

Theory and Empiricism
in Slavonic Diachronic
Linguistics

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Theory
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and Empiricism
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Diachronic
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GABRIELA MÚČSKOVÁ: THE CATEGORY OF DEFINITENESS IN RELATION TO THE LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK LANGUAGE

Abstract: This article focuses on the development – the rise and loss – of the category of definiteness in the Slovak language with reflections in other Slavic languages. The reconstruction of the grammaticalization process starts in the Proto-Slavic period and presupposes a free syntactic construction with a demonstrative pronoun as a determiner of definiteness. The process of grammaticalization began in the analytic form of an adjective in attributive position with the demonstrative functioning as derivative suffix and later as only the grammatical formant. In the Balto-Slavic period there were two forms of adjectives – one with a noun declension form determining indefiniteness and another with a compound (pronoun) declension form with a definite meaning. Subsequent development led to semantic synonymization of both forms, and to variation in their use, and ended in gradual loss of one member of the opposition – the noun declension forms which were gradually replaced by the compound forms also in the predicative position. The conclusion of the paper proposes a set of general characteristics present in the process of grammaticalization of the category of definiteness, determines a possible explanation for the prevailing of the compound declension forms instead of the unmarked and basic noun declension form which has declined in use, and proves that the described process bears all the typical features of the process of grammaticalization including its final reduction and loss. **Keywords:** Slovak language, definiteness, grammaticalization, noun and compound declension, loss.

The category of definiteness is applied to noun phrase (NP) parts of discourse, thus in the grammatical system of language it belongs to noun grammatical categories. From the semantic point of view it expresses the fact that the referent of the NP is known or already mentioned before in the context and it is characterized by the concept of **uniqueness** – i.e. the existence of only one entity meeting the descriptive content of the NP – and **familiarity** – i.e. the addressee of the utterance is presumed to be acquainted with the referent of the NP (Abbott 2006: 1–4). According to Anna Kibort the category of definiteness corresponds to the semantic category of identifiability (Kibort 2008: 1).

Language has more items which are able to express these meanings, but – as Barbara Abbott has shown in several works (citing also other authors that dealt with this question from linguistic, logical and philosophical points of view) – it is not possible to suppose all these items equal in expressing definiteness and opposite to items expressing indefiniteness (Abbott 2004: 1–3). Concrete types of language items expressing definiteness – **determiners of definiteness** – create a hierarchy according to the degree to which they are able to express an identifiable or unique referent. The highest position in this hierarchy belongs to NPs which contain demonstrative pronouns – the identifiability of these pronouns arises from their deictic function and function to

stand for other referents (cf. Lehman 2002: 33). Then it is personal pronouns as NPs and NPs with some kind of definite article – free or in the form of a derivative morpheme with the function of definiteness. A certain degree of definiteness is present in possessive NPs, NPs with a universal quantifiers as the determiner (*každý, všetko, všetci* etc. – [each, every, all]) and utterances which have no concrete determiner of definiteness, but they contain some general statement (*Ruža je kvetina* – [Rose is a flower]) and the definite character arises from a relation of inclusiveness (in detail cf. Abbott 2006: 1–2). Also proper names belong to the hierarchy of determiners of definiteness, but they – in my opinion – occupy a special position as the indication of an identifiable and unique referent is their primary function and motivation of their emergence, not just their characteristic feature.

In various languages the encoding of definiteness can have different forms. According to Lyons (Lyons 1999: 47–156; cited according Kibort 2008: 2) there are:

i. simple definiteness encoding – there is some type of article (free-form determiner or affix) in the language;

ii. complex definiteness encoding – there is no article and the language has some other devices encoding the meaning of definiteness (like those mentioned above: NPs with demonstratives or possessive pronouns, personal pronouns or proper names etc.).

But definiteness is a grammatical category only in languages in which the meaning of definiteness and indefiniteness has been grammaticalized and the result of the grammaticalization process is a type of (in)definite article present in all NPs or there are languages with grammaticalized definiteness only in NPs with adjectives in attributive position or in pronominal NPs (Kibort 2008: 2–3).

The type of the language, from the point of view of the encoding of definiteness and the presence of a grammaticalized category, is not invariable in its historical development and it can change, as can be seen also in the Slovak language and all Slavic languages, too.

