

## ON GENERAL EXTENDERS: PHONETIC REDUCTION, DECATEGORIZATION AND STUFF LIKE THAT

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**Abstract:** *The present study examines multiword expressions which typically occur in clause-final position, having the structure conjunction+NP, and encoding shared knowledge. These constructions are termed general extenders in the literature. When investigated from the perspective of grammaticalization, general extenders are shown to undergo formal changes as a result of morpho-syntactic reanalysis, phonological reduction and decategorization. The grammaticalization framework is also shown to have an impact on their pragmatic behaviour. Under this analysis, these expressions are used to hedge expectations of informativeness and accuracy, functioning as markers of positive and negative politeness.*

**Key Words:** *general extenders, categorization, grammaticalization, phonological attrition, intersubjectivity, pragmatic functions.*

### 1. Introduction

The forms to be analysed in this article make up a class of linguistic expressions that typically occur in clause-final position and have the structure *conjunction+NP*. They are referred to, in the literature, as **general extenders (GEs)**: ‘general’ in the sense of being non-specific or vague with regard to their referent, and ‘extenders’ because they are added to grammatically and semantically complete utterances, thus extending them. However, since Dines’s (1980) seminal study of GEs, the terminology used in the literature to define these expressions varies considerably from *set marking tags* (Dines, 1980; Ward and Birner, 1993; Stubbe and Holmes, 1995; Winter and Norrby, 2000), *discourse particle extensions* (Dubois, 1992), *utterance final tags* (Aijmer, 1985), *terminal tags* (Macaulay, 1985), *generalized list completers* (Jefferson, 1990), *post-noun hedges* (Meyerhoff, 1992), *generalisers* (Simpson, 2004) to *vague category identifiers* (Channell, 1994) and *general extenders* (Overstreet, 1999, 2005; Cheshire, 2007; Carroll, 2007, 2019; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2010). These labels sometimes focus on the pragmatic function and sometimes on their specific formal properties. In this study, I use the term ‘general extenders’ proposed by Overstreet (1999, 2005), which I consider the most neutral and the most descriptively accurate, since it does not (over)emphasize any of the functions such expressions can fulfil.

Dines’s (1980) seminal study of GEs sparked off a continuously growing and diverse body of research (Aijmer 1985, 2002; Cheshire 2007; Dubois 1992; Overstreet 1999; Stubbe and Holmes 1995; Winter and Norrby 2000; Youssef 1993; Hornoiu 2016; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2010; Buysse and Leuven 2014). Each study has offered its own perspective on the various factors which condition the usage and realization of GEs, as well as their referential, category implicating and/or discourse-pragmatic functions. Recent research (Cheshire 2007, Tagliamonte and Dines 2010, Overstreet 2014) has shown that GEs in English are undergoing a process of grammaticalization. In what follows, I discuss the social, grammatical, and pragmatic factors which have been shown to condition the use of these forms.

## 2. Morpho-syntactic analysis

### 2.1 Form

General extenders have been broadly defined as a sub-set of utterance-final discourse particles. However, unlike other discourse markers that come at the end of a sentence, phrase, or utterance such as *eh*, *you know*, and *right*, prototypical GEs display a common function and follow a basic template, *connector+NP*. As shown in **Table 1**, when a connector is required, a quantifier and/or a generic are also necessary, whereas the comparative is optional.

**Table 1.** Prototypical General Extender Template

Connector	Quantifier	Generic	Comparative
and or	all every some any the odd the whole no	thing(s) stuff people one where shit crap baloney	like that sort of kind of type of of that kind of that sort of that type around there to that effect

The first element in the GE construction is the conjunction *and* or *or*, which is typically followed by a quantifier such as *all*, *every*, and/or *some*. Occasions when the conjunction is missing, as in (1), are also possible.

