

# Grammaticalization in Young People's Language

## The Case of German

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### 1. Introduction\*

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### 1. Introduction\*

Synchronic research on grammaticalization has touched, among other things, upon the relation between grammaticalization and its sociolinguistic context, i.e. the social groups or language varieties and styles in which an instance of

grammaticalization occurs.<sup>1</sup> It has been well attested that “many grammatical changes go on and probably originate at the colloquial level” (Lehmann 1991: 531) of natural languages.<sup>2</sup> Recent evidence for this relation includes the following cases of grammaticalization in different languages:

- The construction *lets* (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 10-14), originally an imperative, becomes a discourse particle (e.g. *lets wash your hands*) in some colloquial varieties of English.
- The construction *be+like* (e.g. *I'm like: "Oh my God"*) is used as a marker of reported speech in both British and American English (Romaine & Lange 1991, Ferrara & Bell 1995, Andersen 1997).
- Similarly, the particle *ba* functions as a quotation marker in Swedish (Erman & Kotsinas 1993, Kotsinas 1997).
- The tag-question *innit* in British English is “developing from the contracted form of a canonical tag-question (*isn't it*) towards becoming grammatically invariant” (Andersen 1997).

These cases show some interesting parallels in terms of the linguistic structures involved, the ‘diachronic depth’ of the linguistic changes, and the social profile of the linguistic innovators. First, the items undergoing grammaticalization fulfill textual and/or interpersonal functions rather than the ideational function of language.<sup>3</sup> In other words, changes result in the emergence, not of grammatical morphemes, but of discourse markers of various kinds.<sup>4</sup> Second, the processes under discussion are non-completed. In their investigation of “a case of grammaticalization in progress”, Romaine & Lange (1991) note that the quotative function of *like* is absent from a number of linguistic and lexicographic treatments of this item, probably because it was too recent or too infrequent a phenomenon to receive attention. The same holds for Swedish *ba*, whose function as a quotation marker seems to have developed during the last 15 years (Erman & Kotsinas 1993: 7). As an invariant tag, British English *innit* is not attested until the eighties (Andersen 1997). Third, and most important for the purposes of the present paper, with the exception of *lets* these cases are reported as occurring predominantly in the speech of the youngest age group while being almost or totally absent from older speakers at the time the studies were undertaken.<sup>5</sup>

These cross-linguistic similarities have not passed unmentioned. In a review of discourse markers in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and British English teenage language, Andersen (1997) concludes that: “Teenagers’ ability

to express reported speech without the use of explicit verbs of saying appears to be a cross-linguistic phenomenon”. This view is borne out by recent findings on German youth language. In contemporary German, a new quotation marker, consisting of a subject marker (proper name or person pronoun) and the particle *so* (lit. ‘so, like that’) appears in the speech of young people as well. Its employment is illustrated in example (1) (from Androutsopoulos 1998), a young woman describing a meeting with a stranger:

- (1) *und ich so: "cool!" und er so: "hä?"*  
 ‘and I like: “cool!” and he like: “what?”’<sup>6</sup>

As in the Swedish and English cases, *so* is a multifunctional item with several colloquial usages. In its quotative function, it can introduce quotations, pseudoquotations,<sup>7</sup> sound-words or gestures; it occurs in more or less the same discourse types as Swedish *ba* and English *be+like*, i.e. mainly in narratives.

The empirical evidence gathered so far suggests that young people’s language is a promising field of research on grammaticalization in progress. The view that youth is “the time when linguistic change from below is advanced” (Eckert 1997: 163) is admittedly an old one. However, recent research shows a growing awareness of the fact that “the role of young people in the process of language change on the whole is underestimated and should be looked into at greater length” (Kotsinas 1997: 131). According to Stenström, “teenage language [...] is where linguistic innovations and new trends tend to make their first appearance, some of them even entering and becoming part of the standard language” (Stenström 1996: 146). This tendency has repeatedly been noted with regard to lexical change, in that teenage slang items were found to be entering adult colloquial or even standard vocabulary (see e.g. Andersson & Trudgill 1990). In addition, it could be particularly important for grammaticalization, in view both of the above findings and of the assumption that grammatical change might reach its peak in adolescent years (Kerswill 1996: 200).

The present paper aims to explore further the relation between youth-specific language use and grammaticalization, using evidence from contemporary German. Four cases of grammatical change, both in word formation and in syntax, will be presented. The relevance of slang vocabulary as a starting point for a grammaticalization process will be pointed out, and the attempt will be made to draw some conclusions as to grammaticalization tendencies in young people’s language.

## 2. Data and Method

The data presented in this paper were collected in the course of a research project on German youth language (*Jugendsprache*). As used in recent German academic writing, *Jugendsprache* is a cover term for adolescent and post-adolescent language varieties or speech styles, roughly equivalent to the terms *teenage talk* and *teenage speech* as used by Andersen (1997) and Stenström (1996). In this respect, *Jugendsprache* is essentially nonstandard speech, featuring regular and habitual patterns of language usage not (yet) recorded in grammars and dictionaries and/or discouraged at school.

