The Grammaticization of *but* as a Final Particle in English Conversation

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Abstract

In contemporary Australian fiction, ending a turn with *but* is becoming stereotyped as distinctive of Australian English (Mulder 2002). Fascinated to know to what extent this might reflect spoken conversation, and whether it might not be restricted to Australia, we began making a collection of examples from various sources of spoken American and Australian English.

From these data emerge two hypotheses. Firstly, in contemporary spoken English (and written Australian dialogue), the behaviour of *but* can be modelled as a continuum from a prosodic-unit-initial conjunction to a prosodic-unit-final discourse particle in a way that suggests a grammaticization process in progress. The usage of 'final *but*' in Australian English, and its grammaticization pathway, seems precisely parallel to that of *though* (Barth-Weingarten/Couper-Kuhlen 2002).

Secondly, as *but* 'moves' along this continuum, its conversational function changes, in a way that is consistent with what has been described in the grammticization literature. What we find with our American data is that both prosodically and sequentially, speakers give evidence of taking another's prior *but*-ending utterance as having been finished, but with an implication left 'hanging'. Sometimes they ratify the implication left hanging by the final *but*, and sometimes they simply go on with a turn that assumes that implication. However, our Australian data provide considerable evidence that there are many uses of 'final *but*' which have progressed far enough to be considered final particles. Not only are these uttered with final prosody, but the participants do not behave as if there are any implications left 'hanging'. To argue for these claims, we draw on contemporary American and Australian data, looking at prosody, turn organization, and the interactional actions in which the speakers are engaged.

Keywords

grammaticization, pragmatics, conversation, contrast, *but*, concession, interaction and grammar, emergent linguistics, Australian English, American English

The Grammaticization of *but* as a Final Particle in English Conversation[1]

1. Introduction

Jefferson (1980) introduces the term 'syntactic conjunctionals' to include the words *and*, *but*, *because*, *so*, and *or*. She is interested in them because of their implications for the way speakers handle overlap in conversation: these 'syntactic conjunctionals' seem to be 'weak' 'in terms of taking or holding speakership'.

Our interest in this paper is in one of these forms, namely *but*. Our data strongly confirm that this word tends to be overlapped; in this paper we consider *but* in terms of 'taking and holding speakership' as it grammaticizes towards a final particle in English conversation. We refer to this as 'final *but*'.

From our data emerge two hypotheses. Firstly, in contemporary spoken English (and written Australian dialogue), the behaviour of *but* can be modelled as a continuum from an IU-initial conjunction to an IU-final discourse particle in a way that suggests a grammaticization process in progress.[2] The continuum that emerges from our data can be schematized as:

(1)   initial *but*   >   Janus-faced *but*   >   final *but*

   [IU-initial 'conjunction']   [IU-final 'discourse particle']

The usage of 'final *but*' in Australian English, and its grammaticization pathway, seems wholly parallel to that of *though* (Barth-Weingarten/Couper-Kuhlen 2002).

Secondly, we hypothesize that as *but* 'moves' along this continuum, its conversational function changes from that of a turn-continuing 'connective' to a turn-yielding discourse particle, in a way that is consistent with what has been described in the grammaticization literature.[3]

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[1]   We are grateful to these people for valuable discussion of the ideas in this paper: Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, Robert Englebretson, Bryan Fricker, Ritva Laury, Gene Lerner, Geoffrey Raymond, Hongyin Tao, and Caroline Thomas.

[2]   For ease of reference, following Chafe (1994) and Du Bois et al. (1993), we call these prosodic units Intonation Units (IUs), fully recognizing that prosody involves much more than 'intonation'.

[3]   While our hypothesis that the change in conversational function is consistent with the grammaticalization literature is supportable from our data, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address this issue in detail.

To demonstrate these claims, we draw on contemporary American and Australian data rather than historical data, considering prosody, turn organization, and interactional actions .[4]

2. Data

In dialogue in contemporary Australian fiction, 'final *but*' is becoming stereotyped as distinctive of Australian English (Mulder 2002). Here are two examples:

(2)　　*O'Fear.* (Peter Corris (1991:100))

> Bradley slapped the tops of his thighs. "Mine accident," he said. "Both legs buggered for good. Compo's[5] coming through, **but**."
>
> I nodded. "No hope?" I said. "Physio? Operation?"
>
> "Stuffed," he said. "Mind you, I miss the fishing more than the bloody work.

