



# All-cleft constructions in the London–Lund Corpora of spoken English: Empirical and methodological perspectives



Eleni Seitanidi <sup>a, \*, 1, 3</sup>, Nele Pöldvere <sup>a, b, 1, 2</sup>, Carita Paradis <sup>a, 1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, 221 00, Lund, Sweden

<sup>b</sup> University of Oslo, P.O. Box 1003, Blindern, 0315, Oslo, Norway

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Available online 22 February 2023

### Keywords:

Diachronic development  
Spoken language  
Corpus comparability  
Metonymisation  
Intersubjectivity

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates *all*-cleft constructions in the London–Lund Corpora of spoken British English. It has two aims: an empirical and a methodological one. The empirical aim is to contribute to research on spoken discourse by analysing the form–meaning properties of *all*-clefts along with their pragmatic functions and their development since the 1950s drawing on insights from Cognitive Linguistics with special focus on Diachronic Construction Grammar. We show that *all*-clefts are used both as assertions and directives. They focalise an element that speakers find particularly relevant at the same time as they have the effect of blocking alternative perspectives and thereby contracting the discursive space for addressees. The methodological aim is to critically assess the comparability level of the diachronic corpora based on a detailed investigation of the distribution of *all*-clefts in the data. We show that there is a high degree of similarity between the designs of the corpora, which makes them suitable for diachronic investigations of recent change.

© 2023 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

One of the activities in which human beings engage on a daily basis is using language in a variety of settings, and especially in everyday face-to-face conversation (Clark, 1996: 11; Cameron, 2001: 12; Pöldvere and Paradis, 2020). Despite its centrality in everyday life, spoken language has not received as much attention as written language (Fried and Östman, 2005; Linell, 2005; Paradis et al., 2021) either from a synchronic or from a diachronic constructionist perspective (Pöldvere and Paradis, 2019). Even though time is an important factor in the development of language use, it has not been studied much for want of corpora. However, the advent of spoken corpora from different time periods such as the Spoken British National Corpora (BNC1994 and BNC2014) (Love et al., 2017) and the London–Lund Corpora (LLC–1 and LLC–2) (Pöldvere et al., 2021) has made it possible to study the development of spoken language in Present-Day English more easily (Paradis et al., 2021). Analysing natural spoken discourse is important for our understanding of what speakers do with language in authentic speech situations, how speakers behave and express themselves in different discourse contexts and what the differences might be between speech and writing. Within this context and using corpus data, we set out to analyse an important dialogic

\* Corresponding author. Room SOL:H307c.

E-mail addresses: [eleni.seitanidi@englund.lu.se](mailto:eleni.seitanidi@englund.lu.se) (E. Seitanidi), [nele.poldvere@ilos.uio.no](mailto:nele.poldvere@ilos.uio.no) (N. Pöldvere), [carita.paradis@englund.lu.se](mailto:carita.paradis@englund.lu.se) (C. Paradis).

<sup>1</sup> Visiting address: Helgonabacken 12, Lund, Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> Visiting address: Niels Treschows hus 11th floor – Niels Henrik Abels vei 36, 0371 Oslo, Norway.

<sup>3</sup> Postal address: Box 201, 221 00 Lund. <https://www.sol.lu.se/en/person/el2778se/>.

construction, namely the *all*-cleft construction, in spoken interaction since the 1950s to demonstrate the form–meaning and pragmatic properties that it has in spoken language. Now, such studies require assessments of comparability of the texts in the corpora under investigation to guarantee the outcome of the diachronic research and this is exactly also one of our aims in this study, namely, to assess the degree of comparability between the texts used for our study of *all*-cleft constructions in spoken English. It should be noted that the scope of the comparability aim is limited to the specific corpus texts in which the *all*-cleft construction was found. To study the construction in spoken discourse, we use data from two corpora of spoken British English: the first London–Lund Corpus ( $\text{LLC-1}$ ) with data from the 1950s–1980s (Greenbaum and Svartvik, 1990) and the new London–Lund Corpus ( $\text{LLC-2}$ ) from 2014 to 2019 (Pöldvere et al., 2021), collectively called the London–Lund Corpora ( $\text{LLCS}$ ).

Research on the *all*-cleft construction is limited (Bonelli, 1992; Traugott, 2008; Homer, 2019), and its uses have not been studied in detail (Tellings, 2020: 3). Example (1) from  $\text{LLC-2}$  illustrates the *all*-cleft construction along with its basic formal and semantic properties. It is from an advisory meeting between a study abroad coordinator (speaker A) and an undergraduate student (speaker B) interested in applying for studies at a foreign university.

- (1) A: I know it's easier said than done but I would urge you not to overthink it  
 B: yeah okay  
 A: not to worry too much about it [...] as long as your application to UC is strong **that's really all you can control**  
 [...]  
 B: do you have uh any records of [...] what choices people got at university  
 kind of like you know campus choices  
 A: there's no real figures that I can give you that will be a true representation  
 of anything unfortunately **all you can do is make sure your application is good**

In (1), speaker A uses the demonstrative *all*-cleft *that's really all you can control* (marked in bold) to advise the student not to worry about his application by indicating a limit to what the student can control. Furthermore, she also uses the regular *all*-cleft *all you can do is make sure your application is good* to point out what the student can rather than cannot do. Formally, *all*-clefts comprise two clauses, where one clause contains the copula *be* (Traugott, 2008: 152). Semantically, *all* is synonymous with 'not much' (Homer, 2019: 1). Following Goldberg (2006: 5), we define constructions as "pairings of form with semantic or discourse function" that exist at various levels of language use. *All*-clefts are such form–meaning units with a focalising discourse function. Furthermore, they are "fully productive, being lexically constrained only with respect to the filler constituent of the subject phrase" (Kay, 2013: 37) and hence understood as constructions by speakers of English.

Thus, the study has two aims: one empirical and the other methodological. The empirical aim of the study is to contribute to research in spoken discourse by examining *all*-clefts in their various discourse contexts (e.g., face-to-face conversation, prepared speech) to shed light on the constructions as such as well as their pragmatic functions in Present-Day spoken English. The term pragmatic function is used here to refer to the meaning of the construction when it is used in a specific discourse context in view of what the speakers want to achieve in a particular speech event. In other words, pragmatic function has interactional focus on how speakers regulate their contributions vis-à-vis interlocutors or listeners. Furthermore, the study tracks the development of the construction including its pragmatic functions from the 1950s until the 2010s within the broad framework of Cognitive Linguistics in which meanings in human communication crystallise in actual discourse events (Croft and Cruse, 2004; Paradis, 2005; Talmy, 2000). This then means that context and text type are important for our understanding of what is communicated as well as for how we as speakers express ourselves. Construction Grammar, more precisely Diachronic Construction Grammar within the Cognitive Linguistics family of approaches, is particularly suited for these purposes (Traugott, 2008; Traugott and Trousdale, 2013; Pöldvere and Paradis, 2019). Not only is it usage-based and takes various linguistic and contextual aspects into consideration, but it also invokes cognitive mechanisms to account for meaning variation and change. In the analysis of the data, both the *motivations* for shifts and developments of use in spoken communication and the actual cognitive *mechanisms* that give rise to new variants are crucial for the descriptions and explanations (Traugott and Dasher, 2002; Paradis, 2011; Pöldvere and Paradis, 2019; Pöldvere et al., 2022).

Even though the  $\text{LLCS}$  were designed to be comparable on a general level, the methodological aim of the study is to critically assess the comparability level of the texts in which the *all*-cleft constructions occur with regard to the situational context and the demographic information of the speakers. As already mentioned, comparability of corpus design is important for all investigations of language variation and change because it ensures that any linguistic differences between the corpora can be attributed to one parameter only (Leech, 2007). In the case of the  $\text{LLCS}$ , this parameter is time as there is a difference of approximately 50 years between them. However, according to Pöldvere et al. (2021), there are also other design features that may have implications for studies of language use by which  $\text{LLC-1}$  and  $\text{LLC-2}$  differ from each other such as the distribution and nature of some of the discourse contexts. For this reason, we take up the call by (Pöldvere et al. (2021) to "critically examine the extent to which results obtained from the London–Lund Corpora are truly comparable" in order to raise awareness of potential differences in the designs of the  $\text{LLCS}$  and how they might affect linguistic analyses. The methodological part of the study thus informs decisions about the empirical part of the study. The result of this critical analysis will also form the basis for the inclusion or exclusion of texts in our empirical study. The study can then provide useful guidance to future researchers

using the  $\mu$ CS as their data source. Although there has been discussion about the comparability level of the  $\mu$ CS, no study has shown it empirically.

Four research questions are central to our investigation:

1. What are the form–meaning properties of the *all*-cleft construction?
2. What are the pragmatic functions served by the constructions in the discourse contexts in which they occur?
3. How, if at all, has the use of the construction changed since the 1950s?
4. To what extent are the  $\mu$ CS comparable with respect to the use of the *all*-cleft construction?

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the literature on clefting and *all*-clefts in particular. Section 3 introduces the data and the methods used, and Section 4 analyses the findings. Finally, Section 5 concludes the article.

## 2. Background

This section introduces clefting and previous research on *all*-clefts followed by an overview of usage-based Cognitive Linguistics with a focus on Diachronic Construction Grammar.

