Why as a Prefatory Interjection*

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Key words: discourse markers, why, interjections, explicature, English

0. Introduction
The English interj ectional discourse marker why is first attested in the 16th century. The earliest use recorded in the OED closely resembles present-day uses:

(1) — Then I perceive ye will make good cheer.
— Why, what should I else do? [1519, Interl. Four Elem. B. vij]

Why is common as an interjection in pre-twentieth century dramatic texts, often surpassing even well and o(h) in frequency. By the nineteenth century, however, the interj ectional use of why as reflected in such texts had begun to decline. Interj ectional why survives in British and American English but is now relatively uncommon both in drama and natural speech.

In this paper I will first examine earlier descriptions of the marker why in present-day English, then argue that why, although prefatory, is interpretively allied to freestanding 'gestural' interjections like wow and

*I wish to thank Hashimoto Kiyota for permission to use the Contemporary American English Corpus (CAMEC). A working version of this paper appeared as Schourup (1995).

1) Spellings in all examples have been modernized.
Several related issues will also be addressed, including: how the function of *why* affects its distribution; how *why* is related to the similar marker *well*; how *why* interacts with the inferential markers *so* and *then*; and how the word *why* acquired an interjectional use.

1. Earlier descriptions

1.1 OED

The OED entry for *why* distinguishes two contemporary interjectional uses:

- an expression of surprise (sometimes only momentary or slight; sometimes involving protest), either in reply to a remark or question, or on perceiving something unexpected

- emphasizing or calling more or less abrupt attention to the statement following (as in the apodosis of a sentence), in opposition to a possible or vaguely apprehended doubt or objection

On the first definition *why* indicates surprise on the part of the speaker at something textual or exophoric. The second definition focuses instead on the relationship between *why* and the utterance it prefaces.

The notions of surprise and doubt/objection which figure in these definitions are both highly qualified ("sometimes only momentary or slight", "possible or vaguely apprehended"). The need for these qualifications is suggested by the historical examples cited under each definition (for exx. 2a-b see OED 20: 307). Thus while in (2a) Mary's initial exclamation suggests full-blown surprise, the surprise in (2b) is merely rhetorical:

(2) a. 'Goodness gracious!' said Mary, ... 'Why, it's that very house.'
(1837, Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, xxxix)

b. Were there no such people as the Essenes? Why, no; not as
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Josephus described them. (1847, De Quincey, *Secret Soc.*, Wks. 1890 VII. 217)

Similarly, the notion of opposition to doubt or objection is contextually well supported in (3a) but harder to discern, if present at all, in (3b):

(3) a. Take an honest woman from her husband!

   Why, it is intolerable. (1596, *Sir T. More* 1.1.122)

b. *Ham.* I shall in all my best obey you Madam.

   *King.* Why 'tis a loving, and a fair reply.

   (1602, Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.2.121)

1.2 Lakoff (1973)

Lakoff (1973: 461–2, 464–6) argues that *why* before an answer indicates surprise that the question has been asked. She claims that *why* may be used either when the answerer thinks the questioner knows the answer already, or when the answerer feels she is not expected to know the answer, as in (4a) and (4b), respectively:

(4) a. Q: Hey, Harry, who’s buried in Grant’s Tomb?

   A: Why, General Grant! (fr. Lakoff ex. 13)

2) It is clear in context that, while the king might harbor private doubts about Hamlet’s declaration, and might well imagine that Hamlet harbors his own feelings of doubt or objection, it is not in the king’s interest to draw Hamlet’s attention to doubts of either kind. His purpose in addressing Hamlet is only suited if he appears to take the reply at face value. Since the king shows not doubt/objection but delighted surprise, the OED might better have classed (3b) with (2a) and (2b) (assuming, for the moment, that it is valid to distinguish two separate uses).

3) Lakoff notes that this generalization does not apply to ‘prompt’ questions asked by teachers to students. Such questions are acceptable even though the teacher is understood to know the answer in advance. However, Lakoff’s claim (1973: 462) that *why* is never used to preface answers to such questions may be overstated.

4) Lakoff claims that *well* is unacceptable in this example, but *well* seems to me fully acceptable if phonologically reduced to *w’l*.
b. Q: How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?  
A: Why, how should I know?/Why, I wouldn’t know.  
(=Lakoff ex. 15)

In Lakoff’s view *why* in both (4a) and (4b) indicates surprise that the question “is not being asked in accordance with the rules” (ibid., 464). She notes that *why* has a similar function when introducing a response to a statement, as in (5):

(5)  
A: My daughter is taking painting lessons.  
B: Why, isn’t your daughter still in nursery school?  
(cf. Lakoff ex. 19) 

In Lakoff’s view the *why*-prefaced utterance in such cases “indicates that the statement to which it is a reply was surprising to [the speaker]—that is, not in keeping with the rules under which the discourse was developing” (ibid.). She also sees surprise (more specifically, astonishment) in examples like (6), in which *why* precedes the response to an unfulfilled command:

(6)  
Why, haven’t you taken out the garbage? (=Lakoff ex. 20)

*Why* used sentence-internally, as in (7), is said to have a different use:

(7)  
Now, as soon as the aardvark discovered the anthill, why, he ran home lippity-lop to get his shovel. (=Lakoff ex. 24)

Lakoff characterizes *why* on this use as “a rhetorical device, meaning something like ‘What follows is so obvious as scarcely to need mentioning, I don’t know why I bother with this.’” She comments that *why* cannot be used “when something in a narrative is not the obvious conclusion to be drawn from what occurred previously and from one’s as-

5) I have substituted for Lakoff’s example one that is brief and cross-culturally accessible.
sumptions about the situation". as in (8): ⁶)

(8) *Now, as soon as the aardvark discovered the anthill, why, he ran home lippity-lop to get a quarter to go to the movies. (=Lakoff ex. 25)⁷)

Lakoff’s view thus countenances two distinct uses of *why*, as indicating surprise at a foregoing utterance, and as indicating within a narrative that what follows is an obvious conclusion. She does not attempt to bridge the gap between these uses.

1.3 Traugott (1982)

Traugott (1982: 255) comments on *why* only briefly, citing this example:

(9) If you have any trouble reaching her, why, just feel free to call me.

In Traugott’s view *why* in (9) is “hearer-engaging” and represents a development from the complementizer (*I know why the caged bird sings*), which is in turn regarded as a development from interrogative *why*.

1.4 Quirk et al. (1985)

Quirk et al. (1985: 444) categorize *why*, on one use, as an ‘initiator’. They also place in this class *well*, *oh*, *ah*, *oh well*, and *well then*. Both the use of *why* as an introductory word before questions and statements and

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⁶) Note that the obviousness in question might only be perceptible to the speaker. Thus, for example, there is nothing odd about saying *If you don’t want to miss the morning mail, why you’d better leave after ten* to someone who knows nothing of when the mail is delivered. Such utterances often suggest that the hearer should have known the information in question.

