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# From demonstrative to definite and beyond: the case of *nage* 那個 in spoken Taiwan Mandarin

Claire Saillard\*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the literature, numerous cases of demonstratives grammaticalizing into definite determiners have been documented and set as typical examples of grammaticalization (cf. Lehmann 2002). Looking at synchronic studies, some note that demonstrative determiners are not semantically restricted to deictic or anaphoric uses; rather, their meaning extends to other uses, ranging from definite to indefinite determiners, as exemplified by the well-known case of ‘indefinite this’ in English (cf. Gundel et al. 1993 among others).

In modern standard Chinese, be it *putonghua* 普通话 in the PRC or *guoyu* 國語 in Taiwan<sup>1</sup>, there is no identified ‘article’ among noun determiners. Rather, there is a pair of demonstrative pronouns, proximal *zhe* 這 and distal *na* 那, which can be used as determiners of nouns. Some studies describe the distal demonstrative in modern standard Chinese as ‘definite’ when used as a determiner. For instance, Gundel et al. (1993: 284) characterize *nèi* N as ‘uniquely identifiable’, like ‘the N’ in English, while proximal *zhè* N is compared to the demonstrative ‘this N’ in English. Thus, the phenomena we wish to discuss clearly pertain to discourse, and crucially, oral discourse. As spoken language is less standardized than written varieties of the language, it is not surprising if, depending on which oral variety is described (Taiwan Mandarin, Beijing variety...), different semantic and pragmatic extensions of the demonstratives have been evidenced.

### 1.1. *Nà, nè, nèi* or *nǎ*?

The question of the pronunciation of 那 is relevant only to spoken data. Nevertheless, it seems to be constrained by syntax as well as by register. Describing standard Chinese as used in Mainland China, the *Xiandai hanyu cidian* (现代汉语辞典) considers *nà* to be the correct pronunciation for 那, be it followed by a classifier or directly by a noun. However, the dictionary adds that in the spoken language, 那 used in isolation or directly before a noun is pronounced *nǎ*

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\* Univ Paris Diderot, Sorbonne Paris Cité, Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle, UMR 7110, 75205, Paris, France

<sup>1</sup> In this paper we use *pinyin* for transliteration of the Chinese language. As for the Chinese graphs, since we aim to describe language uses in Taiwan, we use ‘traditional’ characters, as is the norm in Taiwan, unless we quote works published in Mainland China.

or *nè*, while it is pronounced *nèi* or *nè* when preceding a classifier. Grammarians of modern standard Chinese like Zhu (1982: 85) consider *nèi* to be derived from *nà yī* 那一 (demonstrative + cardinal numeral ‘one’). Zhu (Op. Cit.: 86) furthermore considers that in subject position, isolated (i.e. pronominal) 那 can either be pronounced *nà* or *nèi*, whereas in the less frequent object position<sup>2</sup>, it can only be pronounced *nà*.

In Taiwan, as explained in the *Guoyu cidian* (國語詞典), *nà* is the standard pronunciation of 那, and, whereas *nèi* is also considered to be the concatenation of *nà yī* 那一: demonstrative + cardinal ‘one’), no description of the distribution for the two pronunciations is provided.

However, various linguists have proposed alternative explanations for the double pronunciation, based on a combination of syntax and semantics and/or discourse. In Gundel et al.’s work, ‘uniquely identifiable’ *nei* (we may call it either “definite” or “referential”, see section 2.2.1. below) immediately precedes a noun, and no mention is made of a classifier. In Fang’s (2002, 2012) work on the Beijing vernacular, 那 is pronounced *nèi* whenever it has an anaphoric value, and specifically in its “situational” (where it alternates with *nà*) and “tracking” uses; it is pronounced *nà* in its “textual” uses, and *na/ne* in its “recognitional” uses (Fang 2002: 349). We may note that Fang is solely interested in instances where either of the demonstratives directly precedes the noun, without classifiers in between.

In the present paper, we base our observations on a spontaneous and informal spoken Taiwan Mandarin corpus that we gathered through participant observation in two workplaces in Eastern Taiwan<sup>3</sup> between 1996 and 1997. The recorded variety is highly colloquial, and we take it as representative of spoken Taiwan Mandarin as used in informal settings. Our aim in gathering this corpus was to capture the multiethnic flavor of colloquial Taiwan Mandarin. The sample of the corpus used for this study comprises 63 speakers, all of which are bi- or multi-lingual<sup>4</sup>, using Taiwan Mandarin as the main *lingua franca* in their workplace. The sample totals over 5,400 words<sup>5</sup>, which were thoroughly transcribed and manually annotated with grammatical category tags.

<sup>2</sup> The *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* notes that in object position, bare *zhe* and *na* can only be used in parallel structures of the type *kàn zhè kàn nà* 看这看那 ‘look here and there’. Zhu’s examples are in accordance with this remark.

<sup>3</sup> One was the Hualien Mennonite Christian Hospital in Hualien City, and the other was the Hsiulin County Health Center, consisting of a main dispensary and eight « Health Stations » in the Hsiulin County of Hualien District.

<sup>4</sup> Most of our recorded speakers have a Formosan language (Truku or Amis) as their first acquired language; the remaining speakers are either from a Minnan (the dominant dialect) or Hakka language background. All have acquired Taiwan’s official standard – Taiwan Mandarin – through schooling, and use it routinely in the workplace. Many of them can speak an additional local language. As for their socio-professional characteristics, part of the speakers are highly qualified health professionals while another part is less qualified; patients are elderly or middle-aged people with various employment situations.