The data consists of mainly written sources, with some additional spoken material. The sources of the written data are *fanzines*, i.e. cheaply made non-commercial music magazines, produced by students or musicians in their late teens and early twenties. Around 60 such magazines were collected between 1992-1995, covering the whole German-speaking area. This material formed the basis of a system-oriented linguistic analysis of German youth language (Androutsopoulos 1998), focusing on the description of word formation patterns, idiomatic constructions, speech act patterns, greetings, terms of address, semantic fields, loanwords etc.

While identifying cases of grammaticalization was not an original aim of this research, working with the analytic tools provided by grammaticalization theory became necessary in order to account (i) for morphological and syntactic innovations in comparison to colloquial Standard German, and (ii) for the variation in the occurrence of non-standard constructions of various kinds.

The following discussion of these patterns draws on a number of well-established mechanisms of grammaticalization. Following Hopper & Traugott (1993: 36, 97, 102), *generalization* is understood as the process of an item or construction spreading through the linguistic system, in a way that could be described as expansion into new linguistic environments. Generalization is seen as proceeding by means of *analogy*, i.e. through the creation of new or the modification of existing forms in accordance with existing patterns. A usual condition of the generalization process is *reanalysis*, a change in the structure of an expression or in the grammatical status of an item without modification of its surface manifestation.<sup>8</sup> In addition to these fundamental mechanisms of grammatical change, a number of diagnostic criteria or "heuristic principles" (Hopper 1991) are used. They include: phonetic erosion of an item in comparison to its original phonetic shape; semantic bleach, i.e. the reduction of semantic content; the extension of distributional range; an increased frequency

of occurrence; divergence between the original and the grammaticalized forms; and layering, the coexistence of different grammatical encodings in the same functional domain.

Although these mechanisms and diagnostic features can indicate that a grammaticalization process is taking place, none of them are restricted to grammaticalization. Because they are necessary but not sufficient in order to distinguish grammaticalization from other types of grammatical change,<sup>9</sup> there are still cases whose typological status as instances of grammaticalization is not clear. A number of such borderline cases in contemporary colloquial and nonstandard German are discussed in Lehmann (1991); his central criterion of grammaticalization is that the "variation affecting a linguistic unit [be] directed towards subjecting that unit more to rules of grammar" (Lehmann 1991: 493). However, pinpointing the direction of change is not always straightforward, especially when the change is too recent or at too early a stage of development. It is an important challenge to synchronic grammaticalization research to identify

potential instances of grammaticization, possibly before a stage had been reached at which forms were unambiguously part of the grammar of the language.  
(Hopper 1991: 32)

This task is of particular importance for the present paper, since the cases to be discussed are neither clear-cut nor accomplished, but rather "emergent regularities that *have the potential* of being instances of grammaticalization" (Hopper 1991: 19, my emphasis). In general terms, their analysis will be carried out by setting a cline which represents the direction of change of the item or construction in question, fixing cluster points on the cline, and assigning individual occurrences of the item/construction to these cluster points by means of the diagnostic criteria mentioned above. As will appear, a further indication of the direction of change is provided by the quantitative relations between cluster points: items further down a specific cline occur less frequently than items at earlier stages of the same cline. For instance, occurrences of the intensification pattern discussed in section 3.4 in simple syntactic environments form the bulk of my data, occurrences in more complex environments being the exception. Similarly, the negative *null* (see section 3.3) occurs as a noun modifier more often than as a verb modifier. On the basis of such quantitative facts, it is possible to assume implicational relations between stages, in the sense that the occurrence of a grammaticalizing pattern in certain contexts

implies the occurrence of the same pattern in some other contexts. Admittedly, reconstructions of this kind are partly based on ad hoc criteria and might seem a somewhat ahistorical and, at times, impressionistic practice. This is a problem that synchronic grammaticalization research in general has to face (cf. Hopper & Traugott 1993: 7).

### 3. Case Studies

Four cases of grammaticalization will be discussed in this section. To begin with, two word formation cases, the emergence of nominal formatives out of free lexical units (3.1) and the pattern of denominal conversion (3.2), will be analysed. Then two syntactic cases, the use of the cardinal *null* 'zero' as a negative (3.3) and a new word order pattern of intensification (3.4), will be dealt with.

#### 3.1. Nominal formatives

German youth slang makes regular use of two word formation patterns which have traditionally been productive in colloquial varieties of German.<sup>10</sup> As will appear, both cases involve 'serially productive' (*reihenhaft produktiv*) formatives rather than affixes. Pattern (a) is the use of general evaluative nouns as intensifying-evaluative first constituents. Some examples<sup>11</sup> are given in (2):

- |                      |   |                      |
|----------------------|---|----------------------|
| (2)a. <b>Hammer-</b> | <i>Hammersongs; Hammerplatte</i>                        | 'very good/strong B' |
| b. <b>Killer-</b>    | <i>Killerband; Killersongs; Killer-Keller</i>           | 'very good/strong B' |
| c. <b>Kult-</b>      | <i>Kultband; Kultheft; Kultteil; Kultparolen</i>        | 'very good B'        |
| d. <b>Bomben-</b>    | <i>Bombenhit; Bombenerfolg; Bombenjob</i>               | 'very good B'        |
| e. <b>Scheiß-</b>    | <i>Scheißjob; Scheißkaff; Scheißbullen; Scheißleben</i> | 'very bad B'         |