⁷) It is, of course, possible to imagine circumstances in which it would be natural for the aardvark to go to the movies upon finding an anthill. It is also possible to imagine a reading for (8) in which *why* indicates something other than the obviousness of what follows (see Section 2, n. 8).
its use with negative if-clauses (Why, if it isn’t Susan!) are claimed to express surprise (ibid., 819, 842). The use of why in conditionals, as in (10), is also noted (p. 819):

(10) If HE doesn’t want to press charges, why YOU should.

Why in (10) is described as “a more emphatic conjunct than then”. Quirk et al. do not comment on whether the surprise they find in other uses of why is also present in such examples.

1.5 Bolinger (1989)

Bolinger’s comments on why are situated within a discussion of English intonation. He refers to why as “the most subdued” lexical interjection, characterizing its exclamatory use as follows:

When it is produced as an exclamation it is handled in a very special way: a brief phonation is punctuated by a breathy aspiration in the form of a chest pulse (ballistic movement of the diaphragm)—one might spell it wuh!, though varying amounts of the [ai] diphthong are apt to be retained. The mood is one of anxious surprise and perplexity, the same as we find with well in its reduced w’l form when the latter is given the same brief phonation and breathy articulation. It is sometimes hard to tell whether the exclamation is w’l or wuh. Between exclamatory why and what follows, there is a brief pause as the speaker gropes for words: ‘This accusation (inference, claim, etc.) is totally unexpected and totally unjustified; I don’t see why I should have to deal with it.’ (Bolinger, 1989: 293)

To characterize the meaning of why on both exclamatory and nonexclamatory uses Bolinger turns to the definition of medial why in narrative (as in ex. 7 above) proposed by Lakoff: ‘What follows is so obvious as scarcely to need mentioning, I don’t know why I bother with this.’ Bolinger notes that this definition contains a use of “cognate in-
terrogative *why*” and that this inclusion is appropriate since it “implies surprise at the need to bring something up” (ibid., 294). He cites six other situations in which *why* is used with this implication. These are listed in (11) with Bolinger’s illustrative examples. In all these uses *why* is clause- or sentence-initial and unaccented.

(11) a. ‘Explanations’:
   *If you want to know, why, just ask!*  
   b. ‘Cases where the answerer goes the question one better (*even* is expressed or implied)’:  
   *It’s just as good, isn’t it? — Why, it’s (even) better!*  
   c. ‘Situations that seem unreasonable to the speaker’:  
   *I can’t understand what happened to Eddie! Why, just a moment ago he was standing right here!*  
   *It’s too heavy for me. — Why, can’t you even lift five pounds?*
   d. ‘Superfluous invitations’:  
   *It’s Johnny, isn’t it? And his two friends? (Pause) Why, come in! Don’t just stand there!*  
   e. ‘Realizations of something that the speaker acknowledges should have been obvious to him’:  
   *Didn’t the name “Gowers” come up in the conversation? — (Hesitates and strikes forehead) Why yes, come to think of it!*  
   *And that means ... !*
   f. ‘Consequences that it seems superfluous to point out’:  
   *When they caught sight of my face, why, they practically fainted!*  

2. *Why* and surprise

Dictionaries typically refer to the interjection *why* as ‘an expression of surprise’. Lakoff’s first definition of *why* and the first OED definition focus on surprise. Surprise also figures in the comments on *why* by Traugott and by Quirk et al., and, as an implication, in Bolinger’s definition (see also Brinton, 1996: 204, 271). It is clear that *why*-
prefaced utterances do, at least in most cases, convey surprise on the part of the speaker, but it is more difficult to show that this element is specifically encoded by why.

In a discussion of intonationally conveyed surprise Bolinger (1986: 298) comments that surprise is

an emotion so comprehensive that it can be read into almost any sort of exercised utterance. One can be surprised and angry, surprised and hurt, surprised and frightened, surprised and incredulous, or surprised and delighted—surprise comes with the abrupt timing of almost any active emotion (patience would be excluded, as it has time to build up).

If surprise can be “read into almost any sort of exercised utterance”, we need to ask whether it is not also read into those uses of why that are said to indicate surprise—that is, whether, rather than being an encoded feature of the meaning of why, as most descriptions suggest, surprise is an inferred element in the understanding of particular why-prefaced utterances.

But first, what is surprise? An emotion, surely; something enclosing related notions like astonishment, shock, and being taken aback, and allowing for attendant attitudes such as delight, incredulity, and disapproval. There is more to surprise than emotion, however. Someone who is surprised has suddenly become aware of something that is unexpected under the circumstances and owing to this sudden, unexpected awareness experiences an emotional reaction. While the qualities of sudden apprehension and unexpectedness are in principle independent of each other, since something can be perceived suddenly without seeming unexpected, with surprise both qualities are necessary. The abruptness of surprise may at first seem dispensable, since we can say I’m surprised at how slowly this traffic is moving or Your appetite is surprisingly strong these days. But although such utterances refer to continuing or intermittent occurrences, they still suggest an initial moment
of abrupt cognition. Utterances like *I'm always surprised at how well you dance* or *I'm continually surprised by how tall you've grown* are either meant to function as rhetorical exaggerations or to suggest repeated forgetting and 're-cognition'. The abrupt apprehension in which surprise originates must, however, be distinguished from the emotion generated, which frequently lingers; thus, for example, it is possible to go on at length about how amazed one is.

To determine whether surprise is an encoded feature of the meaning of *why*, we can look for examples in which *why* is present but one or more necessary features of surprise are absent. If no such examples can be found, this will suggest that *why* does encode surprise. With this in view, let us consider a range of examples.

There are first fairly clear cases like the following:

(12) Something wriggling out of the shadow like a great snake. They look like tentacles to me. *Why*, I can see the thing’s body now. It’s large and—large as a bear. Ladies and gentlemen, it’s indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it, it’s so awful. (1938, Howard Koch, *War of the Worlds*, variant transcript.)

(13) You can have any kind of home you want. *Why*, you can even get stucco. Oh, how you can get stucco! (1929, Geo. S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind, *The Cocoanuts*)

It does seem plausible that *why* in (12) indicates surprise. The body of “the thing” is suddenly and unexpectedly noted and elicits an emotional reaction. *Why* in (13) also seems to indicate surprise, though only mock surprise with concurrent mock delight.

Surprise is less apparent in (14):

(14) A: Another dish of peach cobbler, maybe?
B: No, thanks. I’m quite full.
A: *Why*, let’s take a stroll in the garden, then, shall we?
Here A can be said to encounter B’s refusal suddenly and might regard it as unexpected, but A seems not to indicate a strong emotional reaction of any kind. To indicate any degree of genuine surprise at B’s refusal would be indelicate in this situation. A’s use of why is, however, consistent with sudden mild delight—perhaps a host’s mild delight or relief at knowing how a guest’s needs can better be met. Thus while it seems incorrect to say outright that A communicates ‘surprise’ at B’s refusal, some degree of conveyed sudden emotion cannot be ruled out.

