

7 Historical Discourse Analysis

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0 Introduction

Some dozen years ago, as evidenced by van Dijk's four-volume *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1985), the historical analysis of discourse was unrecognized.¹ However, the intervening period has seen a wealth of studies, which have been variously termed "New Philology" (Fleischman 1990), "post-/interdisciplinary philology" (Sell 1994), "historical discourse analysis" or "historical text linguistics" (Enkvist and Wårvik 1987: 222), "diachronic textlinguistics" (Fries 1983), or "historical pragmatics" (Stein 1985b; Jucker 1994). While providing an overview of some of these studies – which range from detailed accounts of particular discourse forms in individual languages to programmatic statements concerning the nature or usefulness of the undertaking – the following chapter will attempt to describe this new field of endeavor by locating discourse analysis in relation to historical linguistics and, alternatively, historical linguistics in relation to discourse analysis, and by exploring the mutual contributions of these disciplines as well as their possible synthesis.

0.1 *Scope of discourse analysis*

An initial difficulty which presents itself when one attempts to survey the field of historical discourse analysis is the determination of what is encompassed by discourse analysis itself. Standard treatments of discourse analysis (e.g. Stubbs 1983; Brown and Yule 1983; Schiffrin 1994) cover a wide range of topics, including cohesion and coherence, anaphora, information structuring (topic/comment, given/new, focus), turn-taking, boundary/peak marking, grounding, topic or participant tracking, discourse markers, and segmentation (paragraph or episode marking), on the one hand, and inference, implicature, presupposition, maxims of conversation, relevance, the Cooperative Principle, politeness, and speech acts, on the other hand.

Particularly problematic is the distinction between discourse analysis and pragmatics (see Ward and Birner, this volume), as suggested roughly by the division of

topics above. A textbook account of pragmatics (e.g. Levinson 1983) covers many of the same issues as do accounts of discourse analysis; pragmatics is sometimes said to encompass discourse analysis – or the reverse. It has been suggested that discourse analysis is more text-centered, more static, more interested in product (in the well-formedness of texts), while pragmatics is more user-centered, more dynamic, more interested in the process of text production. Discourse analysis is frequently equated with conversational analysis, and pragmatics with speech act theory. It would seem difficult to distinguish the two with any conviction, however; for example, discourse markers, such as *well*, *so*, or *you know*, have both “textual” functions in organizing discourse (e.g. marking topic or participant change, narrative segmentation, discourse type, saliency, fore/background) – functions falling more under the rubric of discourse analysis – and “expressive functions,” both subjective (e.g. expressing evaluation/emphasis, focusing on the speaker) and interpersonal (e.g. evoking the hearer’s attention, expressing common knowledge, denoting “negative” or “positive” politeness) – functions falling under the rubric of pragmatics proper (see Brinton 1996: 36–40).

While it is not possible in this chapter to define the range of topics included in the field of discourse analysis (these will be suggested by this *Handbook* in its entirety), it is useful to understand the field broadly as “the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring *connected* spoken or written discourse” (Stubbs 1983: 1), as being concerned with the level above that of the individual sentence: with intersentential connections, with global rather than local features, and with those forms that serve to bind sentences. No attempt will be made here to differentiate with any exactness between discourse analysis and pragmatics, though the emphasis will be on the more formal aspects of text structure, such as discourse markers or grounding, rather than on the more notional elements of text semantics, such as presupposition or conversational maxims, or on aspects of language use. For this reason, certain aspects of historical pragmatics, especially those relating to diachronic changes in the expression of conversational routines and politeness formulae or in the structuring of speech events, will not be treated here.

0.2 *Scope of historical discourse analysis*

As a cross-disciplinary field, historical discourse analysis may be approached from at least two different directions.

The first approach involves an application of discourse analysis to language history. It is the study of discourse forms, functions, or structures – that is, whatever is encompassed by discourse analysis (see above) – in earlier periods of a language. The attention of the discourse analyst is focused on historical stages of a language, yet the emphasis remains on discourse structure. This approach may be termed **historical discourse analysis** proper.² The advantage of such an approach is that it may more satisfactorily explain the functions of many features of older texts. Note, however, that this approach is essentially *synchronic*, since it involves an analysis, albeit a discourse-oriented one, of a language at a particular stage in its development. Within such an approach, there are two possible steps, one mapping form to function (the explication of the discourse functions of particular historical forms) and the other mapping function to form (the identification of historical forms which are exponents

of particular discourse functions) (cf. Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 13ff). The former direction seems to be the more common in historical discourse analysis.³

The second approach involves an application of discourse analysis to historical linguistics. It is the study of “discourse-pragmatic factors” in language change or of the discourse motivations behind diachronic changes, whether phonological, morphological, syntactic, or semantic. The attention of the historical linguist is focused on discourse matters, yet the emphasis remains on language change. It should be noted that a consideration of discourse factors in certain kinds of diachronic change, such as word order change, is not recent, and an interest in discourse-driven or influenced change can now be seen as almost commonplace. Such an approach has the advantage of providing elucidation of certain changes and a fuller understanding of diachronic processes of change. It may be termed **discourse-oriented historical linguistics**.⁴ An extension of this approach (dating back to Givón 1979a) involves the study of how an element functioning on the discourse level comes to function on the morphosyntactic or semantic level.

A third approach, though less well developed than the others, is more truly interdisciplinary, involving a synthesis of discourse and diachrony. It involves a study of the changes in discourse marking, functions, and structures over time. That is, discourse structure is treated on a par with phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic structure as something which changes and develops over time, so that one might legitimately talk of *discours(al) change* as well as, for example, *phonological change*. This approach may be termed **diachronic(ally oriented) discourse analysis**.

The remainder of the chapter will examine these three approaches.

