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**The Development of English Parentheticals: A Case of Grammaticalization?**

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper I will consider the development of a particular type of pragmatic marker, namely parentheticals, in order to find out in how far the processes of grammaticalization and subjectification (as a special subtype of grammaticalization) have been at work here, as has been suggested in the literature.[1] I will concentrate on *I guess* and *I think*, and will compare two relevant investigations, i.e. Thompson and Mulac (1991) [henceforth T&M], who have investigated the matter synchronically but also made suggestions as to the historical development of these markers, and Brinton (1996) [henceforth B], who analysed constructions of the *I guess*-type diachronically, from Old English onwards.

Section 2 briefly describes these two proposals. Since the conclusions drawn there differ considerably, I will next (section 3) investigate developments in Dutch – another Germanic language, close enough but yet different – to find out which of the two hypotheses holds up more generally. In section 4, I consider to what extent this development falls under the rubric of grammaticalization, i.e. to what extent it follows the principles (Hopper 1991) or parameters (Lehmann 1995[1982]) established for this process. Here I will also pay attention to the parallel process of lexicalization, which shares many of the characteristics of grammaticalization (cf. Himmelmann 2004, Brinton and Traugott 2005), and look in particular at the issue of scope. According to Tabor and Traugott (1998) certain types of grammaticalization – if not all – behave contrary to the scope parameter of grammaticalization. The discussion will be rounded off by a brief conclusion.

## 2. Previous accounts

T&M (p.313) suggest that parentheticals, as shown in (1c), have evolved from matrix clause structures such as (1a) via a stage given in (1b):

1.a. I think *that* we're definitely moving towards being more technological

[1] I offer this topic to Herbert Schendl's Festschrift because I feel it is particularly appropriate: one of his PhD students, Ursula Lutzky, is presently working on pragmatic markers, and a colleague of his, Gunther Kaltenböck is working on parentheticals as part of his Habilitation. I wish Herbert, who I have known as a most wonderful and considerate colleague, both academically, socially and 'Erasmus'-wise for at least twenty years, all the best in an, I hope, more leisurely continuation of his career.

b I think 0 exercise is really beneficial

c It's just your point of view you know what you like to do in your spare time *I think*

They do not investigate the historical shift empirically but deduce it from synchronic quantitative and qualitative evidence. They argue that the grammaticalization of these parentheticals can be shown by means of discourse-frequency counts on the assumption that there is a relationship between the frequency of tokens and the emergence of grammar. They base their counts on a corpus of recorded conversations between university students. The reason that they use spoken discourse is because the parentheticals are rare in written language. In their description of the development, (1a) and (b) are seen as the 'target' constructions from which the epistemic parenthical (1c) has derived, but (1b) itself can also be seen as an epistemic parenthetical, which makes it the 'bridge' construction that makes the change possible (cf. Diessel and Tomasello 2001: 107-8, who describe the three constructions as a continuum whereby (b) and (c) are often difficult to distinguish). Once the parenthetical has evolved, it can be put in any position in the sentence.

The qualitative evidence they present concerns the semantic change of the 'believe-type'-target verb from a verb of cognition (e.g. *think* in the sense of 'to have thoughts') into an epistemic evidential, with *think* expressing 'degree of speaker commitment'. This change is closely related to the frequent use of the verb in combination with the first person (second person is also used but amounts to only 4% of all parentheticals in their corpus), which is in fact responsible for the subjectification that these constructions undergo ("markers of evidentiality and epistemicity are skewed towards first person singular declaratives and second person questions", T&M, p.322). It is only in these persons that the verb evolves into a parenthetical at all.

The question arises whether this change is the result of pragmatic inferencing, which is said to play a role in cases of grammaticalization/subjectification, or whether this concerns a case where the verbal expression in the first person (which makes it necessarily subjective from the beginning) becomes formulaic through frequent use. B (pp.243, 254) clearly opts for the former,[2] while T&Mare closer to the latter in suggesting that the phrases are formulaic (cf. also Thompson 2002) and that the development resembles lexicalization (T&M: 324). After some discussion they reject the option of lexicalization, however, because the parenthetical is "still available for ordinary negation and questioning". I will return to this point in section 4.

