

## GRAMMATICALIZATION AND PERSISTENCE PHENOMENA IN TWO HYBRID DISCOURSE MARKERS – *LA PREUVE* AND *REGARDE*<sup>1</sup>

by

Corinne Rossari  
University of Fribourg

### Abstract

*La preuve and regarde are two discourse markers that have undergone a grammaticalization process. As a consequence of this process they have partly lost their lexical value and have acquired a rhetorical one. The latter makes them function as connectives that can mark a justification relation. We shall see that in spite of this newly acquired discourse value, these two forms have preserved the perceptual aspect of their original meaning: la preuve by recalling a fact that is likely to be materialized in the sense of 'montré' ('shown'), regarde by recalling a state of affairs which is likely to be assessed by the addressee. The co-existence of these values is a result of the persistence phenomena that may affect grammaticalized items.*

### 1 Introduction

The purpose of our contribution is to examine the semantic-pragmatic interface by analysing expressions that we define as being “hybrid”. The particular nature of these expressions resides in the fact that they work at a crossroads of several word classes. Yet, this behaviour is not determined by a potential polysemy of these terms. Unlike an item such as *enfin*, which may function as a time adverb, a metalinguistic revision connective or even as an interjection, the expressions that we are going to study – *la preuve* and *regarde* – exhibit, for the same and unique use, traits related to different classes of lexical entities. *La preuve* is both a justification connective and a nominal predicate and *regarde* is both a justification connective and a verb in the imperative. Thus, our analysis, instead of establishing interrelationships among the different uses of a term as the analysis of Hansen (2005) does for *enfin*, focuses its attention on how these different traits coexist. The intrinsically dual nature of these expressions shows that meaning comes into being at the very interface between semantics and pragmatics.

---

<sup>1</sup>The present paper represents a contribution to the project *Semantic typology and classification of French connectives*, funded by the Fonds National Suisse de la Recherche Scientifique (request no 610-062821)

This issue is intimately related to the questions analysed by grammaticalization theories, whose purpose is to identify the principles governing the syntactic-semantic changes affecting items that have turned into discourse markers, for example. But whereas grammaticalization theories are primarily concerned with the various stages reflecting these changes of category or function, our purpose is to identify the simultaneous existence of phenomena that are supposed to be related to different grammaticalization stages. By examining the case of two lexical items that have turned into connectives<sup>2</sup> – the nominal predicate *la preuve*<sup>3</sup> and the verbal predicate *regarde*<sup>4</sup> –, we are going to reveal the characteristics ‘betraying’ their original status in terms of function and category. This persistence effect, minutely recorded by grammaticalization theories (see the notion of *persistence* in Hopper 1991, according to which original meanings constrain later use), perfectly brings out the way in which semantics and pragmatics co-operate in order to make up the meaning of an expression.

The two expressions that we are going to focus on have held our attention because they are intrinsically hybrid. We mean by this that, in terms of category, they do not possess the status appropriate to the development of their discourse function as connectives. Adverbs, adverbial conjunctions and conjunctions are forms that may easily turn into connectives, which is not the case for verbs or nouns. The study of the grammaticalization stages, carried out by Traugott (1995) for expressions such as *besides*, *indeed*, *in fact*, which have acquired a connective function, provided evidence that, at an intermediary point in their evolution, they had an adverbial function. It is the latter which facilitated the emergence of the former by the transition from a clause-internal status to a sentential status (clause-internal adverbial  $\Rightarrow$  sentence adverbial  $\Rightarrow$  discourse marker).

As far as *la preuve* and *regarde* are concerned, their original status as nominal and verbal forms respectively has not been obliterated by an intermediary adverbial function. They have not been affected by a decategorialization in the sense of Hopper (1991). Thus, they have maintained their nominal and verbal status while

---

<sup>2</sup>We consider connectives to be a sub-category of discourse markers whose role is to mark rhetorical relations between discourse segments, such as those listed by Rhetorical Structure Theory (i.e. justification, motivation, etc.). For a formal definition of connectives see Rossari 2005a.

<sup>3</sup>The semantics of this expression is studied in Rossari (2005b). We shall only refer here to those aspects that are relevant within the frame of grammaticalization theory.

