Dialogic contexts as motivations for syntactic change
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1. Introduction
In recent years there has been considerable interest in accounting for motivations for change: the “why” of change. Attention has been paid to various aspects of diagrammatic iconicity within the framework of synchronic cognitive linguistics (e.g., Radden and Panther 2004) and historical morphosyntax (Fischer 2007), and also to interactional motivations such as turn-taking and stance-taking (Waltereit and Detges 2007). In this paper I will focus on the emergence of new syntactic constructions in the context of interactional contesting or “dialogic” language use (Schwenter 2000), using the rise of ALL- and WH- pseudo-clefts as my case study.

The outline is as follows. I will briefly review different approaches to motivation (section 2) and then discuss dialogicity (section 3). Section 4 focuses on the linguistic contexts in which pseudo-clefts arose, and section 5 suggests questions for further research.

2. Approaches to motivations
There have been two main approaches to motivations, one focusing on internal factors, the other on external as well as internal ones. Space permits only the sketchiest of comments about theoretical stances that have wide-reaching implications for both theoretical explanation and practice.

“Internal” approaches include synchronic work on various types of iconicity (e.g., Haiman 1980), and pattern match (e.g., Cuyckens, Berg, Dirven and Panther 2003, Radden and Panther 2004). Motivations may be cognitive, experiential, perceptual, etc. and therefore strictly speaking language-independent. But the approach is internal in the sense that they are construed as arising from factors “inherent in, and arising out of, any given synchronic state of the language system” (Gerritsen and Stein 1992: 7).

Diachronic work in which change is construed as grammar change (Kiparsky 1968) also involves an “internal” approach. For the most part, it is assumed that language change results from language acquisition, and that acquisition is passive: “Language learning is not really something that the child does; it is something that happens to the child placed in an appropriate environment” (Chomsky 1988: 134), “A grammar grows in a child from some initial state (UG), when she is exposed to primary linguistic data” (Lightfoot 2003: 107). Early proposals concerning competing motivations (“be clear” vs. “be quick/easy”) by Langacker (1977) and Slobin (1977) assume an internal perspective. In particular, Slobin proposed a disembodied set of “ground rules”, “charges”, or “imperatives” to “the semi-mythical being whom I’ll refer to simply as Language” (p. 186; italics original). Speakers are guided by maxims based in logic and language-internal Gricean implicatures.

“External” approaches, by contrast, appeal to factors arising out of human acts and actions, including language use in a community, contact, and speaker-hearer
negotiation of meaning. We may think here of interlocutors building common ground (Clark 1996), and resolving the competing motivations (“be clear” vs. “be quick/easy”) as construed by Du Bois (e.g., 1985). Speakers and hearers are actively engaged in interaction guided by maxims such as Keller’s (1994 [1990]), which are grounded in the communicative dyad’s actions and purposes, e.g., “Talk in such a way that you are not misunderstood” (p. 94), “Talk in such a way that you are noticed”, “Talk in an amusing, funny way” (p. 101), “Talk like the others talk” (p. 100).³

In historical linguistics, language change is construed as change in use, and speakers are envisaged as active, life-long learners (Milroy 1992, Croft 2000). The hypotheses that grammaticalization is motivated by “expressiveness” (Lehmann 1995 [1982], Hopper and Traugott 2003 [1993]) or “extravagance” (Haspelmath 1998) arise out of perspectives that are at least partially externally-oriented.

While “internal” and “external” approaches are different in orientation, they are ideally integrated (Du Bois 1985, Joseph 1992, and more recently Butler 2006, McMahon 2006):

To understand language change as well as we can, we have to deal with two different levels all the time, that of the speaker, and that of the linguistic system. (McMahon 2006: 148)

Work on invited inferencing as a motivation for change combines both external and internal perspectives. It is assumed that speakers act (invite addressees to interpret) exploiting language-internal implicatures (Traugott and König 1991, Traugott and Dasher 2002). After becoming salient in a community (a social factor) such implicatures may become conventionalized (coded or semanticized) via semantic reanalysis (an internal mechanism). For example, speaker-based, subjective meanings may become salient in certain types of communication as a result of certain interactional practices, but the process of “subjectification” is the reanalysis or semanticization of speaker-based meanings, such as are expressed by epistemic modality or discourse markers. It is an internal mechanism that operates on outcomes of externally motivated interaction.

