

## **Rapid pragmaticalization or degrammaticalization: The case of *agtig* in spoken Danish**

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Diachronic corpus study of development of the use of *agtig* ('-ish') in spoken discourse in Danish.

### **Outline:**

- 1) What is *agtig*?
- 2) How is it used?
- 3) Why is this interesting?

## 1. Introduction: What's the "fuzz" about *agtig*?

Traditionally:

- suffix creating adjectives from nouns, verbs and adjectives: *børneagtige* ('childlike'), *grinagtig* ('laughable'), *gulagtig* ('yellowish').
- Meaning 'like, associated with, full of'. Compare English -ish

Fuzziness:

Ex 1: *Det er total min drømmescene-agtig!*  
'It's totally my dream scene-ish!'

Ex 2: *Rotér den med det samme-agtig.*  
'Rotate it at once-ish.'

Ex 3: *Det er typisk for mailene at de er ekstremt søde. Sådan "jeg kan godt forstå at du er frustreret"-agtig.*  
'It's typical for the e-mails that they are extremely nice. Like "I can understand how you are so frustrated"-ish.'

= extension of scope motivated by the core meaning of *agtig*.

→ generalization to new contexts and functions.

### **3. Data and method**

LANCHART Corpus of Spoken Danish:

- sociolinguistic interviews
- 6.577.029 non-empty intervals (including hesitations)
- seperated into decades: 70's-2010

3 distributional categories:

## A) Adjectives (adverbs)

= traditional function

Ex 4: on a noun phrase

*De virkede lidt panikagtige under verdensbankdemonstrationen.*  
'They seemed a little panic-ish during the World Bank demonstration.'

Ex 5: on an interjection

*Det blev sådan lidt mere øvagtigt.*  
'It became like a little more boo-ish'.

Ex 6: on a verb in a typical indefinit construction

*Der var Gardasøen eller Balatonsøen, sådan noget noget badeagtigt noget ikke.*  
'There was the Lake Garda or Lake Balaton, like something something bathing-ish something right.'

Ex 7: on an imperative clause

*Det var sådan lidt lidt mere tag pis på det-agtigt.*  
'It was like a little a little more bullshitting-ish (litt. 'take a piss on it').'

## B) Non-adjectives

= new function in new context

Ex 8: *Hun lød hun lød indre København måske-agtigt.*  
'She sounded she sounded inner Copenhagen maybe ish.'

Ex 9: *Jeg kan jo ikke kende forskel på det (.) agtigt he he*  
'Well, I can't tell them apart (.) -ish he he

Ex 10: *De har snakket om det på øh DR1 så jeg tænker så må det jo næsten være lovligt agtig.*  
'They've talked about it on ehh DR1 so I think well then it must be almost legal -ish.'

### C) Unclear

= defined negatively

Ex 11: *De er sådan noget tekniskagtig skole.*

'They are like something technical-ish college.'

Ex 12: *Det er sådan en lille husbådshavn (.) agtig.*

'It's like a little houseboat harbor (.) -ish.'

Ex 13: INT: *Nå sådan noget (.) wildlife eller sådan noget [øh sådan] –*

INF: *Ja [agtigt noget]*

INT: 'Ah like something (.) wildlife or like something [err like] '

INF: 'Yes [-ish something]'

## 4. Results

### Distribution on categories:

811 instances of *agtig*.

35 % well-established + 536 instances used productively.

Occurrences pr. million non-empty intervals:

<b>AGTIG</b>	<b>Entire corpus</b>	<b>Old</b>	<b>New</b>	<b>70's</b>	<b>80's</b>	<b>90's</b>	<b>00's</b>	<b>10's</b>
<b>Adjective</b>	59.6	8.6	86.1	14.4	7.9	0.0	70.7	174.1
<b>Non-adjective</b>	13.2	0.9	19.6	0.0	1.1	0.0	10.4	72.8
<b>Unclear</b>	8.7	0.9	12.7	0.0	1.1	0.0	10.7	23.7
<b>Total</b>	81.5	10.4	118.3	14.4	10.0	0.0	91.8	270.7

### Speaker factors:

- 190 different speakers.
- 2/3 produced by speakers younger than 20 years.



