27 Speaking and Writing English

JIM MILLER AND ANDREEA S. CALUDE

27.1 Introduction

The study of spoken English is exciting, challenging, and controversial: exciting, because new and unexpected constructions keep turning up; challenging, because some syntactic constructions of spoken language resist analysis; controversial, because not all researchers recognize the study of spoken language as legitimate, far less its results. The very title of this chapter is controversial, since spoken language *tout court* does not differ from written language and analysts recognize genres or dimensions applying to both speech and writing (see Section 27.5). Nonetheless, spontaneous spoken language (Miller Weinert 1998) or conversation (Greenbaum and Nelson 1995a) is very different from other genres and that is the focus of this chapter.

The contrast between spoken and written language has long interested linguists, particularly linguists of the Prague School, who from the 1930s on have investigated the characteristics and functions of speech and writing. Teachers of English as a second language have always been aware that learners do not learn to *speak* like natives by reading books. Scholars pondering the relationship between language and society (including literacy) have to deal with spoken and written language. In societies with a standard and non-standard language, typically only the standard has an elaborated written variety; a central issue is the effect of written language on the spontaneous speech of individuals with long exposure to formal education.

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Despite the interest, it is only in the past 30 years that the detailed and accurate study of spoken language has become possible through new technology: genuinely portable cassette recorders, small but high-fidelity microphones, foot controls enabling the analyst to listen many times to particular portions of a recording. Thanks to computers and concordance programs, analysts can quickly and accurately retrieve data from digitized transcriptions. Interestingly, much of the detailed work on spoken language has been done by investigators of non-standard varieties; little microanalysis has been carried out on spoken standard English in the United Kingdom, and what counts as spoken standard English is not clear (see Section 27.8).

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Spoken language is more fundamental than written language; it appeared before written language in the general evolution of human beings; children acquire it before they learn to read and write, and all the societies with a known history had spoken language before they had writing. What is coming out of current and ongoing research with modern technology is that spontaneous spoken language is far more different from (formal) written language than had been suspected and every area of language is affected—morphology, phrase and clause syntax, and the organization of discourse.

The Handbook of English Linguistics, Second Edition. Edited by Bas Aarts, April McMahon and Lars Hinrichs.

27.2 Content of the Chapter

Since most published work on English deal with the written language, this chapter takes the structures and functions of written English merely as a point of orientation and focuses on spontaneous or unplanned spoken English. Section 27.3 outlines the dimensions established by Biber which demonstrate that there is no boundary dividing all spoken language from all written language. It points out that, Biber notwithstanding, unplanned speech is a distinctive genre. Section 27.4 demonstrates the different typical constructions of spoken and written English, drawing on the quantitative analyses in Biber et al. (1999), Bowie and Aarts (2006), Calude (2008), D'Arcy (2014), Greenbaum and Nelson (1995b), Guz (2015), Kaltenböck (2005), Macaulay (1991), Miller and Weinert (1998), and Thompson (1988). Section 27.5 deals with objections to any analysis of unplanned speech. Sections 27.6.1 and 27.6.2 cover two general properties of unplanned speech, the irrelevance of the sentence and unintegrated syntax, while Section 27.6.3 sketches the salient features of discourse organization in unplanned speech. Section 27.7 briefly discusses major problems emerging from recent work on unplanned speech: what constructions are non-standard and the fact that some constructions require different analyses in unplanned speech and planned writing. The conclusion in Section 27.8 lists areas of research for which the study of unplanned speech has important implications.

27.3 Genres and Dimensions

It is essential to begin by making clear what data are under analysis. The central fact is that there is no single boundary dividing all spoken texts from all written texts. Different genres must be recognized, such as conversation, news broadcasts, conversation, and academic texts as used by Biber et al. (1999). There is space here to discuss only one recent and important development in the study of genres. Abandoning the usual genres, Biber (1988) established six dimensions cutting across speech and writing, and six sets of properties correlating positively or negatively with certain major properties of texts and their producers. For example, Dimension 1 has to do with involved versus informational production, that is, whether the text-producer is participating in face-to-face conversation with instant online production or writing carefully edited texts conveying carefully organized information; Dimension 3 has to do with explicit versus situation-dependent reference, that is, with whether the text-producer is setting out all the information in detail or leaving the listener/reader to fill in details from context.

Grammatical properties that correlate positively with Dimension 1 are, in descending order of weighting, adverbial clauses of reason and cause (*Do you know the way there cos I do*), propositional relative clauses (*Julia has resigned, which I think is unwarranted*), and adverbial clauses of condition and Wh-complements (*I believed what she told me*). Grammatical properties that correlate negatively, that is, which are not found in unplanned speech, are prepositional phrases, attributive adjectives, past participial phrases, and present participial phrases. The positive correlations match the number and type of adverbial clauses found by Miller and Weinert and the occurrence of complement clauses; the negative correlations match the types of noun phrases (NPs) listed in Table 27.1. Biber (1988, pp. 104–108) interprets the properties as reflecting the strategies adopted by speakers conveying a lot of information in unplanned speech: speakers avoid compressed, highly integrated structures, such as participial phrases, which are cognitively expensive.

Grammatical properties correlating positively with Dimension 3 are Wh-relative clauses in object positions (*the house which we have bought*), relative clauses introduced by preposition + Wh (*the house in which we are going to live*), Wh-relative clauses in subject position (*the people who sold us the house removed all the light fittings*), phrasal coordination

Table 27.1 Noun phrases in different types of text.