[2] B writes that the "conventionalization of a conversational implicature" (p.243) plays a role in what she sees as a second stage, namely the change from verbs expressing 'a mode of knowing' to epistemic parentheticals. The stage from 'act of cognition' to 'mode of knowing' she considers similar to a metaphorical change. In other words, the first stage is a common kind of semantic change, one involving a change from concrete to abstract.

Frequency is counted on a number of levels. First it is established which target verbs (i.e. verbs expressing belief as a mode of knowing) are overall most frequent. In their corpus, this is the verbs *think* and *guess*, which account for 65% of all believe-type verb occurrences, with the other 42 verbs spread over the remaining 35%. Secondly, it is found that out of the 18 verbs that are in fact used as parentheticals, these two verbs alone account for 85% of all cases. Thirdly, *think* and *guess* occur much more frequently in construction-type (1b), i.e. with a zero-complement – *think* has a zero-complement 91% of the time, and *guess* 99% – compared to a percentage of 76% of all other tokens. Finally, they count the frequency of first and second person singular subjects. *I* occurs 83% of the time with all targets verbs, and *you* 5%, while when used as clear epistemic parentheticals, *I* appears 95% of the time and *you* 4%. These pronominal subjects also occur more frequently when the target verbs are followed by a zero-complement. All these counts together show that the combination *I think* is most likely to occur with a zero-complement 92% of the time.

T&M (pp.314) see a direct relationship between these various frequencies, which they believe throws light on to how they developed:

> the most frequent target clause subjects and verbs are just those which are most frequently found as E[pistemic]PAR[enthetical] expressions, and we suggested that the frequent occurrence of *I* (in declaratives) and *you* (in questions) without *that* in target constructions has led to their re-interpretation as epistemic phrases with verbs expressing belief. […] As epistemic phrases, then, these combinations are free to float to various positions in the clause to which they are providing testimony, as other epistemic particles in English do, such as *maybe.* Again, we found strong correlations between the frequency of those found in these EPAR's and the frequency of those found in target epistemic phrases without *that*. (T&M p. 326)

They therefore conclude (*ibid*: 316) that the blurring of the distinction between the main and the complement clause (through the loss of *that*) paved the way for the rise of the epistemic parentheticals.

B (p.239ff.), who looks at the development diachronically, basically agrees with T&M as far as the semantic-pragmatic development is concerned (but see fn.2). She further notes that in Middle English, too, there is a synchronic correspondence between structures similar to the ones given in (1). She doubts, however, whether there is a diachronic correspondence, i.e. whether the Middle English type (1c) also developed from (1a) via (1b). First of all, she does not find a similar neat quantitative correlation for Middle English. This may be due to a lack of the right data (her data, naturally, is only from written sources), but it is telling that the most frequent parentheticals (*gesse, leve, undertake* 'guess, believe, undertake') do not occur

most frequently with zero complements, as they did in T&M's corpus. On the other hand, the most common parentheticals in line after *gesse* i.e., *trow, wot* 'trust, know', do occur most frequently with *that*-less clauses. Secondly, she looks at the use of these same verbs in Old English. She does not find the modern construction-types illustrated in (1) there, but other types, which she calls 'relative' constructions, remnants of which can still be found in Middle English (B: 240-42). On the basis of these, she proposes a different development.

Let us first look at these Middle English 'relative' constructions (the examples and glosses are from B: 249-50). They are of two types:

2. a. He took me certeyn gold, *that woot I weel*
(Chaucer *CT, Shipman's Tale*, 403-4)
He brought me a certain amount of gold, that know I well'

b. He lese shal; *therof have I no doute*. (Chaucer, *CT, C. Yeoman's Tale*, 833)
He shall lose, of that have I no doubt

3. a. She hath ynough to doone, hardyly/ To wynnen from hire fader, *so trowe I*
(Chaucer, *T&C* bk V, 1124-25)
She has enough to do, surely, to get away from her father, so I believe [=which I believe]'

b. For thrittene is a covent, *as I gesse* (Chaucer, *CT, Summoner's Tale*, 2259)
For thirteen is a convent, as I guess [=which I guess]

The first type (2) is described as "relative structures where the main clause is pronominalized within the parenthetical with the demonstrative pronoun *that/this*, the personal pronoun *it*, or a form such as *therof*, all of which are anaphoric" (*ibid*: 248). Type (3) concerns parentheticals introduced by *as/so*. B (p.250) writes that *as/so* functions either as a relative pronoun (in final position), or as a subordinator ('in so far as') in initial and medial position. She concludes that both types "contain relative pronouns referring anaphorically to the attached clause" (*ibid*: 251).