<sup>4</sup>We refer to the study of Dostie (1998) for the different discourse functions that *regarde* can assume in Quebec French.

acquiring a discourse-centered function allowing them to signal a justification relation

This function accounts for their possible intersubstitution in the following examples<sup>5</sup>

- (1) *Il n'est jamais trop tard pour changer sa vie* **La preuve**, [**Regarde**,] *moi aujourd'hui ! J'ai encore du chemin à faire, tu sais, mais il n'y a personne de parfait* ! (www.entremamans.groups.msn.com)  
 'It's never too late to change your life **La preuve** [**Regarde**] myself today!  
 I've still got a long way ahead of me, indeed, but nobody's perfect'
- (2) *Une élection est validée, même avec un taux d'abstention monstrueux* **Regarde**, [**La preuve**,] *Chirac* ! (www.palmbiscotte.com/forum/topic)  
 'An election is validated even if the abstention rate is enormous **Regarde** [**La preuve**] Chirac'
- (3) *Ma chère Joelle, la violence physique est bien un fait des hommes, la preuve*, [*regarde*,] *l'histoire de l'humanité la violence* (www.forums.voila.fr/read)  
 'My dear Joelle, physical violence is a male thing, **la preuve** [*regarde*] mankind's history violence'

The result of their hybrid nature is that, even when invested with such a discourse-oriented function, these items maintain some traits pertaining to their lexical base. Thus, different diachronic tendencies governing the meaning changes identified by Traugott (1989: 34), may be present in a single use of either of these expressions

#### Tendency I

Meanings based in the external described situation > meanings based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) described situation

#### Tendency II

Meanings based in the external or internal described situation > meanings based in the textual and metalinguistic situation

---

<sup>5</sup>We use corpus data from any discourse type. Several of our examples are taken from Internet 'chats' or from fiction works imitating oral language, since the uses we comment upon are not to be currently found in 'classical' written language. Brackets are used to signal the item not being used in the original discourse.

### Tendency III

Meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state / attitude toward the propositions (Traugott 1989: 34)

In other terms, we shall see that they display both meanings involved in Tendency II and *la preuve* has even come to convey the meaning corresponding to Tendency III<sup>6</sup>

Our paper will be organized as follows. In the first part we shall focus on the loss of the lexical value (based in the external or internal described situation in the sense of Traugott) and on the acquisition of the rhetorical value (based in the textual and metalinguistic situation). In the second part, we shall present the constraints that these expressions impose on their context. In the final part we shall relate these constraints to their lexical value.

## 2 How the rhetorical value has come to supplant the lexical value

Although in the previous examples these expressions are used to draw the addressee's attention, none of them has a lexical value comparable to that emerging from the following examples:

- (4) *La présence de l'arme du crime a son domicile est la preuve de sa culpabilité*

'The presence of the murder weapon at his domicile is **la preuve** (proof of) his guilt.'

- (5) *Regarde l'étoile filante !*

'**Regarde** (Look at) the shooting star!'

### 2.1 *La preuve*

How can one detect the possible discrepancy between the lexical value and the rhetorical value of the expression *la preuve* in the following examples?

---

<sup>6</sup>Our paper will not deal with the way the rhetorical value resulting from Tendency II has been acquired. This general topic is dealt with by the Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (IITSC) (see Traugott 1999 and Traugott & Dasher 2002). In a forthcoming paper (Rossari & Cojocariu Forthcoming) we put forward an alternative solution specifically concerning *la preuve*, based on its deictic use.

- (6) *Je me répands Il m'éponge Il m'écoute en dodelinant, sérieux, avec son air de cureton sans paroisse Il boit ma jactance comme de la Kronenbourg J'me sens en confiance La preuve, j'y sors des trucs vachement intimes* (Lasaygues, *Vache noire, hannetons*)

'I let it go, I tell him everything It's like a liquid spilling out and he mops it up He listens to me, nodding, sober, with that look of a priest with no parish He actually drinks my words as if it were Kronenbourg I feel confident **La preuve**, I confess to him really intimate things'

- (7) *Discours maritaux habituels que j'ai fini par m'approprier et dans lesquels je ne suis pas plus mauvais qu'un autre La preuve, ma femme essuie ses larmes* (Salvayre, *La puissance des mouches*)

'Ordinary marital speeches that I've come to master and at which I'm not worse than others **La preuve**, my wife wipes her tears away'

The first remark to make is that the syntactic use of *la preuve* as a cataphoric nominal predicate is not to be systematically associated with this discrepancy There are several nominal predicates which may be used similarly, but this does not mean that one can identify any loss of their lexical value or the acquisition of some rhetorical value

- (8) *Le nouvel album (un double!) de Rohff n'y figure pas La raison il est vendu à un prix jugé trop bas pour figurer dans le classement des nouveautés* (www infos-du-net com/forum)

'Rohff's new album (a double one) is not to be found here **La raison** it's too low-priced to be included in the novelties list'

- (9) *Lorsqu'on clique sur le lien de mon site ça marche pas La cause, il y a un « / » de trop avant mon URL !* (www webrankinfo com/forums/viewtopic)