(3)　　*Murder in Montparnasse* (Kerry Greenwood (2002:244))

> '…Got a few mates who play jazz. Not my kind of music, **but**. And them musos drink like wharfies, a man can't hardly keep up with them. I'll come round about lunchtime tomorrow, all right? Today, I mean,' said Bert, noting that the church clock said half past twelve.

Fascinated to know to what extent this might reflect spoken conversation, and whether it might not be restricted to Australia, we began to cull instances from various sources of data, garnering a collection of about 50 instances from our spoken data, 33 from our dialogue in written fiction data, and 30 from internet forums. These are obviously not comparable; we use them in our argumentation accordingly.

- Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (Du Bois et al. 2000, 2003); Du Bois/Englebretson 2004, 2005)
- other spoken American conversations
- International Corpus of English – Australia (ICE-AUS)
- Monash University Dimensions of Australian English Corpus
- contemporary Australian fiction
- various Australian films and live television shows
- Australian Word Map (www.abc.com.au/wordmap/)
- various internet news groups

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[4]　As noted, we find this grammaticization happening in both Australian English and American English; in fact, it appears to be more widespread than this, occurring also in New Zealand English and some varieties of Scottish, Irish and British English, but we will largely restrict our claims to these two sites for which we have substantial video and audio data.

[5]　*compo*: compensation for injury at or in connection with a person's work.

3. The phenomenon

3.1 Initial *but*

It is not surprising that the majority of uses of *but* in conversational English are what can be called 'initial *but*s'.[6] Characteristically, an 'initial *but*' begins an IU, whether or not another IU precedes it in the same turn, generally indicating contrast. Examples are easy to find.

(4)   SBC0006 ("Cuz") 55.43-59.23[7]

1	ALINA:	So he got another radi[o this] summer,
2	LENORE:	[H)=]
3	ALINA:	**but** of course that got ripped off also.
4		<VOX **But** never mind VOX>.

We will not discuss the conversational uses of the 'initial *but*' here (for discussion see Ford (2000), Mazeland/Huiskes (2001), Schiffrin (1987), and Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson (2000)).

3.2 Final *but*

What we are calling the 'final *but*' has two central features: it ends an IU and it ends a turn. To give a feel for this use, we provide several examples, all from our American data.

(5)   SBC0008 ("Tell the Jury that") 1303.52-1309.90

1	RICKIE:	I don't think he would do anythi=ng,
2		… when people are around.
3	REBECCA:	[Right].
4	RICKIE:	[You know],
5		down at the other seat[2s or <X in2] back X>,

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6   We do not have quantitative support for this claim, but after combing through large amounts of data, our impression is that 'initial *but*' outnumbers 'non-initial *but*' by about 5 to 1.

7   For our spoken examples, we have kept the transcription system used by the original transcriber. For the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English, this is the system described in Du Bois et al. (1993). For certain others, it is the Jefferson system described in Atkinson/Heritage (1984). One noteworthy difference is that '=' in the Jefferson system indicates 'latching', when 'there is no interval between adjacent utterances, the second being latched immediately to the first (p. x), while in the Du Bois et al. system, '=' indicates vowel lengthening.

6	REBECCA:	[2Right2].
7	RICKIE:	I could scream **but**,
8		.. (H)
9	REBECCA:	Yeah.

(6)   SBC0006 ("Cuz") 1392.02-1399.22

1	ALINA:	(H)= It was funny.
2		(H)... [That's the only part] I'll miss **but**,
3	LENORE:	[So X X] --
4	ALINA:	<X uh X> [(Hx)] --
5	LENORE:	[His position] is pretty uh,
6	ALINA:	... % (TSK) (H) stable.
7		.. Yeah.

(7)   Coffee 3.3[8]

1	Steve:	What is French [over the phone.]
2	Karen:	[He and Didier -] give lessons over the phone.
3	Charles:	French lessons.
4		(1.0)
5	Steve:	Was this their own: - idea?
6		(2.8)
7	Karen:	W'l now Didier - makes his money by going to Atlantic City **but**-
8		(1.7)
9	Charles:	hhh hhh HAH HAH HAH HAH
10		(1.3)
11	Karen:	'ts inCREDible,
12		how they live -
13	Charles:	It IS incredible.

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8   In examples (7) and (8) heavy stress is indicated by capital letters.

