Same, different, other, and the historical microsyntax of the Degree Phrase

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This presentation has two goals: first, to extend the coverage of microcomparative syntax to a neglected domain (DegP, the extended adjectival projection), and second, to consider the implications of the newly uncovered data for the theory of syntactic change in general.

Much generative research on syntactic change has focused on the functional heads C, T, and D, but the Deg head has received little attention. For example, Roberts and Roussou's (2003) landmark study makes only passing mention of "the various degree markers which may make up a functional system associated with AP" (223). This presentation will advance our understanding of syntactic change in the DegP by examining the English "identity adjectives" *same, different,* and *other*, a little-studied class that displays micro-syntactic variation both diachronically and synchronically.[1] The analysis will reveal a grammatical-ization pathway from A (adjective) to Deg (degree head) to Ident (a proposed category in the DP spine). An item's diachronic journey through the Deg position will be shown to coincide with its ability to possess comparative grammatical properties, as expected if Deg is the locus of comparative grammatical features. The analysis is consistent with a micro-parametric model of syntactic change in which grammaticalization involves an upwards reanalysis from one head to the next (e.g. Roberts and Roussou 2003), with the selectional properties of the grammaticalizing item shifting to reflect those of its newly reanalyzed category.

The data. Synchronically, *same, different,* and *other* pattern grammatically with **comparative** adjective forms rather than unmarked absolute forms. Most strikingly, they can precede a numeral without requiring focus, like comparatives but unlike absolutes:

(1)   IDENTITY ADJ   *the **same/other** three cars*
      COMPARATIVE   *the **bigger** three cars*
      ABSOLUTE ADJ   #*the **big** three cars*   (only acceptable with focus on *big*)

Same and *different* are also able to **select comparative clauses** (2) and take the same **degree modifiers** as comparative forms do (3).

(2)   IDENT   *the **same** answer* [*as I expected*]   (3)   IDENT   *exactly **the same** answer*
      COMP   *as **good** an answer* [*as I expected*]   COMP   *exactly **as good** an answer*

      IDENT   *a **different** answer* [*than I expected*]   IDENT   *a far/way **different** answer*
      COMP   *a **more thorough** answer* [*than I expected*]   COMP   *a far/way **more thorough** answer*

In the past, *other* shared the comparative properties in (2-3), as shown by the examples in (4):

(4)   a.   *Neyther is the church reformed in our dayes, **another** church* [*than that deformed in the dayes of our fore-fathers*]. (1656; OED)
      b.   *This Italian poetry is in a world far **other** from ours of to-day*. (1879; OED)

However, in most contemporary English dialects, *other* is no longer able to take comparative clauses or degree modifiers, as shown in (5). Also unlike *same, different*, and typical adjectives, *other* cannot function predicatively (*It seems **the same / different / *other***).

(5)   a.   ****another** answer* [*than I expected*]   b.   **a far/way **other** answer*

Synchronic analysis. My core proposal is that *same* and *different* belong to the functional category Deg rather than the lexical category A, differing from the prototypical Deg heads *as* and *more/-er/less* only in that they do not select an AP complement. Identity adjectives are thus "intransitive Deg", just as Abney (1987) argued that pronouns are intransitive D. That is, *same* is "intransitive *as*" and *different* is "intransitive *more/-er/less*":

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(6)	D	Deg (equative)	Deg (non-equative)
TRANSITIVE	*the* NP	*as* AP (*as...*)	*more/-er* AP (*than...*), *less* AP (*than...*)
INTRANSITIVE	*it*	*same* (*as...*)	*different* (*than...*)

Identifying *same* and *different* as comparative Deg explains why they pattern grammatically with comparatives rather than absolutes. As for *other*, which has lost its former comparative and adjectival properties and now serves a quasi-referential function, I propose that it occupies a higher functional head in the DP spine. For convenience, I will assign this head the ad hoc label Ident ("Identity"), mirroring Breban's (2010) functionalist analysis, but the only crucial point here is that contemporary *other* occupies some position in the DP rather than the DegP.

Diachronic analysis. The synchronic analysis above is only a snapshot of a dynamic system. Although *same* has long been grammatically stable (Breban 2002/03), *different* and *other* have evolved in ways that are captured by the proposed model.
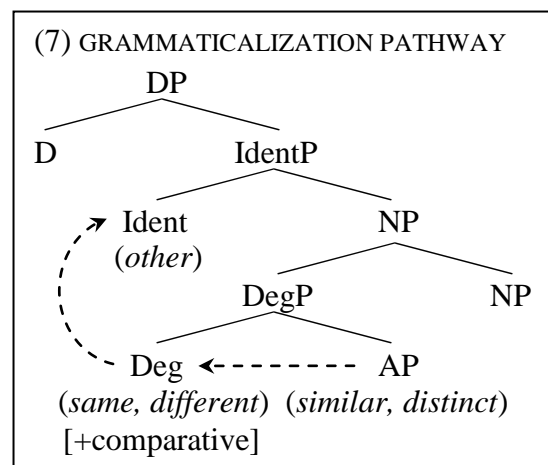
Different. The preceding discussion focused on *different* as Deg (*different*$_{Deg}$ *than...*), but this variant of *different* is in fact a recent innovation; *different* was formerly a purely lexical adjective, selecting a comparative PP (*different*$_A$ *from...*) just as the similar adjective *distinct* does (and this lexical variant of *different* still exists). Modelling the development of *different*$_{Deg}$ is straightforward: along with the change of its category from A to Deg, its lexical selectional property (+PP) was replaced by the categorial selectional property of comparative Deg (+CP) and its lexical meaning was reinterpreted as the Relation element of Kennedy's (1999) general denotation for all Deg heads, supplying the relation "not equal."

Other. As shown above, *other* has lost its comparative properties and taken on a quasi-referential function. To account for this change, we can posit the reanalysis of *other* from Deg to some higher head in the DP (here "Ident"), thus removing it from the Deg system altogether.

***Different* thus illustrates how an item may gain comparative properties upon entering the Deg category while *other* illustrates the loss of such properties upon exiting Deg.** The upwards grammaticalization trajectory revealed by this analysis is shown in (7).

Summary. Synchronic and diachronic data from English illustrates that "identity adjectives" constitute a valuable empirical domain for testing microparametric theories of syntactic change.

Extensions. In addition to the core proposals stated above, the presentation will also expand the empirical picture by discussing a possible incipient change in English (the transitivization of *same*) and showing striking parallels to the English system in the Algonquian language Innu-aimun.

(7) GRAMMATICALIZATION PATHWAY

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