Catalan. We hypothesize that the change was facilitated by contact with Spanish, a language with definite articles but without specialized personal articles. However, this change was not uniform across varieties of Catalan. For instance, this change did not occur in Balearic Catalan, varieties that do not have a canonical Romance *l-* article for definite DPs (see (10)). In contrast, other varieties did replace the CL head with the D head, as in (11). The familiarity feature here is expressed with the definite article.

(10) [$_{ClassP}$ CL +FAM …… [$_{NP}$ N]]

(11) [$_{DP}$ D +FAM   …… …… [$_{NP}$ N]]

Still other varieties, such as Valencian Catalan, retain no classifiers or definite articles with proper names. It is interesting to note that these varieties have had more contact with Spanish than others.

     This eventual replacement of the classifier by the definite article took place in stages. Up to the 15th century, all varieties maintained the classifier. Central varieties started to replace only the feminine classifier, precisely the form that requires a word marker (Harris 1991, Mascaró 1985):

(12) a. en   (classifier, masc.)   Joan   (Central Catalan)

      b. la   (definite article, fem.)   Maria

In other varieties, there was loss of the classifier altogether and replacement with the definite article. The loss in some varieties is simultaneous to the mixed system of others, and can be found in 15th and 16th century texts:

(13) a. el/lo   (definite article)   Joan   (Western Catalan)

      b. la   (definite article)   Maria

Spanish *don/doña* and Balearic Catalan *madò/don* were not vulnerable to change or loss because they retained the honorific value.

     If our analysis of Catalan personal articles is on the right track, it provides a new example of familiar triggers of diachronic syntactic change: a) a shift in the interpretive feature of a functional head (in this case, CL); and b) language contact. Also examined is the variable effect these triggers have had across varieties of Catalan.