(8)   Game Night 16

Talking about whether Abbie is Norwegian or not.

1	Abbie:	It's a complica[ted story.]
2	Terry:	[totally.]
3	Maureen:	R(h)eally.
4	Abbie:	And the NA:ME is MY NA:ME is Norwegian **but**,
5	Maureen:	What a- what is his [nationality?]
6	Terry:	[Sola.]
7	Abbie:	Hungarian,
8		(1.0)

In each of these examples, a *but* ends an IU, and a turn; smoothly and with no evidence of trouble, another participant then takes a turn. Yet there is a clear implication left 'hanging', such that the clause ending with *but* seems to be a concession, with the claim it is a concession for only implied (see Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson (2000). In (8), for instance, Abbie concedes that her name is Norwegian, leaving open the implication, confirmed by the conversational context, that she herself is not Norwegian. As we will see just below, there is strong evidence in the data that participants orient to this 'hanging' implication.

Two questions immediately come to mind in considering each of these examples. First, what is their prosody? Second, what is their conversational function? We will address each of these in turn.

Prosodically, there are several questions to consider. First, as we have noted, by definition, these 'final *but*s' are final in their IUs.

Second, and more important, is what Local/Kelly (1986) call attention to: whether the *but* is followed by a 'holding' silence or a 'trail-off' silence (p. 195). The turn-holding *but* ends with a final glottal closure which is maintained through a silence and only released at the beginning of the following word produced by the same speaker. The trail-off *but* ends with an audible exhalation and no glottal closure. 'Trail-off' *buts* 'imply that they are a legitimate place for turn transition to occur' (p. 195).

Unfortunately, the sound quality of many of our examples does not allow us to distinguish between these two types of *but*. However, we do have several examples where we can hear the exhalation and/or where exhalation is marked by the transcriber. Let's consider (9) again:

(9)   SBC0006 ("Cuz") 1392.02-1399.22

| 1 | ALINA: | (H)= It was funny. |
| 2 | | (H)... [That's the only part] I'll miss **but**, |

3   LENORE: [So X X] --

4   ALINA: <X uh X> [(Hx)] --

5   LENORE: [His position] is pretty uh,

6   ALINA: ... % (TSK) (H) stable.

7   .. Yeah.

In line 1, Alina comes to a point of possible turn completion, then inhales and goes on to produce another turn unit, which also comes to a point of possible completion with *but* in line 2. The next syllable cannot be heard distinctly, though it sounds like *uh*, and then Alina exhales ('Hx' in line 4) in overlap with Lenore's next turn, *his position is pretty uh,*. According to Local/Kelly's analysis, the *but* in line 2 would be an example of a 'trail-off' 'final *but*', and Alina's exhalation in line 4 is an indication that she intends to yield the floor; in fact, simultaneously with this exhalation, Lenore indeed does take a turn.

The third prosodic issue we want to address relates to what Du Bois et al. (1993) refer to as 'transitional continuity', that is, whether the ends of IUs have contours that seem 'final', 'continuing', 'appealing', or 'cut off'. Intriguingly, and perhaps counter-intuitively, we have found examples of 'final *but*' that exhibit each of these. The examples above are various transcribed by researchers with commas and with dashes. Listening to each of them, we do not find any consistent correlates to these symbols, nor do we hear any consistent pattern among the examples; all could be perceived as complete (and could be transcribed with semi-colons in the GAT transcription system (Selting et al. 1998).[9] We note that Local/Kelly also found that pitch was not a reliable indicator of the distinction between 'turn holding' and 'turn-yielding' *but*s:

> Interestingly, the pitch characteristics which precede these two kinds of 'silence' would not on their own serve to uniquely distinguish the kinds of utterance (195).

Finally, we note that many of our 'final *but*s' are followed by substantial pauses, which is another cue that the speaker considers the turn to be at an end, as shown in (7), repeated here:

(10)   Coffee 3.3

1   Steve: What is French [over the phone.]

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[9]   What seems clear is that emerging prosodic contours are routinely judged by interlocutors as to whether they are possibly whole *gestalts* or not; our research suggests that what may not be so clear is at what exact point in an emerging contour prosody allows judgments about a speaker's intention to continue. See Szczepek Reed (to appear) for discussion.