(1) ...Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Who, *all that stuff*. (4f/M/19)<sup>1</sup>

The third element is a noun which is non-specific or vague with regard to its referent, such as *thing* or *stuff*. This generic reference of the head accounts for the term ‘general’ The last element in the GE construction is an optional comparative and it may appear either at the end of the construction, as in *and stuff like that*, or in the middle, as in *and that kind of stuff*. Empirical data show that the comparatives are not used unless the construction includes a generic (Tagliamonte and Denis 2010). Another formal feature is that GEs are added to otherwise grammatically and semantically complete utterances/sentences, thus extending them. Examples (2) through (6) show the following combinatorial patterns:

#### **Connector + Generic + Comparative**

(2) So it was- it was pretty general, you-know, nice and quiet, never a lot of noise, *and stuff like that* (NV/F/60)

#### **Quantifier + Generic + Comparative**

(3) they’re turning sixteen in like October and November *something like that* (3Q/F/16)

#### **Connector + Quantifier + Generic + Comparative**

(4) I can see all this multiculturalism *and everything like that* (N‡/M/85)

#### **Connector + Generic**

(5) a lot of it was talking and listening and- and listening to people talk and the performances *and things* (N/M/37)

#### **Connector + Quantifier + Generic**

(6) It was in- when- oh I think it was like, grade-seven *or something* (NB/F/38)

GEs have been divided into two sets: **adjunctive and disjunctive**. **Adjunctive GEs** are marked by the conjunction *and* and tend to apply to all members of the category to which the referent belongs. Thus, they have, in Aijmer’s (1985:374) terms, an “additive function” because they signal to the addressee that the speaker is talking about more than just the member of the

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<sup>1</sup> The examples from (1) to (12) are taken from the Toronto English Archive (Tagliamonte 2003–2006). The information in parentheses includes identifying details for the speaker cited, indicating the sub-corpus, the individual speaker code, speaker sex and speaker age.

set referred to. Adjunctive forms are also identifiable by their quantifier element. Only universal quantifiers, such as *all* and *every*, are allowed. **Disjunctive GEs** are marked by the conjunction *or*, (e.g. *or something*, *or anything*) and refer to only one member of the set to which the referent applies. Aijmer (1985:374) calls this the “alternative function” because it signals to the addressee that the speaker is not necessarily talking about the referenced member, but rather about any member of the set. Disjunctive GEs require the existential quantifiers *some* and *any*.

In addition to the typical GE combinations mentioned above, there is another set of GEs which does not follow the template outlined in Table 1, but nevertheless performs a similar extension function. This set includes such GEs as *or whatever* (7), *and so on* (8), *among others* (9), *and so forth* (10) and *bla bla bla* (11).

(7) you could get a, you-know hamburger or- *or whatever* (N1/M/53)

(8) because they started to smell and- and get moldy *and so on* (Nw/M/84)

(9) you see a whole different kind-of like different kind of culture, food, and clothing and what not (Iç/M/21)

(10) I mean like the thought of things that he'd done *and so forth*. (DC/DIA17/186)

(11) like a meal or like, chicken with potatoes *and blah blah blah*. (CO/B136701/31)

Similarly, the template does not apply to the example in (12), where the GE construction includes a *wh*-clause:

(12) A large number of people sitting in mackintoshes soft seat rugs *and what have you*. (DC/DLF01/411)

## 2.2 Clause position

GE constructions occupy clause final position and, in terms of the overall conversation structure, they occur at a transition relevance place, a position at which speaker change may take place. Their clause final position generally signals the end of an information and tone unit. However, there is a recent tendency that some GEs, such as *and stuff*, have become more flexible with regard to their position in the clause (Overstreet, 1999:13; Cheshire, 2007:156; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2010:342). They may be followed by discourse markers and backchannels typical of speech, such as *you know*, *you see*, *okay*, *yeah*, *well*, *sort of*, *I mean* or a tag question, as in (13).

(13) It's when I did it it was really good *and everything*, you know, as long as... (CO/B142706/703)<sup>2</sup>

These discourse markers may also occur before them, as in (14).