1 Historical Discourse Analysis

Historical stages of a language often contain apparently meaningless words and particles, empty or repetitive phrases, inexplicable morphological forms or uses of inflectional forms, seemingly “primitive” stylistic features, and uncategorizable or odd text types. While traditionally many of these features have been viewed as grammatical pleonasms, metrical expedients, intensifiers or emphatics, colloquialisms, or defects of style, it has proved fruitful in recent years to re-examine these features using the tools of modern discourse analysis.

While a major stumbling block to such a re-examination would appear to be the lack of oral texts from earlier periods, since discourse analysis has typically been concerned with the oral medium, with naturally occurring conversations, and oral narratives, this is no longer considered a serious impediment to historical discourse analysis. First, it is generally agreed that earlier periods of most written languages, especially medieval texts in the Indo-European languages, are products of the transition from an oral to a literate culture and, though not oral texts, contain an “oral residue” (Ong 1984), the linguistic characteristics of an oral culture. For Fleischman, it is precisely because discourse analysis is concerned with oral texts that it will explain many of the features of medieval literature: “I am convinced that many of the disconcerting properties of medieval vernacular texts . . . can find more satisfying explanations if we first of all acknowledge the extent to which our texts structure information

the way a spoken language does, and then proceed to the linguistic literature that explores the pragmatic underpinning of parallel phenomena in naturally occurring discourse" (1990: 23). Second, much can be deduced about the oral form of earlier languages from "speech-based" genres (Biber and Finegan 1992) such as court records, sermons, and dramatic dialogue as well as from more colloquial written genres such as personal letters. Finally, it has become increasingly common to apply the techniques of discourse analysis to written texts and to recognize separate principles of discourse structure in such texts: "written texts can be analyzed as communicative acts in their own right" (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 10).

1.1 Discourse markers

In historical discourse analysis, perhaps the most attention has been paid to what Longacre terms "mystery particles," that is, to the "verbal and nominal affixes and sentential particles [which] continue to defy analysis even at a relatively advanced stage of research" (1976: 468); in contemporary discourse analysis, mystery particles are more typically termed *discourse markers* (Schiffrin 1987) or *pragmatic markers* (Brinton 1996: 29–30, 40) and include such forms as *well*, *now*, *so*, and *y'know* in Modern English.⁵ Viewed traditionally, discourse markers are considered to be of indeterminate word class and uncertain meaning. But as Longacre observes, mystery particles almost inevitably "have a function which relates to a unit larger than the sentence, i.e. to the paragraph and the discourse" (1976: 468).

It has been convincingly argued that a number of particles can be understood as functioning as discourse markers with textual and interpersonal functions; here, space permits only a sampling of articles discussing particles in the history of the Germanic and Romance languages. For example, several works have treated Old English (OE) *þa* 'then'; it has been seen as a foregrounder, a foreground "dramatizer," a sequencer of events, a marker of colloquial speech, a peak marker, and a narrative segmenter (Enkvist 1972, 1986; Enkvist and Wårvik 1987; Wårvik 1990, 1995a, 1995b; see also Hopper 1979, 1992) or primarily as a shift marker (Kim 1992). Similar functions have been attributed to the cognate *thô* in Old Saxon and Old High German (Wilbur 1988; Betten 1992). OE adverbials such as *hēr* 'here' and *nū* 'now', as well as a variety of forms in the later periods (e.g. *before/afore/fore*, *above*, *the said*, *hereafter*), have a "text deictic" function in expressing the point where the speaker or writer is at the moment (Fries 1993, 1994). Comparing the OE adverbs *witodlice* 'certainly' and *soplice* 'truly' with their most common Latin counterpart, *autem* (see Kroon 1995) and with the use of *þa*, Lenker (forthcoming) argues that they serve as highlighting devices and as markers of episode boundaries or shifts in the narrative (functionally equivalent to *þa gelamp hit þæt*; see below). It has also been suggested that *sona* and *þærrihste* 'immediately, at once' signal the "peak zone" of OE narratives (Wårvik 1995a). I have argued that OE *hwæt* 'what' serves as an attention-getter and as a marker of shared knowledge (Brinton 1996). Fludernik (1995, 1996: 101–20) has looked at the use of *so*, *but*, *and*, and *thenne* as episodic narrative markers in Middle English (ME). Fischer (forthcoming) exemplifies the use of *marry* (<*Mary*), beginning in ME and peaking in the sixteenth century, as a textual marker used to claim the floor at the beginning of a turn and as an interpersonal marker expressing a range of speaker attitude. In

Shakespeare, *why* may be used as a discourse marker to draw a logical conclusion from what has gone before, often giving a tone of superiority and potential disparagement, while *what* may be used to express surprise or incredulity, which often turns into contempt or scorn (Blake 1992). Interjections in Early Modern English (EModE), such as *ah*, *alas*, *fie*, *oh*, *tush*, and *welaway*, Taavitsainen argues (1995), are a subset of discourse markers; they “encode speaker attitudes and communicative intentions” (439), are “deliberate devices in manipulating reader involvement” (463), and may serve textual functions in some genres.