'When one clicks on the link to my site, it doesn't work **La cause**, there's a superfluous '/' before my URL'

These nominal predicates announce a referent corresponding to the state of affairs they introduce Their cataphorical status makes it impossible for them to do without the linguistic expression of this state of affairs The use of these items is clearly inadequate if the reason or the cause they denote are accessible exclusively through the discourse situation as such This inadequacy comes from the fact that these nominal predicates have only the capacity of evoking an extra-linguistic situation

- (10) *Le nouvel album (un double!) de Rohff n y figure pas \*La raison'*  
 'Rohff's new album (a double one) is not to be found here **La raison!**'
- (11) *Lorsqu'on clique sur le lien de mon site ça marche pas \*La cause'*  
 'When one clicks on the link to my site, it doesn't work **La cause!**'

*La preuve*, although it may be used cataphorically, may assume a deictic interpretation, i.e. an interpretation according to which, by using this expression, the speaker offers *ipso facto* its referent, the same way as if she/he used *ici*(= *here*) or *maintenant*(= *now*)

- (12) *Je me répands Il m'éponge Il m'écoute en dodelinant, sérieux, avec son air de cureton sans paroisse Il boit ma jactance comme de la Kronenbourg J'me sens en confiance La preuve'*  
 'I let it go, I tell him everything It's like a liquid spilling out and he mops it up He listens to me, nodding, sober, with that look of a priest with no parish He actually drinks my words as if it were Kronenbourg I feel confident **La preuve!**'
- (13) *Discours maritaux habituels que j'ai fini par m'approprier et dans lesquels je ne suis pas plus mauvais qu'un autre La preuve'*  
 'Ordinary marital speeches that I've come to master and at which I'm not worse than others **La preuve!**'

An appropriate context could supplant the verbal formulation of the state of affairs. When used in this way, the expression alludes to a concrete scene which is likely to confirm what the speaker has just stated. Such an allusion is only mentioned with a rhetorical purpose, in order to reinforce the previous utterance. Its meaning has become discourse-internal. To put it differently, it is not the knowledge of a certain state of affairs that makes the speaker refer to it by using *la preuve*. It is rather the fact of uttering *la preuve* as such that suggests the existence of the state of affairs in question. This mechanism differentiates *la preuve* from the expressions having preserved their lexical value, such as *la cause* or *la raison*, the latter imply the existence of a state of affairs that the speaker presents as being the cause or the reason of the state described in the previous utterance. A speaker who would like to refer to the genuine proof/evidence of a certain state of affairs would rather say

(14)

- (14) *La preuve de la culpabilité de Paul est l'arme du crime a son domicile*  
 'La preuve (the proof) of Paul's guilt is the murder weapon found at his domicile'

instead of

- (15) *Paul est coupable #La preuve, l'arme du crime a son domicile*  
 'Paul is guilty La preuve, the murder weapon found at his domicile'

This difference does not appear in the case of *la cause* or *la raison*, which have preserved, for both uses (cataphorical or not) their meaning focused on the extralinguistic situation

- (16) *Paul est blessé La cause, un banal accident de la route*  
 'Paul is injured La cause, an ordinary car accident'
- (17) *La cause de la blessure de Paul est un banal accident de la route*  
 'The cause of Paul's injury is an ordinary car accident'
- (18) *Paul a démissionné La raison, l'environnement de travail épouvantable*  
 'Paul has resigned La raison, the horrible work environment'
- (19) *La raison de la démission de Paul est l'environnement de travail épouvantable*  
 'The reason for Paul's resignation is the horrible work environment'

These constructions clearly show that the cataphoric use of *la preuve* is accompanied by a form of lexicalization<sup>7</sup>. The noun phrase has partly lost its compositionality in order to form a whole. This loss has modified its value: it is no longer a noun phrase, but a set expression in which the noun is frozen with its article<sup>8</sup>. The utterance where it occurs is not purely descriptive in nature (i.e. the facts referred to do not have the upper hand), on the contrary, it is rather subjective, since the verbal act closes up on itself by evoking a scene which materializes an assessment previously formulated by the speaker. An utterance displaying the speaker's purely subjective perceptions is perfectly compatible with this use.

<sup>7</sup>We adhere to Moreno Cabrera (1998)'s view of lexicalization as being a semantic change involving a loss of compositionality, without however restricting it to a metonymy-based process.

<sup>8</sup>For an analysis of *la preuve* as a set expression, see Rossari (2005b).

(20) *Paul est coupable. La preuve, tu as vu la tête qu'il fait quand on l'interroge !*

'Paul is guilty. **La preuve**, you've seen the face he pulls when he's being questioned!'