In many languages which have a grammaticalized category of definiteness in some form of article (free-form determiner, suffix or affix) the article has arisen from a demonstrative pronoun (Campbell 2004: 294; Lehman 2002: 33), which, as it was mentioned before, has the highest degree of expressing definiteness – this characteristic was probably the motivation of this grammatical language change in which the determiner as a lexical unit syntactically in an attributive position (with the function of identifying a concrete referent) became, during a process of a grammaticalization, a grammatical item with

the function of expressing definiteness as the grammatical category (e. g. Late Latin *ille*, Gothic *sa*, *sō*, *þata*, OE *sē*, *sēo*, *thæt*, Homeric *hó*, *hē*, *to* etc. < PIE **so*, *sā*, *tod* – see Lehman 2002: 34).

A similar process can be seen in historical periods of the development of Proto-Slavic and the Slavic languages that originated from it. The Proto-Slavic language inherited from the PIE declension system a noun declension realized in the declension of nouns, noun forms of adjectives, some types of numerals and former participles (*nt-*, *s-*, *l-*, *n-* and *t-* participles) and pronominal declension realized in the declension of former pronouns – personal, demonstrative, possessive and interrogative (*on* [he], *j(en)* [that/masc.], *ten* [that/masc.], *veš* [all], *měj* [my], *náš* [our], *s(en)* [this/masc.], *kto* [who], *č(so)* [what] etc.) and in numerals *jeden* [one], *dva* [two], *dvój* [double], *trój* [triple] (cf. Lamprecht-Šlosar-Bauer 1986: 138).

Despite a lack of textual historical sources, we might suppose that for expressing a known, concrete or unique referent in a discourse the former demonstrative *jь*, *ja*, *je* was used in attributive position before the head of a NP to exclude the referent from the class of equal denotates:

N. sg. masc.	* <i>chlapъ</i> noun 'a man'	* <i>jь</i>	<i>chlapъ</i> demonstr. + noun 'this man'
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with declension forms:

G. sg. masc.	* <i>chlap-a</i> noun-G suffix '(of) a man'	:	* <i>j-ego</i>	<i>chlap-a</i> demonstr.-G suffix + noun-G suffix '(of) this man'
D. sg. masc.	* <i>chlap-u</i> noun-D suffix '(to) a man'	:	* <i>j-emu</i>	<i>chlap-u</i> demonstr.-D suffix + noun-D suffix '(to) this man'
I. sg. masc.	* <i>chlap-omъ/ьmъ</i> noun-I suffix '(with) a man'	:	* <i>j-imъ</i>	<i>chlap-omъ/ьmъ</i> demonstr.-I suffix + noun-I suffix '(with) this man'
L. sg. masc.	* <i>chlap-ě</i> noun-L suffix '(in) a man'	:	* <i>j-emъ</i>	<i>chlap-ě</i> demonstr.-L suffix + noun-L-suffix '(in) this man'

etc.

In this construction the demonstrative with an identification function stood before the noun that it determined and it kept this position also in the syntactic construction of the whole NP with an adjective in an attributive function:

I. Syntactic construction:

		jь	chlarpъ		G. <i>dobra jeho chlapa</i>
dobrъ		└──────────┘			D. <i>dobru jemu chlapu</i>
		└──────────┘			I. <i>dobry jimъ chlapotъ/ьтъ</i>
		└──────────┘			etc.
adject.		demonstr.	noun		
'good'		'this/that'	'man'		

During the process of grammaticalization the demonstrative became a postposed member in an analytic form of the adjective phrase with a function of definiteness:

II. Analytic form:

			chlarpъ		G. <i>dobra + jeho chlapa</i>
dobrъ		jь			D. <i>dobru + jemu chlapu</i>
		└────────┘			I. <i>dobry + jimъ chlapotъ/ьтъ</i>
		└──────────┘			etc.
'good'	+	'the'	'man'		

Further development led to reassessment from a free form of the pronoun to a synthetic construction with a derivative suffix, so it lost its status and meaning of a demonstrative pronoun (decategorialization) and became just a suffix with determinative function. In declension both parts kept their own declension – the adjective part declined according to the noun declension and the determiner part according to the pronominal declension:

III. Synthetic agglutinative form:

dobrъjь	chlarpъ		G. <i>dobrajego chlapa</i>
	└────────┘		D. <i>dobrujemu chlapu</i>
'goodthe'	'man'		I. <i>dobryjimъ chlapotъ/ьтъ</i>
			etc.