	Adjective + noun	*Noun + prepositional phrase*	*Noun + relative clause*	*Complex noun phrase*
	% of noun phrases belonging to each type			
Conversation (Miller and Weinert)	5.6 *a big adventure*	6.6 *the book on the table*	3.2 *the book that I liked*	0 *a new proposal from the agency which is likely to be rejected*
Letters to newspaper	19.7	18.8	3	3 *a rigorous and valid examination on applied economics that consists of three papers*

(*Sue and Sheena*, as opposed to *Sue bought a car and Sheena sold her motorbike*, which is an example of clause coordination), and nominalizations, that is, words ending in *-ity*, *-ment*, *-ness*, and *-tion*. Biber interprets these properties as reflecting referential explicitness, which is typically connected with precise writing but also with prepared spoken texts such as lectures and speeches.

In spite of the complexities outlined above, researchers continue to find spontaneous or unplanned speech very different from other types of text. Picking up the key points made above, however, we recognize that the key distinction is not speech versus writing but planned versus unplanned production of speech and writing. Planned production includes speech based on writing, such as lecturing, giving a sermon, and delivering a prepared speech. Unplanned production includes conversation, extempore narration, and impromptu discussion, but also writing activities such as composing personal e-mails or personal letters. Some speech production is semi-planned; for example, speakers narrating events which they have described previously and for which they have in memory ready-made phrases and clauses.

Unplanned spoken language has essential properties which determine certain characteristics of spoken texts. Spontaneous speech

i. is produced in real time with little or no planning and editing (many written texts are planned and edited);
ii. is subject to the limitations of short-term memory;
iii. is typically produced by people talking face to face;
iv. involves the use of pitch, amplitude, rhythm, and voice-quality;
v. is accompanied by gestures, eye-gaze, facial expressions, and body postures, all of which signal information.

The above properties engender certain linguistic properties:

a. A small quantity of information is assigned to each phrase and clause.
b. Speakers do embed clauses inside other clauses, but a typical pattern is one in which clauses are merely adjacent.
c. The syntax is less integrated than the syntax of planned writing.
d. Phrases contain fewer words and clauses contain fewer phrases.
e. The range of vocabulary, particularly Greco-Latinate, is less than in planned writing.

In addition:

f. Constructions occur in unplanned speech which are not used in writing, and vice-versa.
g. The organization of discourse involves a number of devices that are absent or infrequent in writing.

27.4 Differences Between Spontaneous Speech and Writing

This section discusses the general grammatical properties that distinguish unplanned speech from other types of text. The following sections look at particular properties, the abandonment of sentences, and the unintegrated syntax of unplanned speech.

27.4.1 Settings, Topics, and Informants

Consider (1) and (2).

(1) New York's **an incredible place** we went through the Bowery … and we had to keep the windows locked through there but it's **an incredible city** it's **mind-boggling** and the negroes are **fantastic** the clothes they wear they are **so magnificently turned out** flamboyancy that they just seem to carry off I was very impressed with the way that they dressed … it's **a marvelous city**.
(2) However defective our knowledge may be, we have ample evidence to show that great empires rose and fell in India, and that, as in religion, art, literature and social life, so in political organization, India produced her own system, distinctive in its strength and weakness.

(1) and (2) illustrate some of the differences between unplanned speech and planned writing. (1) is a narrative from spontaneous conversation and (2) is from Basham's *The Wonder That Was India*. (1) consists of a series of short main clauses. There is one subordinate clause, a contact relative clause, in the noun phrase *the way that they dressed*. Its structure is simple, a pronoun subject and an intransitive verb. The noun phrases are simple too; mostly pronouns or article + noun, and two with an adjective, *incredible*. There is a complex noun phrase, *flamboyancy that they just seem to carry off*, but it stands on its own and is not part of a clause.

(2) is typical of planned writing. It has three subordinate clauses—*however … may be*, *that great … India*, *that … weakness*—and a main clause, *we have … weakness*. In the first subordinate clause, the complement of *be*, *however defective*, is untypical of speech, where we would expect *no matter how defective*. The third subordinate clause contains a complex correlative construction, *as … life*, *so … organization*, quite untypical of planned speech, never mind unplanned. The passage contains a very complex noun phrase—*her own system*, *distinctive … weakness*, a type unknown in unplanned speech.

Are the differences between these texts typical of the differences between unplanned speech and writing? Early investigations produced different answers. Some analysts reported that spoken discourse had significantly more subordination, elaboration of syntax, and adverbs. Others reported that written narratives contained more subordinate constructions than spoken narratives but fewer coordinate constructions. Halliday (1989, pp. 76–91) proposed that written language has compact but simple syntax loaded with lexical items, whereas spoken language has intricate syntactic structure with many subordinate clauses but a small number of lexical items per clause. This structural difference stems, at least in

part, because while "the written sentence knows where it's going when it starts, the spoken clause complex does not" (Halliday 2016, p. 16).

Beaman (1984, pp. 76–91) resolved the contradictions by suggesting that the different results reflected differences in formality (setting, topic, and participants). These indeed seem to be part of the answer. One study concluding that spoken language has complex syntax was based on interviews with university students about school and university and essays about the students' life-plans. In the interactions, figures of authority, academics, interviewed people of junior status, students, in an institutional setting. They focused on one topic and invited narrative monologues from the students. These are ideal conditions for complex syntax because narrators have the floor in a formal setting and can concentrate on the narrative without interruptions.

Another factor is amount of exposure to formal written texts. The people with most exposure to writing experiences are typically (but not necessarily) those with the longest exposure to formal education; significantly, the abovementioned study analyzed the language of speakers who had successfully undergone a long process of formal education to reach university. Halliday's (1989) examples of speech have complex syntax and vocabulary and sound very typical of speakers in command of written English (see Miller and Weinert 1998, pp. 18–20) Unfortunately, samples of speakers have usually been organized with respect to gender, age, and social class, but not length and type of formal education or reading habits. The problem may be potentially alleviated by taking into account speakers' occupation, as can be done with data from the Spoken BNC2014 corpus (Love et al. 2017), see, for instance, recent research using these data in the *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* (volume 22, issue 3), including differences in demonstrative cleft use across speaker occupation (Calude 2017). But the main issues of reading habits and the effect of education still stand because people's occupations do not always reflect their education background perfectly.