(14) What are you doing tonight, you know, do you wanna go out *or something* cos I'm in London, I'm in a hotel. (DC/B142701/103)

### 2.3 Polarity

Although GEs are consistently used in positive declarative sentences, they can also be found in negative declarative sentences (15), interrogative sentences (16) and (14) above and in imperative sentences (17) and (18):

(15) I haven't learned my Highway Code *and all that sort of shit*. (CO/B142504118)

(16) Do you do sports *and things*? (DC/DIA020/234)

(17) Scan it in, flip rotate erm picture slide *or whatever*. (CO/B132503/602)

(18) Sit down and calm yourself, take a Valium *or whatever* it is. (CO/B142607/28)

### 2.4 Reference

GEs generally refer to the preceding element which tends to be a noun phrase most of the time, performing a syntactic function other than subject, as in (19), or in (16) above.

(19) Well like changing a plug or something like that. (DC/DIA10/273)

However, Cheshire (2007) points out that some GEs, such as *and things* and *and stuff*, do not always refer to a preceding noun. Instead, they may refer to the preceding verb (19), or to a prepositional phrase (20), or even to the whole previous clause, as in (14), repeated below for convenience:

(19) Well like changing a plug *or something like that*. (DC/DIA10/273)

(20) It was all by the phone *and stuff*. (DC/DIA09/16)

(14) What are you doing tonight, you know, do you wanna go out *or something* cos I'm in London, I'm in a hotel. (DC/B142701/103)

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<sup>2</sup> The British English data are taken from Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT) and Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English (DCPSE), unless indicated otherwise.

There are also instances when their reference is not entirely clear, as in (21) where it is not clear whether the speaker has the previous adjective in mind or the whole clause.

(21) He said he was making a real effort, to be good and to be faithful *and everything*. (CO/B142703/231)

## **2.5 Modification**

In contemporary English, many of the general extenders have two related forms: one is unmodified (e.g. *or something, and things*) and the other is modified by some other forms, such as *like this/that, (of) that sort/kind, this/that nonsense, this/that business, this bit, the rest of it*, as shown below:

(22) I haven't learned my Highway Code *and all that sort of shit*. (CO/B142504118)

(23) Well like changing a plug *or something like that*. (DC/DIA10/273)

Some linguists consider both forms (i.e. the unmodified and the modified one) together as examples of a single form (e.g. Evison, McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2007). However, as Overstreet (2014) points out, there is a clear structural difference in the way these forms are articulated. Moreover, empirical data provides further evidence for the analysis of these two forms as structurally different, to the extent to which a preference for the consistent use of a short unmodified form rather than a longer form may be socially significant. For instance, a recent study involving young (preadolescent) speakers of London English has shown that short forms were frequently used and longer versions were almost absent from the data (Levey 2012: 274). Thus, an emerging pattern seems to have been identified whereby shorter forms are becoming more frequent and are no longer treated as a complex phrase consisting of several component elements, with the result that forms "that were formerly separate become stored and processed as a *prefabricated phrase*" (Cheshire 2007: 166; my emphasis).

In Present-Day English, the short form *or something* is the most frequent general extender in most surveys (e.g. Biber et al. 1999: 115-116) and has become a fixed form. Erman (1995) points out that it is no longer viewed as having distinct components [or + some + thing] and is so idiomatic that its articulation is also typically reduced. In other words, the separate morpho-syntactic components of the original phrase have fused into a single form. This process of fusion involves the reanalysis of a frequently used sequence of separate units as a single processing chunk (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 44). On the other hand, the long form (e.g. *or something like that*) functions as an explicitly cohesive expression (Aijmer 2002: 224), typically

with a discernible antecedent for the anaphoric *that* (Cheshire 2007: 178). A similar distinction can be observed in the use of *and stuff like that* compared to *'nstuff* (Overstreet 2011: 301). The unmodified forms of GEs seem not only to lose their cohesive link, but they also lose some of their phonetic substance, as we will see in **Section 3**.