Similar arguments have been adduced for various mystery particles in the history of the Romance languages, such as Old French *mar* ‘woe unto you’, *si*, and the locative particles *ci*, *ça* ‘here’, *la*, *iluec* ‘there’ (see Fleischman 1990 for a summary of these articles). Fleischman (1992) argues that Old French *si* (untranslatable) functions as a main-clause marker of subject/topic continuity, while explicit subject pronouns mark switch-reference. Bolkestein and van de Grift (1994) show that the choice in Latin among the anaphoric particles *is*, *hic*, *ille*, *iste*, and \emptyset is pragmatically/functionally motivated. In a detailed study, Kroon (1995) argues that differences among the Latin adversative conjunctions *at*, *autem*, and *vero* and causal conjunctions *nam*, *enim*, *igitur*, and *ergo* cannot be explained adequately as a matter of relative strength, but that discourse type and communicative/expressive value must be considered: *nam* and *autem* occur primarily in monologic discourse and express textual connections in the strict sense; *enim* and *vero* occur primarily in dialogic discourse and function as “situating particles” indicating the involvement of the discourse participants, while *ergo* and *at* have an interactional function as well as a textual (connective) function. In another study of Latin particles, Risselada (1994) points out that a full understanding of directive markers (e.g. *dum*, *age*, *modo*, *quin*, *vero*, *sane*, *proinde*) depends on a knowledge not only of their basic meaning but also of the level of the utterance to which they pertain and the pragmatic and contextual properties of the utterance in which they are used.⁶

In sum, it has been possible to argue that erstwhile mystery particles in older stages of languages share many, if not all, of the features of discourse markers in modern languages. They are normally marginal in word class, heterogeneous in form, of high frequency, phonetically short, outside the syntactic structure of the clause, sentence-initial, lacking in propositional content, optional, difficult to translate, and stylistically stigmatized. Moreover, they exhibit all of the textual functions – grounding, saliency or peak marking, narrative segmentation – as well as the speaker- and hearer-oriented expressive functions, including those of internal and external evaluation, of modern discourse markers (see Brinton 1995).⁷

1.2 Inflectional forms

1.2.1 Verbal morphology

Tense-aspect morphology, because of its function in conceptualizing and placing events in time, plays a special role in discourse structuring and hence has been studied by historical discourse analysts.

For the student of medieval literature, the “historic(al) present” – the use of the present tense in a past-tense narrative, often with rapid and seemingly inexplicable

alternations between past and present – offers the most obvious phenomenon where a discourse analysis might provide a more satisfactory explanation than has thus far been given. It has traditionally been explained either as a metrical expedient or as an intensifying, vivifying, or emphatic device. Numerous exceptions can be found, however, in which the appearance of the historical present cannot be accounted for by either theory. Extrapolating from work on the historic present in modern oral narratives, therefore, which has suggested its role in narrative segmentation, foregrounding, and internal evaluation, scholars have argued that the historical present in medieval texts from different traditions serves discourse roles: in Old French, it marks foregrounded events of “highest saliency,” is a device for internal evaluation, and is characteristic of oral performed narrative (Fleischman 1985, 1986); in ME, it denotes main events, introduces central characters, and highlights key descriptive details (Richardson 1991); and in Old Norse, it frames and stages the narrative, marking transitions between episodes, distinguishing speakers, and providing internal evaluation (Richardson 1995). For both Fleischman and Richardson, vividness and excitement are a consequence of the text-organizing function of the historical present, not the primary function of the form. The overarching function of the present tense in Charlotte Brontë’s nineteenth-century narrative seems to be that of evaluation, while the historical present is used for foregrounding and internal evaluation; “dramatization” and “vivid visualization” contribute to the form’s evaluative function (Brinton 1992).

Discourse studies have also focused on the function of aspectual forms. Consonant with general principles of grounding, Hopper (1979: 219–26) concludes that in OE narrative the foreground is characterized by verbs in the perfective aspect denoting single dynamic, punctual, telic events, whereas the background is characterized by verbs in the imperfective aspect denoting states or durative/iterative/habitual atelic processes.⁸ Looking at other aspectual forms in OE, Richardson argues that “nonperfective” forms, including motion, perception, and ingressive verbs, with accompanying infinitive, signal new episodes, accelerate actions for dramatic effect, and establish point of view; likewise, the perfect in ME serves to mark narrative boundaries (1994). I argue that ME inchoative *gan* ‘began’ serves a demarcating function and slows the narrative down, while perfective *anon* ‘at once, immediately’ marks salient action and speeds a narrative up (Brinton 1996). Finally, a number of studies have also suggested discourse functions for EModE *do* as a peak marker, information focuser, or event foregrounder (Stein 1985a; Wright 1989).⁹

Fleischman (1990: 36) concludes that tense-aspect forms serve a variety of important roles in discourse: they may have textual functions (e.g. grounding, creating cohesion, marking boundaries, or modulating pace), expressive functions (e.g. expressing evaluation or point of view), and metalinguistic functions (e.g. signaling text type).

1.2.2 Pronominal forms

Pronominal forms, because of their anaphoric and referential functions, play an important role in discourse structuring and hence have also received the attention of historical discourse analysts. For example, it has been suggested that the demonstrative pronoun *this* in ME (as in “this Pandarus”) functions as a foregrounder (Fludernik 1995; Sell 1985). Work on EModE has attributed a discourse function to the variant personal pronominal forms *you/thou* (see references in Stein 1985b: 348): Calvo (1992)

argues that in addition to negotiating social identities and expressing attitudinal features, these forms may denote a change in conversational topic and mark discourse boundaries; similarly, Hope (1994) sees these forms as having not only a “macro-pragmatic” function in encoding the differential status of the interlocutors, but a “micro-pragmatic” function in expressing emotional attitude. Wales (1995) also sees a discourse role for the generalizing *your* (i.e. “not your average person”) in EModE; in addition to its generic or gnomic meaning, it has various kinds of expressivity: a deictic, focusing function, a second person discourse awareness, and a generally dismissive tone.

1.3 *Fixed phrases and clauses*

A number of the recognized discourse markers in Modern English consist of phrases (e.g. *after all, all right, and stuff like that*) or clauses, sometimes called “comment clauses” (e.g. *I mean, you see, that’s right*). Thus, it is not surprising that fixed expressions in older language, in addition to their function as oral formulae, are coming to be recognized as discourse markers. For example, OE *þa gelamp hit þæt* and ME *then bifel it that* ‘then it happened that’ can best be understood as a metacommentary marking an episode boundary and expressing the “subsidiary foreground,” the instigating event of an episode. OE *hwæt þa* ‘what then’ moves the narrative forward, expressing the fact that the event which follows can be inferred from the previous event. In contrast, ME *what (ho)* makes a claim on the attention of the interlocutor (Brinton 1996).