Most hypothesized motivations are very general: conditions, not specific “why’s” for change. Recently Detges, Schwenter, and Waltreit in a number of papers separately and together have explored more specific motivations by correlating particular rhetorical strategies and stances with the rise of particular usages. For example, Detges (2006) discusses turn-taking and self-topicalization as motivations that were precursors of the development of subject-markers out of pronouns in French and other languages. The “obligatorification” of the pronouns resulted, he argues, from the overuse of optional first and second person pronouns, hence devaluation of their pragmatic effect, and eventual reanalysis as subject markers. Also appealing to turn-taking, Waltreit (2006) discusses the development of discourse markers out of imperatives, e.g., Italian Guarda! ‘look’ > ‘see’/’self-selection marker’, Diciamo ‘(let’s) say.’ He argues that speakers self-select by using attention-getters in “illegitimate” ways, e.g., Guarda! when there is nothing to look at, or Diciamo when interlocutors are not engaged in simultaneous talk. Waltreit and Detges (2007: 79) propose that the kinds of interaction that precede subjectification, pragmatization (of discourse markers), and grammaticalization, can be specified in more detailed ways than has been usual in the past by appealing to argumentation to a
conclusion, and negotiation of viewpoints. They propose that the development of modal particles like French *bien* ‘indeed’ as in (1a) out of the manner adverb *bien* ‘well’ derives from “stereotypical argumentational moves negotiating common ground (“What do I believe that you believe concerning the felicity of my speech act?’”). On the other hand, discourse markers such as Spanish *bien* ‘well’ as in (1b) arise out of the negotiating strategy of “further[ing] verbal interaction (“What are we going to do next’”) (Waltereit and Detges 2007: 79).

(1) a. Vous avez *bien* reçu mon message?
   ‘You did receive my message, didn’t you?’ (Ibid.: 63)

   b. A. … todo ciudadano … tiene derecho a esa legítima defensa
   ‘… every citizen … has the right to this self-defense’

   B. *Bien*. Eh … creo que…
   ‘Well. Eh .. I think there …’ (Ibid.: 62)

A different motivation, that of presupposition accommodation, is proposed by Schwenter and Waltereit (Forthcoming) to account for such developments as use of additive *too* as a refutation marker. An early example is:

(2) “Surely you can’t be thinking of marrying a man who wasn’t in the army, who jeered at men who did enlist?’”
   “He was, *too*, in the army. He was in the army eight months.” (1936 Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* [Schwenter and Waltereit Forthcoming])

As Waltereit and Detges show, in the case of Spanish *bien* the interaction is often one of disagreement (see (1b)). The same is true of the use of *too* in (2). In other words, the context for their use is one in which multiple viewpoints are expressed using a strategy that is contesting and refutational, oriented toward an alternative conclusion. In other words it is “dialogic”.

3. Dialogic interactions

For over twenty years there has been considerable discussion, especially in Europe, of the distinction between the number of speakers and the number of points of view invoked (see Roulet 1984, Ducrot 1984, 1996; more recently Schwenter 2000, 2007, Nølke 2006). A distinction is made between “monologal”-“dialogal” interaction and “monologic”-“dialogic” interaction. The first, “monologal”-“dialogal”, refers to the number of speakers (simplistically, one or two) and concerns absence or presence of turn-taking. The second, “monologic”-“dialogic” refers to number of view points invoked (simplistically, one or two). Monologic orientation concerns the extent to which speakers share common ground and build their argument toward the same or similar conclusions (e.g., *and*, which signals agreement or addition). Dialogic orientation concerns the extent to which speakers contest, refute, or build an argument toward alternative or different conclusions (e.g., *but*, modal *in fact*). Monologicity and dialogicity are on a continuum (Schwenter 2000) – very little language use is purely monologic (Taavitsainen, Härmä, and Korhonon 2006: 1).
There are many linguistic expressions that index some degree of dialogicity. Among them are:

a) Adversatives: these “signal[] a confrontation of ‘incompatible’ viewpoints” (Schwenter 2000: 261), e.g., but, Spanish si.

b) Concessives: these convey the “implicature that there is a dissonance or incompatibility between two eventualities” (König 1991: 134), e.g., although, however.

c) Negation: this has been conceptualized as denying or correcting the “truth” of a prior proposition or utterance (Givón 1978), or of a presupposition, implicature, etc. (Geurts 1998). While the extent to which canonical negation is used this way has been challenged (e.g., Tottie 1991, Thompson 1998), non-canonical negatives target a salient affirmative proposition in the ongoing discourse record, e.g., not ... either, OE na ... wiht ‘no … thing’ (> not), Fr. ne ... pas ‘no … step’ (Schwenter 2007) and are refutational.

d) Epistemic modal adverbs: these invoke alternative worlds (Lyons 1977) and therefore doubt, e.g., surely, possibly.

e) Focus particles: these exclude alternatives and “carry an implication of dissonance or incompatibility” (König 1991: 131; also Traugott 2006), e.g., even, only.

f) Scalars in general since they invoke alternatives (König 1991).