## 2.6 Syntactic Constraints

Syntactic constraints are also involved in the use of GEs. The distribution of GEs has been accounted for in terms of agreement between the plural noun referent and the generic. To describe this distribution, Dines (1980:26) proposes the paradigm in **Table 2** to assign features to forms.

According to Dines (1980) and Aijmer (1985), the morpho-syntactic features of GEs can be mapped to the features of the noun referent. In other words, it is assumed that the morpho-syntactic features of the referent, particularly the category of number, will affect the choice of the generic. *Stuff* attaches to mass noun referents; *things* attaches to plural noun referents; *everything* and *something* attach to singular noun referents.

**Table 2.** Mapping of Morpho-syntactic Features and Forms (based on Dines 1980)

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Personal</b> everyone	<b>Count</b>		<b>Mass</b>
		<b>Non-personal</b> everything		
<b>Plural</b>	people	<b>Assertive</b> something	<b>Non-assertive</b> anything	stuff
		things		

However, empirical data show that the generic element and the referent do not always match. In fact, it has been previously observed that GEs often attach to larger grammatical nodes, such as the verb phrase (VP) and complementizer phrase (CP) (Aijmer 1985:376; Dines 1980:27). However, more recent studies have shown that the generic form is not directly correlated with the morpho-syntactic features of its referent (Aijmer 2002:216; Channell 1994:132; Cheshire 2007; Overstreet 1999:257). The following examples document VP attachment (24) and (25), and CP attachment (26) and (27), in the Toronto data.

(24) his sister's a- like a rebel and has piercings everywhere, and goes out *and all that stuff* (4P/F/14)

(25) I have to carry like a map around campus *and stuff* (4e/F/18)

(26) I heard that underneath the Taj-Mahal, they bury like the kid *or something*. (2p/M/14)

(27) then we got a radio and we heard everything, how-, what was going on *and stuff* but it was pretty cool (4e/F/18)

(Tagliamonte 2003–2006)

Moreover, some studies report that many GEs attach ambiguously (Overstreet and Yule 1997:257; Winter and Norrby 2000:4). As the example in (28) shows, multiple interpretations can be given to the set or category the speaker is evoking. One possible paraphrase for the sentence in (28) can be “if there’s really a god leave a sign or a message”, in which the GE replaces a list of things that a deity might leave for a nonbeliever. On the other hand, another possible interpretation could be “if there’s really a god leave a sign or come to me in a dream”, in which case the GE evokes various actions. In the first interpretation, the GE attaches to the NP, whereas in the second it attaches to the VP.

(28) if there’s really a god leave a sign *or something* (2p/M/14) (Tagliamonte 2003–2006)

### 3. Phonological attrition

The loss of phonological substance is a reliable indicator that a linguistic expression is undergoing change as it develops new functions (Lehman 1993). This process of phonological attrition is due to frequent use (Boye and Harder 2012: 29).

General extenders are affected by phonological change in two ways. First, in terms of suprasegmental information, long forms of GEs tend to occur as separate constituents in a distinct tone unit, whereas short forms are more likely to be found inside a tone unit with other constituents. Moreover, long forms used without the conjunction (*and/or*) are preceded by a pause which clearly separates the general extender from the utterance preceding it. For instance, Aijmer’s (1985: 370-71) analysis of British English data has shown that the short unmodified forms *and things* and *or something* were overwhelmingly used inside a tone unit, whereas their longer counterparts with the comparative phrase *like that* were much more likely to be in a separate tone unit by themselves. In addition, short forms were used with greater frequency and are more likely to be integrated into the rhythmic structure of utterances, making them less salient in phonological terms.