In this example, Paul's facial expression when being questioned is presented as a concrete manifestation of his culpability. In (15), where the presence of the murder weapon stands for a genuine proof of Paul's guilt, the use of the expression is either astonishing or modifying the quality of 'proof' of the object referred to. By the very fact of being introduced in discourse by means of *la preuve*, the presence of the murder weapon at Paul's domicile is deprived of its 'proof' status, in the legal sense of the word. In other words, with *la preuve*, anything can function as proof of anything, the very notion of *proof* being completely blown up. The category of *proofs* becomes so vague, so loose, that it can cover any kind of verbal justification. This is actually why one has the feeling that it is the very fact of uttering *la preuve* that suggests the existence of a proof.

So, there has indeed been lexicalization, i.e. a partial loss of the compositionality inherent to the original noun phrase. It is this very loss that has led to a meaning change.

## 2.2 *Regarde*

The discrepancy between the lexical and the rhetorical values of *regarde* is emphasized by several distributional clues. In its quality of expression, *regarde* is not bound by the same constraints as a verb in the imperative. For instance, an imperative that constitutes an utterance cannot be introduced by means of conjunctions such as *car* or *parce que*:

(21) \**Arrête de lire, car / parce que dors !*

'Stop reading, **car / parce que** (because) sleep!'

The conjunctions *car* or *parce que* are incompatible with the verb *regarde* when the latter preserves intact its lexical value; nonetheless, when *regarde* is used as a discourse marker introducing an utterance, they may as well precede it (cf. (22) vs (23)).

(22) \**Il vaut mieux prendre un parapluie, car / parce que regarde dehors, il pleut !*

'We'd better take an umbrella, **car / parce que regarde** (because look) outdoors, it's raining!'

- (23) – *Il est antisémite*  
 – *Tu crois? Moi, je ne le ressens pas Parce que regarde notre situation aux noirs, aux arabes, c'était super chaud* ([www.technikart.com/article](http://www.technikart.com/article))  
 ‘– He is an anti-Semite  
 – Do you think so? As far as I'm concerned, it's not my feeling **Parce que regarde** (because look) our situation, with the Blacks, the Arabs, was very tense’

At first glance, these distributional clues seem very clear. *Regarde* as a discourse marker is no longer an imperative. It has lost the syntactic constraints affecting such a form. This loss has also been accompanied by a change in meaning. In (23), *regarde* does not have an interpellative value, which would correspond to the lexical meaning conveyed by the imperative. The speaker does not ask the addressee to pay attention to one particular situation. When used in such a way, *regarde* gains a rhetorical value, becoming a connective<sup>9</sup>. The state of affairs that it introduces is used as a justification for what is previously said. In the latter example, the justification is already marked by *parce que*. But *regarde* may also be used alone to underline a relation of justification, which would appear less clearly without it.

- (24) *Oui, les bureaux de vote ne sont pas encore fermés, mais c'est impossible que la tendance s'inverse. Regarde, les votes ont déjà beaucoup ralenti* ([www.18centres.com/php/phorum/nav](http://www.18centres.com/php/phorum/nav))  
 ‘Yes indeed, the polling stations are still open, but it's impossible that the tendency should reverse. **Regarde**, voting has already slowed down significantly’

---

<sup>9</sup>The same remark seems to apply to *mira*, the Spanish equivalent for *regarde* as a discourse marker. Pons Bordería (1998) identifies a value exceeding the interpellative one and closely related to that of a connective: « El corpus indica que los apelativos *oye* y *mira* poseen, como función primaria, la denominada función fática, que puede estar dirigida hacia la enunciación (función fática propiamente dicha) o hacia el enunciado (función fática interna). Junto a éstas, otros valores completan la nómina de sus usos, entre ellos los de tipo conectivo » (Pons Bordería 1998: 11).

- (25) *Oui, les bureaux de vote ne sont pas encore fermés mais c'est impossible que la tendance s'inverse* #<sup>10</sup>*Les votes ont déjà beaucoup ralenti*  
 'Yes indeed, the polling stations are still open, but it's impossible that the tendency should reverse #Voting has already slowed down significantly'

Although well formed, the latter discourse seems to be incomplete. One cannot clearly perceive the manner in which the second utterance is justified in relation to the first one. The semantic change at work is also underlined by the effect of awkwardness that the use of *regarde* brings about in examples such as (26)

- (26) *Paul a eu 10 ans ?Regarde, il a invité à son anniversaire plus de 30 camarades !*  
 'Paul was ten last week. **Regarde**, he invited more than 30 friends to his birthday party!'

