

**“NP *be found/shown/seen/observed to V_{inf}*”
Grammaticalization of evidentiality in the register of academic writing?**

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This paper explores the possible emergence of a new evidential construction involving several verbs of coming-to-know in a passive construction of the type “NP *be* (AdvP) V1-*ed to V2_{inf}*” in the register of academic writing:

- (1) (...) this downward trend was again found to be statistically significant, that is, $Z = -4.9595$, 2 – tailed, $P = 0.0000$. (BNC: ALP: 179)
- (2) The RAP30 subunit of TFIIF has been shown to bind to RNA polymerase II (25,29,40) (BNC: FTB: 727)

The function of this construction can be explained as follows: certain new facts are ascribed (in the *to*-infinitive complement clause) to a given object of study, encoded by the NP. The use of the passive formula “be found/shown...to” serves to indicate the nature of the evidence for the truth of a given statement. It is used to strengthen a claim by stating that it is based on scientific findings and thereby acquires a modal evidential meaning.

The original agentive meaning of the verbs filling the first V slot (the most frequent being *find* and *show*) is bleached down to a mere evidentiality. In spite of their position in the main clause, the events of *finding*, *showing*, etc. that form the basis of the claims made in the subsequent infinitive complement clause recede into the background, giving the main verbs *find* or *show* an auxiliary character.

The main pragmatic function served by this construction is a rearrangement of information within the sentence, leading to an “upgrading” of the embedded non-finite verbs at the cost of the passivized matrix verb. Complex transitive verbs such as *find* followed by an infinitive almost exclusively occur in the passive construction and that only in learned and scientific prose. This might suggest the notion of register-specific processes of entrenchment, and could possibly serve as an example that grammaticalization processes may also start in domains other than colloquial language.

When occurring in this type of construction, coming-to-know verbs are a part of a system of emerging modal quasi-auxiliaries based on passive construction, such as *be supposed/required to* (deontic necessity), *be expected/thought/considered to* (epistemic) and *be intended/designed to* (volitional).

Corpus data used in this paper come from the academic subcomponent of the BNC, supplemented by data obtained with the help of Google Scholar, a search engine for academic texts in all subject fields.