The second aspect of phonological change involves the loss of phonetic segments, generally known as *phonological attrition*. In her study of



GEs used by adolescents in three English towns, Cheshire (2007) listed *and* and *that* and *or something* as the most frequently used forms. Cheshire points out that “the unstressed *and* is reduced to /n/ in every case and *or* in *or something* is almost always pronounced as a schwa” (2007: 168). In both cases, the conjunction undergoes phonetic reduction which diminishes its role of cohesive marker, supporting thus the reanalysis of these short general extenders as single forms. The examples below document phonological reduction and the omission of segments, providing empirical evidence for the idea that *or something* is widely used in a reduced form, in British English (29), Australian English (30), and American English (31):

(29) you get it out of the computer every six months *o’someth’n* (Erman 1995: 144)

(30) or maybe an optometrist *or some’ing* (Winter and Norrby 2000: 6)

(31) there was like eight ta ten of ’em *er somethin’* (Guthrie (1994: 85)

In the everyday talk of some American English speakers, as described by Aijmer (2013: 142) and Overstreet (1999: 103), the use of *and stuff* has not only become reduced in form (*’nstu*), but it no longer has to be attached to an antecedent noun phrase. Overstreet (1999: 103-4) documented, in the speech of one individual (in a conversation between two nurses), the use of the expressions *y’know* and *’nstuff* (in either order) in a way that was so reduced in form and content that they seemed to be functioning as the oral equivalent of punctuation marks. Macaulay identified a similar phenomenon in one speaker’s frequent use of *and that* which he described as “a kind of punctuation feature” (1985: 115)<sup>3</sup>.

The use of such phonologically reduced forms of both adjunctive and disjunctive GEs may serve as a means of keeping the flow of conversation going, having a role in the prosodic structure of the utterance, but with no role at all in the information content.

## 4. Functions

### 4.1 The referential function

The focus of early research has been on the referential function served by general extenders. Thus some researchers have analyzed these expressions as items which are used to complete three-part lists (Jefferson 1990, Lerner 1994). Working in the tradition of conversation analysis, Jefferson argues that, in constructing lists, speakers and hearers in naturally occurring conversation orient themselves to what she calls the “programmatically relevant

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<sup>3</sup> More recently, expressions used oral equivalents of punctuation marks are referred to as *punctors* (Cheshire 2007).

of three partedness” (1990:66) which means that participants are aware of the fact that “lists not only can and do occur in three parts, but should so occur” (1990: 66). As a result, according to Jefferson, general extenders (which she terms “*generalized list completers*”) are employed by conversational participants to complete three-part lists, providing thus a “methodic solution to the problem of three-partedness” (1990: 67). Still, others view general extenders as set-marking tags (Dines 1980, Ward and Birner 1993), or *vague category identifiers* (Channell 1994)<sup>4</sup>.

#### 4.2 Category implication function

On a **cognitive approach**, general extenders co-occur with a named exemplar (or exemplars) whose characteristics enable the addressee to infer additional or alternate members of the category the speaker has in mind. In other words, GEs attach to a referent phrase to generalize a set of things to which this referent belongs. Following this approach, a noun phrase such as *apples and stuff* is analyzed as having the same referent as the category *fruit*. Alternatively, GEs may attach to a “non-lexicalized” category, in which case there is no one word that encompasses the set of members. The example in (32) is a case in point: the general extender implies an ad-hoc category, spontaneously constructed, which can be described as “things that would get someone sent to the principal’s office in elementary school”.

(32) If I do anything bad like, like I talked one time *or something*, then she says like “Stop talking.”. . . If he was talking then he’d get sent to the office. (2t/M/13)

There are several reasons why a speaker may choose to use a general extender rather than to refer to the category by name. First, by naming an item (or items), and then using a general extender to implicate a lexicalized category, speakers can refer to a category whose name they either don’t know, or can’t recall. Second, in using a general extender a speaker can identify members of a category for a hearer who may be unfamiliar with the category, or with its name (Overstreet 1999:45). Finally, naming a specific exemplar and indicating “more” with a general extender allows a speaker to emphasize or highlight certain members of the category, particularly prototypical members.