### 2.1. Clefting and *all*-clefts

Traditionally, cleft constructions have been treated by grammarians in relation to information packaging (e.g., Quirk et al., 1985; Johansson, 2001; Ward et al., 2002; Biber et al., 2021). They are types of information packaging that divide a message into two clauses in order to attribute prominence to specific elements (Ward et al., 2002: 1415; Biber et al., 2021: 950). Biber et al. (2021: 950–952) divide cleft types into: (1) *it*-clefts (*It was his voice that held me*), (2) ordinary *wh*-clefts (*What I do object to is violence on TV*), (3) reversed *wh*-clefts (*You see a weekend flight is what you want*) and (4) demonstrative *wh*-clefts (*That's what I thought*), which differ from each other in terms of wording and the placement of prominence within the various structures (see Section 3.2 for our classification of *all*-clefts based on Biber et al., 2021).

In their study of clefts in spoken discourse, Weinert and Miller (1996) make the highly relevant point that the structure of clefts reflects the situational context in which they are produced. Clefts in spoken New Zealand English, especially the demonstrative type, have been found to be used to take the floor politely, to indicate what someone has contributed to a conversation, to explicate the relationship between different aspects of discourse, to stress a point and to organise discourse and promote discourse understanding (Calude, 2008: 80). Moreover, they can highlight information both inside and outside the text (Calude, 2008: 79).

With regard to *all*-clefts, in particular, Homer states that they can express an attribute or an evaluation, as in *All John is is an assistant professor* (Homer, 2019: 19). He identifies the ‘smallness effect’ of *all* whereby what is discussed in the *all*-clause is ‘not much’ (Homer, 2019: 1; see also Tellings, 2020: 1 on the same topic). When the smallness effect arises, there is also an exhaustiveness effect, conveying the meaning of ‘no more than’, as in *All that John ate for lunch was a banana* (Homer, 2019: 2). For Tellings (2020: 2), *all*-clefts semantically resemble exclusives such as *only* and *solely*.

Studying *all*-clefts from a functional perspective, Bonelli (1992) investigates their contexts and properties. She identifies three functions: (1) attitudinal standpoint, (2) discourse function and (3) discourse relation. Attitudinal standpoint concerns the evaluative character of *all*-clefts, which can express a positive attitude in the form of some action being simple and not requiring much effort, e.g., *All we want is a basic... basic little caravan site* or a negative attitude where some action is described as insufficient or undesirable, e.g., *I wish I'd been nicer to him. All I ever did for him was to make his bed*, or damage limitation, which involves the speaker admitting the existence of an undesirable element, where no other option was available, e.g., *That's the only one you have got is it ... that's all I have I'm sorry* (Bonelli, 1992: 34–35). Secondly, the discourse function of *all*-clefts concerns introducing upcoming information (preface) or summarising preceding information (postface). Finally, discourse relation concerns how the information of the *all*-cleft relates to the preceding information so that the *all*-cleft may serve a conclusive function, in which case the preceding information is presented as the basis on which a conclusion is offered, or a contrastive function where the information of the *all*-cleft expresses a contrast to what has been said before.

Drawing on Bonelli's (1992) synchronic analysis of *all*-clefts, Traugott (2008) examines *all*-clefts from a diachronic perspective combining Grammaticalisation Theory and Construction Grammar. For Traugott (2008), interaction is a fundamental concept forming the basis for the emergence of *all*-clefts in specific contexts. Specifically, she discusses this from the perspective of the negotiation of viewpoints (i.e., dialogicity) as a possible language-internal context of change for *all*-clefts. Using written data from drama and court cases originating in the Early Modern English period, Traugott (2008: 156–157) argues that *all*-clefts were preceded by ascriptive and purposive copular clauses where *all* meant ‘everything’ in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, while evidence of *all* meaning ‘only’ was found in reverse *all*-clefts before 1600. She maintains that ordinary *all*-clefts with *all* being synonymous with ‘only’ emerged around 1600. The main verbs used in the constructions at this stage were *say* and *do*, as in (2).

- (2) **All that he said was**, Nymph when you are at leisure, Faine would I speak  
(Traugott, 2008: 158)

In the 17th century, the *all*-cleft construction containing verbs of saying was used with clausal complements, as in (3).

- (3) To that, **all I can say is this**, that Aristotle himself for all his cunning was so perplexed in following that doubt (Traugott, 2008: 159)

Traugott (2008: 159) points out that towards the end of the 17th century, *all*-clefts were different from the purposive construction containing *all*. A purposive *all*-cleft is shown in (4).

- (4) **For all he did, was to deceiue** good knights.  
Translation: "For everything he did was in order to deceive good knights"  
(Traugott, 2008: 157)

Moreover, example (5) exemplifies an unambiguous *all*-cleft.

- (5) **All I could do**, was stand and laugh at him (Traugott, 2008: 159)

The *all*-cleft in (5) contains the modal verb *could* and the main verb *do* followed by bare infinitives. Traugott (2008) proposes the hypothesis that *to* became optional in the construction following reanalysis, as the construction containing *do* as the main verb and a modal verb did not express a purpose, which led to the redundancy of *to*.

Traugott (2008: 161) states that the construction emerged in dialogic contexts where speakers/writers evaluate a third person and express the idea that no sufficient action was taken by that person (examples (2) and (4) above); when speakers/writers comment on their own actions, they complain about being misunderstood, undervalued or similar (see (3) and (5)). At a later stage, the dialogicity of the context was semanticised into the construction so that after the 18th century, the construction was used in a way that the preceding context was retrievable and the construction itself came to express the above meanings even in non-dialogic contexts (Traugott, 2008: 162). Furthermore, Traugott (2008) stresses the possibility that speakers used the construction to draw attention to an ensuing statement construed as exhaustive.

## 2.2. Theoretical framework

As mentioned in the introduction, Construction Grammar is well suited for studying how language is used in interaction because by attending to multiple levels of linguistic analysis, e.g., syntax and pragmatics (Fischer, 2015: 564), it addresses the entirety of a speaker's knowledge of a language in actual communication (Fried and Östman, 2005: 1754). Furthermore, constructions are important because they play a role in semantic change by means of their contribution to the interpretation of a specific meaning through their combination of words and structure, i.e., not one or the other but both (Paradis, 2011). This is where Diachronic Construction Grammar becomes relevant.

Within Diachronic Construction Grammar, Traugott and Trousdale (2013: 1) distinguish between constructionalisation and constructional change. In her latest work, Traugott defines constructionalisation as

the establishment of a new symbolic link between form and meaning which has been replicated across a network of language users, and which involves an addition to the constructicon. (Traugott, 2022: 49)

The term constructicon describes a lexicon comprising constructions (Traugott, 2022: 24). As the definition of constructionalisation suggests, constructionalisation involves both the form and the meaning of a construction, while attention is paid to the adoption of that construction by numerous speakers. According to Traugott and Trousdale (2013), a construction's form includes its syntax, morphology and phonology, while its meaning includes its semantics, pragmatics and discourse function. Constructional changes are defined as "modulations of contextual uses prior to and following constructionalisation" (Traugott, 2022: 51). As Traugott (2022: 51) points out, constructional changes do not involve any addition to the constructicon but rather they involve changes in either the form or meaning of an existing construction, which may precede or follow constructionalisation (see also Traugott and Trousdale, 2013: 27). These changes are microvariations which do not necessarily lead to language change or a new construction (for a critical analysis of Traugott and Trousdale's (2013) definition of constructionalisation, see Börjars et al. (2015)). Pre-constructionalisation changes may lead to a decrease in compositionality and/or analysability of the expression undergoing change or to changes in the semantics or syntax associated with that expression (Traugott, 2022: 50–51). Post-constructionalisation changes, on the other hand, may lead to an expansion of the collocations of the construction, an increase in the frequency of use of the construction as well as a reduction in its morphology or phonology (Traugott, 2022: 51).

Traugott and Dasher (2002) focus on motivations of shifts and change and the role of interaction for those. In particular, they emphasise the pragmatics of change in communication arguing for change as a speaker-initiated process, motivated by the communicative need in a given context. Speakers may use a construction to refer to something which is not conventionally associated with that construction, and by doing so, they invite the hearer to interpret the expression in a certain way. The speaker's role is a requirement for new constructional variants of meaning. This approach aligns perfectly with Paradis' (2011) understanding of semantic shifts and possible change as being motivated by functionally adequate and clear language use by the speaker invoked by a salience-based leap within the meaning potential of the construction to slightly move the salience of what is uttered.

In Diachronic Construction Grammar and Cognitive Linguistics more broadly, a central mechanism of semantic shifts and change is metonymisation (Paradis, 2004; Paradis, 2011; Pöldvere and Paradis, 2019), which involves the use of a language form in a certain context to evoke a meaning that is not conventionally associated with that form. If this new non-conventional association between the form and the concept of a construction is adopted by the linguistic community, a

new conventional association arises between the form and the concept. A telling example of such a development is found in Kitis (2009) and regards *fovame* ('fear') in Greek and *fear* in English. The original 'put to flight' in the physical domain of MOTION was metonymically associated with the mental domain of EMOTION highlighting 'terror' in the flight. In Greek, the change was fostered in the middle construction where the experiencer is the primary discourse participant, while the development has continued through metonymisation from EMOTION into the interpersonal SOCIO-COGNITIVE EPISTEMIC sphere as a proper subjective marker both in Greek and in English as in *I fear it is too late now* (see also Tissari, 2007).