Moreover, it is possible to find the origin of modern fixed expressions in earlier stages of a language. Modern English parentheticals such as *I think/suppose/guess* (subjective) or *it seems* (objective) arise in early ME as *I gesse/trowe/deme* or *it seemeth*; in addition to epistemic and evidential meaning, they serve purposes of intimacy and “positive” politeness (self-effacement and deference). Nonfirst person epistemic parentheticals (e.g. *God knows*) also arise in early ME as *God woot, trusteth me wel*, and serve as an attempt by the speaker to persuade the hearer of the truth of the utterance. Likewise, the very common Modern English discourse marker, *you know/y’know*, arises in ME as *ye knowen*, perhaps as a replacement for OE *hwæt* (see above) (Brinton 1996).

1.4 *Word order*

The relation of word order patterns to discourse factors such as topic/comment, thematization, and focus is well known. An account of such phenomena, which have been widely studied in the word order of older languages, is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a somewhat broader view of discourse factors in the word order of an historical language is taken by Hopper (1979, 1992), who suggests that word order in OE can be accounted for by a theory of grounding. He argues that the foreground is characterized by (S)OV or VS (O) (“verb peripheral”) word order, while the background is characterized by (S)V(O) word order. In respect to verb peripheral order, (S)OV is used internal to episodes with topical subjects and VS (O) is

used at the beginning of minor episodes and with a change in subject or topic. (S)VO is used for the beginning of main episodes and for global backgrounding.

1.5 Text types

Finally, it has been suggested that typologies accounting for current texts and the enumeration of features characteristic of different text types may not be adequate for a classification of texts from the past, since conventions of genre are defined by a variety of factors, including forms of the language, topic, situation, and medium (see Görlach 1992: 736–44); Fries asserts, for example, that “it must not be taken for granted that text-linguistic rules for present-day English are also valid for the older periods of the language” (1983: 1013). Questions of differences of textual conventions fall under what Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 11) call “pragmaphilology,” or “the contextual aspects of historical texts, including the addressers and addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text reception, and the goal(s) of the text.” Within the field of historical discourse analysis, there have been studies of various genres at different periods, but no comprehensive accounts. For example, Fleischman (1990: 34–5) considers the discourse function of the *laisse* in the Old French epic genre, Görlach (1992) examines the conventions of English cookery books from the past, Hüllen (1995) uncovers the structures in Caxton’s dialogues on language learning, and Virtanen (1995) looks at discourse strategies in EModE travelogues.

2 Discourse-oriented Historical Linguistics

The second approach to historical discourse analysis is one which seeks to find the origins and/or motivations of diachronic change in discourse. This approach has been ascendant in recent years. Since it would be impossible to give a complete picture of the results of this approach, this section can only hint at areas in which these types of studies have concentrated.

2.1 Discourse-driven change

It has become almost standard practice in linguistic research to consider discourse-pragmatic factors as possible causes, motivations, or essential aspects of historical change. Two areas of change in which discourse motivations seem most clearly at work are word order change and grammaticalization.

2.1.1 Word order change

It would seem obvious to conclude that just as there is an essential link synchronically between word order and discourse, there should be such a link between word order change and discourse. The work of Faarlund (1985, 1989) on “pragmatic syntax” is

typical of this approach to word order change. Faarlund argues that “the goal [of pragmatic syntax] is to account for the choices speakers make between systematically related surface structures with equivalent cognitive content” in terms of factors such as theme, focus, and dominance; in other words, whenever two or more (synonymous) syntactic forms exist, there are pragmatic reasons for using one rather than the other. He believes that syntactic change can be explained in terms of pragmatic syntax, for if a new form appears and becomes pragmatically more useful, it may lead to syntactic restructuring, or what Faarlund calls the “grammaticalization of pragmatics” (1985: 366–8, 386). As an example of such change, he discusses the change from OV to VO word order in Germanic. The rightward movement of the object should not be explained as a rare and highly marked afterthought, but by a universal pragmatic principle of focusing. Similarly, Ramat (1990) argues that a discourse-functional explanation is needed for word order changes from Latin to Romance (loss of Wackernagel’s Law, loss of verb-final order, cliticization of pronouns to the left of the verb).

2.1.2 Grammaticalization

More recently, it has come to be recognized that discourse factors play a role in the process of grammaticalization.¹⁰ A widely accepted view of grammaticalization is that rather than involving semantic “bleaching” (loss of meaning) or metaphor, as has traditionally been assumed, it involves a change from conversational to conventional implicature; that is, a conversational implicature arising in certain local discourse contexts becomes “semanticized,” or assimilated as part of the conventional meaning of the grammaticalized word. This type of change has been called “pragmatic strengthening” or “strengthening of informativeness” (Traugott and König 1991; Hopper and Traugott 1993: 63ff; Traugott 1995b).