In this case, it is impossible to understand the utterance introduced by *regarde* as supporting a previous statement, because it is interpreted as a mere elaboration on the theme of the previous utterance.

### 3 The constraints affecting the rhetorical use of *la preuve* and *regarde*

#### 3.1 *La preuve*

The expression *la preuve* cannot be used to preface just any kind of utterance. If we modify the statement it introduces in (1), the use of the expression seems inappropriate, although we may still talk about a relation of justification, as proved by the possibility of using *car* or *parce que*.

- (27) *Il n'est jamais trop tard pour changer sa vie. ?La preuve, les changements sont bénéfiques à tout âge*  
 'It is never too late to change one's life. **La preuve**, changes are good at any age.'
- (28) *Il n'est jamais trop tard pour changer sa vie, car / parce que les changements sont bénéfiques à tout âge*  
 'It is never too late to change one's life, **car / parce que** (because) changes are good at any age.'

---

<sup>10</sup>The sign '#' marks a different interpretation.

Even if, as we have seen before, the lexical value has been obliterated by the acquisition of a rhetorical one, the state of affairs introduced must correspond to a certain pattern. It cannot be a theoretical point of view such as the one expressed in (27). On the contrary, *la preuve* may preface states of affairs that could not be naturally introduced in discourse by *car* or *parce que*.

- (29) *Paul doit être un écrivain hors pair, la preuve j'adore tous ses livres*  
 'Paul must be an outstanding writer, **la preuve** I like all his books'
- (30) ??*Paul doit être un écrivain hors pair, car / parce que j'adore tous ses livres*  
 'Paul must be an outstanding writer, **car / parce que** (because) I like all his books'
- (31) *Paul doit être un écrivain hors pair, car / parce que Dupond, qui est un critique particulièrement intransigeant, adore tous ses livres*  
 'Paul must be an outstanding writer, **car / parce que** (because) Dupond, who is a particularly uncompromising critic, loves all his books'

As we can see, *la preuve* may introduce an utterance in which the speaker talks openly about herself/himself by using the first person pronoun. Such utterances are not well formed justifications if introduced by *car* or *parce que*. The latter require the speaker to invoke the taste of a third person as an alibi to justify the positive assessment made of Paul's qualities as a writer.

These contrasts bring out some of the constraints that *la preuve* imposes on the state of affairs which serves as a justification to the previous statement.

### 3.2 *Regarde*

The constraints imposed by *regarde* are just as remarkable. There are examples which are perfectly appropriate for *la preuve*, but not for *regarde* – (6) is one of them.

- (32) *J'me sens en confiance ?Regarde, j'y sors des trucs vraiment intimes*  
 'I feel confident **Regarde**, I confess to him really intimate things'

These constraints appear even more clearly in the case of introspective utterances.

- (33) *Je n'ai pas envie de sortir, \*regarde, j'ai mal à la tête*  
 'I don't feel like going out, **\*regarde**, I've got a headache'

The following examples illustrate them by means of the temporality of the event they describe

- (34) *Il a dû avoir un problème **Regarde**, il avait l'air très perturbé*  
 'He must have had a problem **Regarde** (look), he seemed really anxious '
- (35) *Il a dû avoir un problème **Regarde**, il a l'air très perturbé*  
 'He must have had a problem **Regarde** (look), he seems really anxious '

There are also cases when both expressions are unnatural, even if we have a discourse relation consistent with a form of justification. We shall see in the next section that such constraints are due to persistence phenomena, that is the effects of the lexical value on the rhetorical use of these expressions

#### 4 The rhetorical value and its connexions with the lexical value

##### 4.1 *La preuve*

The fact that the use of *la preuve* is not natural in examples such as (27) is linked to its lexical value. Trivially, the lexical value of *la preuve* requires that the state of affairs it prefaces may be proven, and this is not the case for a state of affairs presented as a theoretical point of view. A proof is necessarily something that can be visualized by another person. Another constraint should be added to this one: the consequence of the grammaticalization process is that the state of affairs designated by *la preuve* should serve a rhetorical purpose. So, by using this expression, the speaker does not have to give the impression of indicating a certain fact as a 'proof' – as in (15) –, but she/he is supposed to evoke a fact in order to make her/his assessment more concrete and thus confirm it. This is why *la preuve* may naturally introduce any fact directly concerning the speaker – as in examples (1) and (29) –, i.e. a fact that has no value as real proof, but is perfect for rhetorical purposes. Many authentic uses of *la preuve* are meant to make an example out of the speaker's experience