The second pattern is the use of person nouns as second constituents in compound person nouns, illustrated in (3):

- |                   |  |                   |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| (3)a. <b>-typ</b> | <i>Intyp; Macho-Typen; Schrottypen</i>           | 'one who is B'    |
| b. <b>-fuzzi</b>  | <i>HiFi-Fuzzi; Computerfuzzi; DJ-Fuzzis;</i>     | 'one who does B'  |
| c. <b>-fan</b>    | <i>Horrorfans; Knüppelfans; Metallfans</i>       | 'one who likes B' |
| d. <b>-freak</b>  | <i>Soundfreaks; Drogenfreaks; Computerfreaks</i> | 'one who likes B' |

- e. **-junkie** *Telefon-Junkie; Lovejunkie; Computerjunkies* 'one who likes B'

As can be seen from the examples, several items follow synchronically these two paths – in fact, only a selection of the data is presented here. Some of these modify the same base lexeme, e.g. *Killerband/Kultband, Killersongs/Hammersongs* in (2), or accept the same complement, e.g. *Computerfreaks/Computerjunkies* in (3). Many formatives in both sets originate from slang metaphors and/or loanwords. However, their sociolinguistic distribution varies, some of them belonging to general slang or colloquial language, notably *Scheiß-* and *Bomben-* in (2), *-fan* and *-freak* in (3), while others were restricted to youth language at the time of research. The number of attested formations (tokens) per formative ranges from 2 up to 20.

A number of the above diagnostic criteria apply to both sets. We generally find *semantic bleach*, the meaning of the formatives being more general than the (slang) meaning of the free lexical units. (Although the slang meaning of some free units is already quite general prior to formative usage.) For instance, in set (a) *Kult* 'cult' and *Bomben* 'bomb' as formatives simply come to mean 'good'. In set (b), the formative meaning of *-freak*, *-fuzzi*, *-junkie* is metaphorical and different from their (slang) meaning as free lexical items. Moreover, generalization of meaning is accompanied by *generalization of distribution*. The formatives' distributional constraints are gradually loosened in a variety of ways.<sup>12</sup> As a first step, some items from both sets seem to accept only constituents from restricted semantic classes. It has been noted (Lapp 1989) that the loan formative *-fan* originally (i.e. in the late fifties) used to combine only with items denoting music or sports while today no such restriction exists. In the same vein, some more recent items first combine only with bases denoting youth-cultural music products (e.g. *Soundfreaks, Kultplatte* 'cult record') and only at a later stage with bases from other semantic fields (e.g. *Wodkafreaks, Kultparolen* 'cult slogans'). While it is possible to analyse metaphorical formatives from set (a) initially as metaphorical comparisons (e.g. *Bombenhit* 'bomb success'), later formations do not allow such an interpretation (e.g. *Bombenjob* 'bomb job'; see also Ladissov 1983). Finally, there are differences in the *frequency of occurrence*, in that some items, especially of set (b), occur more often as formatives than as free lexical units; *-fuzzi* is not used at all as a free unit in my data. In sum, these items are, in a sense, more grammatical than their free counterparts.

It may be illuminating to look in more detail at a recent type (b) formative, *-junkie*. Although originally introduced in German slang as a

loanword meaning 'drug addict', the starting point for its formative usage most probably was the loan compound *vinyl junkie*, meaning 'one addicted to vinyl', i.e. 'one who adores vinyl records'. Here *junkie* is a metaphorical second constituent, with the first constituent *vinyl* replacing the semantic feature 'drug'. The next step consisted in reanalysing *junkie* as an equivalent to existing formatives such as *-fan* and *-freak*. *Junkie* retained thereby the grammatical meaning 'person noun' and the semantic feature 'interested in something', while the first constituent *vinyl* was replaced by the word-formation meaning 'object of interest'; *-junkie* now combined with concrete or abstract nouns denoting an object of interest, e.g. *Schokoladenjunkie* 'chocolate junkie', which can generally be paraphrased as 'one who (profoundly) likes A'. Such formations are documented in German youth slang dictionaries of the eighties and occasionally appear today in mainstream newspapers and magazines.

In sum, I suggest we are dealing with a prime example of *renewal*, the "process whereby existing meanings take on new forms" (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 121). Patterns (a) and (b) are constantly being renewed (re-grammaticalized) through new slang formatives. These probably first appear in analogical formations or slang loanwords. Once reanalyzed as formatives, they enter existing inventories and follow already established distributional patterns. Most of them are probably used for a short period of time and then dropped, making way for new items. By increase of productivity some of them can turn into regular affixoids, e.g. *-fan* in contemporary German.