A third factor is experience of unplanned speaking in formal situations. Consider the use of propositional relative clauses such as *The noise went on all night, which we thought outrageous*. Millard (2003), analyzing transcripts of radio discussions and phone-in programs, found that presenters and regular members of discussion panels produced ten such relative clauses, but that non-regular members produced none. Miller and Weinert (1989) found none, nor did they find non-restrictive relative clauses such as *the girl, who acted very courageously, was praised by the police*. In Millard's data, non-restrictive relative clauses were produced by regular speakers and presenters. Finegan and Biber (1994, pp. 337–338) sum up the view adopted here: speakers who engage in literate activities more often tend to use complex "literate" syntax and vocabulary more often in unplanned speech, and vice versa for speakers who do not engage often in literate activities.

27.4.2 Morphology

Derivational morphology is of direct relevance to the issue of planned and unplanned speech. English has a very large stock of lexical items built from Greco-Latinate roots which occur more frequently in planned texts, especially formal written texts but also in speeches, news broadcasts, and academic discourse. They are much less frequent in unplanned speech. Even Biber, working on conversations involving middle-class, middle-aged, university-educated males (1986, p. 389 n. 4), found that abstract nouns ending in *tion*, *-ity* were relatively infrequent. Similarly, in a different corpus of speech from a wider sample of speakers, Biber et al. (1999) found that in conversation *-tion* occurred around 500 times per million words; the others occurred less frequently. *-tion* was three times as frequent in fiction, nine times as frequent in news broadcasts, and 18 times as frequent in academic texts. *-ity* was twice as frequent in fiction, six times as frequent in news broadcasts, and ten times as frequent in academic prose. A similar pattern held for compound nouns. D'Arcy (2014) found that

disyllabic adjectives which show consistent variation between synthetic and analytic patterns (*happier* vs. *more happy*) in various varieties of written English are simply absent from spoken vernacular (NZ) English because the kinds of adjectives likely to exhibit this type of variation are simply not used in the vernacular.

27.4.3 Syntax

Many syntactic constructions are used both in speech and writing but there are significant differences. There are constructions typical of speech but not writing and excluded from copyedited written text. The constructions that occur in both speech and writing often differ in complexity, frequency of occurrence, function, and position. The most controversial question is whether spontaneous speech can be analyzed as having sentences. This is discussed in Section 27.5.

27.4.3.1 Noun Phrases

Judgments of complexity are based on two properties: the number of words in a phrase and phrases in a clause, and the depth of embedding. Noun phrases provide good illustrations. Miller and Weinert (1998, p. 146) found that, in a monologue sample, 50% of the noun phrases consisted of a pronoun and other 7% consisted of a single non-pronominal word. When NPs consisting only of a numeral (*give me two please*) or a quantifier (*I'd like more*) were counted, the percentage of one-word NPs rose to 64. Few NPs contained other constituents, as shown in Table 27.1. Note the different percentages found in letters to a quality newspaper (Miller and Weinert 1998, p. 154).

Counting types of NPs is not sufficient, where they occur in clauses is also important. The main tendency is clear: in subject position, speakers use simple NPs. In Thompson's (1988) data, the subject NPs of transitive clauses did not have adjectives, although some subject NPs of intransitive clauses did. Likewise, in the monologue analyzed by Miller and Weinert, no adjectives occurred in subject NPs. This pattern accords with the findings of Crystal (1979, p. 164) working on conversations in the Survey of English Usage (later the London-Lund Corpus). He found that 77% of the clauses had as subject a pronoun or an empty word such as *it* and *there*. The pattern is confirmed in Biber et al. (1999, pp. 235–237). Aarts and Wallis (2014) also find that noun complexity is reduced in spoken language, but their results point to another crucial factor in this equation: the genre of speech investigated. Some speech genres, private dialogue genres in particular, show greater similarity to the conversation data analyzed by Miller and Weinert (1998) than others.

Schilk and Schaub (2016) investigate different types of noun phrase patterns across four different text types (academic written prose in the humanities, social letters, unscripted speeches, and conversation) in five regional English varieties using the International Corpus of English (ICE) Corpora (ICE-Canada, ICE-Hong Kong, ICE-India, ICE-Jamaica, and ICE-Singapore). They build regression models to test various predictors of noun phrase complexity; where complexity is gradient and defined on a four-tiered scale. They find that conversation transcripts involve noun phrases with the lowest complexity, followed by interactional written texts (social letters), followed by unscripted speeches, and, finally, by academic texts. Their results point to informational content as being another dimension to structural considerations, rather than a strict spoken/written distinction.

27.4.3.2 Clause Constructions

Certain clause constructions are quite untypical of spontaneous speech and do not occur in the data of Miller and Weinert. Examples are shown in Table 27.2.

Table 27.2 Constructions typical of writing and not attested in the spontaneous spoken data of Miller and Weinert.

Type of construction	
Gapping	Jim washed, and Margaret dried, the dishes
Accusative and infinitive	We consider her to be the best candidate
Possessive gerund	His having resigned before he even took up the post astonished everyone
Free participle	Browsing in the bookshop, I came across a book on Peter the Great
Participial phrase	The book rejected by the publisher, the plane sitting on the runway at Heathrow
Infinitive as clause subject	To see Naples and die would be pretty stupid
Gerund as clause subject	Skiing in summer is difficult

Table 27.3 Types of relative clauses in a sample of the spontaneous spoken data of Miller and Weinert.