Sentence-internal examples like (7), repeated here, appear to pose even greater difficulty for the notion that why indicates surprise than do examples like (14):

(7) Now, as soon as the aardvark discovered the anthill, why, he ran home lippity-lop to get his shovel.

This utterance does not convey that the speaker is surprised at the fact that the aardvark discovered the anthill. Moreover, what follows why is not unexpected, therefore not potentially surprising. On the contrary, the following clause conveys information to be heard as following naturally and expectedly from what precedes. This fact is what led Lakoff to treat why in such examples as distinct from why in examples like (4)–(5). 8)

Bolinger, however, sees surprise in examples of both kinds. In his view why on all uses conveys that the speaker is surprised at the need to bring something up. Bolinger is thus able to account for the obvious parallel between an example like (7) and one like (15):

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8) Not all medial uses of why indicate that what follows is obvious or natural. Consider: I went to the stationer’s yesterday and bought two ballpoints, and when I got them home, why, neither of them worked. Here the speaker might only be suggesting surprise (at the time) that the pens were faulty, or that the fact that they were faulty abruptly became apparent. To indicate that it was natural and expected that they would be faulty would undermine the speaker’s point. Such examples are in this respect similar to initial ‘discovery’ uses of why (Why, there’s the green umbrella!).
(15) Crummles: I am Vincent Crummles, and I’m in the theatrical profession [...] I have an eye for talent, Mr ...
Nicholas: Oh, uh, Johnson.
Crummles: Johnson? And yours struck me immediately.
Nicholas: Talent for what?

With slight elaboration, Bolinger’s proposal can even be extended to examples like (7), where the addressee need not have signaled a need for the speaker to mention what follows. In such cases it can be said that the speaker’s indication of surprise is only rhetorical in that the speaker is expressing surprise at the projected possibility that anyone might require the following information. This type of usage would then easily shade into a mere indication that what follows is strikingly natural or apparent.

Bolinger’s proposal is an improvement on Lakoff’s, but it is not comprehensive. There are why-marked utterances for which it is counterintuitive to say that why indicates surprise (even rhetorical surprise) at the need to say what follows. No such need is apparent, for example, in (12) and (13). Bolinger’s alternative gloss ‘I don’t know why I bother with this’, also seems inapplicable to such examples. A generalization that does seem applicable to all uses of why, however, is that something has readily entered the speaker’s mind, in the process occasioning an emotional reaction. This generalization is no less applicable to initial examples like (4)–(5) and (12)–(13), in which surprise is registered at what has been said or perceived, than to medial examples like (7), where conveying that the reaction comes to mind abruptly is sufficient in itself to support the contextual implication that what follows is obvious. The generalization is also applicable to examples like (14) in which it seems odd to say that the speaker is surprised.
Abruptness, unlike the other aspects of surprise, which are sometimes muted or missing, cannot be dispensed with. This can be seen by constructing an example in which it is highly unlikely that what follows \textit{why} came to mind at this very moment:

\begin{equation}
(16) \text{Some deeply deluded individuals think they can pull one over on me. \textit{Why}, they can't.}
\end{equation}

Here, because \textit{they can't} is foreshadowed by \textit{deeply deluded} in the previous sentence, it is mildly incongruous for the speaker to indicate that \textit{they can't} has just now come to mind. The related marker \textit{well} is at home in this slot since \textit{well} is entirely consistent with forethought. (For a detailed comparison of \textit{well} and \textit{why}, see Section 5 below.)

It seems wrong to specify the content of \textit{why} much further than this, for example by including a specification of the potential sources of the emotion indicated or the precise emotional quality involved. Lakoff's proposal that utterance-initial uses of \textit{why} suggest that something is "not in keeping with the rules under which the discourse was developing" (1973: 464) also seems to go too far. Building a vague reference to discourse rules into the meaning of \textit{why} accomplishes nothing and is, in any case, difficult to square with the data (e.g., ex. 12 and discourse-initial examples like \textit{Why, Beth! How nice to see you.}). We are left, then, with the robust notion that \textit{why} (setting aside its initiatory property for the moment) indicates that a response has arisen readily or abruptly in the speaker's mind in the process provoking a sudden emotional reaction that in most cases fits within the nebulous category 'surprise'. This is not a tidy description, but then, interjections tend to be useful precisely because forgoing their use results in elaborate circumlocutions. (See, for example, the complex formulations in Wilkins, 1992; Ameka, 1992; Wierzbicka, 1992.)

3. **Interpreting \textit{why} initial utterances**

In this section I will focus on the most typical use of \textit{why}, its use in
utterance-initial position, and ask how why in this position influences the interpretation of the utterance it introduces. There are two general situations in which why prefaces an utterance. It can introduce a reaction to something that has just been said, as in (17a), or to something discourse-external, as in (17b):

(17) a. In my opinion, you were responsible for his failure. — Why, that’s absurd.

b. There’s something wriggling out of the shadow like a great snake. They look like tentacles to me. Why, I can see the thing’s body now. (See ex. 12 above.)

In either case the speaker reacts to something perceived just prior to the occurrence of the why-marked utterance. At the same time, however, why in these examples seems to be processed in relation to the interpretation of the utterance it begins and to share properties with disjuncts (see Espinal, 1991, esp. pp. 729–735).

Typically, utterance-initial discourse markers (on a broad understanding of the term; see Schourup, 1999) comment in some way on the content of the utterance. We can begin the analysis of what initial why contributes to utterance interpretation, then, by asking what sort of comment why provides on the utterances it prefaces in (17a) and (17b). An initial possibility we might consider is that why indicates that the speaker views the propositional content of the marked utterance to be surprising. A reading of this kind is imaginable for (17a): the speaker could be indicating surprise at the fact that what the previous speaker said is absurd. It is also conceivable that the speaker of (17b) might be trying to indicate that he finds his being able to see “the thing” to be surprising, though it seems odd to say that it is his ability to see what is before him that is surprising rather than the sight itself.

In other cases, however, it is clear that any surprise indicated by why could not be the speaker’s surprise at the truth of the proposition expressed. Consider (18):
(18) Bill: I can't possibly play Falstaff. Why, I'm as thin as a rail.

Here if surprise is indicated, it is clearly not surprise at the proposition 'Bill is as thin as a rail', but rather at some prior indication, verbal or otherwise, that Bill should play the part of Falstaff. 9)

A more workable alternative is suggested by our earlier finding that, while the emotion conveyed by why is highly variable in both quality and source, why reliably suggests, in all contexts, that something has arisen abruptly in the speaker's mind. Perhaps, then, we could argue that the comment initial why offers on the following proposition is that it has come to mind abruptly, thus without premeditation, in the process occasioning some sort of emotional reaction in the speaker. To make this idea more specific, and abbreviate it for convenience, we might propose that the why-marked utterances in (17)-(18) are roughly paraphrasable as in (19):

(19) a. The speaker says abruptly and with emotion that that is absurd.
    b. The speaker says abruptly and with emotion that he can now see the thing's body.
    c. The speaker says abruptly and with emotion that he is as thin as a rail.