2	Karen:	[He and Didier -] give lessons over the phone.
3	Charles:	French lessons.
4		(1.0)
5	Steve:	Was this their own: - idea?
6		(2.8)
7	Karen:	W'l now Didier - makes his money by going to Atlantic City **but**-
8		(1.7)
9	Charles:	hhh hhh HAH HAH HAH HAH
10		(1.3)
11	Karen:	'ts inCREDible,
12		how they live -
13	Charles:	It IS incredible.

In this example, Karen has just told Steve and Charles that their mutual friend Didier has started a business teaching French over the phone. At the arrow, Karen finishes an IU with *but*. We can't hear whether there is any exhalation or not following this *but*, but there are two other indications that Karen is orienting to this point as a turn-transition point. First, the *but* is prosodically hearable as completing her turn. Second, there is a noticeably long pause — about 1.7 second long — which also suggests that she does not intend to go on.

Prosodically, then, we find that while pitch does not seem to be a primary cue for whether the speaker has come to a point of possible completion with 'final *but*', there are a number of other cues surrounding its use, and that interlocutors characteristically orient to these, taking the turn to be at an end.[10]

Next we consider the conversational function of the 'final *but*'. To understand conversational function, we find the most fruitful approach to be one which establishes 'function' in terms of the course of action of which the linguistic item in question is a part, as persuasively argued by Fox (1987), Goodwin (1981, 1995), and Schegloff (e.g., 1979, 1996a, b); accordingly, we seek to establish the course of action that the participants themselves give evidence of being involved in when they use 'final *but*'.

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[10] At the same time, as Jefferson (1980) points out, a 'final *but*', like other 'conjunctionals', may be more vulnerable to overlap than other elements which typically end turns. In these cases, as analysts we are generally not able to determine whether the *but* is turn-holding or turn-yielding, simply because we, and presumably the conversational participants, cannot hear it well. For this reason, we have limited our investigation to those instances where *but* is not overlapped.

Intriguingly, we find evidence in the sequential organization surrounding the 'final *but*' to correspond with the prosodic distinction outlined just above. That is, corresponding to the turn-yielding *but* (that is, Local/Kelly's 'trail-off *but*'), we find evidence that participants share an understanding of what 'might have' followed that *but*.

To see this, let's consider (11) again.

(11)   SBC0008 ("Tell the Jury that") 1303.52-1309.90

1   RICKIE: I don't think he would do anythi=ng,

2   … when people are around.

3   REBECCA: [Right].

4   RICKIE: [You know],

5   down at the other seat[2s or <X in2] back X>,

6   REBECCA: [2Right2].

7   RICKIE: I could scream **but**,

8   .. (H)

9   REBECCA: Yeah.

Rickie's arrowed turn ends with *but* followed by a pause and an inhalation. Strong evidence that Rebecca is content to take Rickie's turn as having come to completion is her *yeah*, indicating her affiliation with Rickie's implication that screaming wouldn't have done any good.

Similarly, let's reconsider (12), (13) and (14):

(12)   SBC0006 ("Cuz") 1392.02-1399.22

1   ALINA: (H)= It was funny.

2   (H)... [That's the only part] I'll miss **but**,

3   LENORE: [So X X] --

4   ALINA: <X uh X> [(Hx)] --

5   LENORE: [His position] is pretty uh,

6   ALINA: ... % (TSK) (H) stable.

7   .. Yeah.

As background, Hector is moving from being associate producer of a TV show back to running the editorial unit for the show and just prior to this portion of the conversation Alina has been telling Lenore about a funny exchange that she had with Hector when she phoned him at work. In line 2 of (12), Alina's arrowed turn ends with

but, and, as noted above, there are several indications that she is taking her turn to be complete. Once again, Lenore's turn provides evidence that Lenore takes the turn to be complete as well, since she goes on with a new turn that suggests the 'good news' that might compensate for the fact that Alina will miss funny exchanges like the one she has just had; namely, that overall Hector's situation with the TV show he works on is 'pretty stable'.

(13)   Coffee 3.3

1	Steve:	What is French [over the phone.]
2	Karen:	[He and Didier -] give lessons over the phone.
3	Charles:	French lessons.
4		(1.0)
5	Steve:	Was this their own: - idea?
6		(2.8)
7	Karen:	W'l now Didier - makes his money by going to Atlantic City **but**-
8		(1.7)
9	Charles:	hhh hhh HAH HAH HAH HAH
10		(1.3)
11	Karen:	'ts inCREDible,
12		how they live -
13	Charles:	It IS incredible.

