

Projectability and Clause Combining in Interaction*

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Abstract

We examine a set of supposedly “biclausal” constructions in natural conversations in English and German, and argue that: (1) these constructions are not biclausal, since the second “clause” is typically not a clause but an indeterminate stretch of discourse without a consistent syntactic structure; (2) the first “clause” functions to strongly project this upcoming discourse segment; (3) in certain of the allegedly biclausal constructions even the first part is not really a clause but is instead a fixed sequence with limited lexical choices. We suggest that these apparently “biclausal” constructions should be analyzed as single, partly formulaic clauses deployed by speakers in managing interactional discourse. This analysis accounts for a number of previously unnoticed restrictions on the grammatical and prosodic form the formulaic clauses take, as well as for their projective properties.

1. Introduction

Clause combining in English often takes the form of a set of constructions (generally described as “adverbial clause constructions” (e.g., Thompson/Longacre/Hwang 2007)) consisting of a pair of clauses in which one clause (often termed the “subordinate” clause) is linked to the other clause (often termed the “main” clause) both prosodically and lexically. Prosodically, each clause typically forms its own prosodic unit, the first one ending with a “continuing” terminal pitch contour (Du Bois et al. 1993), and lexically, the ‘subordinate’ clause is introduced by one of a specific set of conjunctions, as in the following extracts from our data:

(1) conditional

if f=riends are recording tapes in Dolby C=,¹
then you'll be able to play it back and it'll sound right.

(2) time adverbial

when I put the tape in,
I never know which direction it's gonna go.

(3) reason adverbial

I don't think it would benefit from pins,
because,
we'd have to undo it.

However, some apparently biclausal constructions seem to have quite a different structure, in that the first of the two clauses is relatively fixed, as opposed to the 'open' structure generally found in instantiations such as (1) - (3):

(4) 'pseudocleft'

.. (H) Well what we're trying to get at,
.. is potential .. versus .. actual.

(5) *it*-cleft

[talking about a tape recorder that doesn't have a certain capability]

.. it's the dual one that doesn't.,

(6) extraposition

it's possible see that I would change (MC 29b)

In a number of recent publications, the "adverbial clause" constructions exemplified in (1) - (3) have been considered from the perspective of conversational interactions (Akatsuka 1997; Akatsuka and Clancy 1993; Akatsuka and Strauss 2000; Auer 2000; Chafe 1984; Clancy, Couper-Kuhlen 1996, 1999; Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson in press; Ford 1993, 1997.) Also considering interactional data, in this paper we would like to augment these studies by contrasting

the constructions exemplified in (4) - (6), which are apparently biclausal, with the ‘adverbial clause’ group in (1) - (3) to see what conclusions may be drawn about their grammatical structure.

2. Apparently Biclausal Constructions

2.1. Pseudocleft (*wh*-cleft)

Utterances like (4) above manifest what is known as either a *pseudocleft* or *wh*-cleft construction:

(4) ‘pseudocleft’

.. (H) Well what we're trying to get at,
.. is potential .. versus .. actual.

The standard grammatical analysis of this construction posits a bipartite, that is, a biclausal, structure that comprises a *wh*-clause and a *focus* clause introduced by the copula *be*, which we will refer to as the *be*-clause. There have been various attempts to characterize the local function of the construction, all of them cast in the model of information structure (Biber et al. 1999, Collins 1991, Geluykens 1988, Prince 1978, Quirk et al. 1985, Weinert and Miller 1996). These attempts rely on the notions of *presupposition*, *background*, *old*, *given*, or *thematic* information for the *wh*-clause and *focus*, *assertion*, *foreground*, or *new* for the *be*-clause. In the Longman grammar (Biber et al. 1999: 959), which is corpus-based, *wh*-clefts are described as consisting of “a clause introduced by a *wh*-word, usually *what*, with its own point of focus, typically at the end; a form of the verb *to be*; [and] the specially focused element: a noun phrase, an infinitive clause,

or a finite nominal clause”. In this account each clause is taken to have its own point of “focus”, so the biclausal pseudocleft sentence contains what might be termed a “minor focus” in the *wh*-clause and a “major focus” in the *be* clause.

Intuitively, there seems to be something valid about this characterization, but these earlier descriptions of pseudoclefts leave some important considerations unaddressed. The first is that, even in those accounts which are based on actual data, they all attempt to account for the “pseudocleft construction” as having cognitive properties, rather than as interactional achievements, thus missing their actual function, as we will show. A second problem is that no satisfactory function of the *be*-clause has been identified, since “focus” is pre-eminently a contextual notion, but no research has addressed what aspects of the context might motivate a speaker to want to “focus” some segment of talk. In other words, these accounts do not attempt to probe what “focus” might mean in interactional terms. According to our conversational data, this is by no means surprising, since what has been called the “focus” element is in principle of unlimited length. Prince (1978) notes this, but does not discuss its implications for her analysis. Identifying the focus as an entire clause is possible, of course, but, as we will show, quite often the follow-up to the *wh*-clause extends indefinitely far into the subsequent interaction.