Type of relative clause	*Number*	*Example*
Wh	0	the book which we gave her the girl who phoned
Th	35	the house that they bought the student that complained
Contact	37	the house they bought the town they live in
Non-restrictive	0	We met her brother, who plays golf. [She has only one brother. Incidentally, he plays golf.] (Compare the restrictive relative clause, We met her brother who plays golf. [She has several brothers; we met the golf-playing one.])
Whom, whose	0	the lawyer whom we know the friend whose car we bought

Gerunds and infinitives occurred but only very simple ones: *I like skiing* and *I love to go skiing*. Biber et al. (1999, p. 754) found that infinitives and gerunds are relatively rare in conversation and most common in fiction, followed by news broadcasts and academic prose.

Other constructions, such as relative clauses, occur in speech and writing but with different frequencies and in partly different forms, as shown in Table 27.3.

Macaulay (1991, p. 64) comments that in his middle-class interviews 20% of the relative clauses are non-restrictive, but only 5% in the working-class interviews. (Non-restrictive relative clauses are typical of planned writing and there is some connection between social class and length of formal education.) Biber et al. (1999, p. 610) found that contact relative clauses were proportionately most common in conversation. Biber et al. found a miniscule number of relative clauses with *whom* and even fewer with *whose*. Other differences concern the use of shadow or resumptive pronouns and the occurrence of subject gaps. These are discussed in Section 27.6 below.

Table 27.4 Percentage of finite subordinate clauses in different text-types.

Conversation	*Fiction*	*Quality newspaper*	*Semi-academic journal*
25	26	41	45

Source: From Miller and Weinert (1998).

Table 27.5 Number of finite adverbial clauses per million words.

Conversation	*Fiction*	*News*	*Academic prose*
11 000	10 500	7500	6300

Source: Biber et al. 1999.

Miller and Weinert (1998, p. 93) found more complement clauses than relative clauses in their conversational data. Sixty-six percent of the former were contact complement clauses. Biber et al. (1999) do not provide directly comparable figures but they do comment that post-predicate *that* clauses are particularly common in conversation (*It is essential that this is done immediately* as opposed to *That this be done immediately is essential*). Examples such as the latter are also absent from the conversational data of Miller and Weinert. The ratios of finite subordinate clauses to the total number of finite clauses in samples of speech and writing show interesting patterns. See Table 27.4.

Finite adverbial clauses present a complex pattern. Thompson (1985) carried out a study of finite and non-finite adverbial clauses and non-restrictive relative clauses in databases of informal speech, informal writing, and formal writing. (Both types of clause are peripheral, i.e., not embedded in other constituents but are loosely attached to their host clause.) Thompson found that informal speech had the highest proportion of finite adverbial clauses. Greenbaum and Nelson (1995b, p. 186) found a lower percentage of finite adverbial clauses in spoken English, a higher percentage in informal written texts, and the highest in formal written texts, but whereas they analyzed monologues, broadcast discussions, and conversation, Thompson confined herself to monologues. Biber et al. (1999, p. 826) also found that finite adverbial clauses were (marginally) more frequent in conversation. See Table 27.5.

Looking at different types of adverbial clauses, they found that in conversation the most frequent types of finite adverbial clauses were condition, reason/cause, and time in decreasing order of frequency; Miller and Weinert (1998, p. 93) found the same types but in reverse order of frequency. Clauses of concession, result, purpose, and manner are much less frequent in the data of Biber et al. and Miller and Weinert found no adverbial clauses of concession at all.

Even within what looks to be the same construction type, there may be subtle differences in use across speech and writing genres. Kaltenböck (2005) analyzed *it*-extraposed constructions and found that these exhibit two rather distinct types: (1) the more prototypical type involving GIVEN-then-NEW information structuring, in which the extraposed clause encodes NEW information, and (2) a less prototypical type of *it*-extraposition, in which the extraposed clause is GIVEN rendering the information flow in the construction as GIVEN-then-NEW. It is the latter and less prototypical type of *it*-extraposition that Kaltenböck finds in spoken language, with the former and more prototypical type occurring in writing. The two construction sub-types also have distinct functions; the construction in speech favors urgency-first, whereas the written language type follows the end-weight principle, structuring information favoring the ease of cognitive pressures.

27.5 Can Unplanned Speech be Analyzed?

In spite of the word, phrase, and clause constructions described above, the study of unplanned speech is not uncontroversial. The very possibility of studying spoken language has been called into question. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, pp. 11–12)—henceforth H&P—invoke the many disfluencies in conversation. By contrast, Labov (1972 p. 203) described as myth the ungrammaticality of everyday speech, also reiterated up by Halliday (2016, p. 13). Labov had to edit only 10% of the utterances produced by his sample of non-academic speakers discussing familiar subjects, which matches the experience of Miller and Weinert (1998, p. 383) with their conversation data. Academics discussing complex topics in complex language produce far more disfluent utterances.

H&P worry that word sequences resulting from slips might be wrongly taken to represent grammatical facts and that actual utterances reflect only imperfectly "the system that defines the spoken version of the language." This worry is met by the rules of fieldwork. Single examples are treated with caution until the analyst collects more examples and checks the ~~data~~ against the findings of other analysts (~~see the salutary lesson of *sat* and *stood* below~~). A final check is whether a construction occurs in writing that is unplanned because it is produced within strict time limits or is very informal, for example, personal letters, e-mails, and even newspaper reports and articles, which are produced to deadlines and without the rigorous sub-editing of pre-computer days. Many constructions begin life confined to spoken language but make their way into writing, particularly texts that are not subject to the scrutiny of teachers and publishers' editors. As an example, H&P (2002, p. 1069) say that the example *It is unreasonable what she suggests* is incorrect, but the authors have noted the same construction, as in *It's unfair what they're doing to the union*, in conversation, radio discussions, and examination scripts. Copy-editors would exclude it, but in speech it is very common. Because spoken language is not "self-conscious" or "self-monitored" (Halliday 2016, p. 12), it enables the potential for innovation to flourish, making it an ideal place to look at where language change is going.