At the level of communicative intentions, the example of *fear* is an illustration of what Traugott and Dasher (2002) mean when they discuss subjectification as a stage in the course of semantic change. According to them, meanings may come to be used by speakers to express speakers' own perspectives and evaluations about something talked about (Traugott and Dasher, 2002: 30). More precisely, subjectification is defined as "increase in the degree to which speakers or writers overtly base meanings in and orient them towards their own perspective" (Traugott, 2022: 202). Since change occurs in cases of meaning negotiation between speakers and hearers, another relevant concept is intersubjectification, which is defined as "increase in the degree to which speakers/writers overtly pay attention to addressees/readers and orient meanings towards addressees/readers' cognitive stances and social identities" (Traugott, 2022: 202). In this sense, the *fear* example is also a case of intersubjectification as it functions as a mitigating device in social contexts (Kitis, 2009: 418). Within Traugott's (2022: 193) approach, subjectification and intersubjectification are diachronic processes which enable the development of conventionalised overt expressions of (inter)subjectivity. Subjectification and intersubjectification give rise to subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which are synchronic concepts (Traugott, 2022: 192). For this reason, (inter)subjectification should be distinguished from (inter)subjectivity (Traugott, 2022: 44). Subjectivity concerns the grounding of meaning in the speaker's perspective (Traugott and Dasher, 2002: 22). Subjective lexical items contain temporal and spatial deictic expressions and explicit markers of attitude towards the discourse (Traugott and Dasher, 2002: 23). In this sense, subjectivity is "speaker-oriented" (Traugott, 2022: 191). Intersubjectivity, on the other hand, is the expression of the speaker's attitude towards the addressee, and intersubjective expressions contain explicit social deictic elements and markers of salience to the addressee, as well as the tendency to mean more than what is said (Traugott and Dasher, 2002: 23). Thus, intersubjectivity is "addressee-oriented" (Traugott, 2022: 191).

Traugott and Dasher (2002: 22) argue that intersubjectivity is based on subjectivity, but the opposite is not the case. In terms of diachronic change, this means that a meaning may undergo subjectification which may not necessarily lead to intersubjectification. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity have been discussed here as two concepts which can account for the two broad communicative functions of *all*-clefts, i.e., assertions and directives (see Section 4.3 for details). Moreover, metonymisation is a mechanism of change which, together with the diachronic processes of subjectification and intersubjectification, can explain the development of *all*-clefts since LLC-1 based on the pragmatic functions served by the construction (see Section 4.4 for details).

### 3. Data and methods

This section first describes the corpora used. Since the LLCs were designed to be comparable on a general level, this section discusses the notion of comparability in corpus design. Next, it describes the procedure for identifying and analysing *all*-clefts in the corpora, followed by the procedure for assessing the comparability level between the LLCs.

#### 3.1. London–Lund Corpora and the notion of comparability

As already stated, the data for this study are from the first London–Lund Corpus (LLC-1) from 1950s to 1980s (Greenbaum and Svartvik, 1990) and the new London–Lund Corpus (LLC-2) from 2014 to 2019 (Pöldvere et al., 2021) with a time difference of approximately 50 years between them. LLC-2 was designed to be comparable to LLC-1 so that they could be used for principled diachronic studies of spoken language. In this study, we examine how successful this task was using the *all*-cleft construction as a test bed.

Both LLC-1 and LLC-2 contain around half a million words stored in 100 texts of 5000 words each, thus totaling around one million words (and 200 texts). A text in the corpora may contain material from one recording only, or it may comprise multiple shorter recordings, or subtexts. The corpora contain both dialogue and monologue, which have been grouped under a variety of text categories or discourse contexts such as face-to-face conversation (including conversations between equals and disparates), distanced conversation (the interlocutors do not see each other with the exception of Skype conversations), broadcast media, parliamentary proceedings, spontaneous commentary, legal proceedings and prepared speech. The discourse contexts "represent different contextual constraints that may affect language use and participant behaviour" (Pöldvere et al., 2021), but the boundaries between them are not always clear-cut. For example, there is some overlap between distanced conversation and broadcast media in the sense that the former includes radio phone-ins; the important feature of such conversations, however, is that they are carried out over a distance and the speakers do not have access to visual cues. Such cues are available in all texts of broadcast media in the corpora and expected to influence participant behaviour. The speakers in the LLCs are educated adults.

In accordance with the description above, we deem the LLCs to be comparable corpora. Comparability is one of three important notions of corpus design in addition to representativeness and balance. Representativeness and balance are necessary for any corpus compilation process. The former means that the results obtained from the corpus can be extrapolated to the population at large, and the latter means that the sizes of the corpus components, in this case the discourse



contexts, are proportional to the relative frequency of the occurrence of these discourse contexts in the population. However, to build a corpus that meets these requirements is nigh impossible. Comparability, or the notion whereby two or more corpora differ from each other in terms of one parameter only, complicates things further, not least because of the conflict between comparability and representativeness: “[a]s one nears to perfection in comparability, one meets with distortion in terms of representativeness” (Leech, 2007: 142). Leech mentions ‘genre evolution’ as one possible factor, but often it simply boils down to practical concerns such as the availability of the data sources and the ethical challenges of obtaining them in the present day (see below). To alleviate some of these concerns, Leech (2007: 44) proposes to view the three notions of corpus design as continua rather than all-or-nothing and to “define realistically attainable positions on these scales” rather than setting unrealistic goals or abandoning the notions altogether.

Indeed, according to Pöldvere et al. (2021), the LLCs provide “a sufficiently representative account of linguistic variation in contemporary spoken British English with evident regard for the distribution of the text categories”. This is evidenced in the range of discourse contexts in the corpora and the precedence given to the most important setting for spoken interaction, namely, private face-to-face conversation among people who know each other well (equals). At the same time, the corpora differ from each other only in terms of time, with the rest of the parameters having been kept constant to the extent possible. Still, there are minor differences in the distribution and nature of the discourse contexts themselves (Pöldvere et al., 2021), which might affect the corpus results, including the present study of *all*-clefts. For instance, compared to the earlier corpus, LLC-2 contains a larger proportion of conversations between disparates within face-to-face conversation, and also the conversations are more diverse in terms of their situational contexts (e.g., work meetings, university tutorials, other advisory sessions). Considering the fact that *all*-clefts tend to have a contesting, adversative meaning in some contexts (Traugott, 2008: 16), it might be the case that such uses of the construction are more likely to occur in conversations where the main goal of the interlocutors is to solve a problem, i.e., professional contexts. By contrast, many of the conversations between disparates in LLC-1 are interviews with prospective undergraduate students, thus representing a very specific context for professional interaction. No such context exists in LLC-2. The reason is largely due to the ethical challenges of recording an admission interview nowadays. This might influence the types of constructions used and their distribution across the LLCs.

### 3.2. Procedure

We accessed LLC-1 via the online corpus tool Corpuscle (Meurer, 2012) and LLC-2 via transcription files in plain text and XML format using AntConc (Anthony, 2022). The task was facilitated by the fact that both sources contain orthographic transcriptions of the corpora, which have been annotated for similar spoken features such as pauses, overlaps and various kinds of non-verbal vocalisations (e.g., laughter). Moreover, LLC-1 contains prosodic annotations, while LLC-2 provides access to the original audio recordings. The LLC-1 audio recordings are not publicly accessible, although, in fact, many researchers have access to them. In order to identify all the *all*-cleft instances in our data, we searched for all occurrences of *all* and found a total of 3981 of them, 2555 in LLC-1 and 1426 in LLC-2. Four duplicates were removed from LLC-1 and 14 from LLC-2, resulting in 3963 occurrences in the LLCs (2551 in LLC-1 and 1412 in LLC-2).

The definition of the *all*-cleft construction to be included in our dataset was based on a semantic and a formal criterion: (i) *all* had to be synonymous with ‘only’ or ‘the only thing’ and (ii) the construction had to contain the copula *be* and an additional verb. Based on these two criteria, we excluded examples such as *we have sanded all the paint off*, where *all* has a quantifying function. The *all*-clefts included in the study have the form *all* + (*that* +) CLAUSE + BE + CLAUSE/NOUN PHRASE, and CLAUSE/NOUN PHRASE + BE + *all* + (*that* +) CLAUSE, where the clause might contain zero or one modal verb, and it may serve various pragmatic functions. In total, we identified 120 *all*-clefts in the LLCs, 56 in LLC-1 and 64 in LLC-2. Next, we adapted Biber et al.’s (2021: 952) classification of clefts to categorise each *all*-cleft instance into one of three groups: (1) regular, (2) reverse and (3) demonstrative. For this, we analysed the concordances and inspected the wider context in which each construction occurred, examining the discourse context, the prosodic annotations and the audio files. The prosodic information proved particularly useful in cases where it was unclear whether *all* appeared in an *all*-cleft or what type of *all*-cleft it was. In (6) the lack of a pause between *that’s all* and *I mean* along with the falling intonational contour on *mean* made it clear that *all* was part of a demonstrative *all*-cleft, i.e., *that’s all I mean*, rather than part of a smaller clause, i.e., *that’s all*.

(6) As long as we realise what we’re getting rid of **that’s all I mean** it actually doesn’t matter

Finally, we examined the semantics of the second verb of the construction, e.g., *mean* in *that’s all I mean* and any modal verbs accompanying the second verb in addition to other form–meaning properties to establish the pragmatic functions served by the construction. In order to compare the two datasets, we calculated both the raw frequencies and frequencies per million words and used basic confirmatory statistics (Chi-squared test).