A third problem is that by no means all of the *wh*-clauses are followed up by anything resembling a *be*-clause. Thus the many extracts like the following:

- (7) ROY: What you oughta do though ~Mar,
 ... [cook] all the fish.
Marilyn: [Hm].
ROY: .. Cause --
 .. well,
 we won't use it,
 .. if you don't cook it.

in which a *wh*-clause fails to be followed up with a *be*-clause according to a bi-clausal criterion, would not be accounted for. Typically, these “incomplete” pseudoclefts are regarded as reduced and deviant versions of the “full” construction (e.g. in Collins 1991). As a result, the distinctive contribution of the *wh*-clause to whatever discourse function is proposed for the pair is either understated or missing completely.

Newer work on the English pseudocleft (Hopper 2001, 2004) and on the corresponding construction in German by Günthner (1999) places the pseudocleft in the context of grammatical constructions that serve wider interactional goals. Data from English conversational discourse make it clear that:

(a) Most pseudoclefts in everyday conversation are not syntactically biclausal, that is, they do not consist of two clauses combined into a single construction. Often, for example, the *wh*-clause is followed by a whole finite clause, not a “noun phrase, an infinitive clause, or a finite nominal clause”, the criterion suggested by Quirk et al. (1985), as is illustrated in these extracts:

- (8) or what I would like to do,
 is I would like to take a day.

- (9) (H) So then what you do is,
 you sprinkle the fifth-graders out evenly.

- (10) What you oughta do though Mar,
 ... [cook] all the fish.

In these extracts, the two clauses are syntactically separate entities, and one could not convincingly speak of a construction in which two clausal elements are grammatically combined. Only the common subject reference in the two clauses serves as a referential link. However, in other extracts, the follow-up clause has a DIFFERENT SUBJECT from the *wh*-clause:

- (11) w- .. what we'll do is,
 ... those'll probably wire transfer [out].

- (12) And,
.. what- what- what we would do is],
.. they would take care of the account maintenance.

Finally, in others, there is no “*be* clause” at all. Instead, the talk continues without any single clause that would tie it grammatically or referentially to the *wh*-clause. In (13)-(14), there is no possibility of a biclausal construction analysis:

- (13) → What we do,
then that's .. that's where the ferrier comes in.
- (14) →... (H) What I did,
.. kind of,
.. (H) in regard to that,
was,
... and,
.. I don't have this date finalized,
but,
(H) s- --
.. I'm trying to go maybe the second week ..of ..January,
(H) to ha=ve ... a representative of Bankers Systems,
(H) .. come <<THUMP here THUMP>>.

From these extracts, it can be seen that the construction as it is often found in written English and in manufactured example sentences is by no means the norm in everyday conversational English.

(b) To this fact must be added another, that the freely generated (or “open choice” (Sinclair 1991)) pseudocleft of syntactic analyses is illusory when data from interactions are considered in terms of grammar in its real-time social context. In fact, most of the *wh*-clauses in pseudoclefts in our data are lexically constrained and formulaic. Most strikingly, a small number of verbs predominate in the *wh*-clause. The following extracts illustrate three of the most frequent verbs, *do*, *happen*, and *mean*:

- (15) → What we do,
then that's .. that's where the ferrier comes in.

(16) → what's happened is is as they've come on board and that we feel that we have got to [X] grips with them²

(17) → what I mean is it's half six right so it's not doesn't push you.

Say is also very common. Table 1 gives the percentages of verbs in the *wh*-clause, taken from the Cobuild corpus.

do	118 (66%)	} 87%
happen	23 (13%)	
say	15 (8%)	
want	8	} 13%
mean	6	
think	4	
need	3	
find	3	
Total	180	

Table 1: number of verbs in *wh*-clause of pseudoclefts in Cobuild corpus (from Hopper 2001)

It can be seen here that the three most frequent verbs, *do*, *happen* and *say*, account for 87% of all verbs in *wh*-clauses. On its own, *do* accounts for two-thirds of such clauses. This heavily biased distribution suggests that the *wh*-clause of the pseudocleft is basically a formula <*what* – NP – *do/say* – *is/was*> [*verbal expression*] or <*what* – *happen* – *is/was*> [*verbal expression*].

(c) A by-product of this fact is that the verb of the *wh*-clause works to *classify* a segment of the up-coming discourse as an Action (*do*); or as an Event (*happen*) characterized as a complex of actions, occurrences, and situations; or as a Paraphrase (*say*, *mean*). In (18), the speaker is announcing an intention to “call you and find out,” that is, to perform an *action*:

Action

(18) (H) Then what I'll do .. is,
 ... when --
 .. you can --

.. I'll call you and find out.

The more complex set of occurrences that qualifies as an Event is introduced by the verb *happen* in the *wh*-clause. In the following excerpt, Rickie, an attorney, outlines to Rebecca, her client, a series of things that will take place on the day of a hearing:

Event

- (19) RICKIE: ... W- what will happen is,
... you'll walk into the courtroom here.
REBECCA: .. [Mhm].
RICKIE: [There are door]s right here.
REBECCA: [2Yeah2].
RICKIE: [2(H)2] There are seats right here,
.. u=m,
.. that are for the audience,
but normally there's nobody in the audience
but,
REBECCA: [Okay].
RICKIE: [your] husband will be there,
(H)= u=m,
.. (TSK) a=nd=,
.. then,
... there are two tables right here.
.. I'll be seated at this table.
REBECCA: [Mhm].
[(H)] An=d,
RICKIE: .. the defendant .. and the defense
attorney will be seated at this table.