### 3.2. Denominal conversions

Denominal conversion is the process of turning a noun into an adjective without overt morphological marking. In this section, particular attention will be given to nouns converted into evaluative adjectives with a general positive ('good') or negative ('bad') meaning. This pattern can be found in colloquial varieties of several European languages, including English (4), French (5) and German (6). The examples below<sup>13</sup> show denominal conversions in predicative (a) and attributive (b) positions:

- |     |    |  |    |   |
|-----|----|--|----|---|
| (4) | a. | <i>That's crap!</i>                                | b. | <i>It's a crap walkman</i>                            |
| (5) | a. | <i>c'est carton</i><br>'it's cardboard'            | b. | <i>morceaux cartons</i><br>'cardboard [music] pieces' |
| (6) | a. | <i>die Oma ist klasse</i><br>'the granny is class' | b. | <i>klasse Zeichnungen</i><br>'class drawings'         |

According to grammars and other authoritative descriptions, this pattern is not productive in contemporary Standard German. Duden (1995: 514), for instance, notes just two such items, *klasse* and *spitze*, describing them as 'fossilized' formations restricted to predicative position. By contrast, the youth language data gives quite a different picture. On the whole, 12 denominal conversions are documented, including both widely used ones (e.g. *scheiße* 'shit', *kacke* 'crap', *kult* 'cult') and regional or group-specific ones (e.g. *toto*). More importantly, some of them exhibit a much wider distribution than the one holding for Standard German. All of these items can stand as predicative adjectives; 9 of them are also used as noun modifiers, either in compounds (set (a) in section 3.1) or as free lexical items in attributive position; 4 items appear in adverbial position as well; and 2 even function as intensifiers, a phenomenon also found for other colloquial evaluative adjectives in German. As Figure 1 shows, the 12 items can be arranged on an implicational matrix according to the distribution of these five syntactic positions.

In which sense can this pattern be said to be grammaticalizing? First, this interpretation is supported by the distributional expansion of the conversions. Contrary to what holds for Standard German, some conversions cover the whole positional range of evaluative adjectives, including de-categorialization as an intensifier. Moreover, the data suggest that the model is increasingly productive, and that conversions expand their distribution in an ever shorter period of time. Let us take the oldest denominal conversion, *klasse*,<sup>14</sup> which probably served as a model for further analogical conversions. While in youth magazines of the seventies (see Ortner 1982) *klasse* predominantly occurs in the modifier-1 position, in my data (22 tokens) it occurs primarily as a modifier-2, i.e. one position further to the right on the implicational matrix. By contrast, the much more recent conversion *kult*, which probably became popular in the mid or late eighties, was already found to occur in three of five positions by the early nineties. As this pattern becomes conventionalized, the 'life cycle' of a conversion can be completed at an ever quicker pace.

	predicative	modifier-1	modifier-2	adverbial	intensifier
<i>klasse</i>	x	x	x	x	x
<i>scheiße</i>	x	x	x	x	x
<i>panne</i>	x	x	x	x	-
<i>kacke</i>	x	x	( )	x	-
<i>kult</i>	x	x	x	-	-
<i>sahne</i>	x	x	x	-	-
<i>m,ll</i>	x	( )	x	-	-
<i>spitze</i>	x	x	-	-	-
<i>schrott</i>	x	x	-	-	-
<i>gott</i>	x	-	-	-	-
<i>toto</i>	x	-	-	-	-
<i>mist</i>	x	-	-	-	-

predicative	<i>der Film ist echt kacke</i>	'the film is really crap'
modifier-1	<i>Pannecover</i>	'very bad cover'
modifier-2	<i>die klasse Mucke</i>	'this class sound'
adverbial	<i>die sehen scheiße aus</i>	'they look shit'
intensifier	<i>die sind so scheiße gut</i>	'they are shit good'
( )	this position is not attested in the data	

Fig. 1: Distributional expansion of denominal conversion

### 3.3. Non-inflected negative

The use of *null* (lit. 'zero') as an alternative to the inflected negative article *kein-* (e.g. in phrases such as *null Schwierigkeiten* 'no difficulties' instead of Standard German *keine Schwierigkeiten*) is a well-known syntactic feature of German youth language; it has even made its way into Standard German dictionaries, where it is marked as *Jugendsprache*. In actual use, *null* can also modify verbs as well as adjectives, in which case it is equivalent to standard German *nicht*. The examples in (7) demonstrate the complete distributional range of *null*, including its syntactic contexts as a noun modifier:

- (7)a. idioms with the structure *null*+NP (+ *haben*):  
*null Bock* 'no kicks', *null Problem* 'no problem', *null Ahnung* 'no idea'
- b. \_\_N (object of *haben* 'have'):  
*die Patty hat auch null Money* 'Patty has no money'
- c. \_\_N (direct or prepositional object of other verbs):  
*da gibt es null Demokratie* 'there is no democracy'  
*wir spielen für null Kohle* 'we play for no money'
- d. \_\_V: *Themen, die mich null interessieren* 'topics which do not interest me'
- e. \_\_A: *null cool* 'no cool'

In Standard German, it is only in its function as a cardinal number that *null* can modify a noun (e.g. *null/ein/zwei Fehler* 'zero/one/two mistakes'). In the nonstandard usages exemplified in (7), *null* belongs to a different quantification scale than standard *null* in that it stands in paradigmatic relationship to the items *wenig* 'few' and *viel* 'much'. Since there are ambiguous contexts, i.e. nouns which can be modified both by cardinal numbers and by quantity modifiers, it is possible for cardinal *null* to undergo reanalysis as belonging to a different category.<sup>15</sup> The decisive moment for the grammaticalization of *null*, however, seems to have been its use in the widely used idiom phrase *null Bock*, which goes back at least to the seventies. *Null* is here a part of an idiom, replacing the standard negative *keinen*. The same is true for other phrases such as *null Problem* and *null Ahnung haben* ('to have no idea'). The next step consisted in the reanalysis of *null* as a free negative, modifying NPs with the same syntactic structure as the idiom phrases, i.e. object NPs of the verb *haben* (see example 7b). Through generalization, *null* can modify object NPs of other basic verbs such as *es gibt* 'there is', *kriegen* 'get' or *spielen für* 'play for' (7c). From this stage on, its distribution is extended to other word classes (see 7d, 7e). However, the grammaticalization process is far from being completed; for instance, no modifications of complex NPs are attested, and the occurrences on adjectives are too few to show any regularity.