The attention B pays to the 'relative pronoun' is important, as we will see below, but there are also a few problems with this account. First of all it is not really possible to compare B's Old and Middle English data directly with T&M's modern data. The latter are from a spoken corpus, the former from a written one. It is perhaps not surprising in this respect that B finds more examples in Middle English than in Old English. A lot of Middle English oral poetry is quite colloquial (especially Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*,

both used by B) whereas the Old English prose texts used by B are mainly religious or historical works, while Old English poetry is heavily constrained by the alliterative half-lines, both in lexis and grammar, making it in many ways quite unlike colloquial speech.

B (pp.240-41), referring to Gorrell (1895), finds some examples of believe-type verbs in Old English followed by a zero-complement but remarks that the "contexts in which omission occurs are quite limited". Gorrell (1895: 396-97) however, interprets these examples not as verb + zero-complement but as syntactically independent clauses, or "simple introductory expressions like the Modern English 'you know'". B believes that Gorrell overstates his case here because the omission of *þæt* 'that' is not frequently found after these verbs (however, neither B nor Gorrell (1895: 348ff.) give any frequencies here to back up their case).[3] I think, however, that Gorrell may be nearer the truth with his idea that these introductory phrases function like adverbials such as 'probably'. The fact that zero-complements are not frequent, may be totally irrelevant, if it is indeed the case that these expressions are *independent* syntactic structures from the beginning. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether T&M's hypothesis is correct for the historical development. A problem is, of course, that Gorrell did not find many such independent structures in Old English, but as stated this may be due to the poverty of the record.

Returning to B's 'relative pronoun'-hypothesis, she draws our attention to a more frequent Old English construction with believe-type verbs presenting "syntactically complete clauses with an anaphoric demonstrative referring back to the preceding clause, that is relative clauses" (B: 241), which she believes are the ancestors of the Middle English constructions noted in (2)-(3). These are of the type illustrated in (4) (I have again used B's glossing here) with *þæs* as the anaphoric demonstrative and *þe* as the relative particle indicating the status of the clause,

4. a. se hæfde ænne sunu nu for þrym gærum, & se wæs, *þæs þe* ic wene, V winter
(GDPref and 4(C)6.271.18)
he had one son now for three years, and he was, of this which I know, five winters old

b. Petrus cwæð: *þæs þe* ic ongyte, þes wæs mycel wer utan on þam mægnum þe he worhte, … (GD 1(C)5.47.14)

[3] For an overview of the complications arising in trying to decide whether *þæt* is left out, or whether we are dealing with direct discourse, see Mitchell (1985: §§1981ff.).

Peter said: of that which I know, this was a great man on the outside in the strength which he wrought,…

c. ne sceal þær dyrne sum/ wesan, *þæs* ic wene (Beo A41 270)
nor shall anything there be secret, of this I think

Two things are to be noted here. First of all, B's translations with a relative pronoun are awkward. The reason for this is that the *þæs* (*þe*) structures do not in fact function as relatives in these clauses, they do not introduce a relative clause. They are rather similar to formulae such as *for þæm* (*þe*) (lit. 'for that [reason] (that)' > 'because', 'therefore'), which introduce subordinate clauses or provide adverbial connectives between clauses. These originate from a relative construction, but are no longer used as such in Old English. In addition, all cases given by B concern the genitive object *þæs*, [4] which occurs even with verbs that do not normally govern a genitive (such as *cnawan, deman, cweþan, tellan*, given below in Table 1, cf. Mitchell 1985: §1092). This shows that the form *þæs* is independent; its case is not dependent on the argument relation it has with the main verb (Thompson [2002: 128ff.] even argues that verbs like *think* do not take an object argument at all). The genitive is often used adverbially in Old English to express extension or duration (cf. *nihtes* 'at night'). All this indicates that *þæs* is not an object but an adverbial expressing 'the measure in/ the extent to which', and that *þæs* in combination with *þe*, like *for þæm þe*, introduces a subordinate clause, more precisely what Quirk *et al.* (1972) have called a subordinate clause of proportion. *Þæs* without *þe* connects the clause more loosely by means of an adverbial conjunct, best translated by 'so, thus'.