In (19), the things that will “happen” are not restricted to a single action, but comprise actions, changes, and situations—where the chairs and tables will be, who will be present, what routines will be followed, etc. The things that Rickie describes are a complex that together makes up an *event*—something that “happens,” as opposed to something someone “does”.

When the *wh*-clause contains a verb of saying, as in:

Paraphrase

- (20) what I'm saying is,
you acquire this through the socialization process.
that we've discussed already.

the speaker's words are typically a *paraphrase* of something that has been said, perhaps at greater length and more obscurely, in prior talk. The motive for presenting such a paraphrase is in part to clarify previous utterances (“what I meant to say was...”). But such clarification may also serve as a rhetorical tactic to re-phrase an utterance that seems to have failed to align or harmonize with the prevailing “mood” of the interaction, or even to make a new assertion (Prince 1978: 891). Simultaneously it works to prepare the way for the subsequent points that are to be made.

In all of these situations, what is striking is that the *wh*-clause of the pseudocleft anticipates (or “projects”) up-coming talk by the same speaker, and, as we have seen, FRAMES that talk in terms of such categories as *event*, *action*, and *paraphrase*. We will return to this point below. It also holds the floor while the speaker develops a line of thought or formulates his/her next utterance, giving the appearance of fluency and complexity.

(d) A final feature that distinguishes the *wh*-clause found in natural conversational data is that the use of the pseudocleft is conditioned by sociocultural and interactional factors. For example, in 13 comparably long transcripts of Part I of the Corpus of Spoken American English, one interaction alone accounted for 21 of the 26 examples of pseudoclefts. This was the interaction named “Letter of Concern”. The core of this interaction is a conspiratorial conversation between two officers of a company, both males. One of them, Phil, is articulating to the other, Brad, a scheme to exclude a certain female employee, Donna, from an important all-day meeting (referred to as a retreat). At the start of the extract, Phil presents the plan, which entails setting up a special post-meeting briefing for the benefit of Donna in order to justify excluding her from the retreat. Phil rehearses what he will say to Donna:

- (21) PHIL: You know,
 we're having a board retreat.
 .. you [know,

BRAD: [R=ight].

PHIL: that it's not] gonna include staff,
if that's what we [2decide.

BRAD: [2Right2].
.. Unhunh2].

PHIL: H)2] ... **And what we will do** (Hx),
is I think,
.. **what we're gonna probably wanna do,**
or **what I would like to do,**
is I would like to take a day.

BRAD: M[hm].

PHIL: [(H)]= ... %d=- during the week,
and we'll just take a whole day.
.. That day.
An=d myself,
(H) uh,
if we have a uh= facilitator,

BRAD: .. Mhm.

PHIL: (H)= U=m,
that that person,
you and !Patricia and .. %!D= !Donna,

BRAD: .. Mhm,

PHIL: and maybe one other,
or two other board members would,
.. actually spend that day and just say okay,
this is what went on at that [retreat].

In this extract, and throughout the conversation, it is clear that Phil is improvising. The pseudocleft formula gives him “down time” to clarify the plan to himself and to his partner in the conversation at the same time as he is holding the floor. Basically Phil is simply saying that he and some others will take off a whole day to brief Donna. The pseudoclefts serve the cognitive role of allowing space within which to organize his proposal. But they also, by filling what might otherwise be embarrassing silences with recognized (if meaningless) expressions, are interactionally designed to give the interlocutor the impression of a proposal that has been fully thought out and is being fluently articulated. Furthermore, by spreading the proposal out through clauses that are in essence empty, Phil manages to suggest that he has more arguments than he really has—that his thinking has been more proactive, more decisive, and more profound than is really the case. Notice here that the pseudocleft is far from being the only device that

accomplishes these rhetorical ends; Phil's discourse is full of stops and starts and redundancies that likewise serve to string out his, ultimately, rather simple idea. Finally, Phil is "thinking out loud". He needs to test his plan in front of an interlocutor to find out if it will hold water. He is creating interactional space to work out how to be unassailable.

The corporate milieu of this extract introduces another social factor, that of register. One context that favors the use of the pseudocleft is the kind of discourse in which the speaker is "holding forth" on a topic, often in the role of expert.³ This kind of talk is typical of what Martin Joos (1967) named the *consultative style*. In this register speakers are guarded, choosing their words carefully in the knowledge that they may later be quoted. Their discourse tends to be laid out in the form of arguments in a monologue. Since pseudoclefts also have an affinity for monologue and the framing of arguments, their frequent appearance in the consultative register is thereby accounted for.