While synchronic studies of dialogicity have focused not only on expressions of dialogicity but also on interactional stance, largely in conversation (e.g., Mann and Thompson 1992, Ford 1994, Couper-Kuhlen and Kortmann 2000), most diachronic work has been devoted to the development of expressions indexing dialogicity as instances of grammaticalization or of subjectification. Dialogic expressions typically derive from non-dialogic ones, e.g.: but < ‘except’ < butan ‘on the outside’ (Nevalainen 1991), only ‘adversative conjunction’ (“denotes the opposite of the consequence or conclusion expected from the first”, Poutsma 1904-05: 385, cited in Brinton 1998) < focus marker < anlic ‘singly’, instead < in stede ‘in place of’ (Schwenter and Traugott 1995) to name only a few. Relatively little attention has been paid to dialogic contexts for changes. There is, however, some mention in Detges’ and Waltener’s work, and Schwenter and Traugott argue that the dialogicity of adverbials like epistemic in fact arises out of the semanticization of dialogic contexts such as are illustrated by (3):

(3) You were pleased before to make some reflexions on this custom, and laugh at the irresolution of our free-thinkers: but I can aver for matter of fact, that they have often recommended it by their example as well as arguments ... In whatever light you may consider it, this is in fact a solid benefit. But the best effect of our principles is that light and truth so visibly spread abroad in the world. (1732 Berkeley, Alciphron ii. sect.24, p. 105 [Schwenter and Traugott 2000: 16])

Note here the prior context of alternative points of view (you were pleased ... but I can aver..., in whatever light you may consider it), as well as the following one (But the best effect...).
Here I argue in greater detail for the importance of paying attention to evidence in texts for interactional goals involving contesting of prior claims or introduction of alternative points of view, i.e. of dialogic contexts, in coming to grips with micro-changes with the example of the development of pseudo-clefts. In earlier work (Traugott Forthcoming) I tested two hypotheses: i) that they might have arisen in primarily dialogal interaction, given that analyses of WH-clefts based on constructed data suggest they are responses to questions (e.g., Higgins 1979 and many studies building on his work), ii) that they might have arisen at turns, given that other studies based on spontaneous conversation suggest they are used to delay an assertion at a turn (e.g., Hopper 2001). I found that the textual evidence gave little support for turn-taking as a motivation for the development of pseudo-clefts. Rather, dialogic contexts appear to have played an important role, most especially in the case of ALL-clefts. This is consistent with Kim’s (1995) finding that WH-clefts are used in conversation mainly to signal a counter-active, i.e. dialogic, stance in spontaneous conversation.

4. Contexts for the development of pseudo-clefts

Pseudo-clefts are constructions like:

(4) a. What Bruce ate was the crab. (WH-cleft)
   b. What Bruce did was (to) peel the potatoes. (WH-cleft)
   c. All/*Everything Bruce ate was the crab. (ALL-cleft)
   d. All/*Everything that you have to do is (to) close the window. (ALL-cleft)

They involve a string of the type WHAT/ALL – NP – V – BE – X (see Prince 1978, Higgins 1979, Collins 1991, Lambrecht 2001, Delin and Oberlander 2006, among many others) and:

a) Two clauses, one of which is a relative,\(^6\) one of which involves a copula.
b) Givenness: some part of the construction (typically the relative) must be given or at least recoverable.
c) Uniqueness and contrastiveness: the focus constituent is construed as an exhaustive, exclusive listing (Bruce ate only the crab, not the shrimp, squid, etc.)
d) Specificational/identifying focus: the complement of the copula is specific and referential (not ascriptive or non-referential) (see Patten 2007 for detailed discussion of specificationality).

Ball (1994) analyzed the history of IT-clefts, and showed that antecedents of what Prince (1978) called “stressed focus” IT-clefts (but without it) are attested in Old English; these require X to be given or at least inferable and salient in the discourse. What Prince called “informative-presupposition” IT-clefts arose around 1400; in this type X may be new.\(^7\) ALL-pseudo-clefts arose around 1600, and WH-pseudo-clefts around 1660. All three clefts are examples of “grammaticalization without lexical bleaching” (Lehmann Forthcoming), and of constructionalization (Traugott Forthcoming).
4.1 Early examples of ALL-pseudo-clefts

Early examples in the database with the string ALL – NP – V – BE – X are ascriptive (5a; ‘everything I said was tricky/design to trick’) or purposive (5b). Here all means ‘everything’:

(5) a. I haue made him happie by training you forth: In a word, all I said was but a traine to draw you from your vow: Nay, there's no going backe. ‘I have made him happy by drawing you forth: in a word, everything I said was only a trick to draw you from your vow. No, there is no going back.’ (1606 Chapman, Monsieur D’Oliue [LION: EEBO]

b. I loue thee dearer then I doe my life, And all I did, was to aduance thy state, To sunne bright beames of shining happinesse. (1601 Yarrington, Two Lamentable Tragedies [Ibid.])

