Charting the grammaticalization trajectory of *right*

Derek Denis[a], Martina Wiltschko[b], Alexandra D'Arcy[a]
University of Victoria[a], University of British Columbia[b]

Deconstructing discourse-pragmatic markers (DPMs) into their composite parts—form and context—helps overcome problematic multifunctionality in analyses of discourse-pragmatic variation and change (see [1]) by revealing points of semantic equivalence. With well-defined envelopes of variation, the development of DPMs can be understood as the expansion of forms to new contexts [2]. To illustrate, we analyze the diachrony of the DPM *right* in Canadian English. *Right* is a *confirmational*, a set of DPMs (including *eh* and *you know*) that turn utterances into requests for confirmation, as in (1). We consider multiple sociolinguistic corpora spanning 100+ years of apparent time, representing Ontario and British Columbia [3]; 2000+ tokens are considered. Over our apparent-time range, *right* rises from marginal to the majority variant.

(1) It's human nature, *eh(you-know/right)*?   (M/1914)

Following previous work, we argue that the meaning of a confirmational is derived from its core function and its context [2,4]; the type of the modified clause (declarative, exclamative, etc.), the relative expertise of participants, and intonation interact to partition distinct variable contexts, constituting different (yet diachronically-mutable) subsets of variation [2,5]. For example, (2a), in which the speaker is not the expert and seeks confirmation of the truth of the proposition, bars *you-know*; (2b), where the speaker has expertise and seeks confirmation of the addressee's knowledge, bars *right* for older speakers but is licit for younger speakers [2,5].

(2) a.   You have a new dog, *eh/*you-know/right?*
     b.   I have a new dog, *eh/you-know/(*)right?*

We tease apart the composite parts of context by operationalizing various factors. For example, as a rough heuristic for expertise, we code the subject of the associated proposition. For our oldest speakers (born 1865–1914), *right* is limited to contexts with 2nd person subjects (i.e., speaker non-expertise), as in (2a). However, a change occurs that we argue is best understood as *right* expanding to the variable context of (2b) (speaker expertise), supported by data from speakers born more recently:

(3) I'd just be really uncomfortable doing that, *right*?   (M/1992)

We similarly operationalize clause type and intonational contour to further refine the variable contexts. While for older speakers *right* could only modify declaratives, younger speakers can use *right* with exclamatives and interrogatives, as in (4). Likewise, older speakers use *right* with rising intonation (i.e., as a *Call on Addressee* for confirmation [5]), while younger speakers can use *right* with flat/falling intonation, like 'narrative *eh*' [6], as a marker of common ground [7].

(4) All these old profs are not gonna like- why would they retire, *right*?   (F/1993)

Following recent generative work (e.g., [4,8,9,10]), we map these contextual differences to an articulated syntactic structure above CP. Ultimately, the different subsets of variation are indicative of distinct but diachronically-linked variables that represent different layers of this structure. From this perspective, the diachrony of *right* exhibits a grammaticalization trajectory similar to what [11] propose more generally: upward reanalysis. When multifunctionality is deconstructed, the variable context(s) is objectively definable and delimitable, giving insight to

how DPMs interact with the grammar over the course of their development.

References:

[1] Pichler, H. 2010. Methods in discourse variation analysis: Reflections on the way forward. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14:581–608.
[2] Denis, D., M. Wiltschko, and A. D'Arcy. 2016. Deconstructed multifunctionality: Confirmational variation in Canadian English through time. Paper presented at *Discourse-Pragmatic Variation and Change* 3, University of Ottawa. (May 2016).
[3] Wiltschko, M. and A. D'Arcy. 2015. Deriving variation in function: A case study of Canadian *eh* and its kin. Paper presented at NWAV44, University of Toronto/York University. (Oct. 2015)
[4] Wiltschko, M. and J. Heim. 2016. The syntax of confirmationals: A Neo-Performative analysis. In *Outside the clause: Form and function of extra-clausal constituents,* G. Kaltenböck, E. Keizer, and A. Lohmann (eds.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. pp. 305–40.
[5] Beyssade C. & J.-M. Marandin. 2006 The speech act assignment problem revisited: Disentangling speaker's commitment from speaker's call on addressee. In O. Bonami & P. Cabredo-Hoffher (eds.), *Empirical Studies in Syntax and Semantics* 6. 37–68.
[6] Johnson, M. 1976. Canadian eh. *Ohio State University Working Papers in Linguistics*, 21:153–160.
[7] Andersen, G. 2001. Pragmatic markers and sociolinguistic variation. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
[8] Speas, M. and C. Tenny. 2003. Configurational Properties of Point of View Roles. In A-M. Di Sciullo *Asymmetry in Grammar.* pp. 315-344. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
[9] Z. Lam. 2014. A complex ForceP for speaker- and addressee-oriented discourse particles in Cantonese. *Studies in Chinese Linguistics* 35(2): 61–80.
[10] Bayer, J. and Obenauer, H.-G. 2011. Discourse particles, clause structure, and question types. *The Linguistic Review,* 28: 449–491.
[11] Roberts, I. and A. Roussou. 2003. *Syntactic Change: A minimalist approach to grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.