In this stage of the grammaticalization process – historically in the Balto-Slavic period – the form known as “compound declension of adjectives” [zložené adjektívne skloňovanie], known also in Baltic languages, arose (Lamprecht-Šlosar-Bauer 1986: 138). Thus, in the Balto-Slavic and Proto-Slavic period there existed the grammaticalized category of definiteness and indefiniteness represented by the form of adjective: the noun declension forms *dobrъ chlapъ* [a good man] represented the category of indefiniteness and compound declension forms *dobrъjъ chlapъ* [the good man] the category of definiteness (cf. Krajčovič 1988: 113; Klemensiewicz-Lehr-Spławiński-Urbańczyk 1955: 323 and others); but this opposition was limited to NPs with an adjective attribute, i.e. in the case of an adjective in an attributive position, and was not spread generally. Adjectives in predicate position had just the noun declension form (Klemensiewicz-Lehr-Spławiński-Urbańczyk 1955: 323). Östen Dahl (Dahl 2004: 152) also presupposes the existence of the grammatical category of definiteness in Proto-Slavic only in attributive constructions. Jan Gebauer (Gebauer 2007: 169) explains the difference between the noun and compound declensions as follows: “...the adjective noun declension form simply marked the referent according to its specific quality and this quality was determined to it, – but on the other hand, the adjective compound declension form determined the actual referent which had the quality in question.”¹

Josef Kurz (Kurz 1958: 86–90), comparing Old Church Slavonic texts – translations from Greek, has shown that the grammatical definite forms of adjectives in Old Church Slavonic are not fully equivalent to the Greek definite article (*σοφὸς ἄνθρωπος* – ὁ σοφὸς ἄνθρωπος [a wise man – the wise man]) which functioned generally. Moreover he demonstrated some degree of variation in the use of noun declension forms of adjectives in relation to their indefinite function – which could be a consequence of further changes in the development of the Proto-Slavic category of definiteness.

Those further changes in form and function of compound declension forms of adjectives are connected with phonological changes in the 10th century – mainly the contraction of groups of vowels with intervocalic *-j-* into one long vowel. Due to this sound reduction, the character of the compound declension form changed into a synthetic inflectional one and the relation between the suffix and former demonstrative became covert and gradually not recognized (semantic bleaching – desemanticization):

1 “...adjektivním tvarem jmenným byl předmět podle jisté vlastnosti své prostě poznamenán a byla ta vlastnost při něm vytčena, – naproti tomu adjektivním tvarem složeným vytýkal se sám předmět, který příslušnou vlastnost měl.”

N	<i>dobrьъ</i>	>	<i>dobrý</i>
G	<i>dobrajego</i>	>	<i>dobrého</i>
D	<i>dobrujemu</i>	>	<i>dobrému</i>
A	<i>dobrьъ</i>	>	<i>dobrý</i> (later reanalysed to <i>dobrého</i>)
L	<i>dobrějemъ</i>	>	<i>dobrém</i>
I	<i>dobrьjimъ</i>	>	<i>dobrým</i>
			etc.

The development from the compound to the synthetic inflectional grammatical form resulted in a change of the demonstrative pronoun to a grammatical morpheme (phonetic reduction – erosion) and gradually also the loss of awareness of the function of definiteness. But the loss of the grammatical category of definiteness was a gradual process and it had reflection in semantic, syntactic and lexical changes.

From historical documents we know some cases where the noun and compound forms had identical meaning, e. g. in case of species numbers [druhové číslovky] known in Old Czech (*desater* : *desaterý* [ten]) – as Jan Gebauer (Gebauer 2007: 170) shows, there was no semantic or grammatical difference between these two forms (*čtverý lid* = *čtver lid* [four (species of) peoples], *desaterým činem* = *desaterem činem* [ten (species of) actions]), moreover, the noun declension was not evident in all forms and later it disappeared in favour of the compound declension.

The weakening and gradual loss of grammatical expression of definiteness in Proto-Slavic was supported also by syntactic changes. Already in the pre-historical period of the development of the Slavic languages, the use of the noun declension forms of adjectives had been specified to predicate position and the compound declension forms to attributive position (Klemensiewicz-Lehr-Spławiński-Urbańczyk 1955: 323), so their function to express definiteness was lost and both forms became just syntactic variants of an adjective – alloforms.