Halliday (1989) observes that the production of written language also presents disfluencies—restarts, repetitions, and anacolutha. Editorial tidying-up removes them, but they can be seen in, for example, handwritten personal letters and examination scripts. Analysts of written language also have to deal with unique examples, particularly of lexical items; they ensure the item is clearly labeled with its technical term, *hapax legomenon*. One-off syntactic structures are relegated to footnotes in reference grammars or annotated editions of literary texts.

27.6 General Syntactic and Discourse Properties of Unplanned Speech

27.6.1 Sentences and Clauses

Sentences are the traditional basic unit of syntax. Many analysts propose to keep sentences not only for the analysis of written language but to analyze spoken language as consisting of clauses and combinations of clauses, or "clause clusters," to use the term introduced by Halliday (1989).

There are three major reasons why sentences are not suited to the analysis of spoken language. One is that speakers do not share intuitions about what counts as sentences in spoken language. Wackernagel-Jolles (1971) found that senior undergraduate students listening to a recording and provided with an unpunctuated transcript of the words did not agree on sentence boundaries; for one narrative they agreed that 29 sentences were possible but agreed on final boundaries for only six.

Another is that there are no reliable criteria for recognizing sentences. Speakers do not always pause between one putative sentence and the next, and intonation contours may include more than one main clause. Finally, speakers typically produce loosely connected phrases and clauses unlike the neat hierarchical structures associated with formal written language and courses in syntax. Indeed, utterances may consist of fragments of clauses but be perfectly interpretable; they belong to a particular text and context which support the interpretation.

Miller and Weinert (1998, chapter 2) observe that what counts as a text sentence varies from one language culture to another and has varied from one century to another in English. They point out that text sentences do not correspond neatly to the system sentences of linguists, system sentences being units within which analysts can handle constituent structure and dependency relations. In any case, the traditional tests for constituent structure apply inside single clauses, and while a few dependency relations cross clause boundaries, the densest networks of dependency relations occur within single clauses. The abandonment of the sentence for the analysis of spontaneous speech seems only sensible.

Nonetheless, some analysts remain neutral or change their mind. Crystal (1979, p. 159) concluded strongly in favor of the clause and against the sentence for spoken language but later (Crystal 1995, pp. 214–215) he asserted that we do speak in sentences but that speech and writing differ in sentence organization. McCarthy (1998, pp. 79–82) points to various problems: utterances interpretable as the realization of sentences but produced by two or more speakers; clauses introduced by *cos* or *if* which do not modify a main clause and function like main clauses; the general absence of well-formed sentences from spoken discourse. He does not explicitly abandon the sentence but does declare that grammar becomes discourse when sentence-based units of description fail to account for the facts, and he does focus on discourse.

Chafe (1994, pp. 139–145) regards sentences as viable for spoken language but redefines them as corresponding more to short paragraphs. Central to this view are prototypical intonation units consisting of a single coherent intonation contour, possibly followed by a pause and stretching over a maximum of six words. These contours and sequences of words may correspond to clauses, phrases, or simply fragments of syntax. Each intonation contour encompasses one piece of information. However, speakers regularly deal with conglomerates of information, which Chafe calls "centers of interest"; they use one intonation pattern to signal that a given conglomerate has not been completed and another pattern to signal that it has. Chafe identifies the latter pattern with sentence-final intonation.

Greenbaum and Nelson (1995a, p. 5) reject Chafe's analysis because the recognition of centers of interest is subjective and unreliable. Presumably Chafe would counter that what is crucial is the pattern of intonation signaling completion of a given chunk of utterance, but his sentences nonetheless correspond to paragraphs. The proponents of clauses claim that clauses can be recognized by picking out verbs (finite or non-finite) and their modifiers.

Going one step further in granularity, Bowie and Aarts (2016) propose that clausal fragments are legitimate units of analysis of spoken language and provide pragmatic and grammatical criteria for identifying these (see pp. 261–263). The debate over sentences and spoken language will continue, ~~as will~~ as well as over the best unit of analysis in this type of language.

27.6.2 *Integrated and Unintegrated Syntax*

The syntax of formal written language is said to be integrated while that of spontaneous spoken language is unintegrated. Consider the following examples.

(3) If you've got some eggs about whose age you are not sure here's a useful test.
(4) if you've got some eggs you're not sure about their age here's a useful test (cookery program on New Zealand television).

In (3), the noun *eggs* is modified by the relative clause *about whose age you are not sure*. *About whose age* is the complement of *sure* but is at the front of the clause. The relative pronoun *whose* connects the relative clause to *eggs*. Crucially, the relative clause immediately follows the head noun *eggs* and is held to be embedded; that is, in process terms, the basic noun phrase is *some eggs*, the direct object of *'ve got*. Into that noun phrase is inserted the relative clause.

In (4), the relative clause is replaced by *you're not sure about their age*. This looks like a main clause; there is no relative pronoun and the clause is linked to *eggs* by the personal possessive pronoun *their*. *About their age* is the complement of *sure*, which it follows, as is normal for adjective complements in main clauses. All the evidence indicates that *you're not sure about their age* is a main clause which is adjacent to *some eggs* but not embedded in it. The differences are summed up by saying that the second clause is integrated into the noun phrase in (3) but not in (4).

(5) is an example of a relative clause embedded in a noun phrase but with no overt pronoun linking it to the head noun.

(5) I only wear shoes that I'm not thrown forward on my toes (BBC radio discussion).

The relative clause is *that I'm not thrown forward on my toes*. It modifies the head noun *shoes* and is linked to it by the complementizer *that*. But inside the relative clause there is no Wh-pronoun or even an ordinary pronoun linking with *shoes*. A formal written English equivalent is *shoes by which I am not thrown forward on my toes* and a possible spoken version is *shoes that I'm not thrown forward on my toes by them*. In the former *which* provides the link, in the latter *them*.

Another type of integrated construction is in (6).