I assume that both the subordinate clause and the more loosely connected paratactic clause could further develop into 'a comment clause', which has a rather independent status. I have found quite a few examples of this type of clause in Old English, but only in texts consisting of or containing many dialogues. Table 1 gives an overview of the believe-type verbs found with the *þæs* (*þe*) construction in The Dictionary of Old English Corpus.

| *þæs* (*þe*) ic $+V_{pres}$ | *cnawan/witan* 'know' | *cweþan/tellan secgan/reccan* 'say, tell' | *deman/þencan gemunan* 'think,consider' | *geliefan* 'believe' | *hopian* 'hope' | *ongietan/ begietan* 'understand' | *wenan* 'believe, expect' |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 13 |

Table 1: *Number of Old English constructions of the type illustrated in (4), with the verb in the first person present tense*

[4] With one exception, i.e. her example (23d), which has *þæt*, but this is a misquotation since The Dictionary of Old English Corpus has *þæs*. A search of this corpus shows furthermore that there is not a single example where a believe-type verb in the first person sg pres. is preceded by the pronoun *þæt* in the accusative, which is the regular case for a verbal direct object with these verbs.

This finding makes it likely that the Middle English clauses in (2) and also the ones introduced by *as/so* (3) are the same as these clauses, i.e. they too are not relative clauses. Interpreting *as* as an adverbial rather than a relative, also explains why in the Middle English data we occasionally find examples with inverted word order: next to *as/so I trowe* there is *so trowe I*, and next to *I trowe*, we also find *trowe I* (cf. B: 213).[5] Additionally, it explains the occurrence of pleonastic *it* in clauses such as *as it semeth me, as it thynketh me*, where the occurrence of the pronoun *it* is difficult to explain away as "a dummy subject with an impersonal verb" ( B: 251), since in these clauses the 'relative pronoun' *as* should function as a subject. Finally, it explains examples such as the ones given in (5), which cannot be understood from the point of view of T&M's idea of the zero-complements as a bridge structure. In (5) the 'zero-complement' of the believe-type verb shows all the paraphernalia of a main clause, i.e. with an NP in topic position followed by inverted word order. This indicates that *I woot* and *I trowe* occur early as separate, independent clauses by themselves,

5. a. I trowe an hundred tymes been they kist (Chaucer, *CT, M. of Law's Tale* 1074)
   I believe, a hundred times did they kiss each other
   b. And for I woot wel ingot have ye noon (Chaucer, *CT C. Yeoman's Tale*1206)
   And, for I know well, mould have you none [you don't have a mould]

In other words, there seems to be no need to create an intermediate relative-clause stage in the process sketched by B (cf. (6) below).

B's stages of development, replacing the ones suggested by T&M in (1), are as follows:

6. *Diachronic development of* I guess-*parentheticals according to B (p. 252)*
   Stage I: *They are poisonous.* That I think
   Stage II: *They are poisonous* {that I think, I think that/it, as/so I think} = which I think
   Stage III: *They are poisonous, I think* OR
   *They are poisonous,* as I think = as far as I think, probably
   Stage IV: I think, *they are poisonous / They are*, I think, *poisonous*

[5] This may also show that the clause is in fact a main clause, because in subordinate clauses adverbials cannot be placed in topic position, since this is already filled by the complementizer. We will return to this question below when we look at Dutch parentheticals.

So now we have two possible sources for the English parenthenticals. They may have developed from a main clause introducing a *that*- and later zero-complement, losing its main-clause status in the process and merging with what was originally the subordinate clause. The problem with this is that we have little historical evidence for it, zero-clauses seem to be rare in Old English, while quite a few of the zero-clauses in Middle English still display main clause word order (cf. (5)). Moreover, this development could only take place once the complementizer *that* was **regularly** left out. This became the case only at the end of the Middle English period. *That*-loss then steadily increased in the sixteenth century and reached a peak at the end of the seventeenth century (cf. Rissanen 1999: 284). This loss was greatly helped by the fact that in this same period the typical subordinate-clause word order (SOV) disappeared so that there really was very little difference between a clause with and without *that.* These developments, however, are a little bit too late to explain the rise of the parentheticals from zero-complements, since there are already many parentheticals in late Middle English, as B shows.