### 3.4. Pre-determiner intensification

The last pattern to be discussed involves a word order change in contemporary German with respect to the placement of intensifiers. The pattern, currently a very common and frequent phenomenon in young people's speech, can be

called pre-determiner intensification because the innovation consists exactly in the possibility to place an intensifier (such as *voll*, *total*, *absolut*, *ziemlich*, etc.) outside the definite NP. An overview of the lexical classes which can be inserted in the pre-determiner slot of a copulative construction, that is, in position X in the pattern below, will serve as a starting point for the discussion.

(8) SBJ \_ V<sub>COP</sub> \_ X \_ DET \_ NP

Possible complements of this slot in standard German include temporal adverbs, e.g. *das ist immer das Problem* ('that's always the problem'); modal adverbs, e.g. *das ist leider der Fehler* ('this is unfortunately the mistake'); gradation particles, e.g. *das ist wohl der Fall* ('this is surely the case'). In addition, there are two idiomatic intensifying constructions, *so ein*+NP ('such a+NP') and *was für ein*+NP ('what a+NP'). The occurrence of intensifiers in the pre-determiner slot is not mentioned in any contemporary grammar whatsoever and is obviously considered not acceptable in Standard German. In recent youth speech, however, this slot can be occupied by intensifiers as well, yielding phrases such as (9)-(11). In equivalent standard phrases, the intensifier would have to be placed inside the NP, yielding *ein totaler Fehler* ('a total mistake') for (10) or *ein voll geiler Typ* ('a really cool guy') for (11).

- (9) *voll der Schwachsinn!* 'fully the nonsense!'<sup>16</sup>  
 (10) *das war total der Fehler* 'this was totally the mistake'  
 (11) *das ist voll der geile Typ* 'that's fully the cool guy'

A thorough analysis of the pattern would have to take account of the remarkable fact that pre-determiner intensification restricts the selection of the determiner to the definite article. In other words, it is impossible to replace the definite with the indefinite article in (9)-(11) (\**total ein Fehler*, \**voll ein geiler Typ*). Rather than discussing this restriction,<sup>17</sup> I will concentrate on the gradual syntagmatic and paradigmatic expansion of the new pattern. For this purpose, 66 occurrences of the pattern were analyzed according to three criteria: (i) the lexical item used as intensifier; (ii) the structure of the intensified NP; and (iii) the syntactic embedding of the NP. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Lexical and syntactic constraints on pre-determiner intensification (N=66)

Intensifier	Structure of NP		Context of intensified NP				
	n	%	n	%			
<i>voll</i>	49	74	N	52 78	fragment	17	26
<i>total</i>	05	08	Adj+N	11 16	predicative	29	44
other	12	18	other	03 04	dir.obj. of <i>haben</i>	08	12
					dir.obj. of other V	12	18

As can be seen on the left part of Table 1, *voll* accounts for 74% of the instances of pre-determiner intensification. Earlier data allow us, in fact, to assume that *voll* was the first intensifier regularly used in this pattern. The middle part of Table 1 shows that 78% of the intensified NPs consist of a single noun (see examples (9) and (10) above). Only 16% consist of a modified noun, as in (11) above, whereas more complex NPs are very rare. The rightmost part of Table 1 shows that 66% of the intensified NPs occur either as fragments, see example (9), or as predicates of a copulative construction (examples 10, 11). The remaining instances include objects of the verb *haben* 'have' (12) or of other basic verbs such as *machen* 'make' (13):

- (12) *wir hatten voll den Spaß* 'we had fully the fun'  
 (13) *wir machen fett die Party* 'we will make fat the party'

This analysis allows for the reconstruction of a basic or 'prototypical' realization of the pre-determiner intensification pattern: the intensified NP has the simplest internal structure; it does not occur in embedded clauses; and it shows no lexical variation, the choice of intensifier being restricted to one item only. In fact, the intensifier *voll* occurs in 88% of the fragments and 72% of the predicates.

Starting from this basic realization, the development of the pattern can be depicted by arranging all other occurrences according to syntactic and lexical criteria. On a syntagmatic dimension, contexts can be arranged in a continuum of increasing complexity, with the intensified NP first occurring as a fragment, then as a predicative, then as a direct object of *haben*, and finally as a direct object of other verbs. The most complex environments attested in my data are



embedded clauses with complex predicates such as (14) and (15).