In addition, a frequent strategic use of the pseudocleft is to *delay* a stretch of talk so as to provide a modal or stance-taking frame for the upcoming action (Hopper 2000, 2004; Günthner 1999, 2006). In the next extract, from the same conversation as (7) above, Marilyn and Roy and their friend Pete are fixing dinner together. Marilyn is trying to figure out how to make two pieces of fish serve three people.

- (22)
- | | | |
|----|----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | ROY: | ... I could eat .. o=ne of those. |
| 2 | MARILYN: | .. you could? |
| 3 | ROY: | well, |
| 4 | | .. [but I] won't. |
| 5 | PETE: | [@@] |
| 6 | | then [I guess] -- |
| 7 | ROY: | [I mean], |
| 8 | Marilyn: | okay. |
| 9 | PETE: | [divide] [it in half. |
| 10 | ROY: | [well don't] -- |
| 11 | Marilyn: | [then I'll] -- |
| 12 | ROY: | [y-] |
| 13 | | what you oughta do though Mar, |

14 ... cook all the fish.
 15 .. cause --
 16 we won't use it,
 17 .. if you don't cook it.

In lines 1-11, Roy, Marilyn, and Pete can be seen to be negotiating how to deal with the fish. Significantly, these utterances, and especially those in lines 9-11, are characterized by dysfluencies, cut-offs, and lack of resolution. It is at this point that Roy, in line 12, begins a directive to Marilyn, which is the **action** that his utterance in lines 13-16 is doing, the [y-] in line 12 presumably being the beginning of *you*. In line 13, he produces a *wh*-clause fragment, which we suggest serves here to alert Marilyn to the upcoming directive, to *cook all the fish*, whose effect is to “cut to the chase”, and conclude the negotiation. Our evidence that this is his agenda can be found in lines 15-17, where he provides a motivation (*cause we won't use it if you don't cook it*) for his directive.

Extract (23) illustrates this framing function of the pseudocleft with especial clarity:

(23) 1. SHARON: ... (TSK) (H) <Q Oh,
 2. well,
 3. .. **what you do with those third-graders**,
 4. you know,
 5. is you just like,
 6. (H) take them,
 7. and put them,
 8. you know,
 9. with one of the smarter fourth-graders,
 10. who's very [ver]bal,
 11. CAROLYN: [uh].
 12. SHARON: and .. and well-beha=ved.

The focal verb of Sharon’s turn is *put* in line (7); but *put* does not make its appearance until well into her turn. It is preceded in line 3 by a “pseudocleft” *wh*-phrase, which in this case is formulated so as to reintroduce the lexical noun phrase *those third graders*, mentioned earlier in the conversation. This noun phrase anticipates the pronoun direct objects of *take them* (line 6) and *put them* (line 7). After *those third graders* in line 3, the next two lines present, first, the filler

you know (line 4) and then in line 5, the *is* of the pseudocleft and the subject *you* of the next two verbs. The *take* of line 6 projects the *put* of line 7. (This anticipating use of the verb *take* in English has been analyzed in Hopper 2001, 2006). Line 8 is another instance of the filler *you know*, and lines 9 - 12 are devoted to the elaborate noun phrase *one of the smarter fourth-graders, who's very verbal, and .. well-behaved*. In this extract, then, the pseudocleft can be seen to be collaborating with other devices (the use of the “delayers” *you know* and *like*, the projecting use of *take*, the early introduction of the lexical direct object *those third graders*) to hold up, and thereby deliver a very strong focus on, the adverbial phrase *with one of the smarter fourth-graders, who's very verbal...and..and well behaved* in lines 9 - 12.

Sharon's turn in extract (23) brings to the surface another local use of the pseudocleft, one which meshes well with its broader, more interactional and strategic functions. The grammatical unit spanning lines 6-12 *distributes* lexical verbs and their noun arguments over multiple clauses and multiple prosodic units and thereby enables complexes of information to be delivered at a slower rate—“one clause at a time”, as Pawley and Syder (2000) put it. At a strategic level, as we have seen, the interactional function of the *wh*-clause is to project certain social actions. But it can also serve to (re)introduce NP arguments. Sharon uses the pseudocleft *what you do with those third-graders* both to prepare the advice given in lines 6-12 and to reintroduce the NP (*those third-graders*) that is the centerpiece of this advice. The pseudocleft permits her to establish *those third-graders* first, while she works out how she's going to present the advice. Moreover, the use of *take* in line 6 allows a third reference to the third-graders (in addition to the full lexical reference in line 3 and the anaphoric pronoun in line 7) to be added, thereby reinforcing the establishment of *those third-graders* as who the conversation has been about.

We have shown for “pseudoclefts” that their apparent “bi-clausality” is something of a chimera for everyday English interactions. Hopper (2001, 2004) suggests that this discrepancy between accounts in the literature of pseudocleft constructions and the actual facts of conversational English may be traced at least in part to analysts’ basing their accounts on example sentences reflecting intuitions about written English patterns. He further proposes a significant shift in our understanding of linguistic constructions for literate speakers of English, namely that, rather than view everyday conversational English “pseudocleft fragments” as a degenerate variety of a bi-clausal pseudocleft norm, linguists would be better advised to consider the written pseudocleft construction to be a normativized version of the *what*-fragment found pervasively in interaction.