The other possibility is that they developed from a relative clause as indicated in (6II). Although I agree with B that a development from a clause with an anaphoric element is most probable, I do not think it likely that this was a relative. Rather than as relative clause, I interpret the Old and Middle English examples as 'subordinate proportional' (Quirk *et al*.'s term) or as paratactic, independent clauses introduced by an anaphoric connective element in the genitive, which I would classify as an adverbial derived from a demonstrative pronoun.

From the point of view of timing, and also from the evidence that we have from Old English, this second (modified) development may be the more likely one. Of course, if the parenthetical started in this way, it may well have been reinforced in the later period by the rapid spread of zero-complements.

**3. Parentheticals in Dutch**

In order to get a better perspective on the possibilities presented in section 2, let us have a look at what happened in a closely related language like Dutch. Here parentheticals of the type *I guess, I think* also developed, but some of the other changes, i.e. the rise of zero-complements and the fixation of SVO word order did not occur there. The latter two differences may help to get a clearer view of what happened in English.

First we will have to establish which of the believe-type verbs have come to be used as parentheticals in Dutch. I will only use synchronic evidence here based on frequencies, which I have established via a quick and superficial (but I think for this purpose adequate) Google

search.[6] The count is not precise, but it does give a good idea; moreover the parentheticals are more frequent in the highly colloquial webpages than in many other available sources. Clearly, we will need more fine-tuned data, both diachronic Dutch data and typological Germanic data to come to any firm conclusions, but some preliminary ones are possible on the basis of this small pilot. The same frequency counts may help us to establish, following the T&M method, what constructions may have been of influence in the development. In this case, variations in word order, which were not available for Modern English, may help us to arrive at a more detailed picture. Some relevant frequency counts can be found in Table 2. I have only considered phrases in the first person singular because it is clear from T&Mthat second person singular parentheticals are rare.

| **VERBS** | **CONSTRUCTIONS Verb-Subject** | | | **Subject-Verb** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | V+ *ik* 'I' | 'that'+V+ *ik* | V+ *ik* + 'that' | *ik* + V +'that' (+ *ik*/*we*) | *Ik*+V+ Ø+*ik/we* |
| *bedoelen* 'mean' [past tense] | **276,000** [39,200] | 45,700 | 18,300 | 21,100 (785/ 359) | 21,100/ 791 |
| *denken* 'think' [past tense] | **893,000** [**905**,**000**] | 53,000 [42,500] | 265,000 [78,100] | 894,000 (306,000/ 101,000) [ 409,000 (68,700/ 10,300)] | 45,300/ 986 [35,400/1,140] |
| *geloven* 'believe' [past tense] | **565,000** [9,410] | 29,500 | 25,500 | 224,000 (53,900/ 11,100) | 12,000/ 34 |
| *hopen* 'hope' [past tense] | **409,000** [15,600] | 23,700 | 103,000 | 1,570,000 (136,000/ 40,900 | 3,770/ 69 |
| *menen* 'mean' [past tense] | **71,100** [11,500] | 12,100 | 10,100 | 33,200 ( 888/ 659) | 308/ 1 |
| *verwachten* 'expect' [past tense] | **98,000** [10,900] | 3,800 | 17,000 | 51,400 (710/ 970) | 191/ 16 |
| *vinden* 'find' [past tense] | **707,000** [**1,118,200**] | 385,000 [104,400] | 223,000 [52,300] | 550,700 (21,500/ 18,100) [80,000 (10,000/ 1,800)] | 925/ 172 [ 735/ 14] |
| *Weten* 'know' [past tense] | **1,040,000** [292,000] | 187,000 55,800 | 142,000 39,800 | 440,000 (77,700/ 5,160) [92,200 (27,800/ 951)] | 9,920/ 159 [424/ 28] |

