

## A temporal to epistemic/modal/pragmatic grammaticalization cline

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Examples are found in many languages of epistemic, modal or discourse particles coexisting with or deriving from *temporal* adverbs or expressions, such as French *enfin* from ‘at last, finally’ to ‘anyway, all the same’, etc. and Dutch *soms* from ‘from time to time’ to ‘perhaps’ and a mitigator of directives. This paper posits the existence of a grammaticalization cline, not recognized in Heine & Kuteva 2002, from temporal expressions to particles the usage of which clearly supersedes time reference.

The main question to be addressed here is whether a relationship can be established between the type of temporality involved and the ‘output value’, modal or otherwise, and which diachronic mechanisms might be involved. The question of directionality, which hinges mainly on the adduction of clear counter-examples, will also be dealt with. Determining the universality or not of the posited cline is beyond the scope of the present paper. Data is collected from lexicographic sources and the grammars of a variety of languages, and checked with informants wherever possible.

It is expected that the link between the temporal and non-temporal usages can be reduced to two main types, with brevity/futurity/repetitiveness linked to uncertainty, the mitigation of directives, etc., and past reference or perfectivity to certainty, emotive assertiveness, the reinforcement of utterances, etc. Deictic and non-deictic examples are found in both categories. The temporal antecedents of the epistemic value of ‘perhaps, possibly’ — roughly a 50% chance of occurrence — may, for example, be

- the immediate future (deictic), e.g. Greek *τάχα*, Afrikaans *dalk* (< Dutch *dadelijk*), *aans* (< Dutch *aanstonds*), *netnou*
- a once-off incident or occasion (non-deictic), e.g. English *perhaps*, *perchance*, Hungarian *esetleg*, Dutch *eens* (*e’s*), *bijgeval*, Spanish *tal vez*, Papiamentu *talbez*, isiZulu *khathisimbe*
- another/different occasion (deictic), e.g. seTswana *motlhamongwe*, isiZulu *mhlawumbe*
- a short while, brief moment (non-deictic), e.g. Frisian *koarts*, Dutch *even*
- repetition (non-deictic), e.g. Dutch *soms*, Frisian *faeks*, *jamk*, and, morphologically, Malay *mudah-mudahan*.

The first source — given the inherent uncertainty of the future — converts to epistemic possibility and from there to mitigation as a discourse function. Small quantities (*in casu* of time) carry over iconically to epistemic possibility, which in turn converts to the mitigation of directives, etc.

A variety of assertive values expressing the speaker’s confidence in the truth or relevance of his/her statement, conclusion or insight, such as ‘definitely, indeed, actually, finally, after all’, tend to be based on references to

- the (distant) past (deictic), e.g. Italian *allora*, French *alors*, German *einmal*, Dutch *eenmaal*, Afrikaans *hoeka* (< Khoi ‘of old’), *almelewe* (*amlie*)
- perfectivity, completion (non-deictic), e.g. Latin *tandem*, German *schon*, *halt*, *schließlich*, French *déjà*, *enfin*, Polish *ostatecznie*, Swedish *ändå*, *slutgiltigt*, isiZulu *impela* (< *phela* ‘come to an end’), seTswana *fêla* (< *-fêla* ‘come to an end, expire’), Afrikaans *reeds*.

Both of these temporal types have the thrust of ‘established fact’ and give rise to evaluative particles.

The paper attempts to provide an overall view of the motivation of the changes, taking into account metaphorical and metonymic processes (cf. Hopper & Traugott 2003) and subjectification in general.

### **References**

- Heine, B & T Kuteva. 2002. *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: CUP.  
Hopper, PJ & EC Traugott. 2003. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: CUP.