This here-t'-Ø York identity: evidence for a (socio)linguistic definiteness cycle from vernacular determiners in York

Laura Rupp

The Definiteness Cycle (Lyons 1999) offers an ideal rendering of the grammaticalization trajectory of determiners. In the Definiteness Cycle, the form and the meaning of a determiner progressively weaken. The weakened determiner will be reinforced by another definite morpheme until it is eventually fully replaced. The cycle will then be repeated. Meanwhile, an intermediate stage can occur that is characterized by the coexistence of old and new forms (a.k.a layering; Hopper 1991).The variety of English spoken in York in northern England provides a unique opportunity to study the diachronic development of the English determiner system. First, the definite article first developed from the demonstrative paradigm in the north of England in early Middle English (McColl Millar 2000). Second, the York English Corpus (Tagliamonte 1996–1998) has three vernacular determiner constructions that appear to represent subsequent stages in the cycle: the zero article, reduced determiners and complex demonstratives (Rupp 2007, Tagliamonte & Roeder 2009). They are illustrated in (1a–c), respectively:

(1)   (a) You used to have to walk across Ø floor and ask a girl to dance. (YRK, Bradley Lowe, 62)
       (b) Our street is better than ? next street. (YRK, Bradley Lowe, 62)
       (c) What is that there red book do you know. (YRK, Albert Jackson, 66)

       Drawing on Rupp & Tagliamonte (forthcoming), I probe the emergence and function of these three determiners from the joint perspective of language variation and change, historical linguistics and discourse-pragmatics: What has been their place in the English determiner system over time and what is their function in the York community in the 20th century? In order to tap the phenomenon, I used the York English Corpus (Tagliamonte 1996–1998; 50 speakers) and a range of historical sources (including the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) and The Penn-York Computer Annotated Corpus of a Large Amount of English (2015)). The York English data were analysed using statistical techniques including multivariate analysis (Goldvarb). I will report the following findings:

(1)   While the zero article dates back to Old English; today, speakers seem to use the zero article with nouns whose referent has a low degree of individuation (viz. Epstein 1994 for French).
(2)   The reduced determiner is best analysed as a reduced distal demonstrative (*that*) that has weakened in form and function, as Rupp (2007) and McColl Millar (2000) have shown. The reduced distal demonstrative has been recycled as an identity marker by young York men (Tagliamonte & Roeder 1999).
(3)   The reduced demonstrative was reinforced by a locative adverb. Over time, the use of complex demonstratives has been extended from conveying only 'regular' deictic meanings to a new meaning that can be conceived of as 'psychological deixis' (following Johannessen 2006).

       I envisage that the determiners have survived a transitory stage and remained a productive alternative option under certain conditions to the extent that they are now used to express subjective meanings. This analysis corroborates the idea that discourse-pragmatic

factors can influence the grammaticalization process (Epstein 1995, Traugott 1995) and lead to an alternative path in the cycle.

References

Ecay, A. 2015. *The Penn-York Computer-annotated Corpus of a Large amount of English based on the TCP* (PYCCLE-TCP). https://github.com/uoy-linguistics/pyccle. [accessed 18 August 2016].

Epstein, R. 1994. The development of the definite article in French. In W. Pagliuca (ed.), *Perspectives on grammaticalization*, 63–80. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Epstein, R. 1995. The later stages in the development of the definite article: Evidence from French. In H. Andersen (ed.), *Historical linguistics 1993*, 159–175. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Hopper, P. 1991. On some principles of grammaticization. In E. Traugott & B. Heine (eds.), *Approaches to grammaticalization,* vol. 1 *Focus on theoretical and methodological issues*, 17-35. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Johannessen, Janne B. (2006) Just any pronoun anywhere? Pronouns and "new demonstratives" in Norwegian. In Torgrim Solstad, Alte Grønn, & Dag Haug (eds,), *A Festschrift for Kjell Johan Sæbø*, 91–106. Oslo: University of Oslo.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edn. 1989. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

McColl Millar, R. 2000. *System collapse system rebirth: The demonstrative pronouns of English 900-1350 and the birth of the definite article*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Rupp, L. 2007. The (socio-)linguistic cycle of Definite Article Reduction. *Folia Linguistic Historica* 28, 215–249.

Sankoff, D. S.A. Tagliamonte & E. Smith. 2005. Goldvarb X. Toronto, Canada: Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto. http://individual.utoronto.ca/tagliamonte/goldvarb.html. [accessed 31 August 2016]

Tagliamonte, S. A. (1996–1998). Roots of identity: Variation and grammaticization in contemporary British English. Research grant, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), # R00238287.

Tagliamonte, S. and R. Roeder. 2009. Variation in the English definite article: Socio-historical linguistics in t'speech community. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 13, 435–471.

Traugott, E. 1995. Subjectification in grammaticalization. In D. Stein & S. Wright (eds.), *Subjectivity and subjectivisation in language*, 31–54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.