Numerous examples of the role of conversational implicature in grammaticalization have been adduced by Traugott, primarily from the history of English. An instance of such a semantic shift is the change from temporal to causal meaning in the grammaticalization of OE *sibþan* ‘since’ from adverb to conjunction, from the meaning ‘from the time that’ to the meaning ‘because’, which results from semanticization of the meaning of ‘cause’ which arises in certain contexts. Working within the same framework, Carey (1994), considering the early grammaticalization of the perfect in OE, sees the shift from stative (adjectival) to perfect (verbal) meaning, that is, from present state of an object to past process performed on an object, as the conventionalization of an invited inference. Burridge (1995: 73–4) cites a number of examples from Pennsylvania German where increased pragmatic meaning is the outcome of grammaticalization: the change of *als* from an adverb > habitual aspectualizer > discourse particle; the development of futures with *geh* ‘to go’ and *zehle* ‘to count’; the development of a progressive from the locative construction *sei* ‘to be’ + *am/draa* ‘on, at’; and the change of *duh* ‘to go’ from habitual to present. Taking into account communicative intent, speaker attitude (prominence, (de)emphasis, viewpoint), grounding, and thematic continuity, Epstein (1994, 1995) has studied the grammaticalization of the Latin demonstrative *ille* as a definite article *le/Ø* in French; for example, the zero article in French expresses a low degree of individuation and hence has a backgrounding function; it serves a role in signaling the way a speaker manages the flow of information.¹¹

2.2 From discourse to grammar/semantics

In 1979a, Givón argued for the following historical progression:

discourse > syntax > morphology > morphophonemics > zero¹²

He saw the first two steps as motivated primarily by communicative needs and the last two by phonological attrition. In discussions of this progression, interest has focused on the change from looser, conjoined, paratactic constructions to more tightly bound subordinated constructions, e.g. from finite clause to nonfinite complement, from topic clause to relative clause, and so on; other examples of this progression (with an emphasis on the initial discourse > syntax step) include the change from topic to subject marking or from old/new information marking to case functions.

The strong interpretation of Givón's now widely cited progression, which is probably not tenable, is that *all* syntax results from the fossilization of original discourse forms. A weaker interpretation – that what begins as a discourse strategy may sometimes be reanalyzed as syntax – has provided fruitful means of approaching some historical developments. For example, Burrige (1995) argues that in Pennsylvania German, the dative of possession, which begins as a rhetorical device for promoting personal involvement, develops into the regular syntactic marker of possession, displacing the original possessive genitive; furthermore, the semantic shift involves a conversational implicature from close relationship to possession. Faarlund (1985, 1989) sees the rise of an obligatory subject with specific syntactic properties from Old Norse to Modern Norwegian as the result of a topicalization rule moving the NP which is not most highly ranked semantically (but which is most highly ranked thematically) to the left; the moved NP then acquires the grammatical function of subject. Wiegand (1982, 1987) argues that the OE construction *for* + demonstrative pronoun (+ *þe*) begins as a pragmatic indicator of cohesion between two units of discourse, with the demonstrative indexing the cause. As case marking is lost in ME, the demonstrative is no longer analyzable as a deictic, and the construction is reanalyzed as a simple conjunction. König (1992) suggests that disjunctive (*whether*), quantificational (*what/where/however*), and scalar (*even*) conditionals in English and German still show evidence of deriving from a juxtaposed or loosely connected clause.

3 Diachronically Oriented Discourse Analysis

The third type of historical discourse analysis is one which examines the evolution of discourse marking over time, whether focusing on the development of individual discourse markers or on changes in systems of discourse marking.¹³

3.1 The origin and development of discourse markers

A number of questions arise in the study of the development of discourse markers:

- 1 What is the source of discourse forms? What semantic and syntactic properties predispose them to express certain discourse notions?
- 2 What is the course of their semantic and syntactic development? Do they follow recognized principles of change?
- 3 How do they fare over time? What changes do they undergo and why? To what extent are they transient?

Most studies of the evolution of discourse markers have related their development to the unilinear course of grammaticalization proposed by Traugott (1982: 257), from propositional/ideational to (textual) to interpersonal/expressive meaning,¹⁴ following three principles of semantic change (Traugott and König 1991: 208–9):

- tendency I: from meanings situated in the external described situation to meanings situated in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) situation;
- tendency II: from meanings situated in the described external or internal situation to meanings situated in the textual/metalinguistic situation;
- tendency III: to meaning increasingly situated in the speaker's subjective belief-state/attitude toward the situation.

Tendencies I and II are metaphorically driven, while tendency III is metonymically driven, involving an increase in informativeness or a conventionalizing of conversational implicature (see above). Tendency III results in "subjectification," or "the development of a grammatically identifiable expression of speaker belief and speaker attitude toward what is said" (Traugott 1995b: 32).

Traugott gives the examples of the discourse markers *well*, *right*, and *why* moving from propositional to textual to interpersonal meaning (1982: 251, 252, 255), of *let's*, moving from a second person imperative to a first person hortative to a discourse marker meaning that the speaker is cognizant of the hearer, of *let alone* developing from an imperative to a discourse marker expressing the speaker's epistemic attitude, and of the subject of *I think* losing its referential properties and becoming the starting point of a perspective (1995b: 36–9). Schwenter and Traugott (1995; also Traugott forthcoming; Tabor and Traugott forthcoming) point to the acquisition of discourse functions for the "substitutive complex prepositions" *instead/in place/in lieu of*, which originate as purely locative expressions but come to encode an implicature of (counter)expectation. Citing the development of *indeed*, *in fact*, *besides*, and *anyway* in the history of English, Traugott (1995a, forthcoming; Tabor and Traugott forthcoming) argues for a cline: clause-internal adverbial > sentential adverb > discourse marker (denoting elaboration/clarification of discourse content). Rickford et al. (1995: 119–26) discuss the development of *as far as* from a marker of distance or extent to a topic restrictor beginning in the seventeenth century, again from a clause-internal adverb to a discourse marker (see also Traugott forthcoming).

Working within the same model,¹⁵ Onodero (1995) sees the Japanese adversative conjunctions *demo* and *dakedo* changing from ideational > textual > expressive and interjections such as *ne* changing from expressive > textual/expressive, both moving from less to more personal. Kryk-Kastovsky (1997) looks at the shift in the adverbs *now* in English, *nun* in German, and *no/na* in Slavic (cf. OCS *nyně*) from propositional to textual/pragmatic meaning and their evolution as markers of speaker attitude.