The procedure for assessing the comparability level between the LLCs was as follows. We examined the frequencies of the *all*-clefts in each LLC text noting cases of texts contributing an unusually high number of constructions relative to its frequencies in the rest of the dataset. Then, we examined the metadata of that text to determine whether there was a text with similar characteristics in the other corpus. We examined features such as the situational context of the conversation (e.g., work meeting) and the speakers’ main demographic information (age, gender). If no such text was found, we ran additional analyses with and without the text in question to determine its effect on the overall results and to provide reliable explanations. We limited our investigation to the level of the text, rather than the subtext (see above), because subtexts revolve

around similar subject matters and/or involve the same speaker(s). Consequently, they make similar affordances for the choice of the constructions.

We decided not to consider speaker frequencies as a measure of comparability between the corpora. Even though this would have been possible in  $\text{LLC-2}$  where each speaker has been given a unique speaker ID (e.g., 'S001'), it turned out to be impossible in  $\text{LLC-1}$  for lack of relevant metadata (cf. Pöldvere et al., 2021). Specifically, the metadata in Greenbaum and Svartvik, 1990 contains a list of speakers in  $\text{LLC-1}$  where each speaker in a text has been given a letter (A, B, etc.). The letters start over again in the next text. There is an indication if a speaker appears in more than one subtext within a text (e.g., 'same speakers as in S.1.11a' for subtext 'S.1.11b'), giving the impression that all the other speakers in the corpus are unique. However, closer inspection of the audio files revealed that there are many speakers in the corpus that appear in more than one text. For example, it is clear from the speakers' voice qualities that the interviewers of the prospective undergraduate students mentioned above are the same across all the interviews, covering three texts in total. Moreover, one of the interviewers appears in several conversations between equals, which is confirmed by his age and the dates of the recordings. This is an unfortunate shortcoming of  $\text{LLC-1}$ , which forced us to consider text-level frequencies only.

#### 4. Results and discussion

This section starts by discussing the frequency and distribution of the *all*-cleft construction in the  $\text{LLCs}$  followed by its form–meaning properties. Next, it discusses the pragmatic functions of the construction followed by information about the development of *all*-clefts since the 1950s. Finally, it ends with a critical assessment of the comparability level between the  $\text{LLCs}$  based on the findings concerning the use of *all*-clefts.

##### 4.1. Frequency and distribution

As previously mentioned, we identified 120 occurrences of the *all*-cleft construction in the  $\text{LLCs}$ . They were found in 75 out of 200 of the texts in the corpora or, in other words, in fewer than half of the texts. In terms of the discourse contexts in which they were used, the context that was the richest in *all*-clefts was legal proceedings, followed by spontaneous commentary, face-to-face conversation, distanced conversation, broadcast media and prepared speech, in that order, based on their occurrence per million words, as shown in Fig. 1. Interestingly, no *all*-clefts were found in parliamentary proceedings, even though this discourse context is a type of spontaneous monologue resembling conversation (Greenbaum and Svartvik, 1990: 12) in the sense that the politicians' contributions are not based on a complete script ("*Companion to the Standing Orders*" n.d.; "*Reading Speeches*" n.d.). Furthermore, the presence of *all*-clefts in spontaneous commentary, face-to-face conversation, distanced conversation and broadcast media suggests their use in more informal contexts, which is supported by the observation that almost 76% of the *all*-clefts in face-to-face conversation were in conversations between equals compared to disparates. The conversations between equals in the  $\text{LLCs}$  are typically informal conversations between people who know each other well. Nevertheless, since the discourse context richest in *all*-clefts was legal proceedings, which is a formal discourse context, it may be argued that the use of the construction depends on the function it serves in a specific discourse context rather than the formality associated with that discourse context. More detailed information about the use of the construction in the various discourse contexts will be offered in Section 4.3.

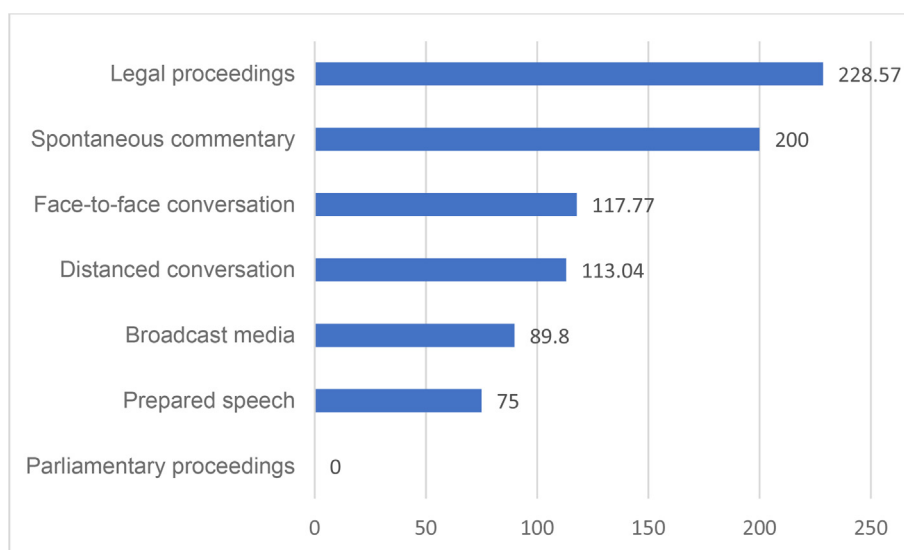


Fig. 1. Distribution of *all*-clefts across discourse contexts in the  $\text{LLCs}$  (frequency per million words).

#### 4.2. Form–meaning properties

As already mentioned, the two criteria used for the identification of *all*-clefts are formal and semantic in nature. An *all*-cleft should contain two verbs, whereof one should be *be*, and *all* should evoke the meaning of ‘only’. We start with the formal properties identified in the present study. In terms of verbs, the most common second verbs in the *all*-clefts were *do* (31%, 37 occurrences), *say* (12%, 14 occurrences), which are also mentioned by Traugott (2008), as well as *(there) be* (8%, 9 occurrences), *know*, *want* (7%, 8 occurrences) and *need* and *have* (6%, 7 occurrences). In only 10% of the *all*-clefts in the LLCs, the second verb of the clause was followed by the *to*-infinitive, which suggests that the infinitive marker has lost ground in Present-Day English. This is in line with Traugott’s (2008: 159) findings about the decrease in the use of *to*-infinitive in the second half of the 17th century. Furthermore, *all* was followed by *that* in only 3.3% (4 out of 120) of the *all*-clefts found in the LLCs where *all* referred to the object of the *all*-cleft verb, e.g., *all that I am arguing is the relative decline of the power of kingship*. The majority of the *all*-clefts identified (63%, 76 out of 120) contained no modal verb. With regard to the modal verbs used in the LLCs, the majority (43%, 19 out of 44) expressed ABILITY, followed by NECESSITY (27%, 12 out of 44) and OBLIGATION (23%, 10 out of 44). The remaining modal verbs expressed HYPOTHETICALITY (5%, 2 out of 44) and POSSIBILITY (2%, 1 out of 44). The majority of modal verbs occurred in *all*-clefts where the main verb was *do* (57%, 25 *all*-clefts), followed by *all*-clefts where the main verb was *say* (18%, 8 *all*-clefts).

In terms of the types of clefts found in the data, regular *all*-clefts were the most frequent in the LLCs (63%, 76 occurrences), followed by demonstrative *all*-clefts (34%, 41 occurrences) and reverse *all*-clefts (3%, 3 occurrences). Since our categorisation of *all*-clefts was based on Biber et al.’s (2021) categorisation of *wh*-clefts which include but are not limited to *all*-clefts, no direct comparison can be made between Biber et al.’s (2021) results and our own findings in terms of the distribution of *all*-cleft types. However, the low frequency of occurrence of reverse *all*-clefts in the LLCs aligns with Biber et al.’s observation about reverse *wh*-clefts being the least frequent *wh*-cleft type in conversation (2021: 952–953). With regard to regular and demonstrative *all*-clefts, our findings differ from Biber et al. (2021) in the sense that we found regular *all*-clefts to be more frequent than demonstrative *all*-clefts in the LLCs. In terms of the formal properties of *all*-clefts, regular *all*-clefts (*All I do is playing ping-pong*) can be followed by a clause, noun phrase, the infinitive or a gerund with the focalised element occurring at the end of the message. In reverse *all*-clefts (*God help us all is all I can say*), the focalised element is given even more prominence by being placed clause-initially. Demonstrative *all*-clefts (*This is all I can tell you*) start with a deictic element, which may refer to a specific element or to all the information gathered in the discussion.

The formal properties described above are symbolically linked to the meaning potential of the *all*-cleft construction, which is to highlight a specific element in the message that speakers find particularly relevant. We argue that, by focalising an element, speakers exclude different perspectives. In this sense, the construction has a contractive function (Martin and White, 2005; Pöldvere et al., 2016) prompted by the exhaustive meaning of *all* (‘no more than’) (Homer, 2019: 2). When speakers use the construction in discourse, they mean “I believe nothing else is more important/relevant than the element I have focalised in my turn”, thus blocking alternative views. What these alternative views are depends on the construction’s specific pragmatic functions (see Section 4.3). This meaning potential of *all*-clefts is particularly interesting from the perspective of dialogicity and the dynamic negotiation of meaning in discourse (see the next section for examples).