Table 2: *Constructions with believe-type verbs in present-day Dutch collected with Google (May 2005)*

What can we deduce from this table? *Weten* 'know' is the verb that occurs most frequently in the first person (that is, in the present tense), but a quick perusal of examples confirms that in most cases it is used as a full cognitive verb. The next two most frequent collocations with the first person are with the verbs *vinden* 'find' and *denken* 'think'. What is

[6] Although not ideal, Meyer *et al.* (2003) show that the web can be usefully searched with public search engines like Google producing worthwhile results for linguistic study.

of interest concerning these two verbs is the fact that the past tense first person is even more common than the present in the most frequent construction, the inverted *vind ik/ denk ik* 'find I/ think I'. This is a very clear indication of the modal use of the past tense, which is regular only with epistemic expressions (cf. the modal use of English *might, could, should* etc. which likewise also do not refer to a past time). It shows, in other words, the parenthetical epistemic status of these phrases. Interestingly enough, the past tense with parentheticals is not at all usual in English. The ICE-GB corpus, gives 1655 hits for *I think*, and only 284 for *I thought*, similarly for the other frequent parentheticals (*I mean/meant*: 1417 vs 24; I suppose/supposed: 212 vs 5; *I guess/guessed*: 43 vs 1 etc.).

The next two verbs in line in Table 2 are *geloven* 'believe' and *hopen* 'hope'. Past tense use does not confirm parenthetical status in this case. However, their low frequency may well be due by the fact that their past tenses (*geloofde* and *hoopte*) are too long and phonetically awkward (because of the consonant cluster) to be of parenthetical use. Compare this to *vond* 'found' and *dacht* 'thought', which are monosyllabic (cf. on the point of brevity and its relation to frequency/economy, Krug 2001).

Another piece of evidence that may be said to confirm the parenthetical status of these four most frequent verbs (after *weten*, which I have excluded on semantic grounds) is the fact that only these verbs may undergo Negative-raising in Dutch. In Fischer (1998), I have shown that Negative-raising is closely related to modality and politeness. It is altogether clear that when a still fully cognitive believe-type verb is negated, the verb itself is negated. In Negative-raising, however, the parenthetical verb is itself not semantically negative (as a parenthetical verb it has very little referential meaning), but the negative marker is raised from the subordinate clause predicate, which represents the true negative proposition. Negative-raising constructions, like parentheticals, are most common in the first person, and they both serve to tone down the discourse; they are used as "stance-verbs" (Thompson 2002: 139) to create bonding.

The next thing to be observed in Table 2 is the small number of zero-complement clauses in the last column. In Dutch, unlike in English, it never became usual to drop the complementizer (this may well be related to the fact that the word order in subordinate clauses remained SOV). Indeed at a quick scan, most of the examples here concern a new main clause after *Ik* 'I' + Verb, shown by the fact that it has SVO word order (the same is true for the structure Verb + *ik*, not shown in the Table).[7] This at least suggests that the T&M scenario cannot be correct for the earlier stages of the development in English, where word order was

[7] Note that it is not possible when searching in Google to filter out punctuation marks and capitals, hence no distinction can be made between *I think he is right* and *I think. He is right.*

still more like Dutch. The later *that*-dropping in English may have speeded up the use of believe-type verbs as parentheticals there, but this would need to be shown by a more detailed investigation of the Middle and Modern English periods. My impression is indeed that Dutch makes less use of parentheticals than English, which may well be due to the fact that 'that'-dropping did not become the rule with these verbs. Again, this needs to be investigated further.

A final, most noticeable difference is the large frequency of inverted structures with the Dutch believe-type verbs (columns 1-3) compared to the occurrence of SV orders (columns 4-5). We already noted above that in Middle English both orders still occur, although the inverted order is not frequent (presumably due to the increasing fixation to SVO in this period). The only way to explain the inversion is by accepting that the parenthetical phrase is in fact a main clause. Only main clauses undergo inversion in Dutch. The fact that a structure with initial demonstrative *dat* 'that' (column 2) also occurs fairly regularly, suggests that this VS phrase is a reduced clause introduced by a demonstrative pronoun in topic position, or by some topicalized anaphoric adverb (the combination with *dan/zo* 'then/so'+ Verb+ *ik* 'I', is quite high with *denk ik*: 139,600, less so with *vind ik*: 74,320). This comes close to the Middle English construction *so trowe I/so I trowe* 'thus believe I/I believe'.