Finell (1989, 1992) observes a similar course of development with *well* in English and with topic changers, including introducers (*now*), closers (*however*), and resumers (*anyhow*).¹⁶

In general, research has found that in their development, discourse markers undergo many of the morphosyntactic and semantic changes identified with the process of grammaticalization,¹⁷ though never, of course, being fully “grammaticalized” in the sense of being incorporated into a recognized grammatical paradigm nor generally undergoing phonological reduction or morphological bonding.¹⁸ They are subject to the following changes, all of which are thought to be typical of grammaticalization:

- 1 decategorialization: loss of the morphological and syntactic characteristics of their original word class);
- 2 change from open to closed class membership (Traugott forthcoming);
- 3 syntactic fixation: loss of syntactic variability and occupation of a fixed slot (but see Traugott 1995b);
- 4 “divergence” (Hopper 1991) or “split”: retention of full lexical characteristics in some contexts alongside grammaticalization in other contexts; and
- 5 “layering” (Hopper 1991): continuation of older, more highly grammaticalized forms next to newer, less grammaticalized forms.

Semantically, discourse markers exhibit “semantic aptness,” or appropriateness for the type of discourse marker that they become; more importantly, their semantic development provides evidence for unidirectionality, for referential (propositional) meaning being the source for pragmatic (textual and interpersonal) meanings (see Brinton 1995; Traugott 1995b, forthcoming). It might be argued that discourse markers do not undergo “condensation” (loss of syntactic scope), since in their discourse function they relate not to individual words or even clauses but to larger stretches of discourse; in fact, Tabor and Traugott (forthcoming) challenge the notion of scope reduction (from “loose” to “tight” syntax) in the process of grammaticalization generally.

I have argued (Brinton 1996) that in its evolution from interrogative to complementizer to discourse marker, OE *hwæt* becomes a particle of indeterminate status and assumes fixed, initial position, always occurring with first or second person pronoun. Its interrogative sense permits it to become a marker which questions common knowledge, expresses surprise, and focuses attention. ME *gan*, in its change from aspectual marker to turn-of-event marker to emphatic/intensive marker, develops from a full verb to a (quasi-)auxiliary, generally occurring with the bare infinitive, and becomes fixed in the third person preterite. Its inceptive semantics motivates its development as a textual marker which focuses on the ensuing action. ME *anon*, developing from locative/temporal meaning to the meaning of saliency/importance/sequence and then of willingness/readiness, loses the cardinal characteristics of a predicate adverbial and follows Traugott’s cline (see above). Its perfective semantics motivates its development as a textual marker which emphasizes the sequence of events. *þa gelamp hit þæt* in OE and *then bifel it that* in ME become unitary and particle-like; their general meaning of ‘happening’ makes them suitable as episode boundary markers. In ME, parentheticals such as *I gesse* become fixed in the first person, present tense, and undergo a semantic change from act of cognition, to mode of knowing (evidentiality), to (un)certainty (epistemicity), and finally to intimacy/

politeness.¹⁹ Using evidence such as its increasing fixedness in the first person, its occurrence sentence-initially without *that* or parenthetically, and even its orthography, Palander-Collin (1996, 1997) sees the grammaticalization of the impersonal verbal phrase *methinks* as a sentence adverbial indicating evidentiality, opinion, or subjective truth.²⁰ Akimoto (forthcoming) discusses the grammaticalization of *I pray you/thee* > *I pray* > *pray/prithee* as a “courtesy marker”; in taking on an interjectional use, occurring parenthetically in mid and final position, the verb *pray* undergoes decategorialization and syntactic subordination (or loss of scope) as well as semantic bleaching (see also Palander-Collin 1996: 148, 1997: 393). Finally, Lenker (forthcoming) observes the grammaticalization of OE *witodlice* and *soplice* from truth-intensifying, speaker-oriented adverbs with sentential scope to discourse markers serving as highlighters and markers of discourse discontinuity.

3.2 Changes in discourse marking

In addition to the evolution of individual discourse studies, attention has also been paid to larger changes in patterns of discourse structuring, from one system of discourse marking to another system. For example, Wårvik (1990) sees a “typological” shift in the history of English from the explicit foreground-marking system of OE, centered on the use of *þa* “then”, to the “fuzzy” backgrounding system of Modern English, which depends on the tense-aspect system (simple vs. expanded tenses) and the syntactic status of clauses; she relates this shift to a change from oral to literate techniques of grounding (cf. Aristar and Dry 1982). Fludernik (1995) sees the leveling of the foregrounding function of *þa* counteracted by various devices in ME, including *þis* NP, *so*, *thus*, and *anon* to denote foreground and present participles to denote background. ME *þenne/than* “then” becomes primarily a temporal marker of sequence (Wårvik 1995a; Fludernik 1995) or serves to mark the onset of a narrative episode, though with decreasing frequency (Fludernik 1996: 101).²¹ A fundamental change in narrative organization which might also be attributed to the oral > literate shift is the replacement of foregrounded metacommentaries such as *þa gelamp hit þæt* denoting episode boundaries in OE with backgrounded, preposed *whan*-clauses in ME (Brinton 1996; also Fludernik 1995). Similarly, Finell (1992) notes that particles such as *now*, *however*, and *anyhow* tend to replace explicit phrases such as *and now let me tell you* as topic changers in EModE. In contrast, Taavitsainen (1995) sees interjections, as they become restricted to the oral context, as losing the textual functions (e.g. reader involvement, turning point in plot, vividness of narration, topic shift) that they had in EModE, while continuing the speaker- and addressee-focusing functions.