According to Igor Němec (Němec 1968: 51), after the loss of the opposition definiteness : indefiniteness the compound forms sank also to predicative position and they got closer to nouns. At the same time the substantivization of adjectives and participles in positions that belong to morphological substantives developed (also Gebauer 2007: 167) and this had a consequences in the lexicon too, e. g. the loss of some Old Czech agent nouns with the function of contemporary participles (*tlukač*, *obětovník*, *líbač*, *netbač*, *pravdymluvce*); in Old Slovak such deverbative nouns still had the function of not only active

substantivized participles (*zbitel*) but also passive (*zbitec*) – such developments led to the rise of new nouns which had an origin in adjectives (for details see Němec 1968: 51).

Today we have only some individual residues of noun declension forms in the predicative position in the Slovak language (mainly the participles – *hoden* [worthy], *vinen* [guilty], *roven* [equal], *dlžen* [owe] – Krajčovič 1988: 114) a few more examples can be found in Czech (*nemocen* [ill], *nesen* [carried], *bohat* [rich] etc. – Gebauer 2007: 173; Lamprecht-Šlosar-Bauer 1986: 12) as well as Polish (*ciekaw* [interesting], *godzien* [worthy], *łaskaw* [kind] *miłościw* [merciful], *mocen* [powerfull], *pełen* [full], *syt* [sated], *świadom* [aware of], *wesoł* [cheerful], *winien* [guilty], *zdrów* [healthy] etc. – as Jan Petr (Petr 1968: 81) wrote: “Syntactically they are limited to predicative function, their usage is motivated by many factors – mainly stylistic, some of them turn into the category of modal expressions²). In Russian the noun declension forms were preserved in predicative position and they represent a new category – the so-called category of state (*kategorija sostojania*). But, as Josef Vachek (Vachek 1954: 183) has already shown, these noun declension forms today belong rather to the literary standard variety of the language and in colloquial or dialectal language they have been replaced by the compound declension forms. Replacement of the noun declension forms by the compound declension forms (at first in attributive and later in predicative positions) is only one type of change in the tendency of noun declension loss. Another type is an isolation of noun declension forms from the original system and their transfer to other parts of speech (adverbs, nouns, transgressives, *l*-participles) or their fossilization as parts of compound words.

In the development of the grammatical category of definiteness in Slovak and also the Slavic languages we can – after the grammaticalization process in which the opposition definiteness : indefiniteness had become encoded in suffix with definite function – follow the loss of one member of the opposition and the loss of the grammaticalized category as well.

Conclusions

1. We can summarise the phenomena which probably cause, support or simply characterise the loss of the grammatical category of definiteness and might have also general application in other similar cases:

2 „Syntakticky jsou omezeny na funkci predikativní, jejich užití je motivováno řadou motivů – především stylisticky, některé přešly do kategorie modálních výrazových prostředků.“

- limited to one subsystem – definiteness was grammaticalized only in the system of adjectives and was not generalized to NPs without an adjective in attributive position;

- limited syntactically – definiteness was realized only in NPs with adjectives in attributive position (adjectives in predicative or predicative complement positions had only the noun declension form and did not express indefiniteness);

- pass from opposition in grammatical meaning to opposition in syntactic function > syntactic alloforms and semantic synonymization;

- edging out of one member of the opposition – noun declension forms were gradually replaced by the compound declension forms;

- isolation of the edged out form from its original part of speech – fossilized noun forms passed from the subsystem of adjectives to other subsystems of the language.

2. We can also think about the question why – in the phase of synonymization of both forms – the compound declension form of adjectives has prevailed and the unmarked and basic noun declension form has declined.

- relevant motivation can be seen in the tendency in synthetic languages to differentiate nouns and adjectives, and the compound declension forms have acquired new suffixes different from the noun declension (Vachek 1954: 187-188);

- changes in the declension forms of nouns as a consequence of replacement of the stem classification criterion by the classification criterion of grammatical gender causes analogical levelling of declension forms of nouns and their transition to other declension types which supposes a certain period of variation – indefinite noun declension forms of adjectives in attributive position lost the relation of congruence with the noun in the NP. On the other hand, the compound declension forms of adjectives had suffixes originated in demonstrative *jъ, ja, je* which distinguished gender and so they corresponded better with the new system of nouns and they were more stable – this might be the motivating factor for general use of compound forms in the attributive position in the NP;

- rise of a congruent declension between adjectives, pronouns and some numerals which causes analogical changes in their paradigms and probably also supported the position of compound declension forms of adjectives in the declension system.