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<sup>4</sup> When treated as examples of vague language, they take on negative connotations. In one reported study, Dines (1980) found that middle-class judges in Australia associated the use of general extenders with working-class speech. Such forms are stigmatized because they are “assumed to reflect vague and inexplicit speech” (1980: 19). This negative value attached to the use of general extenders seems to come from a feeling that vagueness in reference stems from vagueness in thinking, and hence stupidity.

Furthermore, although GEs mostly generalize to a set, in some cases no category/set may be implied. There are tokens in which no set is identifiable, as illustrated in (33).

(33)

[03] ‘Cause we made like a video.

[1] Yeah, I saw it.

[03] You remember, right?

[1] Yeah.

[03] So ah, we made her a video *and stuff*.

(2c/M/16) (Overstreet 1999)

In (33), the general extender *and stuff* is not used with category implication function. In excerpt (33), speaker [03] is recalling a situation when he made a video for a teacher. There is a brief digression about speaker [1] seeing the video and then the focus returns to the making of the video in the last line. Speaker [03] uses *and stuff* despite the topic of conversation being only the video that he and his friends did for the teacher and nothing else. Thus, in (33) the general extender does not evoke any set/category. Rather it is used as a punctuation mark to signal the end of the exchange.

#### 4.3 Discourse-pragmatic functions

It is the unpredictability discussed in Section 2.6 that may lead us to assign GEs a primary discourse function. The majority of research on GEs has focused on the nature and function of GEs in interaction since in actual usage general extenders do not appear to be used with category implication as their most obvious function. In natural conversation general extenders are not so much list completers or category identifiers as markers of *shared knowledge* and experience, thus taking on a new dimension that is interpersonal and tied to the nature of the social relationships holding among participants. In naturally occurring conversation, GEs are associated with a wide range of discourse-pragmatic functions, being instrumental in creating **inter-subjectivity**<sup>5</sup> or “reciprocity of perspectives” (Cicourel 1974) by invoking shared knowledge and shared experience.

In using a GE, the speaker triggers an “interpretive procedure” (Cicourel 1974) whereby the speaker and addressee assume their mutual experiences of the interaction are the same even if they were to change places

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<sup>5</sup> Inter-subjectivity is the process whereby participants can reach similar interpretations of the world despite the fact that individual mental worlds are necessarily distinct and no two individuals will share identical concepts; this achievement is ascribed to an assumption of shared knowledge and a shared world (Schegloff 1992; Schiffrin 1990, 1994); social actors behave as if the external world is sufficiently the same for them as it is for others.

while disregarding personal differences in how each assigns meaning to everyday activities. Thus, each participant in the talk exchange can attend to the present scene in an identical manner for the practical matter at hand.

Recent studies (Overstreet 1999, Winter and Norrby 2000, Hornoiu 2016) have drawn attention to the similarity between **discourse markers** and **general extenders** when it comes to invoking **shared knowledge**<sup>6</sup> and dispelled the pervasive notion that the only function GEs serve is the referential one proposed by studies of categorization. Although they can be used on occasion as category implicative devices in shared referential worlds, this function is not incompatible with their status as interactional markers of inter-subjectivity in shared social worlds.

Researches working within the frameworks of interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis demonstrate that GEs are consistently used as markers of **positive politeness** (Overstreet, 1999; Winter and Norrby, 2000; Hornoiu, 2016). In using a general extender, the speaker appears to communicate the following message to the addressee: “Because we share the same knowledge, experience, and conceptual schemes, I need not be more explicit; you will be able to supply whatever unstated understandings are required to make sense of the utterance.” Functioning in this way, general extenders are recognizable indications that all talk is, in some sense, incomplete (see Garfinkel 1967), and that each of us expects our interlocutor to co-operate with us in the process of creating whatever sense of completeness is sufficient for a particular occasion. This is precisely the discourse-pragmatic function adjunctive general extenders display, since the “more” that is implicated is typically treated as known (Hornoiu 2016). Adjunctive general extenders, as markers of positive politeness whereby shared knowledge is created and solidarity is invited, fit nicely into Brown and Levison’s (1987) mechanism for presupposing, or asserting common ground with the addressee. Such uses can be identified when the speaker assumes connection and intimacy with his or her interlocutor through shared opinions and feelings about the topic under discussion, as in (34).