<sup>5</sup> Contrary to what is the norm for written corpora of Chinese, we do not count in “characters” (*zì* 字), but in words (*cí* 词). Besides being more relevant for spoken data, this allows us to allot a grammatical category tag to each word of the corpus.

After extracting all occurrences of 那 from this spoken Taiwan Mandarin corpus, we found no instance of 那 being pronounced *nèi*.

There are however two different pronunciations of 那 in our corpus, either fully accented *nà* with a fourth (or “entering”) tone, or unaccented *ná*<sup>6</sup>. As we shall see in more detail below, this constitutes a cue to the semantic and/or pragmatic value of the demonstrative.

In the following text, we note *na(ge)* 那(個) without a diacritic when we wish to characterize it in a broad way, encompassing all its uses.

### 1.2. Outline of this paper

We will begin by a survey of semantic values of demonstratives both in a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. After stating the distribution of the cluster *nage* 那個 in spoken Taiwan Mandarin, we will compare its different uses to those of grammaticalized demonstratives in Lehmann’s (2002) scale and Huang’s (1999) work on spoken Taiwan Mandarin. We will argue that *nage* 那個 does not only display semantic bleaching, but has also developed pragmatic uses. We will propose a semantic-pragmatic continuum to encompass all these uses, as well as criteria to distinguish between them. Then, we will present data revealing fuzzy zones where the demonstrative-classifier cluster is ambiguous between several uses, or arguably, plays simultaneous roles. We will make a claim on the grammaticization of the distal demonstrative into a nominalizer. Then we will conclude by comparing the distal demonstrative to the proximal.

## 2. A SEMANTIC-PRAGMATIC CONTINUUM

### 2.1. Semantic values of demonstratives in diachronic perspective

From a diachronic point of view, it has been argued that in many languages, demonstrative pronouns have evolved into demonstrative determiners first, then, through some kind of desemanticization or ‘bleaching’ (Lehmann 2002: 114), have taken on different noun-related values as determiners and affixes. De Mulder and Carlier note:

Even though the grammatical category of articles as such is far from being universal, the grammaticalization process that leads to its development exhibits cross-linguistic regularities: in the majority of cases, the definite article originates from a weakened demonstrative, mostly the distal demonstrative or the 3<sup>rd</sup> person demonstrative, whereas the indefinite article derives from the unity numeral ‘one’. (2011: 523)

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<sup>6</sup> The « zero » diacritic on a toneless, unaccented rhyme is a convention used in Taiwan. In Mainland China however, no diacritic is used in such cases. In this text, we will use the « zero » diacritic only for *na* 那 when relevant.

Studies on the grammaticalization of demonstratives as summed up by Lehmann all seem to follow a certain ‘grammaticalization path’, which according to the author, can be subsumed as follows (Op. Cit. 49):

demonstrative determiner > weakly demonstrative definite determiner > definite article  
> affixal article > noun marker<sup>7</sup>

The process of semantic bleaching occurring through grammaticalization can be illustrated as in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Grammaticalization scale for demonstrative determiners  
(Adapted from Lehmann 2002: 33-34)

Function	Semantic and syntactic features
Demonstrative pronoun	Semantic components: - definiteness + pointing gesture - deixis Syntactic component (category): - NP vs. Det (autonomous or dependent element)
<b>First step of grammaticalization: weakening of the deictic component</b>	
Adnominal demonstrative pronoun (selection of the unmarked form)	> anaphoricity
<b>Second step: weakening of the demonstrative component</b>	
Definite article	> definiteness
<b>Third step: reduction of definiteness</b>	
Specific article	> specificity
<b>Fourth step: reduction of the referential component</b>	
Noun- or noun class-marker	Only the categorial component subsides

Thus, describing grammaticalization in terms of semantic bleaching amounts to viewing varied uses of demonstrative determiners as pertaining to a semantic continuum, one end of which is more semantically loaded than the other. In Lehmann’s (op. cit.: 112) words:

Although a demonstrative pronoun may, in the long run, be grammaticalized into an affixal noun marker (sign of nominality), we would probably not want to say that the difference between these two signs is merely of a quantitative nature. Nevertheless, they still have a common functional basis, which is, so to speak, laid bare in the most grammaticalized member of a scale (e.g. the noun marker), but superposed by more specific functional aspects in the less grammaticalized members (e.g. the demonstrative). In this sense, the functional similarity among the elements of a grammaticalization scale is represented by its last member, something close to their

<sup>7</sup> As mentioned by Lehmann himself (2002: 34), this path was first proposed by Greenberg (1978) for African languages, but Lehmann further claims that it occurs in languages all over the world.

common *Gesamtbedeutung*, the smallest common denominator to which the input of the scale reduces in the end.

Is such a semantically driven view compatible with the observation that some demonstrative determiners not only have semantically weakened uses, but even reach into the pragmatic functions of language? It is clearly the case with demonstratives in Mandarin Chinese. In the following section, we shall have a closer look at the distal demonstrative in spoken Taiwan Mandarin in a synchronic perspective.