These paraphrases (duly elaborated) seem reasonable as far as they go. Appealingly, they do not go too far: they leave it to the hearer to determine, if communicatively relevant, why the speaker has bothered to indicate that what is said is said abruptly and with emotion. We clearly do want to leave the details to inference with this marker to accommodate the many different qualities and sources of unpremeditated reaction

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9) In (18) what follows why is a reason for what has just been stated in the previous sentence, but this feature is obviously not generalizable to all uses of why. It does not apply, for example, to (17a) and (17b).
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it can suggest.

It is thus feasible to regard initial marker uses of why as contributing to 'explicatures' like those in (19). The term explicature, as defined in relevance theory, refers to an assumption that is communicated by an utterance and that is an inferential development of a logical form of the utterance (see Sperber and Wilson, 1995 [1986]: 182–183; Wilson and Sperber, 1993: 16–19; Rouchota, 1998: 110). Explicatures are distinguished from implicatures, which are assumptions conveyed by an utterance that are not developments of its logical form. 10)

An analysis in terms of explicatures is also possible for sentence-internal uses of why. For example, it can be claimed that (20a) conveys roughly (20b):

(20) a. If the stain won’t come out, why the curtain will just have to be replaced.

b. The speaker says abruptly and with emotion that if the stain won’t come out, the curtain will just have to be replaced.

A potential problem with extending the analysis in this way is that (20b) may not be an ideal representation of what (20a) conveys. Intuitively, it is only the content of the matrix clause that is presented by the speaker as coming abruptly to mind. This is more apparent when the conditional clause is bulky:

(21) If, as we’ve just heard, there are actually a number of proposals likely to come in from places as widely separated as Europe, Asia, and South America, and if we really do want to have the arrange-

10) The explicatures in (19) are 'higher-level' explicatures in that the proposition expressed by the utterance is embedded under a higher level description. Levinson has argued that what are referred to as explicatures in relevance theory are in fact implicatures (see, e.g., Levinson, 2000: 194–198). However, Levinson misrepresents the relevance-theoretic position, incorrectly claiming, for example, that the theory takes each utterance to have only a single explicature (ibid. p. 24). For a critical response to Levinson's views on explicature, see Carston (forthcoming, Ch. 2).
ment turn out to be acceptable to everyone, including this com-
mittee and its various subcommittees, why it makes sense to hold
off a while longer on making a decision.

In using *why* the speaker of (21) is suggesting not that the conditional
and matrix elements both come readily to mind, but that the decision to
hold off requires no substantive forethought in view of all that has just
been said. This problem is not restricted to *why*. The same observa-
tion applies to other items which have a ‘commenting’ function, such as
illocutionary adverbials like *frankly*, which have also been regarded as
contributing to higher-level explicatures (see Ifantidou-Trouki, 1993;
Rouchota, 1998). Thus, if *frankly* is substituted for *why* in (21), the
speaker will more likely be heard as being frank in regard to the matrix
clause than to the whole utterance. This difficulty can easily be elimi-
nated, however, if (as proposed by Carston, forthcoming) the definition
of explicature is revised slightly to include inferential developments of a
sentential subpart of a logical form.

*Why* cannot, however, be regarded as contributing to explicatures in
the same way that illocutionary adverbials do. The parallel between
*why* and such adverbials is only superficial. A first sign of difference is
the fact that *why* sometimes cooccurs with illocutionary adverbials even
though they do not cooccur with each other:

(22) a. Why, frankly I don’t know.
    b. *Sincerely, frankly, I don’t know.

Consider also the variable acceptability of the following examples:

(23) a. Frankly, I don’t know where they went.
    b. I frankly don’t know where they went.
    c. I don’t frankly know where they went.
    d. I don’t know where they went, frankly.
    e. Why, I don’t know where they went.
    f. *I why don’t know where they went.
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g. *I don't why know where they went.

h. *I don't know where they went, why.

While *why seems somewhat better in (23f) and (23g) if spoken with pause intonation or, in writing, surrounded by commas, *frankly is acceptable without pauses in (23b) and (23c); moreover, while *why is categorically unacceptable in final position, *frankly is fully acceptable there.

Although both *why and *frankly may occur with the consequent in a conditional sentence, they display opposite ordering restrictions with respect to the marker *then:

(24) a. If he hesitates any longer, why then (*then why) I think we should withdraw the offer and reassess.

b. If he hesitates any longer, then frankly (*frankly then) I think we should withdraw the offer and reassess.

Moreover, there is again a difference in the effect of pausing. While pauses improve the acceptability of *why after *then in (24a), *frankly is fully acceptable after *then in (24b) with or without pauses. (See also Section 6 below.)

Such distributional differences are not really surprising, since *why is obviously not adverbial. It is thus impossible to construct a paraphrase like (25b) for (25a) parallel to the paraphrase of (25c) in (25d):

(25) a. Why, I find the notion abhorrent.

b. The speaker is saying why that she finds the notion abhorrent.

c. Frankly, I find the notion abhorrent.

d. The speaker is saying frankly that she finds the notion abhorrent.

To the extent that *why is acceptable in (25b), it is understood as a parenthetical interjection, ordinarily requiring commas/pause, rather than as a manner adverb. More generally, *why as a marker lacks a
straightforward relationship to the lexical meaning of nonmarker why of the sort that obviously exists between illocutionary and manner adverbial uses of a word like \textit{frankly} (see Wilson and Sperber, 1993: 16–19). Thus, while it does seem possible to see both why and illocutionary adverbials as contributing to explicatures, in other respects why cannot be grouped functionally with such adverbials. As we will see, the function of why is better described by taking its interjectional properties fully into account.

4. Distributional properties

Restrictions on the placement of why can in some cases be traced to the interjectional function of the marker. An initial regularity, however, may have a less revealing source: why does not ordinarily precede sentences containing initial situational ellipsis, as in (26): 11)

(26) a. (*Why,) should be here soon.
   b. (*Why,) afraid you’ll have to come back later.
   c. (*Why,) thing that gets me is not knowing who I can trust.
   d. (*Why,) friend of mine told me about it.
   e. (*Why,) president giving you a hard time?
   f. (*Why,) course I’m not.

\textit{Why} is permitted, however, with certain highly routine constructions in which \textit{it is}, \textit{there is}, or simply \textit{it}, is understood. Compare the routine ellipses in (27a-d) with the less routine cases in (27e-h):

(27) a. (Why,) \textit{nice to see you}, Leslie.
   b. (Why,) \textit{no wonder} the dog’s upset.
   c. (Why,) \textit{no use} worrying about it.
   d. (Why,) \textit{sounds good to me}.
   e. (*Why,) amazing that they can stand each other.
   f. (*Why,) very hot in here.

g. (*Why,) unthinkable that she would do such a thing!

h. (*Why,) fell between the cracks.