(14) *Das kann soweit gehen, daß ich voll den überzeugten Aasfresser raushängen lasse.* ('things can go so far that I pretend to be fully the convinced meat eater')

(15) *...nachdem wir völlig der falschen Wegbeschreibung zum Opfer gefallen waren...* ('after having been victims of completely the false route description')

On a paradigmatic dimension even more intensifiers can occupy the pre-determiner slot, probably as a result of the pattern's increasing conventionalization. *Voll* is by far the most common realization in my data, but the whole lexical set of colloquial or slang intensifiers are inserted in the pattern at least once. In fact, 5 out of 12 NPs occurring as direct objects of verbs other than *have* take an intensifier other than *voll*: increasing complexity of context coincides with a wider choice of lexical intensifier.

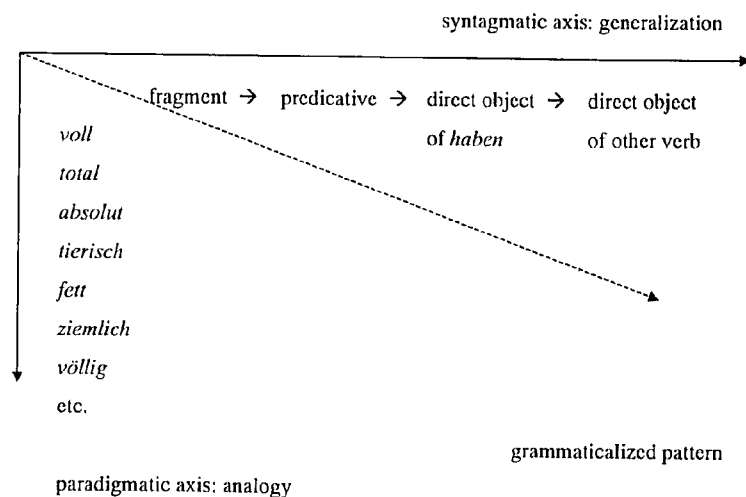


Fig. 2: Development of pre-determiner intensification

Figure 2<sup>18</sup> attempts to visualise the joint extension process of two fundamental grammaticalization mechanisms: *generalization*, as the new pattern works its way through more complex syntactic environments;<sup>19</sup> and

*analogy*, the emergence of intra-slang stylistic variation through the interchangeability of intensifiers. The dotted diagonal line suggests that grammaticalization becomes 'visible' when the joint process reaches a certain 'critical mass'. Needless to say, occurrences such as (14) and (15), which represent the most 'advanced' realization of the pattern at the time of research, form quite a small part of the data.

#### 4. Discussion

A question that arises immediately is whether the processes discussed in this paper are indeed potential instances of grammaticalization. Perhaps the most straightforward case is *null*, a function word developing out of a cardinal number. The nominal formatives have been demonstrated to be, at least to some extent, more grammatical than their free counterparts. The other two patterns, however, are certainly not typologically clear cases of grammaticalization. In the case of the denominal conversions, what may be more "subject to rules of grammar" (Lehmann 1991) is not an individual conversion item, but rather the underlying pattern, providing a new option of creating evaluative adjectives. As for the pre-determiner intensification, it is arguably a development in the morphosyntactic organization of German, the function of nominal intensification gaining a new word order option. Both patterns are here regarded as borderline cases of grammaticalization, a view supported by the mechanisms and diagnostic features referred to in this paper; however, their typological status should perhaps be left as an open question.

Leaving the typological status of the phenomena aside, the fact remains that they are synchronically identified as patterns habitually occurring in young people's speech. This leads back to the relation between age-specific language usage and grammaticalization. Why do these patterns, rather than more prototypical instances of grammaticalization, emerge in youth language, while being largely or completely absent from the speech of other age groups?

Discussions of this question typically evoke the notion of expressivity, "the need to strengthen the message" (Kotsinas 1997). In accordance with a major tenet of grammaticalization theory, discourse-pragmatic conditions are identified as an initial motivation for a grammatical innovation (see e.g. Hopper & Traugott 1993: 63-93). In connection with a number of linguistic innovations in Swedish youth language, Kotsinas (1997) stresses the fact

that extreme and relatively new variants [...] primarily have been used to express some kind of an emotion or attitude, for instance irony, distance, etc., i.e. to attract the attention of the hearer. (Kotsinas 1997: 126-7)

Discussing the sociolinguistic distribution of the quotation marker *be+like*, Romaine & Lange (1991: 267-7) explain the preference for direct quotations rather than indirect speech in young people's narratives through the fact that direct speech is a means of enacting narratives in a more vivid and involved, i.e. expressive, way. Expressive narrative performance is, in turn, one of the features of adolescent speech style. This view is borne out by the findings on German *Jugendsprache*; for instance, fragments and predicates with pre-determiner intensification typically occur as expressive speech acts, e.g. in the closure unit of a narrative, together with other youth-specific features such as sound-words and expletives.

At the same time, expressivity is also a main motivation of slang creation, slang items being to a large extent new ways to encode trivial information and/or means of conveying attitudes towards the referent or the situational context.<sup>20</sup> In fact, I would like to suggest that slang creation and instances of grammaticalization intersect in a variety of ways, with the result that slang productivity in certain semantic-functional domains – such as value judgements, intensifiers, social categorizations, and interactional routines – may favour the emergence of grammaticalization in these domains.