## 2.2. From demonstrative to discourse marker: the case of na(ge) 那 (個)

Uses of the demonstrative as crucially different as those listed in Table 1 can also be shown to be concurrently available in synchronic descriptions of some languages, as we shall see presently by examining the Chinese data. Such a phenomenon is possible because of the functional similarity of demonstrative determiners and definite articles: both participate in the identification of a referent for their nominal head. For instance, Corblin (1987) shows that demonstrative and definite determiners in French, although belonging to ‘radically different interpretive categories’ by virtue of different referring principles (Op. Cit.: 18), are both assignable to the class of ‘designators’, by which they clearly differ from indefinite expressions (Op. Cit.: 195). While Corblin demonstrates the context-dependent nature of the demonstrative, de Mulder (1998) takes on a discourse-oriented approach, stating that demonstratives demand both the identification of a referent and the setting-up of a context, so that demonstratives have a specific discourse function: “As such, these demonstratives always signal the integration of new information into the discourse: the introduction of a new referent, a change of thematic status, a change of universe, etc. [...]” Although these findings are meant to describe French data, they seem to be fairly universal. At all events, they explain why demonstratives can play the role of definite articles in languages that lack the latter category.

2.2.1. *On definiteness, referentiality and specificity*: Since the notions of definiteness, referentiality and specificity are central to the argument developed here, a succinct definition of the terms as we intend to use them is needed.

Regardless of the means for their expression (so-called definite or indefinite articles, absence of such, or other devices such as demonstratives), all of these notions have to do with the retrievability of the referent of a given noun (phrase) or “referring expression”. Chafe (1976: 39) considers definiteness to express the fact that the speaker thinks the addressee already knows and can identify the particular referent the speaker has in mind. Thus, the referent of a definite noun (phrase) is retrievable by both speaker and addressee, or at least considered so by the speaker.

A noun (phrase) is considered specific if it refers to an entity in the world that is identifiable to the speaker and referential if it allows both speaker and hearer to identify its referent. Whereas a referential noun (phrase) is always specific, the reverse does not hold.

### 2.2.2. Distribution of the distal demonstrative in spoken Taiwan Mandarin :

The distal demonstrative *na* 那 in spoken Taiwan Mandarin Chinese is one clear case of demonstrative extending from syntactic functions to pragmatic uses, although there exist some distributional constraints on its various uses. Let us state its distribution:

First of all, *na* 那 is a demonstrative pronoun, and as such, it is only used in subject position<sup>8</sup>. We find such instances of subject pronouns in our corpus, always pronounced *nà*:

- (1) 那是一起裝回來的  
**nà** shì yìqǐ zhuāng-hui-lai de  
**that** be together pack-back-come Part.<sup>9</sup>  
 These were all packed together.

In the preceding example, the distal demonstrative is a deictic pronoun. In other sentences, it may have anaphoric value, such as in (2) where the speaker summarizes a situation he has just been describing to his patient:

- (2) 那是沒辦法  
**nà** shì méi bànfǎ  
**that** be Neg.-have way  
 This cannot be helped.

The sequence demonstrative + classifier may also be used as a pronoun, deictic or anaphoric, without being constrained to the subject position. There again, *nà* 那 is fully accented. In our corpus, the default classifier is the generic individual classifier *ge* 個<sup>10</sup>.

In (3) below where the speaker is pointing to a note on a checklist, *nàge* 那個 is in subject position and has deictic value.

- (3) 那個是會計室寫的  
**nàge** shì kuàijì shì xiě de  
**nage** be accounting desk write Part.  
 That was... written by the accounting desk

The next example illustrates an anaphoric object pronoun, since the referent is quoted in the immediate preceding context, but not physically present:

<sup>8</sup> Zhu 1982: 86 states that in standard Chinese as spoken in Mainland China, bare demonstrative pronouns are more often used as subjects than as objects. We think they are not acceptable as objects in Taiwan Mandarin, and none was found in our spoken Taiwan Mandarin corpus.

<sup>9</sup> In this paper we use the following abbreviations: 1SG, 2SG, 3SG (first, second and third person singular pronouns); Aux. (auxiliary); Cl. (classifier); Neg. (negation); Onom. (onomatopoeia); Part. (particle).

<sup>10</sup> The only other classifier used in the corpus in association with *na* 那 is the species classifier *zhong* 種 'sort'. The cluster *nazhong* 那種 is only found once.

- (4) 她說她吃**那個**就:  
 tā shuō tā chī **nàge** jiù:  
 3SG say 3SG eat **nage** then:  
 She says (when) she eats that, then...

Apart from its pronominal use, the cluster *nage* 那個 is principally found in the determiner position of noun phrases. Contrary to what is the case in Standard Modern Chinese, *na* 那 is seldom directly followed by a bare noun in Taiwan Mandarin<sup>11</sup>. In our corpus, there are only seven instances of *na* 那 directly preceding N. Among those, three use *nà* 那 before *shihou* 時候 ‘time’, forming an almost lexicalized temporal adverbial meaning ‘at the time’<sup>12</sup>. One of the four remaining examples is displayed in (5) below.

- (5) 它**那**副作用會比較強嗎?  
 tā **nà** fūzuòyòng huì bǐjiào qiáng  
 3SG **na** secondary-effect Aux. comparative strong  
 ma  
 Part.  
 Its secondary effects are comparatively strong, aren’t they?

In most cases however, *na* 那 is followed by the classifier *ge* 個 (some 90 instances) and precedes a simple N or complex NP. In the corpus, we find either instances of fully accented *nàge* 那個 as a noun determiner cluster, or instances when *nà* 那 is unstressed. Whereas the former (examples (6) and (7)) can be unambiguously identified as instances of demonstrative determiners, the latter (example (8)) will be discussed in more detail below in order to ascertain their semantic value.