**4. Discussion**

This brings us to a discussion of the status of this change. Is it a case of grammaticalization or is it more like lexicalization? Does it involve subjectification? As to the latter, there is no doubt that the parentheticals are subject-oriented, but I would ascribe that simply to the fact that they are a development almost exclusively of first-person verbal phrases which are, as it were, inherently subjective. Secondly, if the phrase started off as an independent clause, as Gorrell already suggested in 1895 (see above),[8] then the subjectification, if that is what it is, does not involve scope **increase**, since as a clause it would have had scope over the proposition in the next clause or the preceding clause (or both) all along, linked as it was to this clause by the anaphoric/cataphoric demonstrative pronoun or adverb. As far as I can see as to scope, nothing changes. In a similar way I would ascribe the conversational implicature of uncertainty, which B (p.244) believes becomes fully semanticized in the parenthetical, as another necessary result of the fusion of a believe-type verb and the first person, and not as the characteristic causative factor distinguished in studies of grammaticalization. The use of

[8] The same verbs with a complement clause introduced by the complementizer 'that' may then have coexisted with the independent parenthetical clause from the very beginning (see also below). In Old English at least both are found.

such a verb in the first person expresses by its very nature uncertainty (*I believe, I guess, I suppose*), and it is no accident that the phrase *I know* misses out on this development in English as well as in Dutch. If the verb *know* is used epistemically at all, it is mostly in the phrase *Yes I know*, which does not occur, like the other parentheticals, in almost any position in the clause, or in the phrase *you know*. The use of the second person makes it different from the other parentheticals too, which do not frequently occur in the second person.

T&M (p.324) believe that the parentheticals represent a case of grammaticalization – although they do not see them as "a 'textbook case' study" – and so does B (p.253). They both agree that its development does not follow some of the usual parameters, such as phonetic reduction, morphological bonding, increasingly fixed syntactic position, and decrease in scope. They mark the following characteristics (referring to the principles by Hopper 1991 as well as Lehmann 1995[1982]) as evidence in favour of grammaticalization: decategorialization, specialization, divergence, and persistence.

As to persistence, it is true that the original sense of the cognitive verb persists, but that in itself does not rank something as grammaticalization, since in lexicalization the original sense persists too. In fact the parentheticals preserve more meaning than is usual in the grammaticalization of discourse markers (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 73, 267), which also explains (see below) why their specialization (or in Lehmann's terms 'paradigmatization') is not as severe as with full referential elements grammaticalizing into affixes or auxiliaries. As to specialization, it is correct that only a few of the cognitive verbs are regularly used as parentheticals. However, that does not imply that others cannot still be used as such, as T&M (p.319) make clear in their survey: there are still 15% of 'other' verbs used as parentheticals, which although less frequent, are as true parentheticals as the more usual *I guess, I think.*

Concerning divergence, it seems to me that there is some contradiction here. If indeed the verbal phrase has decategorized, i.e. become a pragmatic marker, a secondary category, as is suggested, then indeed the old and the new forms must have diverged, since *I think* etc. now belongs to two different categories: full verbal phrase and (adverbial) pragmatic marker. But decategorialization and divergence equally apply to the process of lexicalization. For instance, in *today*, which no one would dispute *is* a case of lexicalization, an adverb arises from a noun in a prepositional phrase. Moreover, T&M (p.324) contradict themselves when they characterize the development of *I think* as decategorialization and at the same time deny that it can be lexicalization by saying that the "E[pistemic] P[hrase]s are still available for ordinary negation and questioning (It's cute, don't you think?')" (see further below).

