

Jenny Cheshire. 2007. Discourse Variation, Grammaticalisation and stuff like that. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 11, 2:155-193

Summary by Amber Blenkinsop

Intro: General Extenders

-Basic form of general extenders is conjunction (*and* or *or*) plus noun phrase and they occur most often in clause final position.

Examples: *and stuff, and things, and everything, and that*, as well as *or something*.

-There are other forms but these, along with their longer counterparts e.g. *and things like that* etc, are the ones focused on in this study.

-In the literature, these expressions are referred to in a variety of ways including: set marking tags, vague category identifiers, approximators, general extenders, discourse extenders and extension particles. These multiple terms are a result of the lack of a consensus as to their function.

-These expressions are being grammaticalized from their longer forms—*and things like that*—meaning that in a particular expression, each word is losing its syntactic and semantic lexical meaning so that the entire expression becomes fixed, as well as being phonologically reduced.

Aims of paper

1) To perform a quantitative analysis of the extent of grammaticalization of general extenders. The author hoped to show whether changes have affected each of the different forms to the same extent.

2) to look at the meaning and function of these forms.

In previous research, general extenders, like other discourse markers, had been assigned a principal function even though it was recognized that they may have other functions as well. This is where all the different terms for this type of expression came from; the fact that they have been assumed to carry out a certain principle function such as: implicate a category; mark shared knowledge; politeness markers. Most of early research stressed referential meaning (marking categories etc) where as more recent work has focused on the function in the interpersonal domain (solidarity, politeness etc).

3) to contribute quantitative analysis of variation in discourse features.

Data and Methods

Data was collected through interviews with ninety-six 14 and 15 year olds equally represented in three towns in England: Reading and Milton Keynes in the south and Hull in the north. Half of the participants were from a middle class school and the other half from a more working class school with males and females equally represented. The teens were interviewed individually and then in pairs/groups by Ann Williams in all but 6 cases where another researcher filled in. There were no significant differences in the frequency of general extenders so both interview types were analyzed together. Six elderly speakers from each town were also interviewed for baseline comparison.

Results

In general in the three towns adjunctives (those expressions with *and*) were more common than disjunctives (those with *or*) which was the opposite to most other previous studies. The only previous study, Melbourne, that had been conducted in a similar manner i.e. with interviews also had similar results.

The varied results of previous studies is mostly likely due to the various modes used to collect data, different ages targeted as well as the context dependency of general extenders as they can be affected by speech act, topic and relationship between speakers.

General extenders are not in near complementary as they have different discourse functions and therefore cannot be analyzed as a sociolinguistic variable but can still be quantitatively analyzed via distribution.

In this study there were no differences in class or gender for general extenders. However, there was significant individual variation of speakers (e.g. some had 24 tokens/hr vs. other with 3 tks/hr.)

When looked at individually, there was a class difference within the top 5 adjunctives (*and that*, *and all that*, *and stuff*, *and things*, *and everything*) and the disjunctive *or something*. (These five account for 75.7 % of all general extenders in the study.)

And that and *and all that* were favoured by the working class in each town while *and stuff* and *and everything* was favoured by the middle class.

Grammaticalization

History of General extenders:

- Elderly working class speakers in the study used *and that*, *and all that* and *and (all) that sort of thing* suggesting that *and that* has been in working class speech for at least three generation in all three locations.

- *and that* and *or something* have attested history of use in British English over the last two centuries.

- in the 1970s corpora *and things* was most frequent however was replaced by *and stuff* in the 90s and both are becoming more and more grammaticalized. *And that* was starting to show up more in the 90s and is now very prevalent.

Grammaticalization occurring with general extenders is demonstrated via:

Phonetic reduction (Table 5) – *and stuff*, *and things*, *and everything*, *or something* have become phonologically reduced from their longer forms in each town except for *and things* in Hull. The short form of *and that* is unclear so is not included. It could come from *and that sort of thing* or *and that lot*.

Decategorization– When not grammaticalized, the head noun should have the same syntactic and semantic properties as the noun to which it relates anaphorically. Figure 1 shows that most adjunctives are becoming decategorized since the shorter forms refer significantly less frequently to the expected noun phrase in terms of syntactic and semantic properties. *And things* seems to be much less grammaticalized than *and everything* in terms of decategorization. Figure 2 shows that the disjunctive *or something* is becoming decategorized though not entirely since in negative constructions it is replaced by *or anything*.

Semantic change– related to decategorization in terms of dealing with semantics however the semantic change refers more specifically to loss of any semantic meaning than just not being related to the anaphoric NP. Here Table 7 shows the forms that have no literal or ad hoc meanings accessible to the interlocutor. Therefore in all three towns the short forms of the general extenders had fairly advanced semantic bleaching. These results correspond to those in phonetic reduction and decategorization.

Pragmatic shift– Cheshire analyzed the data according to the five communicative domains in Fischer's model of discourse structure: information management, textual organization, speech management, turn-taking and interpersonal relationship between speakers. The types of general extenders were found to have functions in every domain.

Quantitative analysis to track the pragmatic shift of general extenders was abandoned due to multiple problems:

- Tokens could be analyzed as two different ways making it hard to put it into one category to count.
- They were multifunctional in that an expression could be used in different situations but also one token of an expression could be expressing multiple functions at any one time.
- The general extender wasn't alone. There were other linguistic strategies equally as prominent used as well for pragmatics such as co-constructed turns and repetition of key lexical items.

Instead Cheshire analyzed the co-occurring discourse markers.

- Table 8 shows the percentages where the forms that are undergoing the most phonetic reduction, decategorization and semantic change are the ones that appear alone the most often.

- Table 9 shows the type of discourse markers that co-occur with general extenders. It indicates that the types of discourse markers that most often co-occur with adjunctive forms are those meaning *approximation* (such as *about, kind of* etc) while those meaning *uncertainty* (as in *I think, probably,* etc) were associated with the disjunctive form. These co-occurring discourse markers had no sociolinguistic variation.

Grammaticalization	Most affected adjunctives	Disjunctive behaviour
Phonetic reduction	All shorter terms are more frequent, esp. <i>and that</i> and <i>and everything</i> . 'And' is reduced to [n].	<i>Or something</i> is very advanced. 'Or' is reduced to schwa
Decategorization	<i>And that</i> and <i>and everything</i>	Also becoming decategorized
Semantic change	Short terms esp. <i>and that</i> and <i>and everything</i> .	Can't infer anything as it behaves differently in the three towns.
Pragmatic shift	<i>And everything</i> and <i>and that</i> have few co-occurring discourse markers. When do co-occur, usually with markers indicating approximation.	Occur with discourse markers indicating uncertainty.

Conclusion

And that and *and everything* are the most grammaticalized general extenders in British English with respect to the parameters typically associated with the process. Conversely, in American English, *and stuff* is considered to be further advanced than the other general extender forms.

Cheshire identified new, previously unidentified features of general extenders such as being used to mark reported speech. She also identified a potential north-south regional divide in British English use of general extenders and suggests there being a more complex type of sociolinguistic variation occurring with adjunctives and disjunctives.