The following example illustrates the deictic demonstrative determiner use of *nàge* 那個, which is reinforced by the use of the distal locative adverb *nàbiān* 那邊 ‘there’:

- (6) 噯在在**那個**小罐子那邊  
 en zài zài **nàge** xiǎo guǎnzi nàbiān  
 uh at at **nage** small bottle there  
 Uh in... in that small bottle over there

Example (7) below illustrates the anaphoric demonstrative determiner use of *nage* 那個, the referent of the nominal head (the representative of a medical supplies company) being the topic of the preceding speech turns.

- (7) 因為**那個**廠商要來不容易啊  
 yīnwèi **nàge** chǎngshāng yào lái bù  
 because **nage** company to come not easy

<sup>11</sup> Except before such nouns that forbid the use of a classifier as *tiān* 天 ‘day’, *nián* 年 ‘year’, etc.

<sup>12</sup> We consider *nàbiān* 那邊 (*biān* 邊 meaning ‘side’) ‘there’ as a lexicalized adverb since the insertion of a classifier between the two elements is impossible. As for *nàshíhòu* 那時候, we consider that it is not fully lexicalized since the insertion of classifier *ge* 個 as in *nage shihou* 那個時候 is possible (although we do not find it in our corpus).

because            *nage*    company            want    come    Neg.  
 róngyì a  
 easy    Part.  
 Because it's not easy to have that company come over!

Below is one of the many examples of unstressed *nǎge* 那個 in determiner position.

- (8) 她都是領**那個**高血壓糖尿病的  
 tā      dōu      shì      lǐng      **nǎge**      gāoxiěyā  
 3SG    all      be      take      **nage**      hypertension  
 tángniàobìng      de  
 diabetes            Part.  
 She's taking the (medicine for) hypertension and diabetes

In this kind of sentences, *nage* 那個 is clearly not demonstrative, since the nouns it determines are understood as generic notions. The semantic value of the determiner in this case shall be discussed below.

Interestingly, *nage* 那個 is also used to mark hesitation or disfluency, as exemplified below. In (9), *nage* 那個 is lengthened, while in (10) it is followed by an indefinite (of the type 'who', 'what'):

- (9) 她本來有時候到**那個**:: 慈濟嘛  
 tā      běnlái      yǒushíhòu      dào      **nǎge::**      Cíjì  
 3SG    originally    sometimes      go      **nage**      Cíjì  
 ma  
 Part.  
 Previously she sometimes went to uh... Ciji, right?
- (10) 不是說**那個**什麼帶子要換掉?  
 bú      shì      shuō:      **nǎge**      shénme      dàizi      yào  
 Neg.    be      say      **nage**      what      belt      must  
 huàn-diào  
 change-drop  
 Didn't (we) say that (we) ought to change the... whatsit... belt?

Finally, there is one more use of bare *nà* 那 as a 'topic shifting' or 'relevance' discourse marker. In this function, it is always clause-initial. In the following sentence, *nà* 那 serves to mark a change in the topic of interaction.

- (11) 那妳什麼時候回來?  
**nà**      nǐ      shénme      shíhou      huí-lái  
**na**    2SG    what      time      come-back  
 So, when are you coming back?

Semantically and structurally akin to this use is the case where *nà* 那 (or *nàme* 那麼) marks the second member of a hypothetical complex sentence, and is traditionally considered a conjunction. This use was not found in our corpus.

2.2.3. *Semantic features of the distal demonstrative in spoken Taiwan Mandarin* : Based on a corpus of spoken Taiwan Mandarin, Huang claims that the distal demonstrative *na* 那 is often used in a way that likens it to a definite article:

[...] a significant percentage of the distal demonstratives can be shown to be used in contexts where the speaker assumes the identity of a referent to be culturally shared knowledge often independently of, but sometimes negotiated in the course of, the speech situation, a use typical of the definite article in languages where its status as a grammatical category is not in dispute (1999: 78)

Moreover, Huang (Op. Cit.: 90) lists a number of functions for ‘N-words’ (words constructed with the distal demonstrative), including *na* 那 and *nage* 那個 as well as other constructs such as *name* 那麼 ‘such/so’. The functions evidenced by Huang are strikingly close to the different stages of grammaticalized demonstratives as listed by Lehmann (cf. Table 1), to which Huang adds a few uses that are clearly discourse-related. In Table 2 below, we display Huang’s findings according to the grammatical and/or discourse functions of N-words. The column entitled ‘Semantic feature’ attempts to draw a parallel between uses of N-words as described by Huang and different stages of grammaticalized demonstratives as evidenced by Lehmann (2002).

Table 2. Uses of N-words as found in Huang’s (1999) spoken Taiwan Mandarin corpus

Function	Form	Semantic feature
Demonstrative (deictic <sup>13</sup> )	<i>na</i> + classifier (+ N)	<i>Deixis</i>
Demonstrative (anaphoric)	<i>na</i> + classifier (+ N)	<i>Anaphoricity</i>
Referential (1): ‘Introducing a referent of topical significance’	<i>na</i> + classifier + N	<i>Definiteness</i>
Referential (2): ‘Identifying use’ <sup>14</sup>	<i>na</i> + classifier + N	
‘Unavailable use’: similar to Referential (1) but used in association with a relative clause or noun complement	<i>na</i> + classifier + N	<i>Referentiality</i>
‘Discourse boundary’	<i>na(me)</i> + S	$\emptyset$

<sup>13</sup> Huang terms this the ‘situational use’ of demonstratives (Op. Cit. 79).

<sup>14</sup> Huang glosses this use as establishing a ‘reference position’ (Op. Cit. 84).

