

**Looking at *look* and *kijk***  
**A corpus-based, contrastive approach to the rise of discourse markers out of imperatives**  
**of perception in English and Dutch**

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The question whether the development of discourse markers out of imperatives of perception constitutes a case of grammaticalization has not been answered unequivocally. On the basis of the diachrony of *look*; Brinton (2001) argues that it does, but only in a broader conception of the process. This view allows for, among others, an increase in structural scope and a decrease in syntactic fixation. Waltereit (2002), on the other hand, adheres to the traditional parameters in Lehmann (1995) and concludes from his investigation of Italian *guarda* that the answer is negative. The present paper takes a critical look at the arguments of both positions.

In general, it is found that a significant part of the difference in opinion between Brinton (2001) and Waltereit (2002) can be reduced to the issue of whether or not discourse markers are regarded as elements of grammar (see Brinton & Traugott 2005). It is argued here that this question cannot be given a straightforward answer. The advocates of the ‘inclusive’ position, such as Traugott & Dasher (2002), have to recognize that discourse markers are not typically grammatical (the primacy of the pragmatic import, no real syntagmatic relations, etc.), while the proponents of the ‘exclusive’ position need to acknowledge that grammar also functions on the discourse level (sentential adverbs, topicality, etc.; see Brinton & Traugott 2005: 139). In short, a study of the mechanisms of change in imperatives of perception is believed to be of more interest than a discussion about the appropriateness of the labels {grammati-, pragmati- or lexi-}-calization.

Firstly, in Brinton’s (2001) opinion, the development of *look* is similar to that of *I think* and *you know*. She argues that it has evolved according to the cline in (i), more specifically: from an imperative taking clausal complement via reanalysis to its present use as a discourse marker.

(i) matrix clause [subject + verb] > parenthetical adjunct (Brinton 2001: 195)

Waltereit (2002: 1006), however, claims that *guarda* (and its equivalent in other languages) originates from “a short but syntactically complete sentence.” An extensive diachronic corpus investigation of imperative *look*, *kijk* and their variants reveals that synchronically comparable discourse markers may have progressed along different paths. The cline in (i) is confirmed for *look* but *kijk*, which is a more recent development than its English counterpart, can be traced back to a syntactically independent source.

Secondly, this paper follows Waltereit’s (2002: 1008) suggestion that “a comparison of the [functions of the] DMs resulting from the imperative ‘look!’ in several languages might ... provide interesting insights into the typical sequence of changes.” On the basis of the limited literature (see De Vriendt 1995 and Janssen 2006 on *kijk*) and a synchronic study of spoken English and Dutch corpora, some hypotheses about a chronology of their uses as a directive to look, a means to interrupt, a quotative marker and so on are presented.

## References

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