- (36) *Parle a un psy, je l'ai fait et ça a bien marche , **la preuve**, je suis fiancé et j'aime de nouveau la vie* (www.funkymag.com/probleme623)  
 'Talk to a psychologist, I've done it and it has really worked, **la preuve**, I'm engaged and I love life again '
- (37) *L'espace est genial, **la preuve** j'y suis tous les week-ends*  
 (www.guidedenuit.com)  
 'The place is great, **la preuve**, I go there every week-end

- (38) *Non, les tatouages ne sont pas dangereux la preuve, je suis toujours vivant*  
([www freever com/freever/tatouage.jsp](http://www.freever.com/freever/tatouage.jsp))  
'No, tattoos are not dangerous, **la preuve**, I'm still alive'
- (39) *Et je n'ai jamais remis en question la convivialité du forum, la preuve j'y suis toujours* ([www infographik lazao biz/ik/upload](http://www.infographik.lazao.biz/ik/upload))  
'And I've never denied the conviviality of the forum, **la preuve**, I'm still using it'
- (40) *Ce que tu aimes et ce que tu détestes J'aime les gens un peu fous, la preuve j'aime bien Olive, et c'est pour ça que j'aime ce pays* ([www chez com/niafron/citoyens/piment.html](http://www.chez.com/niafron/citoyens/piment.html))  
'What you like and what you hate I like people who are a little bit crazy, **la preuve** I really like Olive and this is why I like this country!'
- (41) *L'erreur est humaine* **La preuve**, je suis humain et j'ai dû commettre une ou deux petites bêtises dans ma vie (archives jeuxonline info/fils)  
'Erring is human' **La preuve**, I am human and I must have done one or two little foolish things in my life'

In all these examples the speaker uses her/his own experience as a 'concrete case'. This manner of speaking is all the more natural since it provides spontaneity to the discourse segment introduced by way of confirmation. We have already seen that, when using *la preuve*, the speaker does not try to designate a fact and qualify it as a 'proof', but she/he rather tries to remain focused on her/his discourse by means of an allusion that comes to her/his mind the very moment she/he utters her/his assessment. Taking herself/himself as an example, the speaker exploits to the utmost the rhetorical possibilities of this expression and, at the same time, she/he provides a simulacrum of proof, since the element in question consists in a concrete fact.

To sum up, we can retain two semantic characteristics of the expression *la preuve*. The first one is a consequence of its lexical value: the state of affairs it introduces has to be a concrete fact, situation or event, in other words, it has to be something that can be shown or proven. The second one has its origin in its rhetorical value: The linguistic expression of this state of affairs has to establish an argumentative type of discourse relation with the previous utterance and not only a merely referential relation. More precisely, the utterance introduced by *la preuve* has to serve as a confirmation of the previous assessment, in the sense

that it has to restate it by pointing to one of its concrete manifestations. This latter characteristic favours the emergence of the third tendency noticed by Traugott (1989: 34) ‘Meaning tends to become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief/state/attitude toward the proposition’. That’s why *la preuve* frequently introduces an utterance concerning the speaker’s experience, which is normally a ‘bad candidate’ for justification purposes, as we have noticed with the unnatural use of *parce que* or *car* (cf. (29) vs (30)). The possible deictic use of *la preuve* (cf. examples (12) and (13)) is one of the manifestations of this tendency. The expression finds its own reference exclusively in accordance with the speaker’s beliefs (it may refer to any state of affairs belonging to the speaker’s cognitive environment).

#### 4.2 *Regarde*

The unnatural use of *regarde* in examples such as (32) or (33) is accounted for by the lexical value that persists in the rhetorical use of this expression. The state of affairs that *regarde* introduces must be accessible to the addressee. Thus, introspective utterances give rise to badly formed discourses, as they are beyond the hearer’s control. The tense constraints illustrated by examples (34) and (35) are due to the same persistence phenomena: the verb in the past is incompatible with an interpretation in which the addressee can verify the veracity of the state of affairs referred to. This persistence phenomenon is particularly remarkable in directives such as (42), in which it is quite difficult to determine if the verb is used as an imperative or as a discourse marker.

(42) *Arrête de lire, car / parce que regarde l’heure, il est très tard !*

‘Stop reading, **car / parce que** (because) **regarde** the hour, it’s very late!’

We have seen that the combination with the conjunctions *car* and *parce que* plays a determining part when it comes to distinguishing between these different uses. In (42) *regarde* seems to have an ambiguous function, between that of a clause predicate introducing its object (i.e. ‘l’heure’), and that of an independent marker which, coupled with its complement, introduces the utterance *il est très tard*. If the example ends on ‘regarde l’heure’, the use of *car* or *parce que* is completely inappropriate, given that only the first interpretation is possible.