#### 4.3. Pragmatic functions

Based on a close inspection of the form–meaning properties, the contexts of use of *all*-clefts, and whether you had a specific or a generic reference, we identified two broad pragmatic functions: (1) assertions, which include giving information, structuring discourse and establishing conditions for the assertion and (2) directives, which include questions, orders, recommendations and advice. If an *all*-cleft expressed a recommendation but you had a generic reference, then it was classified as an assertion because the recommended action was not to be taken by the addressee, e.g., *granny Elsie always used to give me cherry [...] and I think that’s all you’ve got to do*. In this sense, assertive *all*-clefts do not make reference to the addressee and therefore the focus is on the speaker, while directive *all*-clefts make reference to and focus on the addressee. Of the 120 *all*-clefts in the data, 91 (76%) are assertions and 29 (24%) are directives. Table 1 provides an overview of the two main functions along with their subtypes. The subtypes in Table 1 are ordered by frequency starting with the most common subtype. In what follows, we explain the rationale for the categorisation of the various functions. Next, we describe the specific uses of the 91 assertive and 29 directive *all*-clefts in the discourse contexts in which they were found, focusing on the three most common subtypes, and then explaining why the functions are likely to occur in these discourse contexts.



**Table 1**  
The main pragmatic functions of *all*-clefts and their subtypes.

Functions	Definition	Subtypes
<b>Assertions</b> (91 instances)	The speaker gives information, structures discourse or establishes the conditions for the assertion	The <i>all</i> -cleft is used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe a place, situation, need or activity as simple or as lacking interest/action</li> <li>• indicate limitation</li> <li>• refer to the surrounding discourse</li> <li>• indicate (in)sufficiency</li> <li>• explain/clarify a point</li> <li>• criticise someone</li> <li>• express compromise</li> <li>• cite someone</li> <li>• establish a hypothetical limit</li> <li>• take the floor politely</li> </ul>
<b>Directives</b> (29 instances)	The speaker addresses the hearer by making a request for action or information, giving an order, making a recommendation or offering advice	The <i>all</i> -cleft is used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• give instructions describing a procedure as straightforward</li> <li>• present a request made as non-imposing</li> <li>• offer advice by indicating a limitation on the part of the addressee</li> <li>• express criticism/disagreement by presenting an obligation as causing little inconvenience</li> <li>• make a request for information based on two alternatives</li> <li>• explain why something is done</li> </ul>

Before we describe the uses of the *all*-cleft construction, a couple of points are worth mentioning. First, context always fosters the more exact meaning of an utterance. Moreover, the subtypes of each pragmatic function are not mutually exclusive as more than one subtype can occur in a specific *all*-cleft instance, which indicates the multifunctional character of *all*-clefts. A relevant example is provided in (7) from a face-to-face conversation from LLC-2 between two partners discussing the procedure of selling their house. The current speaker is complaining about the behaviour of Mark (anonymised), i.e., one of the people involved in the selling of the house.

(7) I said what the fuck has Mark been doing he's I sent them in **all he has to do is forward an email to the solicitor** and just hasn't done it

Example (7) contains an assertion, and the speaker uses the *all*-cleft construction to achieve two goals: (i) to criticise Mark and (ii) to indicate that the action taken by him was insufficient. Furthermore, since the function of the construction is to focalise an element, which is a function shared by all *all*-clefts, focalising has not been included as a separate category in Table 1. Similarly, *all*-clefts serve to prevent the hearer from making additional assumptions due to the exhaustive meaning of *all*. In this sense, part of the meaning potential of the construction is contractive as the speaker does not acknowledge other possibilities (Martin and White, 2005). This contractive effect of *all*-clefts is illustrated in (8) from legal proceedings, which is the discourse context richest in *all*-clefts. The example is from a court hearing from LLC-1 where the judge is stating his conclusion about the relationship between two individuals involved in a court case.

(8) Amongst the friends is Mr Waldo and **that's all there is to it** as I have come to a conclusion so that this charge of adultery or an improper association of a sexual nature with Mr Waldo fails in my view completely

The judge in (8) uses the *all*-cleft to assert his judgement regarding the nature of the relationship between the two individuals. By using the *all*-cleft, he blocks alternative interpretations of the situation described, which is also supported by the comment *this charge of adultery [ ... ] fails in my view completely*. Interestingly, *that's all there is to it* lacks any hedging, which serves to indicate the speaker's certainty, thus reinforcing the construction's contractive function. This contractive function of *all*-clefts is particularly useful in adversative discourse contexts such as radio phone-ins and legal hearings where each party has to defend their position and block alternative interpretations, assumptions or even accusations. Since the contractive function is part of the meaning potential of the construction and shared by all *all*-clefts, it has not been included as a separate function in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows, the most common use of the 91 assertive *all*-clefts in the LLCs was to describe a place, situation, need or activity as simple or as lacking interest or action. This use was found in spontaneous commentary and face-to-face conversation. Example (9) from a conversation in LLC-2 among equals illustrates this use. The discussion is about the speaker's father's job, who is an orthopaedic surgeon.

(9) He's not a doctor he's a body mechanic cause **all he does is like see patients** who are otherwise well but have some pain somewhere the next time he sees them they're unconscious and he puts Methylin in them and then he leaves

The conversation in (9) is about how various medical specialities exhibit different levels of doctor–patient interaction. The speaker is comparing her father's job to that of a mechanic. She uses the *all*-cleft construction to describe his job as lacking any activity in the form of interaction between the doctor and the patient. In order to support this comparison, she also uses expressions such as *He puts Methylin in them* while patients are *unconscious*, which construes patients as objects rather than human beings. The speaker has used the *all*-cleft to present her father's job as lacking action.

The second most common use of assertive *all*-clefts in the data from the LLCs was to express limitation in terms of what the speaker can contribute to the discussion, limitation relating to someone else's ability or resources available. This use was found in face-to-face conversation, broadcast media, distanced conversation, spontaneous commentary and legal proceedings. Example (10) from LLC–1 illustrates the use of the construction in face-to-face conversation between disparates and is from an interview involving two academics (speakers a and B) and a prospective undergraduate student (speaker A).

- (10) B: We can't really tell Mrs Ferret now here and now can we  
 a: I don't think so no  
 B: no no  
 a: no it's not our practice to  
 B: we'll have to let you know later you see  
 A: well I wasn't expecting to know until April [...]  
 B: no we'll have to [...]  
 B: well **that's all we can do I think Mrs Ferret** [...] and we'll have to let you know what we decide about your application

After an interview, applicants are often interested to know the outcome of the interview. In (10), the *all*-cleft construction appears towards the end of the interview. Speaker B uses the *all*-cleft to express some limitation to what the interviewers can disclose. The *all*-cleft relates to speaker B's previous statement *we can't really tell Mrs Ferret now*, where a negated modal verb was used. The *all*-cleft construction thus seems to be more polite in the sense that it contains no overt negation, but instead presents the action as a limitation to what the speaker can do. Moreover, there is a contrast in style between the negative *can't* and the declarative *that's all we can do* whereby the speaker is presented as willing but unable to take a course of specific action. The *all*-cleft construction thus serves to express the same negative message in a less face-threatening fashion for politeness-related reasons, which can explain the use of the construction in (face-to-face and distanced) conversation. In legal proceedings, the construction can be used to emphasise the information speakers are willing to share rather than information they may be unwilling to disclose.

The third most common use of assertive *all*-clefts in the data from the LLCs was to indicate the content of the speaker's turn, similar to Bonelli's (1992: 33) preface and postface functions of *all*-clefts. Indicating the content of the speaker's turn occurred in discourse contexts such as face-to-face conversation, broadcast media, legal proceedings and prepared speech. Example (11) from a UK Supreme Court hearing in LLC–2 illustrates this use.

- (11) **All I would say in relation to that is that is two things firstly** the extent to which the review mechanism is necessarily [...] **secondly more importantly** in some senses the issue of the monitor demonstrates

The speaker in (11) has used the *all*-cleft construction to provide the outline of the content of his upcoming turn, thus helping the hearers in terms of how many points they should expect. This discourse structuring function is useful in discourse contexts such as prepared speech and legal proceedings, where speakers are expected to prepare the audience for the upcoming information for reasons of clarity.

In terms of the 29 directive *all*-clefts in the data, their most common use was in instructions whereby speakers explained a procedure and presented it as straightforward and as requiring little effort. Example (12) from LLC–2 is from a science demonstration on how to make LED throwies.

- (12) If the LED doesn't light up then you know you've got it the wrong way around **all you have to do is flip it** once it's the right way the LED will light up

As the speaker gives instructions in (12), she indicates the procedure the addressee should follow. By using *all you have to do is flip it*, she construes the procedure as simple in view of the 'not much' meaning of *all*. The *all*-cleft thus serves to indicate that the course of action to be taken is straightforward in a way that the addressee is not intimidated by a potentially complicated procedure. This function was found in spontaneous commentary as it is particularly relevant in demonstrations where speakers give instructions to hearers and present them as easy so as not to discourage the audience.

The second most common use of directive *all*-clefts was to present a request for information or action as minimally imposing. Example (13) from LLC–2 comes from a conversation between two friends where the current speaker is expressing her dissatisfaction with the behaviour of her ex-boyfriend.

- (13) He's older than me do you know what I mean **all I'm asking from you is get a grip** either like I'm not even being as harsh as to say you need to sort your whole life out

By using the *all*-cleft *all I'm asking from you is get a grip*, the speaker in (13) presents her request as minimally inconvenient. This function is highly useful in face-to-face conversation as it describes the action to be taken as not requiring much effort so that addressees are not deterred from carrying out the action requested of them. In this sense, the request is presented as non-face-threatening for addressees since they are not asked to do something extraordinary.