3. The development of the noun declension and the new compound declension of adjectives from free syntactical constructions, through grammaticalization

of the category of definiteness, up to the loss of form and the grammatical encoding of the category, involves all basic interrelated mechanisms characteristic for grammaticalization process (Heine 2003: 579):

1. **desemantization** (semantic reduction or “bleaching”): in the loss of lexical content of the demonstrative pronoun and the acquisition of a more general grammatical meaning as the suffix;

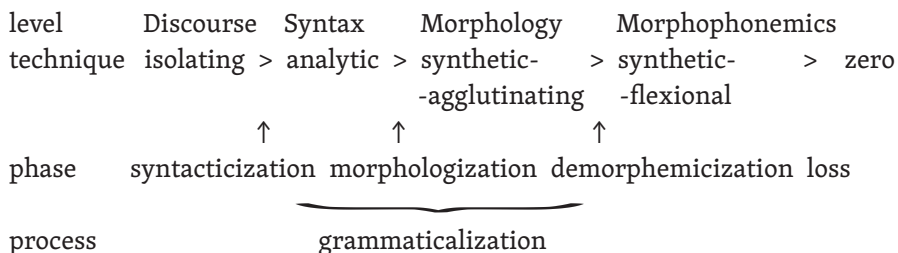
2. **decategorialization**: in the change of status of the independent demonstrative pronoun to an item with determinative function accompanied by cliticization – having an exact position in the NP, and suffixation – change from an analytic to a synthetic form;

3. **phonetic reduction** (erosion): after the contraction of groups of vowels with intervocalic -j- into one long vowel in the 10th century;

4. **extension** (or context generalization): in the wide use of new compound forms of adjectives first in attributive position and later also in predicative position. But this mechanism entered into the described process only at the stage of decline of the grammatical category of definiteness.

At the same time this development fully covers the range of the grammaticalization process given by Christian Lehmann (Lehmann 2002: 12) in his basic and simplified scheme

F1 *The phases of grammaticalization*



and when Ch. Lehmann says that there are not many examples which illustrate the whole process, the case of the rise, development, and end of the category of definiteness in Slovak and the Slavic languages might be one of them.

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Kategória určítosti v súvislostiach lexikálneho a gramatického vývinu slovenského jazyka.

Kategória určítosti sa vzťahuje na význam jedinečnosti, známosti referenta – čiže identifikovateľnosti. Z jazykových jednotiek tieto významy vyjadrujú predovšetkým ukazovacie zámená, potom osobné zámená, nominálne frázy s istým typom určitého člena alebo derivačnou morféom s funkciou určítosti, vlastné mená, privlastňovacie a vymedzovacie zámená, prípadne výpovede so všeobecnou platnosťou. Avšak kategória určítosti je gramatickou kategóriou len v tých jazykoch, v ktorých sa tento význam gramatikalizoval v nejakej forme (samostatnej jednotky alebo afixu) určitého člena. Takýto člen má spravidla pôvod v ukazovacích zámenách. Typ jazyka z hľadiska spôsobu vyjadrovania určítosti a z hľadiska prítomnosti gramatikalizovanej kategórie nie je z diachrónneho hľadiska stály a môže sa v priebehu vývinu meniť, ako to dokazuje aj historický vývin slovenčiny a vlastne všetkých slovanských jazykov. Na začiatku tohto vývinu môžeme predpokladať, že na vyjadrenie známeho, jedinečného referenta (t. j. vyjadrenie určítosti) sa v atributívnej pozícii pred podstatným menom používali aj pôvodne ukazovacie zámená *jb*, *ja*, je s funkciou identifikovať/vyčleniť referenta z triedy rovnorodých denotátov (**chlapъ* : **jb chlapъ* = *ten chlap*), a to aj