(6) Only Nato forces stand between what that man is doing and a huge tragedy.

The integrated syntax lies in the complement of *between*. The noun phrase [*what* [*that man is doing Ø*]] is coordinated with the noun phrase *a huge tragedy*. The actual spoken version of (6), from a BBC radio discussion, is in (7).

(7) Only Nato forces stand between that man what he's doing and a huge tragedy.

In (7), the basic complement of *between* is *that man and a huge tragedy*. Interpolated between the two noun phrases is the free relative clause *what he's doing*. The free relative clause is not embedded in another constituent; it is simply adjacent to *that man*. Its subject, *he*, is co-referential with *that man*. (7) puts the human protagonist at the center of the event, *that man* being the "direct object" of *between*; he is mentioned first and then the relevant characteristic is mentioned, what he is doing.

Other examples are—*Everybody knows Helen Liddell how hard she works* [radio discussion] and *I've been meaning to phone and ask about the new baby and Alan how they're getting on*. The construction is far from new; (8) is from the Authorized Version of the New Testament and is a straight calque of the New Testament Greek (see Miller and Weinert 1998, p. 362).

(8) Consider the lilies of the field how they grow.

The New Testament is a written text but it is a written record of what was spoken. Later groups of translators seem to have considered the unintegrated syntax of (8) unsuitable for writing. The Good News Bible has *Look at how the wild flowers grow* and the Revised English Bible has *Consider how the lilies of the field grow*.

The classic Wh-cleft construction offers a good example of integrated syntax, as in (9).

(9) What they will do is use this command to save the data.

Is links the clauses *what they will do* and *use this command to save the data*. The second clause can be thought of as integrated into the overall structure by losing its subject and its tense. The typical Wh-construction in spontaneous speech is exemplified in (10). No integration has taken place; the clause following *is* has a subject and its own tense.

(10) Right, well, what you're doing is you're drawing a line.

Reversed Wh-clefts can also be unintegrated, for example, *that's what this stuff's based on is intuition* (Calude 2008, p. 111, ex. 42).

Guz (2015) provides a taxonomy of various levels of integration of Wh-clefts in spoken English, arranged on a cline from more- to less-integrated. The cline includes clefts which exhibit a mismatch in tense, aspect, and mood of the copula verb and the verb in the cleft clause, prosodic separation between the copula and the cleft clause, omission of the copula altogether, omission of subject pronouns in the cleft clause, and multi-clause focus constituents. The data analyzed by Guz suggest that unintegrated Wh-clefts are indeed very common in spontaneous spoken language and there is no evidence that they form a barrier to communication.

Other construction types with unintegrated syntax involve a doubling of the copula *be*, also termed DOUBLE *be* (Massam 2017), such as *The problem is, is that this construction is never found in written language*. Massam argues that what are treated by some as a "linguistic curiosity" (2017, p. 121) constitute in fact a unified set of recurrent constructions which can be analyzed syntactically using existing grammatical entities and notions.

The examples in (11) provide further instances of unintegrated syntax.

(11) a. It's unfair what they're doing to the union (radio discussion).
b. It has been well documented the effect "phONEday" had on both business and domestic users (article in *The Independent*).

It is the subject of *is unfair* in (11)a and *has been well documented* in (11)b. What is unfair or well-documented is conveyed by the free relative clause *what they're doing to the union* and the noun phrase *the effect* …. In formal writing, and this is why (11)b is surprising, we would expect the free relative clause and the long noun phrase to be the subjects: *what they're doing to the union is unfair* and *the effect "phONEday" had … has been well documented*.

(12) shows another construction typical of spontaneous speech but not of (planned and edited) writing.

(12) This older woman in the class she likes to kid us all on.

(12) begins with the noun phrase *this older woman in the class* and continues with the complete clause *she likes to kid us all on*. The subject of the clause, *she*, is co-referential with the initial noun phrase. The explanation of the noun phrase—clause structure as a way of dealing with complex subject phrases looks plausible for examples such as (13) but not at all plausible for (14), with a very short noun phrase.

(13) The people who are listening to this many of them will not understand the complexities (radio discussion).
(14) The driver you get a good laugh with him (conversation).

Occasionally, the construction is used to contrast two referents, as in (15), from a road report on Classic FM.

(15) There's been an accident in Kent on the M26 but the earlier accident on the A28 that's now been cleared.

Speakers could use the construction to escape from a syntactic mix-up but most examples do not display any signs of syntactic breakdown such as hesitations and repetitions. The primary function of the structure is to establish referents and make them salient; its secondary function is to enable speakers and listeners to handle complex referring expressions. (13) enables listeners to establish the referent of *the people who are listening to this* and then to decode the clause *many of them will not understand the complexities*. *Them* provides the link to *the people who are listening to this*.

Classic indirect question clauses are integrated with the main clause.

(16) I asked where the new form came from.

The Wh-complement of *asked* conveys a question. It begins with the interrogative *where*, but the rest of the clause has declarative constituent order. Compare (17)a and (17)b, in which the Wh-complements have the word order and structure of a Wh-interrogative clause with subject–auxiliary inversion (see further examples of unintegrated complement clauses in Weinert 2012). (17)a is from conversation and (17)b is from a university final examination script. (This type of indirect question is generally ignored in discussions of English syntax, but note (18) from an article in the newspaper *Scotland on Sunday*.)

(17) a. I can't remember now what was the reason for it.
b. The question centers on where did this new form come from.
(18) No one is sure how long are the passages leading off from this center.

Cheshire (2005) documents recurrent and productive use of lone *when*-clauses in spoken English, that is, *when*-clauses which are traditionally thought to occur together with a main clause on which they are syntactically and discoursally dependent, but which are in fact left hanging in her corpus data. Cheshire argues that such clauses are not functionally equivalent to traditional adverbial clauses and that their role in the discourse is ~~similarly~~ different to written adverbial clauses.

