

Raising parentheticals as discourse particles

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The current paper discusses a class of parenthetical elements derived from raising verb constructions of the type *it* + {*seem, turn-out, appear, happen*} + (*that*)—e.g. *John, it seems, is sick* (see also Dehé and Kavalova 2007). Recent patterns in the grammaticalization of these elements suggest that raising parenthetical constructions have developed a number of functions similar to those of discourse particles. We argue that the directionality of change with these elements—i.e. *parenthetical* > *discourse particle*—is consistent with the shift from *less* > *more subjective* proposed by Brinton (2007) for metalinguistic comment clauses such as *as it were* (see also Traugott and Dasher 2002). To support our claim, we analyze examples from a corpus of 20th century English (Davies 2007), noting that the shift from raising parenthetical construction to discourse particle is an emergent phenomenon that is variable across the individual members of this class.

The source of these raising parenthetical constructions is similar to that of comment clauses used as parentheticals or discourse particles. Thus, typical non-parenthetical examples are given in examples (1) and (2), where both *seems* and *turns out* have expletive subjects (i.e. non-anaphoric *it*) and are followed by sentential complements introduced by *that*. In addition to increased frequency, there are a number of changes that accompany the shift from simple raising construction to parenthetical. Note that in example (3) the clause *it appears* occurs in sentence-medial position and without an explicit complementizer. Both of these features are typical of parentheticals (see Dehé and Kavalova 2007) and further exemplify the type of characteristics displayed by comment clauses used in parenthetical contexts. Moreover, for some of these expressions, it is possible to omit the subject, as in (4), or to occur following the preposition *as*, shown in (5).

- (1) **It seems that** there is no other way for me to get your attention (Davies 2007)
- (2) **It turns out that** environmental problems are solvable (Davies 2007)
- (3) They are, **it appears**, too good for their own good. (Davies 2007)
- (4) **Seems** that citizens of the global village...are now more familiar with Yankee accents (Davies 2007)
- (5) **As it turns out**, authorities are rationing sugar (Davies 2007)

The patterns described in examples (1)-(5) provide evidence that these constructions become syntactically detached from the complement clause in the source construction resulting in parenthetical and discourse particle functions (Brinton 2007). We contend that this change is motivated contextually through the speaker's re-interpretation of the expletive subject *it* giving rise to the equation of the speaker's point of view as the source of the comment. Note that in comment clauses of the type *John, I think, is sick* the source of the evaluation is given overtly as the subject of *think*. With raising parenthetical constructions, no such linkage is established, allowing the speaker to use these expressions with metalinguistic meanings similar to those described by Brinton (2007). This analysis provides further explanation of the paths of change exhibited by elements used in parenthetical contexts.