Pause filler <sup>15</sup> : - global retrieval difficulty - local retrieval difficulty	<i>na</i> <i>na</i> + classifier <i>ge</i> (+ indefinite)	
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Here are some examples of the ‘referential’ and ‘unavailable’ uses described by Huang and extracted from his corpus<sup>16</sup>. Example (11) illustrates ‘introducing a referent of topical significance’, that is, a ‘familiar but unused topic’ (Huang, op. cit.: 82):

- (11) 像講到那個溪頭那個經營好了 (Huang 1999 ex. (6)-107)  
 xiàng jiǎng dào nǎ ge Xītóu nǎ ge  
 like speak about na Cl. Xitou na Cl.  
 jīngyíng hǎo le  
 management ok Part.  
 Take, for example, the management of Xitou Forest

Example (12) illustrates the ‘unavailable use’, where the referent of the noun determined by the distal demonstrative would be unavailable without the addition of a nominal complement:

- (12) 就是有一點那種不放棄的那種脾氣喔 (Huang 1999 ex. (5)-222)  
 jiù shì yǒu yī diǎn nǎ zhǒng bù  
 just be have a little na Cl. Neg.  
 fàngqì de nǎ zhǒng píqì ò  
 give-up Part. na Cl. temper Part.  
 (I) had the kind of never-say-give-up mindset

Importantly, Huang’s general claim is that *nage* 那個 (or ‘its variant *nazhong* 那種, see example (12))<sup>17</sup> is currently emerging as a definite article in spoken Taiwan Mandarin. Crucially, this happens when discourse structure allows for such an interpretation:

the definite determiner is found to regularly emerge from speaker-hearer negotiation in specific, identifiable interactional contexts where the speaker has reason to believe the identity of a referent to be community shared knowledge which s/he can exploit (Op. Cit. 77).

<sup>15</sup> Huang uses a fine-grained distinction between different kinds of ‘difficulties’ as signaled by different forms of N-words or Z-words (words using the proximal demonstrative *zhe* 這). Quoting him: “the distal *na* usually functions as a pause marker for conceptual planning, and the distal *nage* (*nage shenme* or *nage shei*) functions as a pause marker for specific lexical retrieval and the proximal *zhege* functions as a pause marker for local syntactic planning of for general lexical search” (Op. Cit. 88)

<sup>16</sup> Transcriptions and glosses are ours.

<sup>17</sup> We found out in our corpus that apart from the semantically neutral individual classifier *ge* 個, there were a few instances of the species classifier *zhong* 種, but rather less than we expected, and much less than seems to be the case in Huang’s 1999 data. No semantically ‘rich’ classifier was ever used in association with the demonstrative *na* 那.

Thus, if *nage* 那個 retains its demonstrative features in certain cases, for all its non-demonstrative uses, its referential properties depend clearly on discourse characteristics. It thus comes as no surprise that *na(ge)* 那(個) also surfaces as a discourse marker.

The question raised by such an array of values for the demonstrative is whether a parallel could be established between the semantic process that underlies grammaticalization, namely desemanticization, and a similar pragmatic process that would allow for the emergence of discourse functions of the demonstrative. Such a process is identified by authors like Traugott (1995), who shows that the development of certain discourse markers may fit into a theory of grammaticalization. According to her, syntactic extension, concurrently to semantic bleaching, is characteristic of the grammaticalization of discourse markers. This process involves ‘increase in pragmatic functions’ (moving from referential to general and abstract references) and finally, ‘subjectification’ (encoding speaker attitude) (Op. Cit. 13-15), or rather ‘(inter)subjectification’ (Traugott 2010), where the relation between speaker and addressee is made apparent. Thus, for authors like Traugott or Diewald (2011), grammaticalization and pragmaticalization constitute one single process by which discourse markers acquire their pragmatic properties while losing both their semantic contents and their syntactic functions.

If we try and define a semantic-pragmatic continuum to encompass the uses of *nage* 那個 in spoken Taiwan Mandarin, we could view it as a process involving two domains – the grammar realm and the discourse realm – and centered around the core notion of ‘referentiality’. Table 3 illustrates this view.

Table 3. A continuum for the grammatical and pragmatic uses of *nage* 那個 in spoken Taiwan Mandarin

DEMONSTRATIVITY		
Successive loss of the following semantic features:		
Grammar realm	Desemanticization	Deixis
		Anaphoricity
		Definiteness
REFERENTIALITY		
Acquisition of the following discourse pragmatic functions:		
Discourse realm	Pragmaticalization	Linking clauses; Introducing new referents/topics
	Intersubjectification	Marking hesitancy <sup>18</sup>
	Complete bleaching	Marking disfluency

<sup>18</sup> Wang (2011: 41) notes that *nage* 那個 is used to mark ‘hesitancy in sharing certain personal information’ with the addressee, which seems a clear-cut case of intersubjective use. We think that another case of intersubjective use would be using *nage* 那個 to avoid naming a potentially face-threatening referent, as in *ta hen nage* 他很那個 ‘He’s very..., you know’.

Let us state here that the limited scope of this article does not allow us to systematically support the claim that such a continuum is diachronically realistic, although some authors do claim that the regular use of the Chinese distal demonstrative as a definite article pertains to grammaticalization (cf. Huang 1999). We would like to borrow Fang's (2012: 55) term 'grammaticization', which according to her "focuses on the implications of continually changing categories and meanings from a synchronic perspective" and refers to "a process whereby an item is entering the grammar of a language synchronically and may become fixed and constrained in distribution". Taking a synchronic perspective, it is certainly the case that *nage* 那個 has a whole array of distinct and distributionally constrained uses in spoken Taiwan Mandarin, some of which are distinctly grammatical.