We have suggested that a major factor in the normativization and persistent perception of bi-clausality in constructions such as the English pseudocleft is the strong projectability of the *wh*-component. That is, in interactional spoken English this construction routinely projects “more to come”. As we have seen, the “more” is most frequently not a clause but an indeterminate stretch of discourse. But in normative English, the construction has become standardized so that the “more” is a grammatical clause.

Intriguingly, much current research suggests that a very similar shift in our understanding of the sociocognitive foundations of constructions may be called for in the analysis of a number of other apparently bi-clausal constructions that have received attention in the grammatical literature.

2.2. *Extraposition*

One such construction is that which is known as English “extraposition”. In their interactional research, Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson (to appear, in press) note, following Biber et al. (1999), that constructions that have gone by the name “extraposition” involve an evaluative, epistemic or evidential framing of one stretch of talk by another. For example, in, the X portion both provides an epistemic frame for, and strongly projects, the Y portion:

(24) $\frac{\text{it turns out}}{\text{X}} \quad \frac{\text{as a spouse, I get in free.}}{\text{Y}}$

Their conversational data show unequivocally that the X expressions, the evaluative, epistemic, evidential framing expressions, are generally formulaic (what Biber et al. (1999: 989ff) call “lexical bundles”), and that they project “more to come”, i.e. the material that they will be framing.

Further, Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson’s interactional analysis proposes just the sort of shift in understanding that we outlined above for pseudoclefts. That is, rather than assume that the “extraposition” construction is a biclausal syntactic construction, they propose the syntactic “extraposition” construction emerges from a recurrent interactional format wherein X and Y are separate turn units. In this interactional format, X and Y are best characterized as being cognitively stored and interactionally used as two separate “pieces”, rather than as one bi-clausal constructional gestalt. This interactional format arises in contexts where the *it* or *that* in an assessment of the form X is perceived to be referentially indeterminate, as illustrated in (25):

(25) able to do that (Chin. dinner, 32 (13.45))

John: So that- that was really=
that was really nice. hh
 (0.5)
 I mean- **to be able to do that**=
 Ann: =and you don’t have any bad feelings.

Preceding this excerpt, John has just told the others about his having quit smoking. When he says *that was really nice* (X), he appears to be assessing his having succeeded in stopping smoking as *really nice*. However, this assessment is not taken up by anyone, and a longish pause ensues, suggesting that John might perceive that his recipients are having referential trouble with his *that*. So he adds *to be able to do that* (Y) as a separate prosodic unit, in other words, as an increment,⁴ making explicit what it is that's *nice*, and tying it to his assessment in X with dependent infinitival syntax. Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson suggest that it is interactional formats such as this which give rise to the more “syntacticized” construction known as “extraposition”.

The following extract, where Mi is talking about her flukish hole-in-one, illustrates the a separation between X and Y which also arises interactionally:

(26) Mi: I thought it was so funny, (.)⁵
that I got this hole-in-one.

Here Mi has been telling about how, though she is not an avid miniature golfer, she recently scored a hole-in-one at miniature golf. Again, she comes to hear her own assessment utterance *I thought it was so funny* (X) as potentially referentially troublesome, and after a very short pause, she makes explicit what it was that was *so funny* (Y).

These data show that an account of the syntactic biclausal “extraposition” construction must be informed by a consideration of what we might think of as “interactional extraposition”; from this vantage point, we can best understand the “extraposition” construction as a “syntacticized” version (presumably strongly reinforced by the written standard) of “interactional extraposition”, where the X assessment piece comes to strongly project the Y piece naming the assessable.

2.3. Wenn-clauses in German

Grammars of German describe a type of subordinate clause that translates into English as either a *when*-clause or an *if*-clause, as in this extract from *Spoken German* (Günthner 1999: 1):⁶

(27) Wenn ich den sehen würde, würde ich ihn direkt darauf ansprechen
if I him see were:to, would I him directly about:it speak:to
'If I were to see him, I would ask him directly about it.'

As (27) illustrates, the word order rule for the subordinate clause—the protasis—is that the finite verb or in this case, the [lexical verb + finite auxiliary] complex is placed at the end of the clause, with the finite element in the absolute final position. The following main clause—the apodosis—has the word order that is normal for main clauses: the finite auxiliary or finite lexical verb follows the first constituent (the “verb second” constraint, often symbolized as “XV word order”). This means that if the main clause is preceded by a dependent clause, as is the case here, the dependent clause counts as the first constituent, and so the first element in the main clause is the finite verb or auxiliary. The “inversion” of the finite verb or auxiliary and subject (here: *würde ich*) crucially marks the second clause as the apodosis of a tightly integrated SYNTACTIC construction.

While such syntactically biclausal pairs occur frequently in all kinds of discourse, it is also possible in everyday conversation—but less frequent in the written standard—to follow the conditional clause with a clause that does NOT display the inversion. In (28) and (29), the clauses that fail to show the inversion required in the standard language are boldfaced:

(28) (Günthner 1999:1)

Wenn du luscht hasch und=zeit
if you desire have and time
wir machen morgen en kindergottesdienst

we make tomorrow a children's:service

*in der lutherkirche
in the Lutheran:church*

'If you'd like to and have time, tomorrow we're having children's service in the Lutheran church.'