(43) \**Arrête de lire, car / parce que regarde l’heure !*

‘Stop reading, **car / parce que** (because) **regarde** the hour!’

Other cases in which the status of *regarde* is not clear are the ones where it is accompanied by a complement that is not interpreted as an object which has to be

visually perceived by the addressee. A good example in this sense is (2), in which the complement represented by the proper noun 'Chirac' is not interpreted as an object to look at, but as an example, a theoretical case illustrating the statement made in the previous utterance.

- (44) *Une élection est validée, même avec un taux d'abstention monstrueux*  
*Regarde, Chirac !*

'An election is validated even if the abstention rate is enormous. **Regarde, Chirac!**'

The utterance *regarde Chirac* is in fact a short version of *regarde le cas de Chirac*. But, even in the latter version, the value that can be attributed to *regarde* has to be considered in the same mitigated sense, insofar as it has nothing to do with properly looking at a certain case, but only with considering it. One may therefore hesitate between a polysemic analysis, which would treat this use of *regarde* as having a full lexical meaning, but however different from the one convoked in (5), and an analysis according to which *regarde* combines both meanings (the lexical and the rhetorical one)<sup>11</sup>. In the latter case, the predicate has preserved its valence, in spite of the fact that it allows the speaker to underline a rhetorical relation of justification. The possible use of *parce que* in order to introduce the utterance *regarde le cas de Chirac* shows that the verb is not used as an imperative.

- (45) *Une élection est validée, même avec un taux d'abstention monstrueux*  
*Parce que regarde le cas de Chirac !*

'An election is validated even if the abstention rate is enormous. **Parce que regarde** (Because look) at the case of Chirac!'

- (46) *Une élection est validée, même avec un taux d'abstention monstrueux*  
*\*Parce que considère le cas Chirac !*

'An election is validated even if the abstention rate is enormous. **Parce que considère** (Because consider) Chirac's case!'

The contrast between the acceptability of these two examples speaks for itself. If the verb *regarde* were used as an imperative meaning *consider the case of*, it would not accept to be placed in a subordinate clause introduced by *parce que*.

<sup>11</sup>A similar case is pointed out in Waltereit's (2002) study of Italian *guarda*, which allows the speaker to draw the addressee's attention to a particular situation which need not be a visually perceptible one, but may be the discourse itself.

The omission test also reveals the ambiguity of its status. If the conjunction directly introduces the segment centred on Chirac, then the interpretation is modified.

- (47) *Une élection est validée, même avec un taux d'abstention monstrueux*  
**Parce que regarde** Chirac il a été élu avec un taux d'abstention record !  
 'An election is validated even if the abstention rate is enormous **Parce que regarde** (because look) Chirac was elected in spite of a record abstention rate!'
- (48) *Une élection est validée, même avec un taux d'abstention monstrueux*  
 #**Parce que** Chirac il a été élu avec un taux d'abstention record !  
 'An election is validated even if the abstention rate is enormous **Parce que** Chirac was elected in spite of a record abstention rate!'

Without *regarde*, the segment introduced by the conjunction loses its illustrative value, this shows that we have here a value different from the one assumed by the imperative, which is essentially an interpellative one.

These tests indicate that *regarde* simultaneously displays several tendencies inherent to the grammaticalization process, which are responsible for the various semantic values it takes on.

## 5 Theoretical consequences

The results of our analysis open up interesting horizons for historical pragmatics-related matters.

They underline that denotationally strong categories such as nouns and verbs may acquire a connective status<sup>12</sup>. Adverbs, which are better candidates for the acquisition of a connective status, are less prominent denotationally speaking since their general function is to specify a certain predication. The possibility of recruiting connectives among nouns and verbs opens new insights into the way a certain lexical item turns into a connective.

Our results also indicate that the connective status is not exclusive of an (at least) partial preservation of the original denotational value. The semantic change we have focused on is not to be analysed as a succession of distinct values, but as the simultaneous existence of two normally competing values. This might suggest that even behind procedural meanings we might find some conceptual traits.

<sup>12</sup>Notice should be made that *la preuve* seems to be a hapax in French and that VPs are only marginally treated as genuine connectives (see Pons Bordería 1998 for *mira* and Vincent 1992 for *disons*).

## 6 Interrelation between lexical value and rhetorical value: synthesis

In spite of the losses induced by the grammaticalization process on their lexical value, these two items have preserved the perceptual aspect of their original semantic value: *la preuve* by recalling a fact that is likely to be materialized in the sense of 'montré' ('shown'), *regarde* by recalling a state of affairs whose truth value is likely to be assessed by the addressee. The rhetorical value that they have acquired allows both of them to be used as connectives marking a relation of justification.