These distributional facts appear to concern not why but the operation of ellipsis itself. There is a general, though incomplete, restriction on the use of prefatory material preceding initial ellipsis. Consider (28a-b):

(28) a. *Confidentially, friend of mine told me about it.
   b. *To put it bluntly, can't see you again.

The restriction may have a phonological basis. Quirk et al. (1985: 896) suggest that initial situational ellipsis may be a form of phonological reduction, citing such examples as 'k you /kyu/ [=Thank you], 's it matter? /sIt/ [=What does it matter?], and 'd you rather ... /dju/ [=Would you rather?] (1985: 896). They point out that the elided material normally precedes the onset of a tone unit and so has weak stress and low pitch. If such ellipses are phonological they amount to starting vocalization of the utterance late. An initial why, which is not recoverable and thus not subject to such reduction, would eliminate the motivation for ellipsis of following material. 12) The permissibility of why in (27a-d) suggests that the ellipses in these sentences are no longer felt to be synchronically 'active'.

Other distributional facts about why seem to relate to the marker itself. Why cannot, in general, be comfortably preceded by other marker-like expressions:

(29) a. ?Besides, why, I don't even know him.
   b. ?After all, why, he's taller than I am.
   c. ?Now, why, that's a different matter.

In each case, acceptability is improved if the order of the markers is

12) If the fact that why is deviant with situational ellipsis can be attributed to phonological factors, it is not surprising that why does occur with abbreviated answers (Where did she find it? — Why, under the bed) and final ellipses (Why, how could we?), where the ellipsis is clearly not phonologically motivated.
reversed. The peculiarity of (29a-c) can be traced to the fact that when these other markers intervene between why and the beginning of the sentence, they are at variance with the information conveyed by why to the effect that what follows comes to mind immediately. Markers like besides, after all, and now indicate an attitude or stance toward what follows and therefore tend to suggest that the speaker already has in mind what will now be expressed; thus in this position they jar with the subsequent indication by why that what follows has only now come to mind.

An exception to the generalization that why does not follow other markers is the following:

(30) Oh, why I wouldn’t say that.

Unlike the markers in (29), oh in (30) suggests the speaker is now registering an input of information (see Schiffrin, 1987: 73–100); why can follow oh in (30) because it marks what follows as an immediate reaction to that information. The opposite order, Why, oh, is odd because oh in second position marks the input of information as falling within the scope of why. This suggests, peculiarly, that the speaker’s verbalized reaction contains the input of information to which it is a response.

When sentence-internal, why is usually clause-initial and restricted to the main clause, as illustrated in (31):

(31) a. When the parade had passed, why, we went home.
    b. If the carton is completely empty, why, you should throw it away.
    c. Since it was their land, why, we left at once.
    d. ?We went home, why, when the parade had passed.
    e. ?You should throw the carton away, why, if it is completely empty.
    f. ?We left at once, why, since it was their land.
The reason for the peculiarity of (31d-f) is clear: under ordinary circumstances, it is odd to suggest that it is only the background that comes abruptly to mind to the exclusion of the main point. *Why* does occur, however, when both the subordinate and main clauses follow, in which case the entire utterance is presented as having come readily to mind:

(32) a. Why, when the parade had passed, we went home.
   b. Why, if the carton is completely empty, you should throw it away.
   c. Why, since it was their land, we left at once.

Thus, *why* is again seen to be strictly introductory: unlike illocutionary adverbs, it cannot ‘refer’ backward.

Although *why* is almost always clause-initial, it sometimes occurs clause-internally. A range of cases of decreasing acceptability is given in (33) (see also Section 5):

(33) a. There are, why, at least four or five less expensive restaurants we could have gone to.
   b. When I got to the border, the police were, why, waiting for me.
   c. ??I wasn’t happy about the color they, why, chose.
   d. *I wasn’t happy about the color they chose, why.

The differential acceptability of such examples appears to depend on the likelihood that the speaker could have intended to present what follows *why* as coming abruptly to mind, with cases like (33d), in which nothing follows, being heard as categorically deviant.

These distributional characteristics are consistent with a view in which *why* is a variety of ‘mental state’ interjection. Particularly suggestive in this regard is the fact that *why* marks a mental reaction as occurring at the very moment of utterance and does not ‘refer’ back in
the way that illocutionary adverbials do. In the following section we will explore the affiliation between *why* and mental state interjections further in comparing *why* to the functionally similar interjectional marker *well*.

5. Why and well

In this section I will show that *why* is closely related to *well* and that both forms can be characterized as prefatory interjections. Schourup (2001) argues that *well* is a quasi-lexical interjection that depicts the speaker as engaged in ongoing epistemic consideration preparatory to continuation. *Well* is seen as having a self-evident relation to the homonymous adverb, but as interpretively allied to interjections that gesturally depict the speaker’s mental state. It will be argued below that *why*, too, depicts the mental state of the speaker just prior to continuation, but that the state in question is virtually opposite to that depicted by *well*.

The idea that *why* is interjectional is not itself new. The uses of *why* under discussion in this paper are characterized as interjectional in most dictionaries, probably because they often attach to exclamatory utterances. Since many interjections are themselves exclamatory (e.g., *ouch, wow, yu (c)k*), the categorization has appeal. However, both *well* and *why* lack the earmark of typical interjections, that is, the ability to stand independently as an utterance. Both *well* and *why* prefigure continuation, whether or not the speaker can actually muster the continuation at the moment; and both forms, when occurring alone, therefore suggest that the utterance has been curtailed and that the speaker is at a loss for words (cf. Schourup, 2001: 1033, 1043, and Bolinger’s idea, quoted in Section 1 above, that the speaker of exclamatory *why* is groping for words). In the case of *why* this property is even more

13) When *well* is used as a prompt with a continuative rising tone (orthographically *Well?*), the continuation is to be supplied by the addressee (see Schourup, 2001: 1033–1034).
apparent than for well, since why does not ordinarily bear stress or tone. While both why and well lack independence, however, they share a more central property of emotive interjections: they are understood as depicting the actual (or quoted) speaker's current state of mind.

A second similarity between well and why is that, unlike sentential adverbs, both markers are strikingly deviant in final position. This shared feature is derivative: it follows from the fact that both well and why are continuative and forward-looking. Neither can 'refer back' to a preceding utterance as illocutionary adverbs like frankly do (I don't like his attitude, frankly; cf. Section 3). 14) Both well and why are typically sentence-initial but do sometimes occur later in the sentence, where they closely resemble each other in distribution. In (34), for example, both forms occur comfortably at the positions marked @, less comfortably (and protected by commas) at positions marked X, and not at all in positions marked XX:

(34) @ if X you X put XX it X that XX way, @ then X I X guess X we X have x no X choice XX.