This section concludes with examples of a further three spoken constructions: relative clauses with shadow pronouns in (19), clauses with preposed prepositional phrases and shadow pronouns in (20), and clauses in which what looks like a complementizer is separated from the rest of the clause by a pause, as in (21). It suffices to say that unintegrated constructions have attracted substantial attention in English (and other languages alike), and what initially proved to be an isolated quirk of an ideologically tainted linguistic genre is beginning to look like a well-established and widely used grammatical strategy (see for instance the collection of papers in Dehé and Kavalova 2005, and in Evans and Watanabe 2016).

(19) I'm one of these people that I don't like to be surprised.
(20) Out of the twenty-four traditional medicine shops they visited rhino horn was for sale in nineteen of them [radio report].
(21) a. Plus, the lack of ordered rules means that OT analyses are not burdened with various intermediate levels of representation.
b. Although, English has been the most successful language in becoming a lingua franca.

27.6.3 The Organization of Spoken Discourse

Speakers and writers combine clauses into larger chunks of text. Whatever the type of a written text (see Section 27.3), its writer(s) and reader(s) are not face to face, and writers typically have more time than speakers to edit their text. Some types of spoken text are also edited, and may be partly or wholly scripted. Examples are talks on radio or television, lectures, and sermons. Other types of spoken text are produced face-to-face and in real-time with no scripting; examples are informal conversation, interviews, and impromptu narratives.

The differences are reflected in the use of different syntactic devices for various discourse functions in unplanned and unscripted texts. (The functions of intonation and amplitude are ignored here.) Speakers use syntax (as described above) that can be produced online but listeners need texts that they can interpret online. Information is carefully staged with a small quantity of information assigned to small syntactic units and highlighted to make sure the listener's attention is engaged. For example, NEW entities may be introduced in written discourse by means of indefinite direct objects—*In this section I discuss a difficult construction*. NEW entities in unplanned (and even planned) speech are introduced, and thereby highlighted, by means of special structures—*there's a difficult construction I want to discuss*. Speakers use a range of highlighting devices for introducing NEW entities or reintroducing entities (which can be individuals or entire events). Examples are *I've got a friend who…* or (reintroduction) *(you) see the bridge over the river you have to cross it very slowly* or *you know the bridge over the river you have to cross it very slowly…*, where *the bridge* is highlighted by being the direct object of *see* and *know*. Entire clauses can be highlighted: *you know when we get home can we watch tv?*

GIVEN entities (e.g., people and things in the immediate context or previously mentioned) are regularly introduced into a conversation by means of the NP–clause construction exemplified in (12), repeated here as (22).

(22) This older woman in the class she likes to kid us all on.

The construction helps to ensure that discourse referents are clearly established. The NP fixes the referent and the clause conveys the relevant information about the referent. Not so frequent, but playing a similar discourse role, is the clause–NP structure as in *it's not very good the wine*; the final NP both clarifies and firmly establishes the referent of *it*. In Macaulay's (1991, p. 81) Scots data, the clause subject and the final NP can be pronouns, as in *He was some man him*. Macaulay analyzes *him* as reinforcing the referent of *he*. Neither construction is used in writing (except in written dialogue). Carter and McCarthy refer to heads—*this older woman…*, and tails—*…the wine*, and Biber et al. (1999), use "preface" (but not "epilogue"). The construction which H&P find incorrect, *It's unfair what they're doing to the union*, achieves the same effect, establishing the important property and then clarifying and reinforcing the referent of *it* (see too the discussion of (7) in Section 27.6.2).

In unplanned speech speakers introduce topics, move from one part of a conversation to another, correct what they have just said (mistakes or misleading accounts are not infrequent in unplanned speech), and draw a line under sections of conversation. Consider the excerpt from conversation in (23).

(23) A: What is it you're after anyway.
B: We're after everything I mean not not the phonetics because that's fairly well known anyway em it's the syntax we're after.

Speaker A introduces a new sub-topic with a Wh-question, simultaneously signaling with *anyway* that he is lacking a crucial piece of information in spite of B's previous

account. In his reply, speaker B uses a typical phrase, *I mean*, to revise the information he has just given. He uses the spoken negative construction *not* plus NP to cancel one piece of information and an it-cleft to highlight the important information—*it's the syntax we're after*.

Speaker A could have introduced a new topic with a Wh-cleft, integrated or unintegrated; the first utterance in a politician's speech was *what I thought I'd do Chairman: the most important issue is the poll-tax* (example from Regina Weinert). Reverse Th-clefts are used to finish off a stretch of speech, say a chunk of narrative: *and this was him landed with a broken leg* (Macaulay 1991, p. 78).

Example (1) in Section 2.4.1 is a good example of information being staged. A possible written version is *New York is an incredible, mind-boggling city where the black people are magnificently and flamboyantly turned out*. This is an economical version but it lacks the effect of the spontaneous spoken version in which the adjectives are piled on one by one and even repeated and in which the opening clause *New York's an incredible place* is echoed in the clause that completes the description *It's a marvelous city*. As discussed earlier with respect to *it*-extraposition, speakers can handle a slightly different information flow than writers, and one which favors urgency over GIVEN-before-NEW, allowing speakers to focus on matters which require the most immediate attention first.

Finally, we note that speakers have to keep signaling their attitude toward the propositions they are conveying or receiving (what Halliday terms "the grammar of appraisal," 2016, pp. 18–19, and discussion in Cheshire 2005). They achieve this by means of a large number of particles such as *actually*, *well*, *anyway*, *in fact*, *really*, and so on, and by a series of stance-marking adverbs (see Schiffrin 1987, and the text commentaries in Carter and McCarthy 1997).