Finally, directive *all*-clefts were often used by speakers in order to offer advice. Speakers pointed out a limitation to what addressees could do and contrasted this limitation with what the addressees could do to overcome it. This use was found in face-to-face conversation between disparates, in particular advisory meetings, as in (14) from LLC–2 involving the same participants as (1) in section 1.

- (14) A: Actually Merced may get a revival and everyone might wanna go there so there's no real figures that I can give you that will be a true representation of anything unfortunately **all you can do is make sure your application is good**  
 B: okay

In (14), the coordinator (speaker A) uses the construction to advise the student to focus on what he can do and prevent him from worrying about things beyond his control. In this sense, the speaker offers advice in a way which does not come across as

discouraging since it highlights the elements which are within the addressee's control. This function is particularly relevant to discourse contexts in which the addressees may be worried, such as advisory meetings.

#### 4.4. Development of the construction

In line with the third research question of the study, this section tracks the development of the *all*-cleft construction by comparing the frequencies and uses of the construction between the LLCs. The empirical investigation concerned the development of the *all*-cleft construction over the past 50 years. As previously mentioned, we identified 56 occurrences of the construction in LLC-1 and 64 occurrences in LLC-2. While the construction is more frequent in LLC-2 compared to LLC-1, this difference is only minimal and therefore does not suggest real change. However, an interesting finding is that, while the construction makes up ~5% of all instances of *all* in LLC-2, it constitutes only ~2% of the instances in LLC-1, thus indicating a double increase over time within the larger schema of instances of *all* in spoken English. A formal indication of change from LLC-1 to LLC-2 was the presence or absence of *that* when *all* was the object of the verb of the *all*-cleft. While *all* was followed by *that* in approximately 7% (4 out of 56) of the *all*-clefts in LLC-1 (*All that we're seeing is a projection of that motion*), no such instances were found in LLC-2 (*All I remember were four bathrooms*). This difference in the use of *that* between LLC-1 and LLC-2 may be a sign of further reduction of the syntactic properties of the *all*-cleft construction since the time of the recordings of LLC-1. Traugott (2022: 86) explains that reduction describes the loss of semantic or syntactic properties of an item undergoing grammaticalisation, which has been defined as a process whereby a construction "loses in autonomy by becoming more subject to constraints of the linguistic system" (Lehmann, 2004: 155). As she explains, reduction processes occur after constructionalisation (Traugott, 2022: 90), which is an indication of some of the constructional changes that the *all*-cleft construction has undergone in Present-Day English.

In terms of the motivation for the development of the *all*-cleft construction since its emergence, we argue that it relates to the pragmatic strengthening of invited inferences (Traugott and Dasher, 2002). In particular, as speakers use the *all*-cleft innovatively, they invite the smallness and exhaustivity meanings of *all*. The invited inferences draw in part on the meaning potential of the construction invoked in the dialogic context through metonymisation, which is in line with Paradis (2011). The meaning potential of *all* in the cleft construction is to highlight something as synonymous with 'only X' (Tellings, 2020: 9) and 'no more than X' (Homer, 2019: 2). This interpretation may have developed from the meaning of *all* as 'everything' in the Modern English period as reported by Traugott (2008), where the meaning configuration of 'everything' is one of singularity. A metonymical shift to highlight this singularity (rather than plurality) appears to have been reinforced in the next step where the meaning is reported to be 'only'.

Apart from metonymisation, subjectification has played a role in the development of the *all*-cleft construction. By focalising a point using an *all*-cleft, speakers single out an aspect they find particularly relevant in a given situation. This exhaustive reading of *all* invites the association between the focalising function of *all*-clefts and the contractive intersubjective use of *all*-clefts which excludes alternative perspectives and promotes the speaker's viewpoint. In assertive *all*-clefts, speakers focus on the information they find relevant to the discussion, while in directive *all*-clefts speakers focalise the action that should be taken by the addressee. Since assertive *all*-clefts focalise the information the speaker finds relevant without involving the addressee, they exhibit increased subjectivity, whereas directive *all*-clefts have an intersubjective character as the speaker acknowledges and pays particular attention to the hearer as a participant in the speech event.

With regard to the development of the pragmatic functions of *all*-clefts found in the LLCs, the analysis revealed that assertions are the prevalent pragmatic function of the construction in both LLC-1 and LLC-2. Fig. 2 shows these results. In

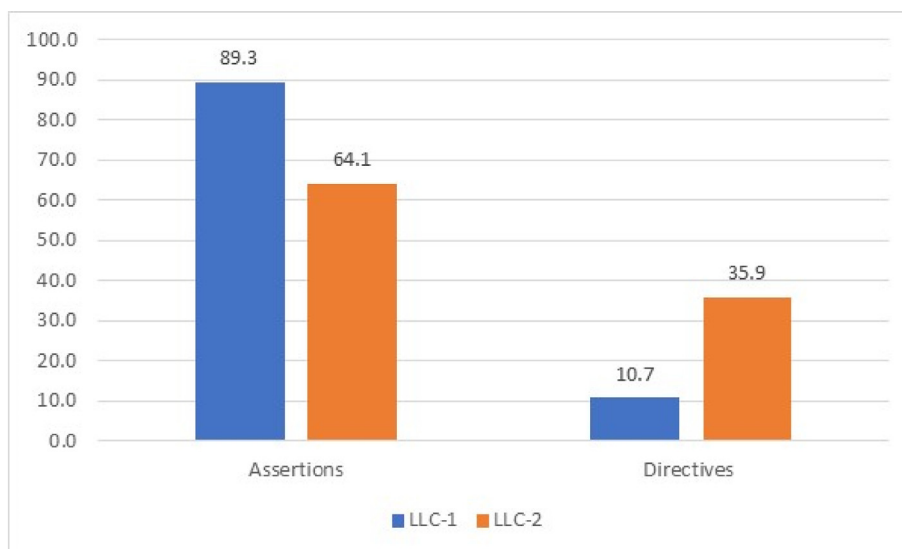


Fig. 2. Frequency of the pragmatic functions of *all*-clefts in LLC-1 and LLC-2.

particular, 89.3% of the *all*-clefts in  $\text{LLC-1}$  (50 out of 56) are assertions, and 10.7% of the *all*-clefts (6 out of 56) are directives. In terms of  $\text{LLC-2}$ , 64.1% of the *all*-clefts (41 out of 64) are assertions and 35.9% (23 out of 64) are directive *all*-clefts. As the figures indicate, there is an increase in the use of directives in  $\text{LLC-2}$  compared to  $\text{LLC-1}$  and a decrease in assertions.

A simple Pearson's Chi-squared test with Yates' correction for continuity in RStudio (2020) showed that the distribution of the pragmatic functions in the corpora is statistically significant at the 5% level ( $\chi^2 = 9.0377$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

A closer inspection of the pragmatic functions across the LLCs suggests that, after constructionalisation, *all*-clefts have undergone context expansion, which often occurs after constructionalisation (Traugott and Trousdale, 2013: 230). In particular, assertive *all*-clefts in  $\text{LLC-1}$  are used to comment on the speaker's turn by indicating what they are going to say and their contribution to the speech event. In most cases, speakers include themselves as the subject of the *all*-cleft, e.g., *and all we wanted was to hold on to that*, while there are few cases of the construction referring to a third party. Furthermore, the examples in  $\text{LLC-1}$  convey a rather descriptive message. The assertive *all*-clefts in  $\text{LLC-2}$ , on the other hand, are used to refer to specific people who are not necessarily present in the speech event and seem to convey a somewhat critical attitude to the people who, in the speaker's point of view, have not done enough. In this sense, *all*-clefts seem to have undergone sub-jertification since the recordings in  $\text{LLC-1}$  as they are more often used to express an attitude towards a specific person or situation, as in (7) from  $\text{LLC-2}$  reproduced here as (15).

(15) I said what the fuck has Mark been doing he's I sent them in **all he has to do is forward an email** to the solicitor and just hasn't done it

With regard to the development of directive *all*-clefts since the 1950s, they are used in  $\text{LLC-1}$  in instructions where *you* could be interpreted to have generic reference. This use is also found in  $\text{LLC-2}$  instructions in spontaneous commentary such as science demonstrations. However,  $\text{LLC-2}$  also includes directives in which the speaker indicates to the addressee how they should behave in a specific situation, as in the case of conversations where the interlocutors disagree with each other such as in (16) from a radio phone-in between a citizen and a Member of Parliament.

(16) I think Minister you know you just have to be really really honest and say yes the funding rate hasn't increased... you just have to be honest **that's all you have to be** there's no arguing about it

Furthermore, directive *all*-clefts are used in  $\text{LLC-2}$  to address the hearer and to provide advice on what to do, such as in the advisory meetings discussed previously. In this sense, the profiling of more contextually specific reference is more common in  $\text{LLC-2}$ . The *all*-cleft construction has thereby acquired a more intersubjective inclination since  $\text{LLC-1}$ , as speakers attend to the needs of their interlocutor(s) and use the construction to advise or criticise them. This metonymical shift seems to have been facilitated by the association of the 'not much' meaning of the construction, used in relation to the speakers' own turn and descriptions of past situations as simple in  $\text{LLC-1}$ , with the burden of difficulty involved in the task to be undertaken by the addressee in  $\text{LLC-2}$ . The shifts observed since the 1950s regard mainly the semantic aspect of the construction, whereas the form of the construction has been affected to a smaller degree. In this sense, the shifts that have been observed, such as context expansion, are instances of constructional change rather than constructionalisation.