In this example, Karen finishes the arrowed turn with *but*, then there is a significant pause, suggesting that she has completed her turn, after which Charles laughs loudly in what is easily hearable as a response to the implication of her *but*-ending turn, which is something like 'but we won't count his gambling at the moment'.

(14)   Game Night 16

1	Abbie:	It's a complica[ted story.]
2	Terry:	[totally.]
3	Maureen:	R(h)eally.
4	Abbie:	And the NA:ME is MY NA:ME is Norwegian **but**,
5	Maureen:	What a- what is his [nationality?]
6	Terry:	[Sola.]
7	Abbie:	Hungarian,
8		(1.0)

Just prior to this part of the conversation it has been established that Abbie's parents lived in Norway, but are not Norwegian. At the arrow, Abbie's IU has both low pitch and low amplitude, and clearly sounds final. Partly because of the heavy stress on *NA:ME*, the implication is clear that although her name is Norwegian, she is in fact not Norwegian. Maureen's next turn shows that she not only has taken Abbie to be finished, but she has gotten the implication and is pursuing the nationality of Abbie's father.[11]

What we have shown so far with our American data, then, is that both prosodically and sequentially, speakers give evidence of taking another's prior *but*-ending utterance as having been finished. Sometimes they ratify the implication left 'hanging' by the final *but*, and sometimes they simply go on with a turn that assumes that implication.

However, our Australian data provide considerable evidence that there are many uses of 'final *but*' which have progressed far enough to be considered final particles. Not only are these uttered with final prosody, but there are no implications left 'hanging'. We return to these data in section 4 below.

3.3 Janus *but*

Between the 'initial *but*' and the 'final *but*' on the grammaticization pathway schematized in (1) is what we are calling the 'Janus *but*s'. They are 'between', and are dubbed 'Janus', because they have properties of both 'initial' and 'final' *but*s. They can thus be hypothesized to represent the crucial reanalysis stage in the grammaticization process we are proposing whereby the 'final *but*' is emerging from a discourse pattern in which the contrasting material associated with the 'initial *but*' is not made explicit but left to inference.

Expanding the continuum in (1), we have been able to usefully distinguish a 'Janus 1' type which is closer to being a 'initial *but*' and a 'Janus 2' type which is closer to being a 'final *but*'. Again, we hypothesize that these can be taken as correspondingly 'earlier' and 'later' stages of the grammaticization process by which the 'final *but*' is emerging from the 'initial *but*'. We illustrate and discuss these below.

3.3.1. Janus 1

In the 'Janus 1' examples, the speaker begins an IU with a *but*, as if it were an 'initial *but*'. The material which is subsequently produced relates to that preceding the *but* with precisely the sorts of semantically contrasting content that we find following our 'initial *but*' examples. However, the clause it initiates happens only in a successive IU; in other words, the 'Janus 1 *but*' occurs in its own IU. Here is an example:

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[11]   Terry's overlapped turn in line 6 probably refers to the Norwegian municipality of Sola where presumably Abbie's parents lived.

(15)   SBC0013 ("Appease the Monster") 1544.68-1548.63

1   MARCI: I don't know what the real story is,

2   **but**,

3   … (1.1) it sounded kinda neat.

Here Marci finishes one clause in line 1, continues with *but* in line 2, then after a rather long pause of 1.1 seconds, she adds a contrasting clause. *But* here is thus serving both as a potential 'final *but*' — it comes across as being final upon its production — and as a 'initial *but*', since in fact, after some delay, Marci does go on to add another clause.

We've said that 'Janus *but*' can be modelled as occupying the middle space on a continuum from the 'conjunction' 'initial *but*' to the 'final particle' 'final *but*'. According to this model we can say that Janus 1 examples have not progressed very far along this pathway: prosodically, they could be taken as 'final *but*s' upon their production, but in fact the speaker immediately provides further contrasting material in the same turn, which has the effect of turning them into introducers after all.

3.3.2. *Janus 2*

'Janus *but* 2' examples, on the other hand, can be viewed as much closer to the 'final *but*' end of the continuum. First, the *but* in these examples is uttered at the end of an IU, just like a 'final *but*'. Second, while the speaker does go on with her/his turn (unlike a 'final *but*'), we have no evidence with which to argue that this subsequent material is to be taken as contrasting with that preceding the *but*; in fact it appears to be initiating a new social action.