27.7 Questions Arising from the Study of Unplanned Speech

27.7.1 The Boundaries of Standard English

Better knowledge of the constructions of unplanned speech has alerted analysts to the fact that constructions previously considered non-standard are in fact used in spontaneous speech by speakers of standard and non-standard English alike. It can be difficult to say what constructions count as standard English. Unquestionably standard are *the young women whom I met* and *the young women who walk the dogs*, but *the young women what I met* is definitely non-standard. Many linguists admit *the young women who I met* as standard or *the young women that walk the dogs*, which would be rejected by many ordinary educated users. Controversy keeps breaking out over *the data are* versus *the data is*, *I never got the essay started till nine o'clock* [preferred: *I did not get*…] and *Even if they had arrived on time, they may have missed the accident* [preferred: … *they might have* …].

Comrie (1999, p. 88) does not himself use *Remember the man that's house got burnt down* but considers it acceptable colloquial standard speech. Some of his colleagues disagreed and many people simply reject spoken data. A referee reviewing a paper for the *Journal of Pragmatics* declared the Wh-cleft *what you're going to do—you're going to go up past the allotments* a performance error. The construction is so frequent in spoken texts (planned and unplanned) that it clearly belongs to the system of spoken English.

The construction does not always receive adequate analysis. One dialogue in Carter and McCarthy (1997) contains *I'd 've thought the first thing you do when it gets as dark and as wet and as miserable as this. You turn your lights on*…. Why is the utterance represented as two sentences, one of which is incomplete? The authors describe the comments ("clauses") as chained together by association and state that written English requires more complex linking,

that is, integration as discussed in Section 27.6.2: … *the first thing you do is to turn your lights on* (Carter and McCarthy 1997, p. 113).

This section concludes with a caveat: it is dangerous to rely on one's own intuition when labeling structures as non-standard or as incorrect. With respect to *the pilot was sat in one of the seats*, Carter and McCarthy (1997, p. 34) comment that the speaker spoke Yorkshire dialect and that standard English requires *was sitting*. Cheshire et al. (1993, pp. 70–71) observe that BE *sat/stood* had been reported as used in certain specific areas of England. Their research showed that the structure was widespread and characteristic of "a general non-standard or semi-standard variety of English," although Burchfield (1981), writing for the BBC, declared *was sat/stood there* unacceptable in any circumstances. Twenty years on the structure is widely used by, for example, reporters on the BBC *News at Ten* (though not by the presenter) and seems to be characteristic of unplanned speech. Many structures considered "non-standard" may be misclassified.

27.7.2 Problems of Analysis

A given construction may require different analyses in spoken and written language.

Consider (24).

(24) It's the wine that I was complaining about (not the food).

That I was complaining about looks like a relative clause—compare *It's wine which I was complaining about* and even *It's the wine about which I was complaining*. Consider now (25)–(27).

(25) It was because he was ill (that) we decided to return.
(26) It was in September (that) I first noticed it.
(27) It was in the restaurant that he proposed to her.

That cannot be replaced by *which*—**It was because he was ill which we decided to return*, etc.—and the *that* clauses modify an adverbial clause of reason *because he was ill* and the prepositional phrases *in September* and *in the restaurant*. Quirk et al. (1985 p. 1387)—henceforth Q&G—propose that the *that* clause in IT clefts is not a relative clause (relative clauses modify nouns) but an annex clause.

Q&G discuss another major property that (allegedly) distinguishes relative clauses from annex clauses. In (28) *that* is omitted.

(28) It was the President himself (that) spoke to me.

Since *the President* is the understood subject of the relative clause, say Q&G, the complementizer cannot be omitted, as shown by (29)a.

(29) a. *I'll lend you the book kept me awake.
b. I'll lend you the book that kept me awake.

In the presentative–existential construction in (30) *that* is absent, although *something* is the understood subject of the final clause *Ø keeps upsetting him*.

(30) There's something (that) keeps upsetting him.

Q&G are consistent; since *that* in (30) is omissible, *Ø keeps upsetting him* is an annex clause. They contrast (30) with (31), which they do analyze as having a relative clause.

(31) *I know a man lives in China.

In fact (31) is acceptable and normal in spontaneous spoken English and has a presentative–existential function. The complementizer can be omitted in other presentative–existential structures such as (32), uttered by a theater manager, and (33), uttered by a teacher (NB *had* in the context was not causative).

(32) I had a witch disappeared down a trap (= trapdoor in the stage).
(33) We've got plenty of kids know very little about English.

To sum up, the concept of annex clauses by Q&G applies to formal written English but not to spontaneous spoken English (note the non-standard *He's a man likes his beer* where *man* is the understood subject of *Ø likes his beer*).

(26) and (27) are also untypical of spoken English, which has the construction in (34) and (35), not mentioned in Q&G (1985), H&P (2002), or Biber et al. (1999).

(34) It was in September when I first noticed it.
(35) It was in Edinburgh where we found the picture.

Note the free relative clauses *when I first noticed it* and *where we found the picture*. *It was in September* establishes a temporal referent. *When I first noticed it* picks up the referent, adds information to it, and can be glossed as "at which time I first noticed it" or even "that's when I first noticed it." This structure simply bypasses the difficulties of Q&G.

27.8 Conclusion

The syntax and discourse-organization of spontaneous speech are important for descriptions of English and for teaching non-native learners to "speak like a native." They are important for other reasons. Children acquire spoken language but learn written language, and any adequate theories of first language acquisition must take into account the data presented above. Questions arise, legitimate but not easily answered, about the usefulness of theories which are based on sentences, given the difficulties in recognizing sentences in spontaneous speech.

The differences between the syntactic structures of speech and writing are relevant to typology; for instance, spontaneous spoken English and written English occupy different locations in a typology of relative clauses. The differences are also relevant to accounts of historical change, since many syntactic changes begin in spoken language and spread into writing. Last, but for many scholars first, theories of the evolution of language must take account of the central fact that spoken language evolved first, not written language.

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