The most obvious relation between slang and grammaticalization is *renewal*. Hopper & Traugott (1991: 121) identify intensification and negation as two functional domains that undergo frequent renewal. The patterns of renewal examined in this paper (see section 3.1) are quite productive in German youth slang (and most probably in youth-specific varieties of other languages as well). From the point of view of slang, the first steps into the cline of lexicality, as indicated by several diagnostic features, are but a means of creating new 'vogue formatives'.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, from the point of view of grammaticalization, the creativity of slang keeps the respective patterns in a constant state of flux, i.e. re-grammaticalization.

A further relation is provided by the role of slang vocabulary as a starting point or 'path-breaker' of a grammaticalization process. In the case of the denominal conversion pattern, a few popular conversions, such as *klasse*, *spitze*, *scheiße*, probably provided a model for further analogical conversions,<sup>22</sup> eventually leading to the regularization of the pattern. In syntax, the findings are consonant with the well-known fact that syntactic innovations "get a

foothold in a particular environment, often associated with particular lexical items" (Aitchison 1991: 98). This is true both for *null*, whose occurrence in slogan phrases set the stage for its subsequent reanalysis and generalization, and for *voll*, a very popular intensifier in German youth speech, which was the first item regularly used in pre-determiner position. Moreover, it is interesting to note some wider structural implications of both patterns, a point also made by Romaine & Lange (1991: 268) with respect to *be+like*. The negative *null* arguably constitutes a simplification of the negation system of German with respect to its non-inflection and its positional range, as it potentially alternates with both inflected *kein* (on nouns) and *nicht* (on verbs). With respect to the distribution of functionally related lexical classes, the insertion of intensifiers in the pre-determiner slot can be interpreted as a regularization process, since intensifiers can now occupy a position already available to other groups of adverbs and particles in German.

To summarise the argument put forward so far, it is suggested that habitual patterns of slang vocabulary induce instances of grammaticalization in young people's language. Both types of patterns share a communicative motivation, being subject to pragmatic and sociolinguistic pressures to express 'old things in new ways'. Slang productivity concentrates on specific semantic-functional domains which are constantly renewed. They constitute 'weak points', at which an instance of grammaticalization might arise.

As this paper has concentrated on processes of linguistic expansion, the question has been disregarded whether the patterns under discussion will survive over time,<sup>23</sup> that is whether they will eventually become part of the grammar of the wider speech community. For instance, the description of the present distribution of *null* does not predict whether its whole positional range (or which part of it) will eventually spread. The spread of on-going changes is, of course, a sociolinguistic issue, and depends as such on the sociosymbolic values associated with linguistic innovations. Expressivity, the original pragmatic motivation for change, is then but one "kind of advantage" that a new variant brings about for the speakers, the other one being the indexical function of the innovation as marker of a group identity (Kotsinas 1997: 129).

It may be instructive to confront the processes discussed in this paper to the model of innovation and change in young people's language proposed by Kotsinas (1997). Briefly, this model depicts the sociolinguistic diffusion of a feature as a series of intermediate stages: an innovation spreads from the peer-group in which it originated to larger adolescent networks, then to general (i.e. supra-regional) young people's language, then to colloquial registers of adult

language, and it eventually enters standard language. At each stage, the feature takes on a new sociosymbolic value, being connected to identity aspects of ever larger sociocultural units (Kotsinas 1997: 127-129).

In order to locate patterns of word formation in this model, the concept of *layering*, i.e. the coexistence of older and newer encodings in the same functional domain, is a useful one.<sup>24</sup> Synchronically, some of the formatives and conversions employed by German adolescents are part of colloquial adult language as well, while numerous others are restricted to peer groups or networks. Only a few of these will probably spread to German youth language as a whole, most likely those originating in a prestigious urban centre and/or a trendy subcultural style. As for the negative *null* and pre-determiner intensification, at the time of this study they already occurred at a supra-regional level, were subject to metalinguistic comments by older speakers, and were beginning to appear in media usage, similarly to *be+like* which was found to be spreading as well (Romaine & Lange 1991: 269-70). Both these patterns (as well as the quotation marker *so* briefly mentioned in section 1) are likely candidates to enter the next diffusion level, i.e. colloquial adult language, a process aided by the fact that certain adolescent speech patterns are retained while speakers grow older.

As new grammatical or discourse-pragmatic patterns emerge and expand in young people's speech, it may well be the case (see e.g. Kotsinas 1997: 128) that their expressive value in ingroup interaction gradually bleaches out through ritualization (Haiman 1994). However, as the patterns are used in new contexts in the process of sociolinguistic diffusion, their novelty value is still of importance, albeit for wider parts of the speech community.

## 5. Conclusions

Recent research has brought to the fore a number of grammaticalization instances which apparently originate and develop in the speech of adolescents and young people. However, the cross-linguistic evidence for the relation between grammaticalization and age is still insufficient (see Andersen 1997), and the range of linguistic structures or functional domains possibly affected by this relation is not yet fully explored. The present paper is a contribution to this line of research. Four patterns of contemporary German *Jugendsprache* were discussed: nominal formatives, a word formation pattern of denominal conversion, a negative, and an intensification pattern. Drawing on mechanisms

and diagnostic criteria of grammatical change, the attempt was made to show how these items/constructions expand their distribution and come to behave in an increasingly grammatical manner, while still not being "unambiguously part of the grammar" (Hopper 1991). It was pointed out that slang vocabulary may provide the starting point of certain grammaticalization processes. In conclusion, the findings suggest that, apart from pragmatic motivations of grammatical change, detailed investigations of youth specific lexical structures are necessary in order to understand and eventually explain age-specific processes of language change. Further cross-linguistic research on youth language will no doubt contribute to throwing new light on some 'unsolved puzzles' in this field of research.