*La preuve* can only put up with a confirmation relation, by introducing a concrete scene, fact or event which supports the assessment made by the speaker in the previous utterance. The tight rhetorical relation established with the left context of the expression is a consequence of its original grammatical form. This may be considered as a sign of persistence: *la preuve* has maintained the constraints imposed by its definite form, which imply that it has to refer to a previous utterance (*la preuve de quelque chose*, 'the proof of something'). So, the utterance it introduces can only be a confirmation of what has just been stated.

*Regarde* as a connective is only appropriate if it is possible to extrapolate from the previous utterance an assessment that the speaker is trying to support by means of the utterance introduced by the marker itself. In this sense, it could very well be associated with Vincent (1992)'s paradigm of verb-based markers serving exemplifying purposes. However, unlike *la preuve*, *regarde* only owes its relational character to the grammaticalization process it has undergone. An imperative is normally totally independent from any left-hand context and *regarde* has come to be an indication which can only be interpreted if it is possible to extract from this very context an assessment the speaker is trying to support. Thus, the relational value it has acquired cannot be justified by a persistence phenomenon concerning its lexical basis.

To sum up, both expressions are subject to the first two tendencies of the grammaticalization process identified by Traugott (1989: 34); as far as *la preuve* is concerned, we may even speak about the presence of a subjectification tendency, since this item has the capacity to refer to speaker-oriented situations, as when it has a deictic use.

### Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to Corina Cojocariu and Adriana Spiridon for the assistance provided in editing this paper in English. I also thank the two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful remarks.

## References

- Dostie, Gaétane, 1998. Deux marqueurs discursifs issus de verbes de perception: de *écouter / regarder* à *écoute / garde*. *Cahiers de lexicologie* 73, 125–146.
- Hansen, Maj-Britt Mosegaard, 2005. From prepositional phrase to hesitation marker: the semantic and pragmatic evolution of French *enfin*. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 6 (1), 37–68.
- Hopper, Paul, 1991. On some principles of grammaticalization. In: Elizabeth Closs Traugott, Bernd Heine (eds.), *Approaches to Grammaticalization*. Vol. 1. John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 17–35.
- Moreno Cabrera, Juan, 1998. On the relationships between grammaticalization and lexicalization. In: Anna Giacalone Ramat, Paul Hopper (eds.), *The Limits of Grammaticalization*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 211–227.
- Pons Bordería, Salvador, 1998. Los apelativos *oye* y *mira* o los límites de la conexión. In: M<sup>a</sup> Antonia Martín Zorraquino, Estrella Montolfo (eds.), *Marcadores discursivos: teoría y práctica*. Arco, Madrid, 213–228.
- Rossari, Corinne, 2005a. The formal properties of a subset of discourse markers: connectives. In: Kerstin Fischer (ed.), *Approaches to discourse particles*. Elsevier, 327–343.
- Rossari, Corinne, 2005b. Le leurre des significations lexicales : l'exemple de *la preuve*. *Revue Romane* 40 (1), 67–80.
- Rossari, Corinne, Cojocariu, Corina, Forthcoming. Nominal expressions turning into connectives: the case of French *preuve* and Romanian *dovadă*. *Journal of Pragmatics* Special issue S. Pons Bordería (ed.), Empirical Data and Pragmatic Theory.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C., 1989. On the rise of epistemic meanings in English: an example of subjectification in semantic change. *Language* 65 (1), 31–55.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C., 1995. The role of the development of discourse markers in a theory of grammaticalization. Paper presented at ICHL XII, Manchester 1995: version of 11/97.
- Traugott, Elizabeth C., 1999. The role of pragmatics in semantic change. In: Jef Verschueren (ed.), *Pragmatics in 1998: Selected Papers from the 6th International Pragmatics Conference*. Vol. II. International Pragmatics Association, Antwerp, 93–102.

Traugott, Elizabeth C , Dasher, Richard B , 2002 *Regularity in semantic change*  
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Vincent, Diane, 1992 Sociolinguistics of exemplification in the French spoken in  
Montreal *Language Variation and Change* 4 (2), 137–162

Waltereit, Richard, 2002. Imperatives, interruptions in conversation, and the rise  
of discourse markers A study of Italian *guarda* *Linguistics* 40 (5), 987–1010

### **About the author**

Corinne Rossari

Department of French

University of Fribourg

Av Beauregard 11, 13

CH-1700 Fribourg

Switzerland

e-mail [corinne.rossari@unifr.ch](mailto:corinne.rossari@unifr.ch)