(34) the lyrics have more like a rock structure to them *and stuff like that*, whereas most electronica is just kind-of arbitrary words *and stuff like that*, nothing lyrical. (NI/M/24) (Overstreet 1999)

In (34), the two musicians are discussing specific genres of music. An outsider without knowledge of contemporary music would not be able to

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, the close co-occurrence of *you know* and *I mean* with general extenders supports the idea that there is some connection or shared function among these forms.

reconstruct the set to which a rock structure belongs. The speaker assumes a level of shared knowledge and connection.

The interaction function of GEs involves turn-taking and conversation organization. GEs indicate various transitions in discourse, such as a topic shift or a change of speaker. For instance, GEs beginning with the universal quantifier are favoured to mark a shift in the discourse topic (Dubois 1992). Moreover, a correlation has been found between GEs and pauses in that such forms occur immediately before pauses (Winter and Norrby 2000:6).

A preference for a consistent use of GEs is linked to issues of social identity construction. GEs are an important linguistic resource for the construction and performance of feminine identities, being one of the distinctive features of the communal/cooperative conversational style (Hornoiu 2016). A more general reflex of this is the finding that the two gender groups use different frequencies of GEs, in both adolescent and adult age groups. Norrby and Winter (2002), for instance, have found that GEs are used more by girls than boys.

## **Conclusions**

One of the aims of this corpus-based paper was to explore the pragmatic functions of the general extenders in various domains and varieties of English. Due to the wide range of their pragmatic functions, a fine-grained pragmatic analysis of general extenders is beset with problems. In most contexts, it is impossible to identify a main pragmatic function due to their multi-functionality. Their functions should be considered within the local contexts in which they are used and in relation with other linguistic forms. Regardless of whether the referent implicated by a general extender is culturally established or is restricted to a smaller subgroup of the culture, the speaker invites the addressee to act as if he were familiar with what is being described and expects the latter to supply whatever unstated meanings are required to make sense of the utterance. When considered within the local contexts, treating an utterance which includes a GE as unproblematic and refraining from initiating repair entails that the addressee underscores the participants' reciprocity of perspectives. Whether or not the addressee actually shares the experiential knowledge assumed by the speaker is of little consequence. What remains of the greatest importance is the *assumption* of shared knowledge which is marked by the general extender, not the fact, and that assumption is rarely challenged. Thus, general extenders are not so much category implicating devices as **markers of intersubjectivity**, being **positive politeness** strategies instrumental in establishing **solidarity** and **common ground**, and in expressing acts of identity.

A second aim of this paper was to consider the extent to which general extenders have grammaticalized in present-day varieties of English,

by investigating such issues as phonetic reduction, decategorisation, morpho-syntactic reanalysis and pragmatic shift. It is difficult at this stage to come to a final conclusion, but, overall, the four analyses seem to point in the same direction for British English: the GEs *and that* and *and everything* seem to be the most grammaticalized forms, while *and stuff* and *and things* the least grammaticalized (Cheshire 2007). In American English, on the other hand, *and stuff* is further advanced in the grammaticalization process than are the other general extender forms (Overstreet and Yule 1997). In British English, the most frequently used forms are employed in ways which parallel the use of the discourse marker *you know* (Macaulay 2002). This includes a use as punctors, which, for general extenders, at least in British English, may represent an end point in the grammaticalization process.

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<http://www.als.asn.au/proceedings/als1999/proceedings.html>

### **Corpora**

Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT)

Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English (DCPSE)

Toronto English Archive (Tagliamonte 2003–2006).