In (5a) the prior context is not obviously dialogic, but the following context is contesting (Nay, there’s no going back). In (5b) one might infer that the speaker is making such a strong claim because he fears he has been misunderstood. Indeed, everything one person says or does may not be enough for some other person or may be interpreted as mistaken or at best inadequate (due to the quantificational meaning of all), as is poignantly expressed by Henry V in (6):

(6) More will I do; Though all that I can do is nothing worth, Since that my penitence comes after all, Imploring pardon. (1599 Shakespeare, Henry V IV.i.319 [UVa])

c.1600 strings of type ALL - NP - V - BE - X appear with the pseudo-cleft meaning: all can be interpreted as ‘only’, not ‘everything’, and the focus may be understood as exhaustive and specification. Since the focus is a clause in all early ALL-cleft examples, with a verb of speaking, usually say (7a), or do plus infinitive marker (7b), the criterion used for contemporary English that the focused NP should be definite does not apply. There are, however, examples like (7a) in which the focus of an ALL-cleft with say is this, followed by a clause.

(7) a. [A “confutation” between a Jesuit (S.R.) and Bell] Our slanderous and rayling Iesuite, reporteth my wordes in this manner; for saith Bell) (sic), it is a thinge proper to God, to make something of nothing in al cases, and at al times. So then, all that I said was this; (viz) That though man can at sometime in some cases, make one thing of another; yet to make of nothing something, is proper to GOD alone, neither is man able to performe the same. (1608 Bell, The Jesuits Antepast [LION: EEBO])

b. I was desir’d to put a stop to the Sedition of the People. I answered, That all that I could do, was to give no Encouragement to it, but God
only could appease it. (1693 Du Pin, *History of Ecclesiastical Writers* [Ibid.])

Both examples are highly dialogic. In (7a) Bell draws attention to what he actually said (though a man can at sometime…), as opposed to what others construed him as saying (saith Bell: it is a thinge proper to God…). In (7b) Naylor foresees the impossibility of his addressee having any political success, and proposes that he simply do good. Note that whereas the purposive construction (5b) (all I did was for the purpose of Xing in the future) is future-oriented, the ALL-cleft with do is present-oriented (or, more specifically, is oriented to the event time). This is presumably what allowed for the loss of to after do as in (8a) and the verbal gerund in (8b):

(8) a. When any bow’d to me with Congees (= ceremonious bow) trim, *All I could do, was stand and laugh at him.* (1681 Baxter, *Poetical fragments* [LION: EEBO])

   b. These words so resolute and kind, pierced my very heart, and turned me into a Statue, leaving me without sense or motion. All I could do, was *embracing* my dear Sultaness for a final Adieu. (1686 Brémond, *The Happy Slave*, Part III [Ibid.])

(8) unequivocally shows that a new construction had come into being. Not only does do not require to, but the context is no longer dialogic. The construction in itself signals dialogicity. It puts the focus on a scale and signals that it is the only alternative; it also signals that the speaker/writer regards the focus as less than adequate (all is “downward inferential” in Horn’s (1996: 18) analysis), a meaning derived from interaction of the quantifier all with exclusivity and negation (see also albeit, all the same, after all). We may say that dialogicity has been semanticized into the construction. This means it is understood as dialogic in non-dialogic contexts, though such contexts tend to continue to be used.

4.2 Early examples of WH-clefts

As in the case of the ALL-constructions, prior to about 1660 the only examples in data base with the structure WHAT – NP – V – BE – X are ascriptive (9a), or purposive (9b):

(9) a. Then Sostratus taking the occasion to speake, said: “*what I did was of no great valour*, and therfore not worthy the rehearsal” (1597 Tatus, *Clitiphon* [LION: EEBO])

   b. Mistake mee not faire Knight, … *what I did, was to deceiue the Pagans*, who are waking Dragons that neuer sleepe about mee (1612 Markham, *Meruine* [Ibid.])