The loss of particular discourse markers has been accounted for by both grammatical changes and the shift from the literate to the oral mode. For instance, Fleischman (1992) attributes the loss of Old French *si* to a larger syntactic change, viz., the elimination of verb-second and the evolution of SVX order with obligatory subject pronouns, while Fujii (1991, 1992) argues that the development of explicit postpositional subject markers (*wa*, *ga*) in Japanese, where Old Japanese subjects were generally unmarked, results, internally, from the loss of implicit subject markers such as honorifics, as well as from external (language-contact) causes. The loss of discourse forms might also be attributable to a number of other causes (see Brinton 1996): to the

form's co-optation as a metrical expedient and gradual loss of meaning (as in the case of ME *gan*), to its stylistic stigmatization, perhaps because of its affiliation with oral discourse (as in the case of ME *bifel*), or to its overextension of meaning (as in the case of *hwæt* > *what*, which in addition to its propositional uses as an interrogative pronoun, adverb, and adjective and its textual uses as an interrogative complementizer and marker of textual implication ('what then'), acquires expressive uses as a marker of shared knowledge, surprise (*what, why*), an exclamation (*what a*), and an attention-getter (*what ho*)).

Despite the changes in discourse forms over time or their loss, there would nonetheless seem to be a *continuity* of pragmatic functions over time, with the forms expressing discourse functions – forms which seem to be intrinsically ephemeral (see Stein 1985a) – continually being replaced; this process of “renewal” is characteristic of grammaticalization (Hopper 1991). For example, OE *hwæt* is replaced by *you know*, or in its attention-getting function by *y'know what*, OE *hwæt þa* by *so*, ME *anon* by *now*, and ME *gan* by the colloquial forms *up and, take and, go and*. In other cases, there seems to be a preservation of forms over a long period, as in the case of the ME epistemic parentheticals *I gesse*, the surprise sense of *what*, or the episode boundary marking *þa gelamp hit þæt* > *then it bifel that* > *it came to pass that* > *it happened that*, still a feature of modern, colloquial narrative (Brinton 1996).

3.3 Changes in text types

Although Stein (1985b: 351) suggests that the study of text types has always included an historical dimension, studies of changes in discourse or genre have focused almost exclusively on changes that result from the shift from the oral to the written medium.

Taking a global view of change in text type, Biber and Finegan (1989, 1992) have examined changes in a variety of written and speech-based genres in English in respect to a number of grammatical features. What they have found is a “drift” in all genres from features that can be described as more “literate” to ones that can be characterized as more “oral,” that is, to features which they describe as more “involved” (e.g. private verbs, first and second person pronouns, contractions, *that*-deletion) rather than “informational” (e.g. nouns, prepositional phrases, “long” words); more “situation-dependent” (e.g. time and place adverbials) rather than “elaborated” (e.g. pied-piping, *wh*-relatives, nominalizations); and more concrete rather than abstract (e.g. passives, adverbial subordinators, past participles). However, Atkinson (1992), applying this type of analysis to medical research writing from 1735 to 1985 in English, has found a clear progression to more “informational,” less narrative, more explicit reference, and less overt expression of persuasion, that is, the more literate norms of academic prose (apart from its abstractness). Confirmation of this trend is provided by Görlach (1992), who, in examining changes in the genre of cookery books from ME to the nineteenth century, finds evidence of a shift from oral to written traditions, of a gradual development of generic conventions, and of the introduction of social distinctions in the targeted audience in the linguistic, social, and technical aspects of the text type.

Given that the results of genre-specific study and cross-genre studies have shown opposite directions of change in respect to the oral/written continuum, it seems clear

that this area needs much fuller study.²² Moreover, the linguistic features defining “oral” and “written” texts need to be understood better than they currently are before a diachronic study of texts can come to any certain conclusions. One might also question whether the focus on oral and written features, given the uncertainties surrounding this topic, is the most useful one.

4 Conclusion

Some years ago, Clara Calvo issued the following challenge:

For over twenty years the study of discourse has been almost exclusively concerned with synchronic analysis and . . . since we can no longer resort to the excuse that discourse studies are young and immature, we might find it necessary very soon to turn our minds to *diachronic* studies of discourse as well. (1992: 26)

Since the early 1980s, scholars have, in fact, been addressing this challenge in a variety of ways, and recently, historical discourse analysis has begun to take shape as a distinct discipline (see, e.g. Jucker 1995). However, it must be said that the field of historical discourse analysis, as it stands today, consists of somewhat disparate strands of study. One strand can be seen as philology tempered by discourse, the so-called “New Philology.” That is, it focuses on many of the concerns of the philologist – on “mystery words,” inflectional forms, collocations, textual structures – and seeks to understand them as exponents of discourse phenomena such as topic marking, participant tracking, given/new information, narrative segmentation, expressions of subjectivity, and internal or external evaluation, as we understand these phenomena in contemporary discourse. Perhaps the most rewarding of the new philological studies have been those reassessing “mystery particles” as “discourse markers.” The second strand can be seen as historical linguistics tempered by discourse. That is, it involves the usual activities of diachronic linguistics combined with a consideration of discourse factors as sources, causes, or motivations of change. While discourse-pragmatic factors can affect many different kinds of diachronic processes, they have been seen as especially significant in grammaticalization and word order change. Certain grammatical structures have also been seen as developing from original discourse structures, and the reverse. The third and last strand of historical discourse analysis involves the study of the origin, diachronic development, and/or loss of discourse markers, of changes in discourse structures, and of alterations in text types over time. Unlike the first two strands, which are *cross-disciplinary*, this third strand is more truly *interdisciplinary* in uniting discourse analysis with diachronic linguistics; and perhaps represents the richest and most rewarding aspect of the new field of historical discourse analysis.