Consider (16), a discussion of a loan application among a group of bank loan officers:

(16)   SBC0014 ("Bank Produects') 1192.84-1208.05

1   JIM: .. we would charge (H) % .. five-hundred fifty dollars on ac- on an account,

2   it would be five-hundred dollars,

3   it's really kind of a switch around **but**,

4   (H) what .. what that would --

5   .. I think it would be good for (H) .. the five or six of us,

6   (H) to,

7   ... to have Galino down here,

In line 4, Jim concedes that his plan would be 'kind of a switch-around'. What follows, after a hesitation pseudo-cleft initiator *what that would* --, is not easily

inferable as accounting for the 'switch-around', but 'having Galino down' could be taken as indirectly relevant to discussing the particular loan application under scrutiny. The point is that, while Jim does produce further talk after uttering his *but*, the content of this talk is not clearly part of the same action that the *but* is indexing; rather, he seems to be initiating a recommendation regarding the advisability of 'having Galino down'.

As a further example, consider (17), in which Annette is talking to her mother, Alice, about her day at work, and that there had been a party at lunch with lots of food for 'customer appreciation day'; the referent of *em* is hot dogs:

(17)   SBC043 ("Try a Couple Spoonfuls") 259.454-267.828

1	ANNETTE:		So I had two of em,
2			and I mean the first one kinda tasted pretty [good?
3	ALICE:		[@@@@@@ (H)]
4	ANNETTE:		(H) And I ate the other one,
5			then half of the other one],
6			it was like,
7			whoah=.
8	ALICE:		.. [Yeah].
9	ANNETTE:	→	[I don't l]ike hot dogs that well **but**,
10			... (1.4) and then we had cake.

Annette's arrowed IU ends with *but*. Prosodically, it can be taken as complete, and again, her next IU initiates a new action: whereas the arrowed turn is a concession, leaving the implication that even though she doesn't 'like hot dogs that well', she ate these two anyway, the next IU returns to her recitation of what she had had to eat that afternoon.

3.4. Summary

What we have seen so far, then, is that the data we have to hand can be consistently and reliably sorted into at least three categories of *but* usage based on prosody and understandings displayed by participants of conversational organization. One category ('initial *but*') involves *but* being used to introduce talk which provides a contrast with what precedes it. Prosodically and sequentially, it is always taken by participants to be initiating a continuation of a turn.

The second category ('final *but*') involves *but* being used to complete a turn, regularly displaying the prosodic characteristics found at turn ends. As our examples illustrate, participants routinely orient to this *but* by beginning new turns in which they ratify the implication left 'hanging' by the final *but*, or they simply go on with a turn that assumes that implication.

The third category ('Janus *but*') can be viewed as the intermediate grouping, where the data provide indeterminate evidence as to whether the speaker has finished a turn upon uttering *but*. Prosodic and sequential characteristics of these turns indicate that the speaker could be finished, but no other speaker comes in to confirm that other participants take that turn to be finished. Instead, the speaker goes on, sometimes providing the semantically contrastive material in the same turn, but other times leaving the contrastive material implied and going on with a new social action.

4. Further inquiry into 'final *but*'

As noted above, our Australian data are rich with evidence to suggest that for Australian speakers, 'final *but*' has gone 'all the way' to become a final particle, with no implications of anything 'left hanging'. Indeed, consulting several Australian dictionaries and style guides, we find that the 'final *but* particle' is recognized (e.g. *The Australian Macquarie Dictionary* 3rd ed. (1997:246) and Peters (1995a: 102, 1995b:65)); three points emerge from these sources that are relevant to our hypotheses. First, the *Macquarie Dictionary* attributes 'final *but*' to 'non-standard speech' and Peters suggests that 'final *but*' is less 'accepted' or 'colloquial'. Second, this usage of *but* is likened to *though*. Third, in terms of its function Peters (1995b:65) notes: 'Some speakers use *but* at the end of a sentence as a way of softening its impact for the listener'.[12]

To get the feel of this 'final *but* particle', consider the following example from our Australian data:

(18)   MEP1F-B 21

Diana has just made some strange noises.

