

## From visual adjective to modalized intensifier A cross-linguistic study of grammaticalization

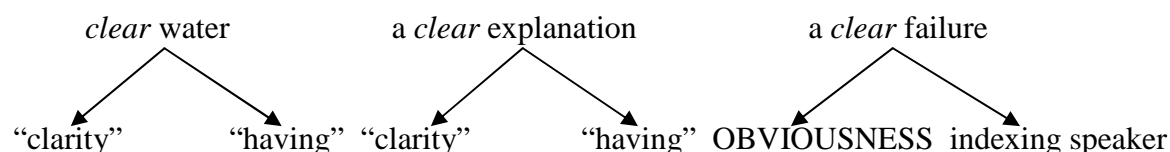
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A sensory adjective *clear* semantically changed from a visual etymology “bright” (OED) through “transparent” or “beautiful” (Chaucer) to “understandable” or “innocent” (Shakespeare), and now frequently functions as an intensifier with “heightening effect” generally used attributively (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 429).

- (1) This strike was a *clear failure*.
- (2) Schools have the *clear responsibility* to ensure that all children have full access to Standard English.
- (3) A *clear majority* of users prefer Word for Windows over WordPerfect.

Different from its previous changing processes, this intensifying meaning causes a remarkable transition from inherent to non-inherent, from referent-oriented to speaker-oriented, and from descriptive to affective as examined from the following two perspectives.

From a structural perspective decomposing the adjective-noun connections into “referential content part” and “relator” (Warren 1984: 21-28, Paradis 2000), both *clear water* and *a clear explanation* can be decomposed into “clarity” and “having.” *A clear failure*, by contrast, involves an epistemic modality of obviousness toward the proposition, and pragmatic function: indexing speaker.



From a pragmatic perspective, an intensifier *clear* shows dialogicity (Schwenter 2000) evoking multiple viewpoints like the following:

- (i) Speaker/writer (SP/W) asserts belief in obviousness.
- (ii) SP/W subjectively invokes a scale and ranks that complement high.
- (iii) SP/W implicates “that the public also believe that.”

By signaling the public agreement as well as her/his own belief, SP/W tries to convey “authoritative” attitude (Macaulay 1995, Bakhtin 1981) to addressee/reader (AD/R) that implies that AD/R should follow SP/W’s opinion. This shows intersubjectivity in the sense of “mutual manifestness” that “possibly includ[es] the hearer,” (Nuyts 2005) as well as subjectivity in the sense of “explicit markers of SP/W attitude to what is said” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 23).

This change to an intensifier is also a case of grammaticalization. Based on Denison’s diachronic discussion (2006) claiming “gradience between adjectives and determiners,” an intensifier *clear* increases distance from adjective and closeness to determiner, because a determiner, *certain* or *sort of* can alternate with an intensifier *clear* (e.g. a *certain/clear* influence, a *sort of/clear* gesture). As Adamson (2000) discusses that the evaluative adjectives like “lovely” became intensifiers and grammaticalized, the intensifier *clear* also became a member of VALUE subcategory of adjectives and the left-most position is more acceptable (e.g. a

*clear* political hostility/ ?political *clear* hostility, a *clear* social reform policy/ ?a social reform *clear* policy).

The Japanese corresponding words, *akiraka* and *hakkiri*, also have changed from a sensory adjective through an intensifying use (example (4)) to an expression of obviousness involving SP/W's evaluation (example (5)).

- (4) Shinbutsu *akiraka-ni* mashi-masa-ba,  
 Gods truly exist-RESP-CONDIT  
 kono urehe yasume-tamae.  
 this suffering relieve-RESP-IMP  
 "If you gods truly exist, please take all this suffering away."  
 (c. 1006 Genji Monogatari)
- (5) *Akiraka-ni* kare wa machigatte iru.  
 Clearly he TOP wrong be  
 "Clearly, he is wrong."

These observations by presenting diachronic data in English and Japanese will allow us to hypothesize a case of cross-linguistic grammaticalization accompanied by semantic-pragmatic changes from "perceptually visible" through "intellectually understandable" to modal intensification.

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