NOTES

- 1 The chapter "Historical discourse" in van Dijk (1985) is concerned primarily with a discourse analysis of historical writing.
- 2 Compare *historical (linguistic) pragmatics* (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 5–6), which combines the first and third approaches discussed here, though it should be noted that the emphasis of the articles in the volume (Jucker 1995) is on the first approach.
- 3 In historical pragmatics, the latter direction, especially the historical study of the lexicalization of speech acts and changes in illocutionary acts, is common (see Stein 1985b: 350; Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 19–22).
- 4 Compare *pragmatic historical linguistics* (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 5). This approach overlaps to some extent with "sociohistorical linguistics," or the study of how social factors (e.g. social class, ethnicity, regional origin, sex, occupation, education) influence linguistic change. In fact, Stein (1985b) defines sociohistorical linguistics as the "micro-approach" of historical pragmatics. In introducing a special volume on the topic, Romaine and Traugott (1985: 5) understand sociohistorical linguistics as encompassing such discourse topics as genre, topic, and oral vs. literate and see it as sharing some of the same concerns as traditional philology. One attempt to address a methodological problem of sociohistorical linguistics – the problem of extracting social information from written texts – is the Corpus of Early English Correspondence, where information concerning gender, social status, educational level, and so on is much more readily extractable (see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1996).
- 5 For a definition of discourse markers, see Brinton (1996: 29–40).
- 6 From other linguistic traditions, one might cite Onodero's (1995) study of the Japanese adversative conjunctions *demo* and *dakedo*, which acquired textual and expressive functions in the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, respectively. In the classical, literary form of Malay used until the end of the nineteenth century, the particle *-lah* is a foregrounder, highlighting the event, giving it special prominence, and announcing it as one in a series of actions; use of the passive voice, marked by *-nya*, is a second means of foregrounding in Malay (Hopper 1979: 227–33).
- 7 "Propositional/ideational" denotes referential meaning or content, "interpersonal/expressive" is the expression of speaker attitude or judgment and aspects of the social exchange, and "textual" refers to devices for achieving intersentential connections and more global structuring of texts (see Brinton 1996: 38–9).
- 8 In contrast, Aristar and Dry (1982) argue that the grounding of aspectual forms in OE is ambiguous; the perfect and progressive forms are not restricted to the background, nor is the simple past restricted to the foreground (see also Wårvik 1990); grounding is accomplished through the use of aktionsart forms.
- 9 In a different vein, Stein (1985a, 1987), considering personal endings on verbs, argues that the variant third person endings *-th* and *-s* in EModE are originally distinguished stylistically (*-th* being used in the "higher" written register and elaborated prose style) and later come to have heterogeneous discourse

- functions; *-s* is more common in the peak, and *-th* marks structural units, different narrative modes, characterization, or intensity.
- 10 For discussions of grammaticalization, see, for example, Lehmann (1985), Hopper (1991), Hopper and Traugott (1993), or Brinton (1996: 50–60).
 - 11 Similarly, the grammaticalization of the demonstrative *se* as a definite article in spoken Finnish (see Laury 1995) also involves pragmatic factors. Since the demonstrative marks a discourse accessible referent, it is reanalyzed as a marker of identifiability in general; this change involves pragmatic strengthening (but not subjectification; see below).
 - 12 Or as it has been reworded by Faarlund, echoing another of Givón's well-known phrases: "today's syntax may be the product of yesterday's discourse pragmatics" (1989: 70).
 - 13 A further aspect of this approach – which will not be pursued here – is the reconstruction of discourse structures to protolanguages.
 - 14 More recently, Traugott (1995b: 47–8) has come to question the unilinear course of development from propositional to textual to interpersonal, seeing grammaticalization operating along several "correlated diachronic continua," though she still considers the change from propositional function to discourse function – "the tendency to recruit lexical (propositional) material for purposes of creating text and indicating attitudes in discourse situations" – as central.
 - 15 Working with a somewhat different framework, Fujii (1991, 1992) examines the development of the Japanese discourse-subject markers *wa* and *ga*: *wa* changes from a marker of contrast and local emphasis to a marker of theme/staging; *ga* changes from an associative marker to a nominative marker, while *no* becomes more fully associative. The markers *wo* and *ni* change from case markers to conjunctives.
 - 16 In a more detailed examination of the history of *well*, Jucker (1997) argues, however, that the earliest form in OE (*wella*, *wel la*) is used interpersonally as an attention-getter; in ME, *well* begins to be used textually as a frame marker introducing direct reported speech, and in Early Modern and Modern English, it again develops interpersonal uses as a face-threat mitigator and qualifier.
 - 17 Traugott (1995b, forthcoming) questions whether the development of discourse markers might be better understood as "lexicalization," "pragmaticalization," or "postgrammaticalization," but concludes that it most closely resembles the process of grammaticalization.
 - 18 Some discourse markers may in fact undergo phonological reduction, such as *God woot* > *Goddot(h)* (Brinton 1996) or *indeed*, *in fact* /ndid, nɪækt, fæk/ (see Traugott 1995a), morphological bonding, or other types of reduction, such as the ellipsis of {*is concerned*, *goes*} in the *as far as* construction (Traugott forthcoming).
 - 19 It can be argued further that the semantic shifts undergone by all of these forms in the process of grammaticalization involve the conventionalization of contextual implicatures, as, for example, the meaning of salience/importance/sequentiality of *anon* is an implicature of the word's sense of suddenness or urgency (see further Brinton 1996).
 - 20 She considers *methinks* as a "sentence adverbial," though the functions and characteristics of the form that she identifies are comparable to those of discourse markers.

- 21 However, *then* preserves its foregrounding function in modern oral narratives.
- 22 For example, Taavistsainen (1994) shows that the development of medical writing is more complex than initially supposed, since even from the beginning of such writing in English, there exist different subtypes that vary in the expression of involvement (e.g. first/second person pronouns, imperatives) or objectivity (e.g. passive), audience, and textual form. A large-scale, corpus-based historical study of medical writing is currently being undertaken (see Taavistsainen and Pahta 1997).

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