Note, further that it is possible to use either why or well twice in (34), once at each of the positions marked @, with only mild stylistic oddity, while repetition of an illocutionary adverb like frankly in (34) is notably redundant.

Well and why are also similar in being derived from fully lexical words: well from an adverb expressing positive evaluation, and why from the interrogative wh-word (see Section 9). However, neither interjection has a use closely based on the meaning of its lexical progenitor. Schourup (2001) argues that interjectional well includes an element of active consideration not present in the adverb. Why seems to

14) This is not to say that why and well can have no connection at all to a preceding utterance — both can signal a reaction to something that has just been said — but only that the verbalization marked by these interjections must follow them.
be an even further cry from its source. Although Bolinger claims to hear an echo of the interrogative in those interjectional uses where the speaker indicates surprise that something needs to be mentioned, we have seen that why does not always indicate this type of surprise. (It is, for example, not possible to construct a paraphrase for (12) along the lines of 'I don't know why I bother to mention this, but ...'.)

The close affiliation between well and why is also suggested by their failure to occur in immediate succession:

(35) a. *Well, why, I don't know.
    b. *Why, well, I don't know.

This restriction is categorical and suggests a severe overlap in function. Well and why also share distributional restrictions with respect to cooccurrence with other interjections (see Section 7).

Both well and why are /w/-initial monosyllables with gestural associations and are arguably iconic to at least some degree. The continuant that begins both forms requires lip approximation, which occurs independently, and cross-culturally, as a nonvocal gesture used to suggest taking matters into account (figuratively, holding them in mind) (see Schourup, 2001: 1046–1049). Why differs from well in its rhyme: where well contains a mid vowel (like hesitative eh) which gives way under reduction to a schwa (like hesitative uh), and a continuative dark /l/, the diphthong in why is allied in its first element with gestural ah, associated with surprise/pleasure, and, in its second, with interjections like eek, and weee, which convey immediate emotional reactions. Note also the similar exclamatory use of my (My! Aren't we getting tall!; cf. Why, aren't we getting tall!), which also begins with a labial continuant, in which the diphthong is complete. A possible cross-linguistic parallel is the interjection waai! used by many Japanese speakers to express sudden unexpected delight.

A further potential line of support for the iconicity of why may be found in the fact that, as observed by Bolinger (1989: 294), some En-
English dialects exhibit a morphemic split between interrogative *why* and the marker. The dialects in question are those which exhibit a voiceless labiovelar semivowel in interrogative *why* and other wh-words. In these dialects the marker *why* appears with an unexpected voiced /w/. One way to account for this split is to suggest that the unexpected voicing is iconically motivated, bringing *why* phonetically closer to reactive gestural interjections like *well* and *wow*. Iconically based forms often behave differently from noniconic forms for the very reason that their meaning has a partly physical basis. (See Hamano, 1998: 195–206, for an intriguing case of this kind.)

*Why* further resembles *well* in marking an utterance to which it is prefixed as a thought by the present (or quoted) speaker. Neither form, that is, can indicate response by anyone other than the actual or designated speaker of the interjection. This is consistent with the gestural role of these interjections (though not uniquely applicable to them): like bodily gestures, vocal gestures are tied to the actual, or impersonated, gesturer.

When in absolute discourse-initial position, both *well* and *why* indicate that the speaker is reacting to something discourse-external. Accordingly, either form can acceptably be prefixed to an unsolicited greeting like *Beth! How nice to see you*. Telephone conversations are different in this regard, since the interlocutors cannot see each other. The first utterance in a private party telephone call is typically *Hello*, spoken by the answerer. *Why, hello* and *Well, hello* are both odd when used to initiate a personal telephone call, unless the answerer is guessing the caller’s identity (an ‘intimacy ploy’: see Schegloff, 1968). The problem with such utterances seems to be that there is as yet nothing very specific to react to. (Predictably, both *Why, hello* and *Well, hello* are acceptable when answering a Picturephone.)

15) The ringing sound of a phone, although obviously intended by the caller as the first communicative move in the interaction (see Schegloff, 1968: 1080–81), is apparently not specific enough to warrant the use of either *why* or *well*. 
Although *why* and *well* are similar in these respects, they are not freely interchangeable. While both forms are reactive, *well* indicates that the speaker is considering what should follow and marks what follows as having arisen out of, or as prompted by, that consideration (Schourup, 2001). With *why*, as we have seen, what follows is not presented as a product of deliberate cogitation. Any calculation involved is brief, perfunctory, or automatic. In this regard *why* and *well*, within the narrow sphere they both inhabit, are near opposites. The contrast can be seen in the fact that *why* is unlikely to be lengthened, while *well* is often drawled out to suggest, iconically, that the consideration it exhibits is being prolonged:

(36) a. [we:::::::l]. I supo-o-o-se so.
   b. ??[wa:::::::i], I suppo-o-o-se so.

A second difference is that *well*, though continuative like *why*, more easily stands intonationally and syntactically apart from an utterance it introduces, while *why*, is more at home as an unstressed, toneless disjunct:

(37) Well! /*Why! Aren’t you a superb little corgi.

It is of interest in this regard that while *well* can carry a fall-rise tone suggesting hesitation and suspended judgment, *why*, in the atypical cases where it bears tone at all, cannot. This restriction is attributable to the fact that a fall-rise ‘referring’ tone (see Brazil, 1997) is inconsistent with the sudden, unpremeditated arising of thought. The general tendency of *why* not to bear tone (in Bolinger’s terms, its quality

While one might react abruptly or in a considered way to the ringing of the phone (without regard to who might be calling), it is difficult to imagine circumstances in which it would be communicatively appropriate to bring the quality of the reaction to the attention of a yet unidentified hearer. Contrast the acceptable *Why/Well who could be calling at this hour?* addressed to oneself or to someone standing nearby.
of being “subdued”) may stem from the fact that a tonic interjectional
why is easily misinterpreted. Compare (38a) to (38b) (see also Section
9 below):

(38) a. Why, how was I to know?
   b. Why? How was I to know?

Elliptical Why?, as in (38b), occurs frequently in English with a
proclamatory falling tone and, less frequently, with other tones. In
many cases a tone-bearing marker use of why would therefore be in
danger of being misheard as interrogative. Well is unlikely to cause
such misapprehension since solitary nonmarker uses of well are un-
common and highly restricted in their distribution (e.g., Did you do well
or poorly? — Well.).