v spojení celej frázy s adjektívom v prívlastkovej funkcii (**dobrŷ jŷ chlapŷ*). Záměno sa postupne stalo jeho postponovaným členom v analytickom tvare a napokon sa prehodnotilo zo samostatného člena na sufix s determinatívnu funkciou, pričom sa v deklinácii spravidla skloňovali obe časti tak, že adjektívum malo pôvodné menné skloňovanie a ukazovacie záměno pôvodné záměnné skloňovanie (*dobra+jego chlapa...*). V tomto procese sa po syntaktickej konštrukcie vytvára najskôr analytický a neskôr syntetický aglutinačný tvar (*dobrajego chlapa...*), v ktorom sa záměno *jŷ* stáva derivačným sufixom a stráca slovnodruhové zaradenie a význam ukazovacieho záměna (dekategorizácia). V baltoslovanskom a praslovanskom období existovala teda v praslovančine gramatikalizovaná kategória určítosti a neurčítosti, reprezentovaná tvarom adjektíva - menné skloňovanie adjektív (*dobrŷ chlapŷ* - „dobrý chlap“) prezentovalo kategóriu neurčítosti a zložené skloňovanie (*dobrŷjŷ chlapŷ* - „ten dobrý chlap“) kategóriu určítosti, - ktorá sa uplatňovala len v prívlastkových konštrukciách. Po kontrakcii a ďalších hláskových zmenách v 10. storočí dochádza v dôsledku hláskovej redukcie k zastretiu súvislosti relačného sufixu s ukazovacím záměnom *jŷ* a zaniká aj povedomie významu určítosti tvaru a významu deiktickosti pôvodného ukazovacieho záměna (desémantizácia). K oslabovaniu a postupnému zániku gramatického vyjadrovania určítosti v neskoršom období prispievajú aj syntaktické zmeny - používanie mennej formy adjektív sa ustaluje v predikáte a zloženej formy v atribúte - čím zaniká funkcia vyjadrovania určítosti a obe formy tak ostávajú len syntaktickými variantmi adjektív - aloformami. Neskôr prenikajú zložené formy adjektív aj do predikátovej pozície až napokon dochádza k zániku jedného z členov opozície (menného tvaru) a k celkovému zániku gramatickej kategórie určítosti a neurčítosti. Pozostatky menných tvarov v predikátovej pozícii máme doložené už len v jednotlivostiach (*hoden, vinen, roven, dlžen* - podobne v češtine a poľštine), tieto formy sú však skôr súčasťou knižného (spisovného) jazyka a v ľudovom jazyku boli aj ony nahradené zloženými tvarmi. V niektorých prípadoch došlo k izolovaniu menných výrazov od pôvodného systému a ich prechod k iným slovným druhom (adverbiá, substantíva, prechodníky, *l*-ové prídavia...), príp. ostávajú ich stopy v ustrnutých častiach kompozít. K javom, ktoré pravdepodobne motivovali a charakterizovali zánik kategórie určítosti v slovenčine patria: obmedzenie gramatikalizácie len na jeden subsystem jazyka (adjektíva) len v istej syntaktickej (atributívnej) pozícii, prechod od gramatickej opozície k syntaktickej funkcii (syntaktické aloformy a sémantické synonymá), zánik jedného člena opozície (menný tvar), ustrnutie menných tvarov a ich prechod k iným slovným druhom. Príčinami presadenia sa zložených tvarov adjektív mohla byť potreba zreteľného formálneho odlišenia substantív od adjektív v syntetických jazykoch, proces presadzovania rodového kritéria pri klasifikácii substantív, pri ktorom sa oslabil vzťah zhody menných tvarov adjektív a substantív, zatiaľ čo zložené tvary so záměnnými koncovkami rozlišovali kategóriu rodu a lepšie korešpondovali s novým substantívnym systémom a vznik kongruentnej deklinácie adjektív a záměna. Vo vývine mennej deklinácie a novej zloženej deklinácie adjektív od voľnej syntaktickej konštrukcie cez gramatikalizovanú kategóriu určítosti až po jej zánik sa uplatnili všetky základné jazykové zmeny charakteristické pre gramatikalizáciu (desémantizácia, dekategorizácia, fonetická redukcia a generalizácia). Zároveň ide o jeden z mála prípadov, keď sa v priebehu vývinu gramatickej kategórie naplňa proces gramatikalizácie v celom jej rozsahu - od vzniku až jej zánik.

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