We would now like to turn to the question of how distinct these uses of *nage* 那個 are.

### 3. HOW DISTINCT ARE THE DIFFERENT USES OF *NAGE* 那個 ?

Studies focusing on particular uses of *nage* 那個 in spoken Mandarin usually give some criteria in order to identify them. For instance, when dealing with discourse markers in spoken Taiwan Mandarin, Liu (2009: 365) states that "the speaker often pauses after *nage* or *zhege* and *nage/zhege* are not stressed when used as DMs". Huang (1999: 78) quotes Li and Thompson (1981: 131-132) according to whom "the demonstrative *nei* 'that', however, is beginning to function as *the* if it is not stressed". In the preceding examples, only prosodic cues are given, and one cannot but notice that a single cue, lack of stress, is invoked both for the 'definite article' use of *na* 那 and for its 'discourse marker' use.

#### 3.1. Devising criteria to identify uses of *nage* 那個

Our aim in this part is to provide further criteria in order to distinguish between all the uses of *nage* 那個 listed by Huang and evidenced in our own corpus. We will not limit ourselves to prosodic criteria; rather, we will summon syntactic, semantic, lexical, phonetic and pragmatic criteria.

- At the syntactic level, one important cue is the possibility for *nage* 那個 to occur alone (syntactic criterion 1), which would mark it either as a pronoun (in NP position), or as an intersubjective or disfluency marker. The latter, contrary to the former, may appear outside NP positions (syntactic criterion 2). This possibility is illustrated in examples (13) and (14) below. Finally, the occurrence of *nage* 那個 between a noun complement and a head noun inside a complex NP (syntactic criterion 3; see example (16) below), with or without the

nominalizing particle *de* 的, would typically mark off the ‘unavailable use’ where *nage* 那個 could be seen as a nominalizer or noun complementizer<sup>19</sup>.

In example (13) illustrating the use of *nage* 那個 in positions other than nominal, not only is *nage* 那個 in verbal position (as is the following verb), but it is lengthened, a probable sign of hesitation or disfluency as we shall see below:

- (13) 那就那個:分開了嘛  
 nà jiù **nage:** fēnkāi le ma  
 na then **nage** separate Part. Part.  
 Then let’s... separate (them)!

Example (14) also has a lengthened *nage* 那個, but this instance of the demonstrative-classifier cluster is in clausal position (it replaces the principal clause of a temporal complex sentence introduced by *jiù* 就, before the speaker makes this clause explicit):

- (14) 她說小便以後那個::就會痛  
 tā shuō xiǎobiàn yǐhòu **nage::** jiù huì tong  
 3SG say pee after **nage** thus Aux. ache  
 She says that after peeing (she) uh:: (she)’s in pain

- At the semantic level, when *nage* 那個 is in pre-nominal determiner position, if the head N has a unique referent whose interpretation is contextually independent (e.g. N is a proper noun, see example (15) below), *nage* 那個 is definite (or self-referring; semantic criterion 1). When it is the context brought up in the utterance that allows the identification of the noun preceded by *nage* 那個 (semantic criterion 2; see example (16) below), the latter is referential rather than demonstrative or definite. This is because referential interpretation of demonstratives is always contextually dependent, while referential interpretation of definite determiners is contextually independent only in their generic use (Corblin 1987: 17).

- (15a) 謝姐那個曾姐那邊哈  
 Xiè Jiě **nage** Zēng Jiě nàbiān ha  
 Xie Sister **nage** Zeng Sister there Part.  
 Sister Xie, at Sister Zeng’s over there, uh...

In the preceding example, the speaker is introducing a new topic in the conversation, by quoting a name that is familiar to her addressee Sister Xie: in Huang’s terms, “a familiar but unused topic” (1999: 82). There is only one Sister Zeng in the hospital, so that *nage* 那個 is clearly not demonstrative; we rather

<sup>19</sup> Since we only look at *nage* 那個 in this paper, we do not discuss further the possibility for *na* 那 to stand alone clause-initially, which would mark it either as a discourse marker or conjunction, either as a subject pronoun (see part 1 of this paper).

think it is definite. Evidence for the phrase ‘Sister Zeng’ having been established as a new topic surfaces in the next utterance by the same speaker:

- (15b) 她也有[...]那個呢  
 tā yě yǒu [...] nàge ne  
 3SG also have *nage* Part.  
 She also has... that thingy...

This shows that ‘Sister Zeng’, as the new topic, serves as the head of a ‘topic chain’ (Tsao 1979), referentially linked to the subject of the following sentences. Referential use of *nage* 那個 can be exemplified as follows:

- (16) 二號的那個網裝繃帶  
 èr hào de nàge wǎngzhuāng bēngdài  
 two number Part. *nage* net-wrapped bandage  
 the number 2 net-wrapped bandage

In (16), it is the nominal complement preceding the determiner that permits the identification of the noun referent (not any net-wrapped bandage, but number 2). This is precisely what Huang (Op.Cit.) describes as ‘unavailable use’.