Like other gestural interjections (e.g., ah and oh; see Bolinger,
1989: 264–290), neither well nor why contributes to the truth conditions
of an utterance; both forms can be regarded as displaying the speaker’s
mental state (on a broad understanding of this term) rather than as
encoding conceptual information about that state. Well is placed in
utterances to indicate a moment of real-time consideration in relation to
continuation of the utterance. The interpretive properties of well all
appear to follow from this (see Schourup, 2001). A use of why, like a
use of well, shows the mental state of the speaker at the moment the
interjection is uttered and can be viewed as ‘symptomatic’ of this state
in much the same way that, for example, wincing is taken as sympto-
matic of a mental state of contracting or withdrawing in response to
something painful or distressing. Wincing does not linguistically en-
code the proposition that the speaker is contracting or withdrawing;
rather, it demonstrates this physically. In a similar way, I would argue,
why, though obviously a conventional, learned form, is interpreted as an
iconic vocal gesture that evinces a mental state in which a response has
abruptly entered the speaker’s mind with some degree of emotion.
Like well, why is in addition prefatory: it ‘propects’ continuation.
Initial uses of *why* and *well* can be regarded as encouraging the hearer to construct an explicature to the effect that the utterance they initiate (or merely ‘prospect’) arises via the particular mental state or disposition the interjection depicts, but on the view that such forms are interpreted as vocal gestures, they should not be seen as contributing to such explicatures by virtue of conceptual information they linguistically encode, in the way that, for example, fully lexical illocutionary adverbs do. Rather, like some conventional nonlinguistic gestures, *well* and *why* bypass conceptual encoding to provide more direct information about the speaker’s mental state.

6. Interaction with *so* and *then*

*Why* is odd before connective *so*, as in (39):

(39) ?Why, so Alex will have to find a new line of work.

This is at first a curious fact, since *why*, as noted in Section 3, is at home preceding *then*, which is semantically similar to *so*:

(40) Why then Alex will have to find a new line of work.

Moreover, *so* itself occurs before *then*:

(41) So then Alex will have to find a new line of work.

These distributional facts call for an explanation, as does the fact that *why* and *well* sometimes behave differently with respect to *so*, as seen in (42a) and (42b):

(42) a. Well, so where did you end up spending the night?
   b. *Why, so where did you end up spending the night?

Note that *well, why*, and *so* are all acceptable alone in such examples:

(43) a. Well, where did you end up spending the night?
   b. So where did you end up spending the night?
c. Why, where did you end up spending the night?

It might be possible to argue that combinations like so then and why then have an independent status, separate from the words comprising them, or to attach special importance to punctuation and pausing in examples like (40). Nevertheless, the regularities in (39)–(43) appear to follow straightforwardly from facts about why, well, so, and then considered individually. Blakemore (1987, 1988, 1992) argues that so indicates that what follows is to be understood as an implicated conclusion. 16) The problem with using why before so might therefore stem from a conflict between the indication by why that what follows comes suddenly and automatically to mind, and the contrary indication by so that what follows is to be arrived at through deliberate inference. This explanation is consistent with the fact that well, unlike why, is compatible with so: the compatibility is expected since well itself indicates a variety of deliberate (though often brief) inference.

The compatibility of why with then is at first more difficult to explain. On the foregoing explanation for the incompatibility of so and why, one might expect then, too, to be incompatible with why, since both so and then appear to mark something which might be referred to as a conclusion. However, the marker then, as suggested by its transparent connection to the temporal adverb then, is more focussed on what follows than on what it follows from, while so, just as transparently, directs equal attention to what is being assumed and what follows ('That being so ...'). It is true that both items can aptly be characterized as inferential and conjunctive, as claimed by Quirk, et al. (1985: 633), and as suggested by their interchangeability in (44) below:

(44) A: I was not expecting her.
    B: So/Then you were shocked at her arrival.

16) When prefacing a question, as in (43b), the indicated conclusion is inferred to be at a higher level ('I ask ...').
A: Yes, I was.

However, the difference in their ‘directionality’ results in distributional differences. Consider (45):

(45) A: Is the halibut very fresh?
    B: It was caught this morning.
    A: Then/?So I’ll have the halibut.

The ‘subsequence’ of then makes it more acceptable than so in (45), where A is announcing a unilateral decision. Here so would suggest, irrelevantly in most circumstances, that the server should be able to work out why A is having the halibut. The difference between so and then also accounts for why so, but not then, can be used to indicate that what follows amounts to finishing an interlocutor’s thought:

(46) a. A: I’ve never once been absent from work.
    B: So no one can call you a slacker.

b. A: I’ve never once been absent from work.
    B: Then no one can call you a slacker.

Only in (46a) can B be heard, on one reading, as picking up on A’s logic to complete A’s utterance (see also ex. 44). Finishing another’s thought is best accomplished by an item like so which logically and overtly ties the current utterance back to what precedes. The difference between so and then also explains why both items are compatible in that order in the same utterance, as in (41), but not in the reverse order. So then is a stable combination because in evoking first the foregoing basis and then the subsequent conclusion, the order of so and then mirrors the order of presentation of premise and conclusion in the utterance. The opposite order, *then so, places the two markers in each other’s line of fire, as it were.

The stability of utterance-initial why then can be explained in a related way. Why then is stable because why first indicates abrupt ap-
prehension and promises a verbalization, while \textit{then} initiates this verbalization and marks it as being of a particular inferential kind. The reverse combination, \textit{then why}, is less stable and less common. It is possible only when either \textit{then} functions as a temporal adverb (‘after that’) that does not indicate having the continuation already in mind, or, on the inferential marker use, with a pause before \textit{why}, to indicate that the speaker has launched into the utterance prematurely and only now realizes what ought to be said.

7. \textit{Why preceding interjections}

\textit{Why} exhibits variable acceptability before emotive interjections. All of the following examples are acceptable if either \textit{why} or the following interjection is eliminated:

\begin{enumerate}
\item [(47)] a. *Why, oops! You dropped your wallet.
\item b. *Why, ah! It’s you!
\item c. *Why, oh! What a beautiful pen!\textsuperscript{17}
\item d. Why, ouch! That hurts.
\item e. Why, hell! Thirty dollars? That’s just the price of a good dinner.
\item f. Why, shit! Someone’s been using my credit card.
\item g. Why, damn! This is good coffee.
\item h. Why, heck! If I’d won, I’d have taken you to dinner.
\end{enumerate}

The acceptability of \textit{why} (or \textit{well}) before the items in (47) appears to depend on the degree to which the following item is itself gestural. In (47a)–(47c), \textit{why} is ruled out because \textit{oops}, \textit{ah}, and \textit{oh} are gestural (see Bolinger, 1989), thus nonpropositional. Forms like \textit{hell} and \textit{shit} have obvious conceptual content and can therefore be introduced by \textit{why}. An interjection like \textit{ouch} is intermediate in the sense that it can be used

\textsuperscript{17} See also the comments in Section 4 above on examples in which \textit{oh} precedes \textit{why}. 
gesturally to evince immediate, nonserious pain or, strategically, to communicate something propositional. *Ouch* in (47d) is acceptable only on the latter reading. For example, (47d) could acceptably be addressed by a mother to a small child to suggest something like ‘Stop hitting my arm—that last punch really hurt!’ A ‘genuine’ *ouch* uttered when touching a hot cup of coffee is highly unlikely to be prefaced by *why*.