(29) (Günthner 1999:8)

*frollein machen se mir ne bloody mary.
miss make you for:me a bloody mary*

*und wenn se nich wissen wat dat ist,
and if you not know what that is*

das is *tomatensaft mit campari
that is tomato:juice with Campari*

'Miss, fix me a Bloody Mary. And if you don't know what that is, it's tomato juice with Campari.'

The main clause word order *wir machen* (instead of *machen wir*) in (28) and *das is* (instead of *is das*) in (29) is evidence that the protasis is not syntactically integrated with the apodosis. Instead the apodosis is presented as an independent main clause, with independent clause word order. While the phenomenon of main clause word order in the apodosis of a conditional has often been frowned upon as highly non-standard by German linguists, Günthner (1999) suggests, in an analysis based exclusively on transcribed conversational data, taking the phenomenon seriously. She proposes that:

“...the statement in the protasis does not contribute to the truth conditions in the apodosis, as is the case in prototypical conditional sentences, but rather presents the conditions under which the following utterance or speech act is *relevant* to the interlocutor.” (Günthner 1999: 5)⁷

Günthner illustrates her point with extracts such as the following (Günthner 1999: 11-12).

The speaker here is arguing that people are by nature active rather than lazy. She has commented that small children are always busy, and now extends her observation to the very old:

- (30) oder wenn man dann sieht was- rentner machen
or if one then sees what retirees do
- oder eh pensionäre; (-)
or er pensioners
- die sind** kein bisschen weniger beschäftigt
they are no bit less occupied
- 'or if you look at what retirees or uh pensioners do, they are not one bit less active.'

The subject-verb pair *die sind* 'they are' identifies the main clause as the unintegrated kind that functions, on this view, to make the relevance of the apodosis apparent to the listener.

Günthner's argument from the German *wenn*-clause supports our own observations about the supposed biclausality of such English constructions as the pseudocleft and extraposition. The integrated *wenn*-clause construction, consisting of a tightly organized protasis and apodosis pair linked by subordinate-main clause syntax, can be understood as a syntacticized version of an interactional pattern in which the speaker, in using a *wenn*-clause, does not set up an if-then condition for the apodosis, but rather invites the listener to interpret the *wenn*-clause protasis as providing what Günthner describes as relevance, in other words, as providing the evidential or epistemic grounds for claiming the state of affairs in the apodosis.⁸ By thus reframing syntactic constructions in interactional terms, we more appropriately situate them as rooted in and motivated by the real-time interactional formats that give rise to them (Hopper 2001, 2004; Schegloff 1996a).

3. Projection and biclausality

An interactionally based examination of such constructions as the English “pseudocleft” and “extraposition” and the use of German *wenn* calls into question earlier work that constructed explanations involving non-empirical cognitive concepts such as “presupposition”, “focus”, and “movement” operations.

What we propose for the grammatical formats we’re considering here is that the initial “pieces”, the *wh*-clause, the *it*-clause, and the *wenn*-clause, must be factored out and recognized as playing a key role in the strategic management of the current talk, rather than simply as parts of syntactic constructions. This role has been discussed by a number of researchers in terms of *projection*.⁹ As Auer (2005: 8-10) puts it, “projection is the adumbration (foreshadowing) of an action by a segment of talk.”

The research referred to in note 9 yields a characterization of projection as a complex of expectations, based on our social experience, that become, to varying extents, a property of routines that are repeated frequently. Projection involves what speakers have come to expect about what might happen next, educated guesses, based on massive experience in social interactions, about the courses of social action a given stretch of talk is heading towards performing.

Evidence for projectability is strong. From the literature, we briefly present just one major piece of evidence. Lerner (1991) called attention to a strong piece of evidence for projectability, what has come to be known as “joint utterance production” (Hayashi 2003, 2004; Hayashi and

Mori 1998; Helasvuo 2001; Lerner 1991, 1996; Ono and Thompson 1996; Szatrowski 2002 a, b.; Tanaka 1999.) Here are two extracts from our data:

- (31) 1. LENORE: his position is pretty uh,
2. ALINA: ... % (TSK) stable.
3. .. yeah.

Alina has been talking at some length about a mutual friend's current work situation; in line 1, Lenore is offering a candidate assessment summarizing his position in his company. She hesitates slightly after *pretty*, suggesting that she is embarking on a word search to complete her assessment. Based on what has transpired in this interaction so far and on her many years of experience with grammatical, prosodic, and social projectability, Alina can easily project how Lenore's utterance might well end, so she provides a candidate completion, *stable*, which is grammatically, prosodically, and socially precisely fitted to Lenore's utterance in line 1. Alina ratifies her own candidate completion to Lenore's projected candidate assessment in line 3. Lines 1 and 2 constitute, then, what Hayashi terms a "joint utterance production", a highly frequent practice which obviously relies heavily on projectability.