#### 4.5. Comparability level between the LLCs

Having analysed the development of *all*-clefts since the 1950s, this section provides a critical assessment of the level of comparability between the LLCs, with respect to research question 4. In order to do this, we turn to the frequencies of the *all*-cleft construction in each text of the corpora (see the Appendix).

As expected, the frequencies are quite low, with most texts contributing no occurrences at all. The texts that stand out in terms of the number of *all*-clefts they contain are from  $\text{LLC-2}$ . We focus on two of them: T084 with six occurrences and T013 with five occurrences. T084 is an instance of a spontaneous commentary on a series of science demonstrations conducted by a male speaker, with an estimated age of around 40 years. It is possible to find texts with similar characteristics in  $\text{LLC-1}$  (science demonstrations with speakers with similar demographic information) and so it seems that any differences between the corpora are unlikely to be due to local situational factors. Moreover, the *all*-clefts in the text from  $\text{LLC-2}$  are instructions (or directives), which present the procedure as simple and straightforward (e.g., *All you need to do is pour ...*). As an important part of science demonstrations, such uses of the *all*-cleft construction are equally likely to occur in  $\text{LLC-1}$ . The same is true of T013 from which (13) was taken. It is a face-to-face conversation between equals, in this case two female speakers, both aged 24. The conversation revolves around a series of text messages sent to one of the speakers by her ex-boyfriend. The *all*-clefts in this text are used to express dissatisfaction with the ex-boyfriend's actions or inactions (e.g., *Be an adult that's all I'm asking you to do*), although it is difficult to say with certainty if they are part of the responses to the ex-boyfriend or not. Either way, speaking negatively about a third person is common in informal conversation including in  $\text{LLC-1}$ . Also, many of the recordings in the earlier corpus were made surreptitiously, which means that speakers were unaware of the recordings and the conversations were even more private in that sense. Therefore, any shifts in the frequency of *all*-cleft constructions with a directive function in the LLCs seem to have been due to change in Present-Day spoken English rather than a fluke in the design of  $\text{LLC-2}$  modelled on  $\text{LLC-1}$ . This suggests that there is a high degree of comparability between the LLCs, making them suitable for diachronic investigations of spoken language. In terms of the present study, it means that the empirical investigation above includes all the texts in the corpora.

A couple of methodological points are worth noting as guidance for future investigations using the LLCs. First, none of the texts in the LLCs that stood out in terms of frequency were face-to-face conversations between disparates, which is a text category which is considerably larger and more diverse in  $\text{LLC-2}$  compared to  $\text{LLC-1}$ . This is different from a recent

study of the diachronic development of advice-giving by Pöldvere et al. (2022), who found a high number of forceful advice constructions in one text in LLC–2, i.e., a study-abroad advisory session. Since no similar context was found in LLC–1, this prompted the authors to run statistical analyses with and without the text in question to compare the results and provide reliable explanations. No such text-specific comparisons were necessary in the present study. Second, in addition to text-level frequencies, future studies should consider individual differences between the speakers based on the information in the user guides of LLC–1 and LLC–2, both of which are readily available (Greenbaum and Svartvik, 1990; Pöldvere et al., 2022). After all, many of the instances of the *all*-clefts in LLC–2 in this study were produced by the same speakers (the science communicator, the person complaining about her ex-boyfriend). The individual differences can be explained through more sophisticated statistical analyses such as mixed-effects regression models (Gries, 2015) based on larger numbers of data. The problem for LLC–1, however, is that this information is not readily available in the earlier corpus due to incomplete speaker metadata (see Section 3.2). There is no simple solution to this problem. A possible one would be to correct the speaker IDs based on the voice qualities in the audio files. Whether or not someone is up for the task is for the future to tell.

## 5. Conclusion

This study had an empirical and a methodological aim. The empirical aim was to provide an account of the form–meaning properties of *all*-clefts and their pragmatic functions, as well as to track their development since the 1950s. In terms of the construction's form–meaning properties, we identified three formal variants, i.e., regular, demonstrative and reverse, and the pragmatic functions of these constructions were assertions and directives. We found an increase in directive *all*-clefts in LLC–2, which indicates an increase in the intersubjectivity of the construction. We drew on Cognitive Linguistics focusing on Diachronic Construction Grammar (Traugott and Dasher, 2002; Paradis, 2011; Pöldvere and Paradis, 2019) to account for the motivations and mechanisms of change involved in the usage of *all*-clefts in the past 50 years. It was shown that the meaning of the construction in all its uses has been to focalise a specific element speakers find particularly relevant, and by doing so speakers exclude alternative perspectives. In this sense, the construction has a contractive function (Martin and White, 2005; Pöldvere et al., 2016), which may have developed as a result of increased subjectivity and speakers' needs to express their own perspective. The contractive function has developed through the concomitant metonymic highlighting of the exclusivity reading of *all* 'no more than' in the dialogic context where the construction is used. In the case of *all*-clefts, speakers may use the construction to mean 'I believe nothing else is more important/relevant than the element I have highlighted in my turn'. This applies to the pragmatic functions found in the specific discourse contexts such as in instructions, in which speakers single out the action which they think would benefit the hearer the most in order to achieve a goal.

Next, the methodological aim was to provide a critical assessment of the level of comparability between the LLCs based on a detailed investigation of the occurrence of *all*-clefts in each text of LLC–1 and LLC–2. We showed that the texts that stood out in terms of frequency in one corpus compared to the other had an equivalent in the other corpus in terms of the situational context (e.g., science demonstration) and the main demographic information about the speakers (age, gender). On a global level, this demonstrates the high degree of similarity between the designs of the LLCs and, by extension, the suitability of the corpora for principled diachronic investigations of Present-Day spoken English. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that this study is only one example of how linguistic phenomena are distributed in the LLCs and that further investigations could reveal inconsistencies (see, e.g., Pöldvere et al., 2022). We welcome such investigations, because it is only by being fully aware of what is "under" the corpora that we can provide reliable explanations about language use, variation and change. On a local level, it gives us confidence that the differences in the distribution of *all*-clefts in this study were due to shifts and changes in language use rather than to local situational factors caused by internal variability in one corpus or the other (cf. Leech, 2007). Finally, this study adds to the growing body of work on change in spoken English based on the new corpora currently available.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the editors of this special issue, Andreas Jucker and Elisabeth Reber, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement of the article.



**Appendix. Distribution of all-cleft constructions in the London–Lund Corpora (number of occurrences per text)**

llc-1		llc-2		llc-1		llc-2	
Text ID	Freq.	Text ID	Freq.	Text ID	Freq.	Text ID	Freq.
S.1.1	0	T001	2	S.5.8	1	T051	0
S.1.2	0	T002	0	S.5.9	0	T052	1
S.1.3	0	T003	0	S.5.10	0	T053	4
S.1.4	1	T004	0	S.5.11	0	T054	0
S.1.5	0	T005	0	S.5.12	1	T055	0
S.1.6	0	T006	0	S.5.13	0	T056	0
S.1.7	3	T007	1	S.6.1	0	T057	0
S.1.8	1	T008	0	S.6.2	1	T058	0
S.1.9	0	T009	1	S.6.3	1	T059	0
S.1.10	1	T010	0	S.6.4	0	T060	0
S.1.11	1	T011	0	S.6.5	1	T061	0
S.1.12	3	T012	0	S.6.6	0	T062	0
S.1.13	0	T013	5	S.6.7	2	T063	0
S.1.14	1	T014	0	S.6.8	0	T064	0
S.2.1	1	T015	0	S.6.9	1	T065	0
S.2.2	3	T016	1	S.7.1	0	T066	0
S.2.3	1	T017	1	S.7.2	0	T067	0
S.2.4	1	T018	0	S.7.3	0	T068	0
S.2.5	0	T019	0	S.8.1	1	T069	1
S.2.6	0	T020	0	S.8.2	1	T070	1
S.2.7	0	T021	0	S.8.3	1	T071	0
S.2.8	1	T022	1	S.8.4	1	T072	0
S.2.9	0	T023	0	S.9.1	1	T073	0
S.2.10	0	T024	2	S.9.2	0	T074	0
S.2.11	0	T025	1	S.9.3	0	T075	0
S.2.11	0	T026	1	S.9.4	0	T076	0
S.2.12	1	T027	0	S.9.5	0	T077	1
S.2.13	0	T028	0	S.10.1	0	T078	0
S.2.14	1	T029	2	S.10.2	0	T079	0
S.3.1	1	T030	0	S.10.3	0	T080	0
S.3.2	0	T031	0	S.10.4	0	T081	0
S.3.3	1	T032	0	S.10.5	0	T082	2
S.3.4	1	T033	0	S.10.6	1	T083	2
S.3.5	0	T034	0	S.10.7	1	T084	6
S.3.6	0	T035	0	S.10.8	0	T085	4
S.3.7	0	T036	2	S.10.9	2	T086	0
S.4.1	2	T037	0	S.10.10	0	T087	4
S.4.2	2	T038	1	S.11.1	1	T088	1
S.4.3	0	T039	0	S.11.2	0	T089	3
S.4.4	0	T040	0	S.11.3	1	T090	0
S.4.5	0	T041	1	S.11.4	0	T091	1
S.4.6	0	T042	0	S.11.5	0	T092	0
S.4.7	0	T043	0	S.11.6	0	T093	1
S.5.1	1	T044	1	S.12.1	0	T094	0
S.5.2	0	T045	4	S.12.2	1	T095	2
S.5.3	0	T046	0	S.12.3	0	T096	0
S.5.4	2	T047	0	S.12.4	3	T097	0
S.5.5	0	T048	2	S.12.5	0	T098	0
S.5.6	0	T049	0	S.12.6	1	T099	0
S.5.7	2	T050	1	S.12.7	0	T100	0