1	Kylie:	You sounded funny @@(H)
2	Diana:	I know.
3	→	Sounded like an alright person **but**.
4		(3.3)
5	Kylie:	<SING On Saturday, SING>

At the arrow, Diana finishes an IU with *but*. Here there are two clear indications that she is orienting to this point as a turn-transition point; namely, the end of the IU has a final contour and it is followed by a substantial pause of 3.3 seconds. We can see that Kylie takes Diana's turn as having been competed by the fact that after this considerable

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[12]   While the use of the 'final *but* particle' in our conversational and dialogue in written fiction data strongly support this observation, it is beyond the limited scope of this paper to pursue this here.

pause, she initiates a new social action of starting to sing softly. Note that unlike the American data, in this example there is no implication of semantically contrastive material left 'hanging' by the final *but*. In fact when we look more closely, what we see is that in the IU before the arrowed IU, Diana agrees with Kylie and then in the arrowed IU introduces the contrastive material in the form of an assessment about herself that she *sounded like an alright person.*

As another example, consider:

(19)   MEE1F-B 6

1	Cathy:		We've had new people join our [group].
2	Megan:		[yeah].
3	Sally:		Kylie,
4		→	She was a bit of a bitch **but**. (Hx=)
5	Cathy:		um.
6	Sally:		She [was].
7	Cathy:		[Al]icia.
8	Sally:		Alicia.

Here, Sally's arrowed IU in line 4 ends with *but*, and the final contour followed by an exhalation are prosodic clues that she takes her turn to be complete. Once more, Cathy's next turn provides evidence that she takes the turn to be complete as well; the *um* is prosodically hearable as questioning Sally's assessment of Kylie as *a bit of a bitch*. Sally then reaffirms her assessment in line 6 and Cathy goes on in line 7 to name another new person who has joined their group.

As in the previous example, there is no unstated implication following the final *but*. In line 3, Sally supports Cathy's statement in line 1 (which is acknowledged by Megan's overlapped *yeah* in line 2) by naming Kylie as a new person that has joined their group. In line 4, she then goes on to supply semantically contrastive material (as final particle *though* would), giving an assessment of Kylie.

What we see in these examples with the 'final *but* particle' is consistent across our Australian data: like 'final *but*' in the American data, it involves *but* being used to complete a turn. However, unlike the American 'final *but*', the Australian 'final *but* particle' always has a final contour and does not leave an implication unstated. Rather, the semantically contrastive material is supplied in the IU ending with the 'final *but* particle'. This leads us to conclude, to put it roughly, that Australia leads North America along the grammaticization pathway schematized above in (1).

The usage of *but*, and its grammaticization pathway, that we have argued for here seem quite parallel to that of *though*. As Barth-Weingarten/Couper-Kuhlen (2002) point out, *though* in IU final-position is prosodically unobtrusive, lacks pitch prominence itself, forms a single intonation contour with the semantically contrastive material

preceding it in the IU, and concedes a prior point without making the point explicit (pp. 348-9). They argue that 'final *though*' is derivable from of a cardinal concessive pattern where the marker of concession precedes rather than follows the contrastive material, and show how in present-day English 'final *though*' has developed as a discourse particle.

Judging from our data, and noting the parallelism between *though* and our final *but*, we are led to conclude that speakers are taking *but* as a resource that can be used as a conjunction and as a final discourse particle.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we have proposed a plausible grammaticization pathway being followed by the morpheme *but* in English, based on synchronic evidence from usage in two broad English-speaking communities.

This evidence shows (1) that careful attention to usage data can illuminate a grammaticization process in progress, (2) this pathway broadly appears to be similar to the one previously followed by *though*, and (3) in a diaspora situation, consistent synchronic patterns can be found which reveal that speakers of the same language in geographically separated speech communities are positioned at demonstrably different points along this pathway.

This kind of evidence argues strongly for an emergentist view of language structure, whereby large-scale patterns are created from repeated small-scale interactions (Bybee 1998, 2001, Haiman 1994, Hopper 1987, 1998). In this case, the change in progress that we are documenting can be seen in terms of the emergence of utterance-final particles in English,[13] particles which 'started out' as clause-initial conjunctions.

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[13] Raymond (2004) notes in passing that English *so* can be similarly understood, and an important body of research provides persuasive evidence that such a grammaticization pathway underlies the usage of a number of final particles in other languages as well (see especially Itani 1992, Lindström 1997, Mori 1999, Ohori 1995, and Park 1998).

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