- At the pragmatic level, physical presence vs. earlier mention in the context of the referent of N can discriminate between (spatial) deictic and anaphoric uses of pronouns/determiners (see examples (3) and (4) above). Cataphoric uses of *nage* 那個 are also possible, as mentioned by Huang (op.cit.: 89). Some of the occurrences in our corpus could be interpreted as cataphoric, as for instance (17):

- (17) 然後找那個:詹惠的號碼  
 ránhòu zhǎo nàge: Zhān Hui de hàomǎ  
 after look-for *nage* Zhan Hui Part. number  
 Then look for that... Zhan Hui’s number

In (17), although *nage* 那個 has the phonetic characteristics of a hesitation marker (see next paragraph), it could also be argued to be a pronoun standing cataphorically for the whole following NP, ‘Zhan Hui’s number’.

- At the phonetic level, as alluded to earlier, weakening of tone on *nà* 那<sup>20</sup> (phonetic criterion 1) points to a non-demonstrative use. Lengthening of *ge* 個 (phonetic criterion 2) points to hesitancy or disfluency, although it is neither obligatory with hesitation marks, nor incompatible with pronominal or determiner uses.

Let us see how the conjunction of all these criteria allows us to effectively discriminate between different uses of *nage* 那個.

<sup>20</sup> The classifier *ge* 個 is always unstressed, thus tone-neutral.

Table 4. A multi-criterion discrimination grid for the uses of *nage* 那個

	Syntactic			Semantic		Pragmatic	Phonetic	
	1	2	3	1	2		1	2
Deictic pronoun	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	?
Anaphoric Pronoun	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
Deictic determiner	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	?
Anaphoric determiner	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
Definite	?	-	-	+	-	+	?	?
Referential	-	-	+	-	+	N/A	+	?
Nominalizer	-	-	+	-	?	N/A	+	?
Intersubjectivity/ Disfluency	+	+	-	-	-	N/A	+	+

### 3.2. Applying the criteria: ambiguous cases

In many cases therefore, using the criteria detailed above allows us to identify clearly which use of *nage* 那個 we are dealing with. However, it often proves difficult to differentiate uses as non-demonstrative determiners and uses as fillers (hesitation markers), since both are unaccented. The ambiguity, according to our criteria, comes from the fact that, for these uses, neither the syntactic nor the phonological criteria are sufficient. As for syntax: whereas determiners occur only pre-nominally, hesitation and disfluency markers may do so too. As for phonology: for all these uses, *na* 那 is unaccented, while lengthening of *ge* 個 is neither obligatory for hesitation and disfluency markers, nor excluded with determiners. This is why we have to rely on semantic criteria only.

Although phonetic lengthening is a good cue for hesitation, hesitation does not exclude the eventuality of *nage* 那個 also displaying determiner features when in determiner position, or pronominal features when in NP position. Let us illustrate.

In (18) below, *nage* 那個 displays all the phonetic features compatible with hesitation (unaccented *na* and lengthened *ge*), but is also compatible with a definite determiner reading.

- (18) 本來去那個::壽豐那邊  
 běnlái qù nāge:: Shòufēng nàbiān  
 originally go nage Shoufeng there  
 (I) used to go to as far as Shoufeng

This example is very similar to Huang's example cited in (11) above: the referent of the noun (another dispensary in the township of Shoufeng) is a familiar topic to both speaker and hearer, although alluded to for the first time in this interaction. Thus, although the sentence displays hesitation (the speaker seems to be struggling to find the name of the place), *nage* 那個 may be considered a referential determiner.

In (19) below, *nage* 那個 seems to stand as a pronoun. Although *ge* 個 exhibits no phonetic lengthening, *na* 那 is unstressed. Clearly, *nage* 那個 is neither deictic nor anaphoric, it stands for a noun the speaker has trouble retrieving:

- (19) 叫 你 到 衛 生 所 拿 那 個 hya  
 jiào nǐ dào weishēngsuǒ ná nage hya  
 call 2SG go health-center take nage Onom.  
 (Someone) told you to come to the health center and take the uh, is that right?

In this case, the referent *tijianbiao* 體檢表 ‘physical examination form’ is named not by the speaker, but by her addressee in the next turn of speech.

In our view, the ambiguity displayed in such examples is fully compatible with the view that we are dealing with widespread variation that has already lead to language change, and may lead to more if the pragmaticalization process endures.

### 3.3. The case of noun complementation

Many of our examples belong to what Huang (Op.Cit.) calls the ‘unavailable use’ of *nage* 那個. In these utterances, *nage* 那個 is located between a noun and its pre-nominal complement ending with the nominalizer *de* 的, thus forming a complex NP. The nominal complement can either be a noun phrase (see example (16) above, and (20) below), a relative clause (21), or an adverb, as in (22) below.

- (20) 三 豐 的 那 個 詹 小 姐 還 是 張 小 姐  
 Sānfēng de nage Zhān Xiǎojiě háishi Zhāng  
 Sanfeng Part. nage Zhan Miss or Zhang  
 Xiǎojiě  
 Miss  
 Miss Zhan or Miss Zhang from Sanfeng
- (21) 你 擦 的 那 個 藥 太 強  
 nǐ cā de nage yào tài qiáng  
 2SG rub Part. nage medicine too strong  
 The cream you rub is too strong
- (22) 之 前 的 那 個 小 姐 沒 有 交 待  
 zhīqián de nage xiǎojiě méiyǒu jiāodài  
 before Part. nage Miss Neg.-have explain  
 The/that young woman (that was here) before didn’t explain

For each of the preceding examples, one can ascertain a specific value for the demonstrative + classifier sequence: in (20), *nage* 那個 could be correlated to hesitation about the exact name of the person; in (21) one recognizes the ‘unavailable use’ since the relative clause serves to ascertain the referent, and in (22), it could be argued that *nage* 那個, despite its being unaccented, has a spatial anaphoric value, designating a person that was present earlier. We also find cases of probable temporal anaphora, as in the following doubly determined example:

- (23) 她 原 來 的 那 個 傳 真 的 那 個 資 料

tā	yuánlái	de	<b>nǎge</b>	chuánzhēn	de	<b>nǎge</b>
3SG	originally	Part.	<b>nage</b>	fax	Part.	<b>nage</b>
zīliào						
documents						
The documents that she faxed previously						

In all cases, the presence of unaccented *nǎge* 那個 together with the noun-complement contributes to the identification of the head-noun reference, which is known to the speaker only at the time of utterance. It is in this sense that *nage* 那個 can be viewed as a referential article.