**References**

- Anthony, Laurence, 2022. *AntConc* (4.0.3) [Computer Software]. Waseda University. <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconcl/>.
- Biber, Douglas, Johansson, Stig, Leech, Geoffrey N., Conrad, Susan, Finegan, Edward, 2021. *Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam. <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.232>.
- Börjars, Kersti, Vincent, Nigel, George, Walkden, 2015. On constructing a theory of grammatical change. *Trans. Philol. Soc.* 113 (3), 363–382. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-968X.12068>.
- Bonelli, Elena, 1992. "All I'm saying is ..." the correlation of form and function in pseudo-cleft sentences. *Lit. Ling. Comput.* 7 (1), 30–42. <https://doi.org/10.1093/lc/7.1.30>.
- Calude, Andreea, 2008. Demonstrative clefts and double cleft constructions in spontaneous spoken English. *Stud. Ling.* 62 (1), 78–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9582.2007.00140.x>.
- Cameron, Deborah, 2001. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. SAGE Publications, London.
- Clark, Herbert, 1996. *Using Language*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords. n.d. Retrieved 8 June 2022, from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldcomp/compso2017/compso06.htm#a58>.

- Croft, William, Cruse, Alan, 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Fischer, Kerstin, 2015. Conversation, construction grammar, and cognition. *Lang. Cognit.* 7 (4), 563–588. <https://doi.org/10.1017/langcog.2015.23>.
- Fried, Mirjam, Östman, Jan-Ola, 2005. Construction grammar and spoken language: the case of pragmatic particles. *J. Pragmat.* 37 (11), 1752–1778. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.03.013>.
- Goldberg, Adele, 2006. *Constructions at Work: the Nature of Generalization in Language*. Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199268511.001.0001> ePublications.
- Greenbaum, Sidney, Svartvik, Jan, 1990. The London–Lund corpus of spoken English. In: Svartvik, Jan (Ed.), *The London–Lund Corpus of Spoken English: Description and Research*. Lund University Press, Lund, pp. 11–59.
- Gries, Stefan Th, 2015. The most underused statistical method in corpus linguistics: multi-level (and mixed-effects) models. *Corpora* 10 (1), 95–125.
- Homer, Vincent, 2019. That's all. In: Stockwell, Richard, O'Leary, Maura, Xu, Zhongshi, Zhou, Z.L. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 36th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*. Cascadia Proceedings Project, pp. 1–21.
- Johansson, Mats, 2001. Clefts in contrast: a contrastive study of IT-clefts and WH-clefts in English and Swedish texts and translations. *Linguistics* 39 (3), 547–582. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.2001.023>. SwePub.
- Kay, Paul, 2013. The limits of construction grammar. In: Hoffmann, Thomas, Trousdale, Graeme (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Construction Grammar*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195396683.001.0001>.
- Kitis, Eliza, 2009. From motion to emotion to interpersonal function: the case of *fear* predicates. In: Hanna, Pishwa (Ed.), *Language and Social Cognition*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin & New York, pp. 433–454. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110216080.3.433>.
- Leech, Geoffrey, 2007. New resources, or just better old ones? The holy grail of representativeness. In: Hundt, Marianne, Nesselhauf, Nadja, Biewer, Carolin (Eds.), *Corpus Linguistics and the Web*. Rodopi, pp. 133–149. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401203791\\_009](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401203791_009).
- Lehmann, Christian, 2004. Theory and method in grammaticalization. In: *Zeitschrift Fur Germanistische Linguistik*, 32, pp. 152–187. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfgl.2004.32.2.152>.
- Linell, Per, 2005. *The Written Language Bias in Linguistics: its Nature, Origins and Transformations*. Routledge, London & New York. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203342763>.
- Love, Robbie, Demby, Claire, Hardie, Andrew, Brezina, Vaclav, McEnery, Tony, 2017. The spoken BNC2014: designing and building a spoken corpus of everyday conversations. *Int. J. Corpus Linguist.* 22 (3), 319–344. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.22.3.02lov>.
- Martin, James R., White, Peter R.R., 2005. *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511910>.
- Meurer, Paul, 2012. Corpuscle – a new corpus management platform for annotated corpora. In: Andersen, Gisle (Ed.), *Studies in Corpus Linguistics*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1075/scl.49.02meu>.
- Paradis, Carita, 2004. Where does metonymy stop? Senses, facets, and active zones. *Metaphor and Symbol* 19 (4), 245–264. <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1904-1>.
- Paradis, Carita, 2005. Ontologies and construals in lexical semantics. *Axiomathes*. 15, 541–573.
- Paradis, Carita, 2011. Metonymization: A key mechanism in language change. In *Defining Metonymy in Cognitive Linguistics: Towards a consensus view*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Paradis, Carita, Victoria, Johansson, Nele, Pöldvere, 2021. *Spoken Language in Time and across Time [Special Issue]*. *English Language and Linguistics* 25 (3), 449–675.
- Pöldvere, Nele, De Felice, Rachele, Paradis, Carita, 2022. *Advice in Conversation: Corpus Pragmatics Meets Mixed Methods*. Cambridge University Press (Elements in Pragmatics), Cambridge. doi: 10.1017/9781009053617.
- Pöldvere, Nele, Paradis, Carita, 2020. 'What and then a little robot brings it to you?': The reactive what-x construction in spoken dialogue. *English Language and Linguistics*. 24 (2), 307–32. doi:10.1017/S1360674319000091.
- Pöldvere, Nele, Paradis, Carita, 2019. Motivations and mechanisms for the development of the reactive what-x construction in spoken dialogue. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 143, 65–84. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2019.02.008.
- Pöldvere, Nele, Fuoli, Matteo, Paradis, Carita, 2016. A study of dialogic expansion and contraction in spoken discourse using corpus and experimental techniques. *Corpora*. 11 (2), 191–225. doi:10.3366/cor.2016.0092.
- Pöldvere, Nele, Victoria, Johansson, Carita, Paradis, 2021. On the London–Lund corpus 2: Design, challenges and innovations. *English Language and Linguistics* 25 (3), 459–483. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674321000186>.
- Reading speeches—Erskine May—UK Parliament. n.d. Retrieved 7 June 2022, from <https://erskinemay.parliament.uk/section/4851/reading-speeches/>. RStudio Team [Computer Software]. 2020. Retrieved from <https://rstudio.com/>.
- Quirk, Randolph, Greenbaum, Sidney, Leech, Geoffrey, Svartvik, Jan, 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman, Harlow.
- Talmy, Leonard, 2000. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics: Typology and Process in Concept Structuring*. A Bradford Book, Cambridge.
- Tellings, Jos, 2020. An analysis of *all-clefts*. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics*. 5 (1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.1092>.
- Tissari, Heli, 2007. Compressing emotion to politeness: on I fear and I Am afraid. In: Rissanen, Matti, Hintikka, Marianna, Kahlas-Tarkka, Leena, McConchie, Rod (Eds.), *Change in Meaning and the Meaning of Change: Studies in Semantics and Grammar from Old to Present-Day English*. Société Néophilologique, Helsinki, pp. 57–90.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, 2008. "All that He endeavoured to prove was...": on the emergence of grammatical constructions in dialogical and dialogic contexts. In: Cooper, Robin, Kempson, Ruth (Eds.), *Language in Flux: Dialogue Coordination, Language Variation, Change and Evolution*. Kings College Publications, London, pp. 143–177.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, 2022. *Discourse Structuring Markers in English: A Historical Constructionalist Perspective on Pragmatics*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam. <https://doi.org/10.1075/cal.33>.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, Trousdale, Graeme, 2013. *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199679898.001.0001>.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, Dasher, Richard B., 2002. *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ward, Gregory, Birner, Betty, Huddleston, Rodney, 2002. Information packaging. In: Huddleston, Rodney, Pullum, Geoffrey (Eds.), *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1363–1448. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316423530>.
- Weinert, Regina, Miller, Jim, 1996. Cleft constructions in spoken language. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 25 (2), 173–206. doi:10.1016/0378-2166(94)00079-4.

Eleni Seitanidi is a doctoral student of English Linguistics at Lund University, Sweden. She is investigating spoken discourse from a Cognitive Linguistics and Construction Grammar perspective. She has also worked on social media discourse and the use of hashtags on Twitter. <https://portal.research.lu.se/en/persons/eleni-seitanidi-2>

Nele Pöldvere is a Postdoctoral Fellow in English Linguistics at the University of Oslo, Norway. Her research follows two main directions: the language of fake news and spoken language. In the latter, she is interested in the combination of social motivations and cognitive mechanisms of speech production, comprehension and change in Present-Day English.

Carita Paradis is Professor of English Linguistics at Lund University, Sweden. She has published extensively on the dynamics of meaning-making in human communication to contribute to a better understanding of what language reveals about social interaction, perception and cognition, and inversely how those systems influence and structure natural language use. <https://www.sol.lu.se/en/person/CaritaParadis/>