Here is a similar instance:

- (32) MILES: ... (H) are they ...teaching ..
any more lambada ... at .. uh,
JAMIE: ... school?
MILES: .. yeah.

Miles poses a question to Jamie, again pausing with an apparent word search. And again, Jamie, projecting what he was about to say, furnishes a candidate completion, which Miles then ratifies.

Clearly, a number of factors contribute to projectability, including all aspects of context and the intricate understandings the interlocutors have of what social work their talk is doing. But just as clearly, linguistic structure plays a crucial role. In particular, linguistic constructions are important because they are so heavily implicated in projectability.

With respect to our argument regarding apparent biclausality, as the research cited in note 9 has demonstrated, projectability is a key property of many biclausal constructions. Our point is that the three constructions we've examined here may not be best understood as biclausal. They have typically been analyzed in terms of a a normativized standard which finds minimal instantiation in ordinary talk-in-interaction. Instead, what the grammar of interactional data reveals are quite different types of grammatical patterns, whereby the first part projects not another clause, as has become the norm in more formal varieties of linguistic communication, but a complex of one or more social actions which is typically manifested as a span of talk of indeterminate length. In other words, constructions such as *what happens, it's nice*, or *wenn du luscht hasch* 'if you'd like to' are not well-accounted for by assuming them to be first parts of biclausal constructions, but are best accounted for by seeing them as relatively open-slot "prefabs"¹⁰ which strongly project certain types of social actions, whose grammatical manifestation takes many different forms and may not be limited to one clause in length (Hopper 2004).

As we noted, an important consequence of projection is thus that linguistic structure must be seen as inseparable from its temporal context. The theories of language structure that were developed in the 20th century, and which still underlie some descriptive practices, take as their basis the *detemporalization* of language (for further discussion, see Hopper 1992, Linell 2005, Schegloff 1996a). They seek motivations for constructions in "cognitive" or "pragmatic" factors that can be displayed simultaneously, without reference to the flow of time. Our view of "biclausality" calls into question alleged factors like "presupposition" and "focus" and replaces it with a temporal perspective in which constructions like the pseudocleft, rather than directly reflecting transient cognitive states, are among the routinized resources available to speakers to

organize talk in anticipation of upcoming verbal interactions in terms of context, temporality, and strategic on-line management of interactional contingencies (Auer 2005a, 2005b).

Our scrutiny of various grammatical patterns in interactional situations has made it clear that assumptions of “biclausality” may in many instances need to be re-thought. In addition to the grammatical constructions we have highlighted in this paper, whose initial pieces project further talk, a number of other constructions long assumed to consist of two “clauses”, often a “main” and a “subordinate” one, are now being seen to be more revealingly understood as being *au fond* monoclausal, involving projectability within a clausal unit. For example, several studies have questioned the biclausality of “complement” constructions in everyday conversational language (Englebretson 2003 for Indonesian, Huang 2003 for Mandarin, and Kärkkäinen 2004, Thompson 2002, Thompson and Mulac 1991a, b for English). Relative clause patterns have similarly been proposed to profoundly involve “monoclausality”; Englebretson (this volume) persuasively shows that “relative clause” does not adequately capture the role of what has long been analyzed as the “relativizer” *yang* in Indonesian. Fox and Thompson (2007), and Kidd et al. (2007) have shown that the most frequent English “relative clause constructions” in everyday interactions and in language acquisition in English are highly monoclausal.

Relatedly, Ford (1993, 2001a, b, 2004), Couper-Kuhlen (1996), Günthner (1993), and Schuetz (2001) have shown that cause clauses are often used in English and German playing social roles in interaction which necessitates factoring them out as independent syntactic elements apart from a biclausal [main clause /subordinate clause] syntactic construction: English *because*-clauses are regular formats for extensions of already finished turns in contexts where the next speaker hesitates or begins to disagree. In (33), for example, A begins to add a *because*-clause when a pause has developed at a point where the recipient, R, could have supplied a response:

- (33) A: .hhh but the thing is, the- they might get their (0.2)
the project cancelled.
→ (0.2)
→ A: because [(they)
R: [What this (.) war project?=
→ A: =Yeah because hhh ABC got bought out?
(0.6)
A: Did you hear about that?=
R: =Yeah,
A: .hhh An' that they're real tight wads? (Ford 1993)

After A's first turn (at the first arrow), R could respond but does not do so immediately. It is after this gap that A begins a *because*-clause extension of his turn. B overlaps A's first *because* with a question, *What this war project?*, through which he shows that A's original turn was indeed problematic. *Because* clauses may thus introduce accounts following turns which, due to the quality of recipient response (or lack of response), might be interpreted as unsuccessful if not appended with some turn extension. Such *because*-clauses must be considered products of interaction rather than only the products of a single speaker's syntactic construction.