Relative distribution of categories over time:

Recording time	Age	Adjective	Non-adjective	Unclear
<b>80's</b>	<20	33.3 % (1)	33.3 % (1)	33.3 % (1)
	20-39	100 % (8)	0 %	0 %
	40<	100 % (2)	0 %	0 %
<b>00's</b>	<20	72.9 % (129)	12.4 % (22)	14.7 % (26)
	20-39	77.1 % (54)	14.3 % (10)	8.6 % (6)
	40<	81.3 % (52)	10.9 % (7)	7.8 % (5)
<b>10's</b>	<20	62.2 % (74)	31.9 % (38)	5.9 % (7)
	20-39	85.7 % (6)	14.3 % (1)	0 %
	40<	100 % (1)	0 %	0 %

- Speakers who use *agtig* more than 5 times, produce 43.5 % of the occurrences, but only make up 14.2 % of the speakers.
- Frequent users produce most of the occurrences in category B and C.

New functions:

Discourse marker (hedge/epistemic adverb):

= "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin 1987: 3) with a discursive rather than intrasentential dependency.

"A category of words that indicate how the listener is to relate the discourse to previous discourse" (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 129).

*Quotative* =

Can be used to begin or end a quotation, cf. English *like* which can mark referred speech or thought (Romaine & Lange 1991).

- $\frac{3}{4}$  of category B (non-adjective) function as discourse markers
- $\frac{1}{4}$  of category B function as quotatives

## Summary of results:

### Generalization of use

- Use of *agtig* has become more widespread overall.
- *Agtig* has been generalized to new contexts with new functions (hedge and quotative).
- (New) use of *agtig* has spread to older age groups.
- The new use is especially evident in frequent users.

### More characteristics typically related to potentially discursively primary status

- Increased independence (affix > adverb/discourse marker).
- Phonological substance: separate phrasing, stress (not analyzed systematically), full vowels, two syllables.
- Semantic substance.
- Larger scope.

√ More examples of *agtig* used in other contexts and with new functions

√ More indications of independent status of *agtig* over time

## **5. Grammaticalization**

= diachronic proces resulting in creation of grammatical elements.

*Grammatical elements enter into (syntagmatic) relations with other elements and always have a discursively sencondary role, unlike lexical elements that are potentially primary*  
(Boye & Harder 2012).

= supporting role, conventionally secondary.

Lexical items → grammatical items (*unidirectionality*, e.g. Hopper & Traugott 2003: 18)

and

Grammatical item → new grammatical element (Boye & Harder 2012: 29)

Characteristics:

- *cline* (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 6)
- *layering* (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 49, 122-124; Heine 2002: 86)
- → more general meaning centered on speaker attitude (Hopper & Traugott: 11)

Important mechanisms (Hopper & Traugott 2003):

- reanalysis (Heine 2002: 84-85, *bridging contexts*)
- analogi

*Agtig* is a good candidate for grammaticalization:

- General/abstract/schematic meaning
- Content depends on the element *agtig* modifies = secondary importance

## **6. Discussion**

So what?

- Grammar isn't a stable, rigid system. Lexicon <> grammar
- Claim of unidirectionality doesn't always hold true.

What proces is *agtig* undergoing?

### *Degrammaticalization*

- Norde (2009: 223-225): English *-ish* has gone through a process of degrammaticalisation called *debonding* (where a bound morphem becomes a free morphem (Norde 2009: 133, 186)).

It means that *ish*

- Can appear as a independant word and has increased syntactic flexibility.
  - Has increased semantic and phonological substance.
  - Has increased scope.
- BUT: The motivation for this development in use of English *-ish* is apparently pragmatic, it's an "emphatic marker" (Norde 2009: 237).

### *Pragmaticalization*

- Development of discourse markers (Norde 2009: 21).
- Discourse markers that rely on other linguistic units to be discursively primary, so that they are themselves secondary, must be grammatical according to Boye & Harder (2012). Thus pragmaticalization can be a type of grammatikalisierung.

Change in meaning from typical objective semantic meaning → subjective, speaker-oriented pragmatic meaning (Hoppe & Traugott 2003: 129).

"Wide-scope adverbs like *however*, *probably* and *evidently* are clearly grammatical expressions" (Boye & Harder 2012: 25).



Fuzziness revisited:

Clitic, adverb, discourse marker?

Does the use of *agtig* have any limits?

- Holophrases?
- Can *agtig* be combined with something that is exactly (and not sort of) right? (cf. Ex 1)

Ex 15: *Nu regner det. Agtigt lidt.*

'Now it's raining. -ish a little.'

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