

## The clines of grammaticality and (inter)subjectivity in the prenominal string of the English NP

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Since the 1970s, it has generally been agreed upon that the left-right premodifier-head structure of the English NP incorporates a continuum from subjective to objective meanings (Quirk et al. 1972, Vandelanotte 2002). Even though this dimension of the English NP has received little diachronic attention, its specific structural-semantic make up makes it an interesting locus to study the (inter)subjectivity and (inter)subjectification of linguistic items.

In terms of (inter)subjectivity, the English NP constitutes not only a continuum of subjective to objective uses, but the subjective uses themselves can be thought of as constituting a continuum. De Smet and Verstraete (2006) define subjectivity as roughly covering “the fact that a particular element or construction requires reference to the speaker in its interpretation”. However, certain elements or constructions need more speaker involvement for their interpretation and are thus more subjective than others. Yet, to my knowledge, the literature does not offer any fine-grained analysis of the different degrees of subjectivity found in the NP. One of the aims of this paper is then to develop a more detailed categorization of the different functional categories in the prenominal string in terms of the type of subjectivity they display, based on the syntactic tests listed by De Smet and Verstraete (2006). These tests will at the same time be used to evaluate the degree of grammaticalization of the functional categories distinguished.

In terms of (inter)subjectification, Traugott (forthc.) suggests that the unidirectional path of semantic change from non-subjective meaning over subjective meaning to intersubjective meaning correlates with progressive movement to the left periphery of the structure; in the case of the NP, the leftmost end of the prenominal string (cf. Adamson 2000).

This paper will bring together a number of observations from empirical corpus studies in the domain of the NP and relate them to the processes of (inter)subjectification and grammaticalization. The findings presented in this paper were collected from specific case studies on the prenominal uses of specifying adjectives (*particular* and *specific*), completeness adjectives (*complete*, *total* and *whole*) and scalar adjectives (*little* and *old*).

The different diachronic pathways of change followed by these adjectives will be looked at from the angle of (inter)subjectification and the different synchronic functions of the prenominal adjectives will be discussed in terms of the degree of (inter)subjectivity they display.

It is the aim of this paper then to contribute to the theorizing on the (diachronic) relation between subjectivity and intersubjectivity and to investigate to what extent the independent processes of (inter)subjectification and grammaticalization correlate in the development of English prenominal adjectives.

### References

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