Similarly, based on previous research showing accounts to be regular components of disagreeing turns (Sacks 1987, Pomerantz 1984), *because*-clauses have also been found to do the specific work of delivering the account portions of disaffiliating responses.¹¹ In (34), in line 4, R delivers a disaffiliative response to A's question in line 1, and R then provides an account in line 8:

- (34) 1 A: Did you get your (.) your first pay check from it?
2 (.)
3 A: [at least?
4 R: [NO: I won't get that for a couple weeks yet.=
5 A: Oh,
6 (.)
7 A: [Well
8→R: ['cause it takes a long time.
9 A: At least it's in the bank,
10 (0.5)
11 R: Yeah it will be.
12 (0.4)
13 R: It will be. Ford (1993)

This research thus further supports our point that apparently biclausal constructions (in this case [a main clause/*because*-clause syntactic combination]) may have properties strongly indicative of an analysis which factors out the apparent “subordinate” clause and recognizes it as an interactional unit of its own, performing a unique social function, and having concomitant prosodic characteristics. In each case, these “subordinate clauses” have become sedimented as pieces of biclausal constructions in more-formal, normative uses of language, but their essence as syntactic units working independently of any fixed syntactic biclausal pair can only be seen with a close examination of their roles in everyday interactional settings.

When we consider grammar in the context of real-time social interaction, then, a vastly different picture emerges of its actual nature. The structural patterns we have been taking to be “syntax”, as manifested in everyday talk, call for a grammatical analysis rooted in an understanding of all the factors underlying the use of language to accomplish social work among real people interacting with each other in real time, informed by lifetimes of experience in social interaction.

4. Conclusions

From the research of interactional linguists into the use of three constructions in everyday conversations, two major findings have emerged. First, each of these constructions can be more realistically understood and analyzed in terms of real-time social activities than in terms of more static “information-status” concepts like “presupposition” and “focus”, or even “relevance”.

Second, each of these three constructions, and others like them, are best understood as formulaic pieces deployed by speakers for the purpose of managing interactive discourse. This provides an empirical account for why they are recurrently found with a number of heretofore unnoticed restrictions on the grammatical and prosodic form they take, as well as for their strongly projective properties.

Further, and importantly, the data do not support viewing these pieces as degenerate versions of more complex constructions. They support instead quite the opposite view, understanding the constructions of literate language as *NORMATIVIZED AND EXTENDED VERSIONS* of the formulas of spoken language. The constructions of written language manifest greater compactness and a higher degree of syntactic integration than the more fragmentary and paratactic arrangement of spoken utterances. The counterpart in spoken conversation of the strict syntactic biclausality that we take as the norm in grammatical studies is a more or less formulaic segment of speech that serves to project an upcoming region of discourse combined with a subsequent stretch of text of indeterminate length that responds to the projection. The higher degree of syntactic integration that we find in written biclausal constructions can be seen as a *REFORMULATION* of the [initial formula/projected text] as a [subordinate clause/main clause] pair in conformity to what have evolved as the normative structural requirements of clauses in the written language.

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¹ Unless otherwise noted, our extracts are drawn from the Corpus of Spoken American English (Du Bois et al. 2005); transcription follows Du Bois et al. (1993). Noteworthy for our analysis are these conventions:

-
- single line : intonation unit
 - punctuation indicates prosodic transitional continuity
 - = : length

² Extracts (16) and (17) are from the Cobuild corpus (Collins Birmingham University International Linguistic Database). This corpus does not aim to represent spoken language in a close transcription. The convention (X) refers to material that could not be understood from the tape.

³ The ‘expert/novice’ roles are also revealed in part by pseudoclefts in the discussion among three elementary school teachers, as exemplified in (23).

⁴ For discussion of increments, please refer to Ford et al. (2002) and Ono/Couper-Kuhlen (to appear) and references cited there.

⁵ Extract (26) is transcribed according to the GAT transcription system (Couper-Kuhlen et al. (1998)).

⁶ English glosses and translations of German extracts and English translations of citations are by the authors of the present article.

⁷ “...dass die Aussage in der Protasis keinen Beitrag zu den Wahrheitsbedingungen in der Apodosis macht—wie bei prototypischen Konditionalsätzen der Fall,—sondern die Bedingungen angibt, unter denen die folgende Äusserung bzw. Sprechhandlung für das Gegenüber relevant ist.”

⁸ Such clause combinations have sometimes been discussed as “speech act adverbials”, wherein the adverbial clause motivates not the main clause itself, but the grounds upon which a speaker has the authority to claim the main clause (Thompson and Longacre 1985, Couper-Kuhlen 1996).

⁹ See, e.g., Auer 1996, 2005; Couper-Kuhlen 1996, 2004; Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson 2000, 2005; Couper-Kuhlen and Ford 2004; Ford 2000, 2001a, b, 2004; Ford and Thompson 1996; Fox 2001; Hayashi 2003, 2004; Helasvuo 2001; Liddicoat 2004; Ono and Thompson 1995, 1996; Selting 2001; Steensig 2001; Streeck 1995; Szatrowski 2002a, b; Tanaka 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Tao 2003; Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen 2005; and Schulze-Wenck 2005.

¹⁰ We adopt this term from Erman and Warren (2000).

¹¹ Studies of Japanese causal connectives has also pointed to interactional functions comparable to those found for English (Ford and Mori 1994 and Mori 1999a, 1999).

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