

Deictification of adjectives as an example of constructional change in the English noun phrase

Tine Breban (K.U.Leuven and Fund for Scientific Research – Flanders)

Deictification is the grammaticalization and subjectification process whereby adjectives that originally only functioned as attributes in the noun phrase (henceforth NP), describing a quality/property of the referent of the NP, e.g. *other* in *far other scene* (OED), acquire a new function as ‘secondary deictic’. As secondary deictics, they clarify the identificational status of the referent when the primary deictic element, the determiner, alone does not suffice to communicate this status to the hearer, e.g. *other* in *the other side*. As argued by Davidse and Breban (2006), adjectives that can undergo deictification always have an inherent deictic potential in their original attribute semantics, i.e. they are concerned with deictic notions such as identification, quantity, location in place or time, etc. In the deictification process this original meaning is given a reference point in or at least related to the deictic situation (i.e. speaker, hearer and the speech situation) and is bound to the deictic information provided by the determiner of the NP. In this sense, deictification is the NP counterpart of auxiliarization in the verb phrase.

So far, the semantic side of deictification has been pinpointed very well. But less attention has been devoted to the accompanying formal processes. Like the semantic ones, these are crucially linked with the grammaticalization environment, the NP. Two formal features of syntagmatic change, also associated with auxiliarization, have been suggested, viz. coalescence as shown by *other* in *another*, but this feature remains very restricted, and movement to a more leftward position in the NP as a linear structure (Breban 2007, Traugott forthcoming). These two changes fit in with the ‘horizontal’ analysis of the NP as a strictly ordered string with determiners > attributes > classifiers > head noun. Such an analysis has already been shown to be too simplistic (Bache 2000, McGregor 1997, Breban 2006). In addition, the NP has to be envisaged as a ‘vertical’, layered structure of units (determination unit, attribution unit, classification unit) and subunits (e.g. submodifier-attribute unit).

In this paper, I will further develop this proposal and argue that the units in fact constitute “constructions” (Goldberg 1995, Trousdale 2007) in that they are governed by their own internal functionally-determined organizational principles, using the determination unit as a case in point. Taking a diachronic perspective, I will show that deictification involves the adjective to detach itself from the attribution unit and to become “structurally” bound to the determiner resulting in the formation of one determiner unit. The observed positional change towards the obligatory ‘post-determiner’ position as well as the coalescence of *other* are then interpreted as evidence for the unit-status of determiner and secondary deictic. The descriptive aim of this paper is to add to the argumentation by looking for prosodic evidence of the unit status. Concretely, the prosodic behaviour of a wide range of deictified adjectives, a.o. *other*, *same*, *whole*, *old*, *opposite*, *usual*, *obvious*, *necessary*, will be investigated both in metrically annotated historical texts and in synchronic spoken language corpus material paying special attention to the presence of features such as single stress, phonological reduction, phonological fusion.

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