It may be this well-attested pattern of determination that is responsible for the occurrence of yet another pattern, namely the presence of *nage* 那個 between a noun and its complement, without the nominalizing particle *de* 的. In our corpus, the nominal complement can either be a noun as in (24) and (25) below, or, as in (26) and (27), a pronoun.

- (24) 四寸那個紗布  
 sì cūn **nǎge** shābù  
 four inch **nage** gauze  
 the four-inch gauze
- (25) 半邊那個頭會暈  
 bàn biān **nǎge** tóu huì yūn  
 half side **nage** head Aux. dizzy  
 One half of (my) head feels dizzy
- (26) 我那個藥已經沒有了  
 wǒ **nǎge** yào yǐjīng méi yǒu le  
 1SG **nage** medicine already Neg. have Part.  
 I have none of my drugs left
- (27) 你那個單子呢?  
 nǐ **nǎge** dānzi ne ?  
 2SG **nage** form Part.  
 What about your form?

This last example is similar to (5) above, where *na* 那 alone was used between the determined noun and a preceding pronoun. A further example can be found in (28):

- (28) 妳到妳那月曆那邊括弧一下妳  
 nǐ dào nǐ **nǎ** yuèlì nàbiān kùohú yī  
 2SG go 2SG **na** calendar there underline one  
 xià nǐ  
 stroke 2SG  
 You go to your calendar over there and underline (it) once, you!

In the last five examples, *na* 那 or *nage* 那個 may be viewed as “replacing” the nominalizing particle *de* 的. In the case of (27), this is made apparent when the

same speaker insists again a few turns of speech later, using the nominalizing particle:

- (29) 妳的月歷啊。就很明顯  
 nǐ de yuèlì a. jiù hěn míngxiǎn  
 2SG Part. calendar Part. thus very evident  
 Your calendar. So that it's very clear.

Given this parallel, we hypothesize that *na(ge)* 那(個) in its 'unavailable' use has gone a further step through grammaticization, acting as a *nominalizer*. Arguably, this nominalizer plays a specific role in discourse, since it is not the case that every instance of *de* 的 could be replaced by *nage* 那個 in spoken Taiwan Mandarin. Anyway, this new value conferred to the demonstrative bears some similarity with the description by Lehmann (2002: 112) of the grammaticalized demonstrative's « smallest common denominator », namely its nominal categorial component, leading in some languages to the development of noun-class markers.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND PERSPECTIVES

Examining different uses of *nage* 那個, we found out that they were not always-clear-cut cases. In some cases, as in (22) and (23) above, unaccented *nage* 那個 can retain its demonstrative semantics; in other cases, typically when unaccented *nage* 那個 precedes a head-noun, the frontier between definiteness/referentiality and some kind of disfluency is not always easy to draw. This is typical of a state of variation in the language, maybe simultaneous with grammaticalization.

So far, we haven't discussed the case of the proximal demonstrative *zhege* 這個, which can *de facto* be used in the same fashion as *nage* 那個. This could come as a surprise when reading the documented cases about the grammaticalization of demonstratives, where it is often argued that the distal demonstrative is a better candidate than the proximal to be extended to definite or referential uses.

In our corpus, we counted the occurrences of *zhege* 這個 as opposed to *nage* 那個, and tried the same criteria for their classification. The results are given in the table below.

Table 5. Uses of the proximal *zhege* 這個 and distal *nage* 那個 in our corpus

Uses	<i>zhege</i> 這個	<i>nage</i> 那個
Pronominal	16	10
Demonstrative determiner	7	4
Definite/Referential determiner	3	26
Nominalizer	1	8
Hesitation/disfluency marker	8	44
Total	35	92

It is interesting to note that, whereas most uses of *nage* 那個 pertain to the more semantically neutral end of the scale (definite/referential uses as well as hesitation/disfluency marks), there is a tendency for *zhege* 這個 to retain its original semantic value: the proximal demonstrative. Nevertheless, there also exists some variation in the uses of *zhege* 這個, and each of the uses that we evidenced for the distal *nage* 那個 is also possible for its proximal counterpart.

Some studies have evidenced the role played in discourse by both *zhege* 這個 and *nage* 那個 in Beijing vernacular (Guo 2009), or in the variety of standard Modern Chinese spoken in Mainland China (Liu 2009). In Beijing vernacular, Fang (2002) argues that the proximal demonstrative *zhe* 这 is the one undergoing grammaticalization and acquiring definite value, as opposed to what happened in Southern varieties of Chinese.

More data on spoken Taiwan Mandarin would be needed to ascertain the double hypothesis that *nage* 那個 is (a) undergoing grammaticalization and (b) doing so faster than *zhege* 這個. Comparing such results with those published on varieties of standard Chinese spoken in Mainland China could point to social (in the broad sense) rather than purely internal factors for such a process of variation leading to change.

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