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## NOTES

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1. For the purposes of this paper, a broad definition of grammaticalization will be adopted, including any instance of "rise of morpho-syntactic structure" (Givón 1995: 10), any "developments in the organization of morpho-syntactic material" (Hopper & Traugott 1991: 50), to the extent that they result in "grammatical constructions which are unknown to normative grammar" (Lehmann 1991: 505). In this sense, types of grammaticalization include not only the development of grammatical items from lexical ones, but also their development from existing grammatical material, as well as word order changes and the fixing of syntactic patterns (see also Hopper 1991: 18).
2. Cases of grammaticalization in pidgin and creole languages will not be dealt with in this paper.
3. In the sense of Halliday (1979).

4. For lexical items developing directly into discourse markers without an intermediate stage at which they function as grammatical markers, the term 'grammaticalization' has been proposed (Erman & Kotsinas 1993).
5. See Ferrara & Bell (1995: 274-5); Stenström (1996: 141); Kotsinas (1997: 123).
6. Note that the English translations of the examples are not intended to be idiomatic.
7. Reported thought being expressed as direct speech, cf. Erman & Kotsinas (1993: 87); Romaine & Lange (1991: 262).
8. Cf. Hopper & Traugott (1993: 40-1, 61); Aitchison (1991: 93). However, there are cases of grammaticalization without reanalysis and vice versa, i.e. occasional reanalyses which do not lead any further down a grammaticalization pathway.
9. Cf. Hopper (1991: 32); Traugott & Heine (1991: 7); Lehmann (1991: 494).
10. See e.g. Sornig (1981), Ladissoff (1983). Reference to major grammars and authoritative descriptions of German will largely be omitted due to lack of space. See Androutsopoulos (1998) for further discussion of the cases presented in this paper.
11. All subsequent examples are extracted from my Ph.D. research corpus (Androutsopoulos 1998) unless otherwise stated. The original spelling of examples from written sources has been kept throughout.
12. Bauer (1983: 255-65) discusses a number of similar cases, including the slangy formative *-nik*.
13. English examples electronically extracted from the COLT-Corpus (see Stenström 1996). For French conversions see e.g. Verdelhan-Bourgade (1990).
14. Documented in Küpper (1987) from the turn of the century.
15. An earlier example of reanalysis is attested in Küpper (1987), marked as "military slang".
16. The translations of the following examples retain the German word order, although ungrammatical in English, in order to suggest the pattern's odd effect from the perspective of Standard German.
17. See discussion in Androutsopoulos 1998. My suggestion is, *grosso modo*, that the determiner in this pattern originates in the stressed (intensifying) definite article, which first

- enabled the use of definite NPs as evaluative predicatives of copula constructions. The subsequent neutralization of the determiner stress probably provided the option to intensify the definite NP.
18. Modelled on Hopper & Traugott's 'schema of the development of auxiliary *be going to*' (1993: 61, 88).
  19. There is also a single occurrence of the pattern in topic position, which can be regarded as a further stage of syntactic expansion: *Voll der ehrliche, massige Typ war da am Werke* ('fully the upright, massive guy was there at work').
  20. See Sornig (1981); Andersson & Trudgill (1990).
  21. See Andersson & Trudgill (1990: 70, 81) on vogue words in general.
  22. As Bauer (1983: 96) notes, "an analogical formation will provide the impetus for a series of formations".
  23. On the notion of survival of recently grammaticalized patterns see Hopper & Traugott (1993: 13); Bauer (1983: 266).
  24. On the notion of layering see e.g. Hopper (1991). The other two patterns are, of course, also instances of layering in the domains of negation and intensification; however, they constitute more singular developments, in that only one negative is grammaticalized and a word order change is involved.

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## Dialectology, Philology and Linguistics in the Romance Field

### Methodological Developments and Interactions

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**Abstract.** This contribution offers a historical survey of the views adopted by Romance scholars in methodological discussions tied up with dialectological work conducted between 1875 and 1925. Following an initial phase in which dialectology was strongly linked to folklore-based work and was mainly devoted to the collection of materials, the study of dialects gained a theoretical status within the historical-comparative model. Dialectology then became institutionalised as an academic discipline which developed in various theoretical directions, with Jules Gilliéron and Louis Gauchat as the two key representatives. Whereas Gilliéron favoured the semantic and psychological study of the history of words – to the neglect of the study of their phonetic evolution –, Gauchat stressed the primacy of phonetics, while paying due attention to sociolinguistic phenomena. The methodological principles on which dialectological work was based had a major impact on other domains within Romance linguistics. Walther von Wartburg, for example, integrated the results of dialectological work in his Romance etymological studies, and Antoine Meillet stressed the heuristic and methodological contribution of linguistic geography to historical and general linguistics.

#### 0. Introduction

Within the field of the historical-comparative grammar of the Indo-European languages, Romance linguistics can be characterised as a domain with a specific diachronic orientation and as one in which dialectological work has been particularly productive. The strong interaction between the diachronical