Let us next have a look at the case for lexicalization. Many of the features apply to both grammaticalization and lexicalization: divergence and persistence, as we have seen, but also morphological bonding. B (p.253) writes that bonding does not apply to this case, but this may be questionable. Since the standardization of the spelling, it has become less likely that separate words will come to be written as a unit. It is of interest though that other verbal parentheticals did become a lexical unit in earlier English or in non-standard languages. An example is the phrase *methinks* and *godwot* 'god knows' (according to the *OED* written sometimes as one word), similarly Afrikaans *glo* from earlier *glo'k* < *glo ek* < Dutch *geloof ik* 'believe I', as noted in T&M (p.318). Wischer (2000), indeed, characterizes *methinks* as a case of 'syntactic lexicalization' because, as she notes, the two processes of lexicalization and grammaticalization may both be said to be present here.

As to T&M's argument that parenthenticals cannot represent lexicalization because they are still available for negation and questioning, this seems to me not quite correct. The negative *I don't think*, which is always used with Negative-raising, can only occur at the beginning of a clause because it has to precede the subordinate clause that it negates. In other words, unlike the regular parenthetical *I think*, it cannot occur in almost any position in the clause. Similarly, the phrase *do you think* is clearly followed by part of the complement clause in (7)

7. What do you think this offers? (ICE-GB s1A-001-116)

because it is impossible to put the phrase at the end and preserve the overall construction (see (8)). (8) simultaneously shows that the complement is an obligatory argument of the predicate *think* because it cannot be left out. This is quite unlike the use of *I think*, which can occur in all the positions indicated by *x* in (9), but which is not itself an obligatory part of the clause *What this offers.* Hence the clause *What this offers* must appear as a main clause (*What does this offer?*) or must be part of a main clause (*What this offers, is …*)

8. *What this offers do you think?
9. *x* What *x* this *x* offers *x*, is *x* …
   *x* What *x* does this *x* offer *x* ?

Also of interest is that most other common parentheticals do not appear in a negative or interrogative form at all: there are no examples of *do you/I guess, you/I don't guess* in the ICE-GB corpus. This indicates that such examples with *think*, which do occur in the corpus,

are not true parentheticals but are closer to expressing a 'mode of knowing' (i.e. T&M's type (1b)). In this light it is not surprising that a complement clause must follow because the cognitive verb (unlike the epistemic evidential) needs a complement and the complement depends on the verb.

Diessel and Tomasello (2001: 106ff.), who have looked at the use of parentheticals like *I think* in child language, distinguish three uses of believe-type verbs: (i) as formulaic parentheticals occurring only in the first person singular present indicative, (ii) as performatives used in direct questions, imperatives and hortatives, and (iii) as assertives. Only in the latter case are they used as full verbs governing an embedded complement clause. This is the type that does not occur in early child language, and which is rare in spoken discourse (hence not considered in Thompson 2002). It is interesting, to say the least, that what is considered by B and T&M to be diachronically the later type, is the earlier construction learned by children.

**5. Concluding remarks**

Taking all of the above into account, I conclude that parenthetical phrases like *I think* etc. are best seen as formulaic tokens, undergoing lexicalization rather than grammaticalization. In this process, they lose some referential content, being narrowed down to a more epistemic, evaluative meaning. In non-standardized languages they are likely to form one lexical unit in the course of time, provided they are not replaced by new tokens lexicalized from new believe-type-verbs. As with modal adverbs expressing speakers' stance (*awfully, terribly, gigantically*), they may have a quick turnover since they also serve as markers of personality, group identity and politeness. I do not believe they originally were part of a complex clause as both T&M, and B have argued in different ways. They probably occurred both in independent clauses and with complement clauses from the very beginning, the former being most frequent in spoken, the latter in written discourse. The difference is probably one between Givón's (1979: 223) 'pragmatic' and 'syntactic mode', which exist side by side in evolved languages. In other words, this case does not present a direct historical development, whereby a construction in the pragmatic mode develops into a syntactic construction to a syntactic mode. A knowledge of even older historical stages would be necessary to decide on this point for English. It seems to me more likely, however, that Gorrell (1895) is right when he accepts the use of parentheticals already for Old English. I find it hard to agree, therefore, with Diessel and Tomasello (2001: 135), who believe that the diachronic development in this

particular case is the opposite of the ontogenetic development, where the parenthetical use clearly comes first. It may well have been early diachronically too.

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**Corpora used**

The Dictionary of Old English Corpus (http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/o/oec/)
ICE-GB: the International Corpus of English: the British component (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/projects/ice-gb/)