These examples have dialogic contexts, but not the specificational structure of WH-pseudo-clefts, i.e. X is not a definite description. It was only a short step to the pseudo-cleft construction, in which the dialogic contexts were retained. As in the case of ALL-clefts, WH-clefts with do are oriented to event-time, not future (10b).
a. I write not out of a designe to advance the repute of our West-Indy Commodities in the making Chocolata. *What I say is the Assertion of others*, who did not intend by their Writings to serve the English Interest in Jamaicay. (1662 Stubbe, *Indian Nectar* [LION: EEBO])

b. If it be objected that I preached to separate Congregations; my Answer is, That I preach’d only to some of many Thousands that cannot come into the Temples, many of which never heard a Sermon of many years. And *what I did, was only to preach to such as could not come to our Churches*. (1697 Baxter, *Mr. Richard Baxter's Last Legacy* [LION: EEBO])

Like ALL-clefts, WH-clefts came within about fifty years to be used in non-dialogic contexts. Here again we can say that the dialogic context has been semanticized in the new construction. However, in the case of WH-clefts there is no downward entailment:10

(11) I heard a Noise, and came down Stairs, but all the Things were gone: I wash Linnen, and *what I lost was the Property of Mr. Gold.*
(May 1736, Trial of Christopher Freeman and Samuel Ellard [BAILEY: s17360505-463173605050])

5. Conclusion and further work

I have added to arguments that by bringing an interactional approach to the study of change, and attempting to go beyond very general ideas about motivations, we can reach a better understanding of how specific micro-changes come about. In particular I have suggested that dialogic contexts deserve special attention.

Among future research questions is whether all expressions that inherently code dialogic meaning, such as those cited in section 3, arise in dialogic contexts. Other questions that deserve attention include how best to refine the continuum from monologic to dialogic contexts and meanings (Schwenter 2000), and further, how best to define the continuum within dialogicity (e.g., from quotation and scalarity to refutation). Since semanticizing dialogicity involves semanticizing stance, a further question is how degrees of subjectification intersect with these continua. And since contesting strategies are partly governed by conventions of interaction in specific discourse contexts, we need also to understand how these factors relate to register and genre and how there may be differences over time due to shifts in cultural norms (Biber 2004).

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1 Various aspects of the development of ALL- and WH-pseudo-clefts were presented at IPra 10 (Traugott 2007) and in Traugott (Forthcoming). Many thanks to audiences at IPra and at SHEL5 for comments. Most especially, thanks to Scott A. Schwenter for drawing by attention to dialogicity, to Ruth Kempson for discussion of my analysis of WH-clefts, and to two anonymous reviewers of the present version. Needless to say, they are not responsible for any errors that remain or for points of view expressed here.

2 Taylor (2006) provides a good summary of the cognitive linguistic approach to motivation, with a critique of possible circularity.
The first two types enable change, the third inhibits it. Grice’s (1989 [1975]) Maxims also appeal to the communicative dyad, but focus on internal logic and implicatures.

Much of this work originates with Bakhtin (see Holquist 1981). Similar issues are also central to much work on stylistics and types of “indirect speech” (e.g., Leech and Short 1981).

Note, however, that “dialogic” is sometimes used to refer to dyadic interaction, i.e. what is here called “dialogual” (e.g., Taavitsainen, Härmä, and Korhonen 2006).

However, den Dikken (2006) argues that they are interrogative. Carlson (1983) argues that in terms of use in dialogue, they “serve the purpose of articulating a sentence as an answer to a particular question” (p. 222) but are structurally free relatives (thanks to Markku Filpulla for this reference).

Interestingly, in Present Day English ALL-pseudo-clefts and WH-clefts in some contexts can be of either type. The pseudo-clefts suggest that at first X was given, but that as the constructions became conventionalized this restriction was relaxed.

I searched the Middle English Dictionary, LION: EEBO, LION: Early English Drama (Jacobean and Caroline (1603-1660), and Restoration (1660-1700) periods), and trials as represented by the Old Bailey Proceedings Online from 1678 to 1743, and the Old Bailey Speech Set from 1732-1743. Each file was searched for all/what (that) I/you/he/she/it/we/they and said/did was (the latter to determine what subjects were selected in the early period).

An anonymous reviewer asked whether there might have been influence of French or Latin texts. Some of the earlier examples of ALL-clefts are in translations from French, but whether or not there was direct influence remains to be studied. Examples (7b) and (8b) are translations from French, but relatively late in the development of ALL-clefts.

Carlson (1983: 223) points out that What David wants is his wallet “implies that his wallet is all David wants. This … is due to the fact … that the character of free relatives is left open between existential and universal force”. Here we must understand Carlson to be thinking of the exclusivity rather than downward entailment of all.
Sources
UVa University of Virginia, Electronic Text Center, Modern English Collection, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/modeng/modeng0.browse.html.

References


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