8. Why and emphasis

According to the second OED definition (see 1.1 above), *why*, in one of its two modern uses, adds emphasis to what immediately follows, in opposition to some perceived doubt or objection. In the relevant OED examples, however, it is not entirely clear that the emphasis in question attaches to *why* itself; the emphasis can just as well be pegged to co-textual elements:

(3a) Take an honest woman from her husband! Why, it is intolerable.

(48) If you will have Caesar for your master, why have him. (1769, Goldsmith, *Rom. Hist.* I.439)

(49) And to conceal it, why it doubled her grief. (1590, Lodge, *Rosalind*, Nb2)

In (3a) the first sentence already suggests that the speaker has doubt about the wisdom of taking an honest woman from her husband. These doubts are confirmed, thus in effect emphasized, by the content of the *why*-marked utterance. *Why* can be omitted without eliminating the emphasis. Example (48) admits a similar treatment. In saying *have him* against the backdrop of a conditional first clause, the speaker repeats the proposition in that clause. This is again interpretable as

18) In the same vein Quirk et al. (1985: 633) ascribe stronger emphasis to *why* than to *then*. 
emphasis, and again the effect persists if why is deleted. The same is true of (49) in which the grammatically unnecessary repetition of a pronoun is associated with greater speaker involvement (see Caffi and Janney, 1994; Culpeper and Kytö, 2000) which might itself be seen as conveying a form of emphasis.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which all utterance-prefatory uses of interjectional why convey emphasis, whether or not in opposition to an element of implied or expressed doubt. Marking an utterance as coming abruptly to mind, and thus not arising from a deliberate process of reasoning, portrays the utterance as a force of nature, unstoppable under present circumstances and compelling in and of itself. This can be heard as conveying emphasis (among other things) even in examples like Why, Beth! How very nice to see you!, which express no element of doubt whatsoever. 19) A further increment of emphasis may attach to the initiatory property of why: why draws attention to the relevance of an ensuing utterance completion and therefore tends to focus attention on what follows. Since the emphasis conveyed by why is quite general and follows from properties of the marker already discussed, emphasis need not be mentioned specifically in the present formulation, and why in examples like (3a), (48), and (49) need not be distinguished from other uses of why.

9. Marker why and interrogative why

As noted in 1.5, Bolinger sees the gloss ‘I don’t know why I bother to say this’ as suggesting an indirect semantic connection between the discourse marker why and interrogative why. He comments that “it is appropriate that in the definition the cognate interrogative why appears;

19) The inherent emphasis of why may also contribute to its deviance with initial situational ellipses. Such ellipses have the effect of demoting the importance of the elliptical utterance, as may be seen, for example, in the greater likelihood that your will be elided in Your tie’s a little crooked than in Your pant leg’s on fire.
it implies surprise at the need to bring something up” (Bolinger 1989: 294). Such a semantic connection is chronologically plausible, since the interrogative use antedates the marker use. 20)

Bolinger’s proposal does not, however, specify how the interrogative came to be used as a marker. A possible line of development is suggested by examples like those in (50):

(50) a. Row.: Nay, I’m sure your lady, Sir Peter, can’t be the cause of your uneasiness.
   Sir Pet.: Why, has anybody told you she was dead? (1777, Sheridan, *The School for Scandal* 1.2)

   Con.: Why, do you think she can’t keep a secret? (1697, Vanbrugh, *The Provok’d Wife* 2.2.278)

   Pistol: Why sir, my wife is not young. (1597, Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 2.1.108)

The punctuation in these examples readily suggests the marker use, 21) but note that if in each case the comma were replaced by a question mark (e.g., *Why? Has anybody told you she was dead?*), the response would no less appropriate. This functional interchangeability suggests that earlier cases in which an elliptical *why* question preceded a full sentential utterance by the same speaker may have prompted reanalysis of interrogative *why* as an interjectional marker similar in many respects to *well* (which predates *why*), but differing from *well* in ways suggested in part by the phonetics of the two forms. The reanalysis could have arisen in speech, in which case some uses of interrogative *why* were misheard as disjunctive. Such mishearings seem

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20) While the first use of the marker recorded in the OED is dated 1519 (see ex. 1 above), interrogative *why* was already present in Old English.

21) The punctuation in (50c) is that of the 1623 Folio; in the 1602 Quarto the comma is missing.
possible in current English, particularly when \textit{why} is hurried or spoken with less prominence than the following sentence. It is easier to presume, however, that the reanalysis was triggered by the unstable punctuation in Early Modern English texts. If an abbreviated \textit{why} question were joined to a following sentence by a comma rather than a question mark, the result would have paralleled the usual orthographic form of \textit{well}-initial utterances, suggesting that \textit{why} could be read as a variety of disjunct. When an interrogative \textit{why} preceded a question, as in (50a) and (50b), a final question mark may have tended to serve double duty, as it often does even today in alternative questions: \textit{Did they arrive on time, or was the train late again?} It is clear that commas were in fact capable of replacing question marks in Early Modern English, as seen in the final utterance in (51):

(51) Host: Say, what beast, thou knave thou?


Notions of abruptness and surprise are nearby on such an account, since \textit{Why?} is often an abrupt rejoinder to a preceding remark, and long has been, as shown by examples like the following:

(52) a. Pant.: 'Twas of his nephew Protheus, your son.


b. Sin: ... while you were king.

King: Why? Am I dead? (1593, Shakespeare, \textit{The Two Gentlemen of Verona}, 1.3)

The marker use of \textit{why} might then be said to preserve an element of meaning implicit in such interrogative uses. (For an interesting discussion of OE \textit{hwæt} along similar lines, see Brinton 1996: 181–210.)

The development I have suggested does not require an intermediate
stage in which *why* is a complementizer, as proposed by Traugott (see Section 1.3). Bolinger’s analysis also seems to involve a complementizer. Although he claims a connection between the marker and the interrogative word, he supports this claim only by citing Lakoff’s gloss ‘I don’t know why I bother to say this’, in which a noninterrogative *why* introduces a nominal clause. Since no specific mechanism has been proposed for deriving the marker use of *why* via a noninterrogative stage, a direct reanalysis of the kind suggested above must be given initial preference.

10. An overview

It is not surprising that *why* has received little attention in the literature on discourse markers. Probably because it has acquired associations of haughtiness and archaism, *why* has become relatively uncommon. Most occurrences are now playful and ironic, as in the use of *why* to convey elitist affectation (*Why, just imagine! You have to polish your own shoes!*) or mock offense (*Would you like to join me for a drink? — Why, Professor Smith, what are you suggesting?*). ‘Sincere’ uses of the marker do occur, particularly among older speakers, but interj ectional *why* is clearly on the wane in both American and British English.

The falloff is relatively recent, however, and even present-day speakers of English who rarely use the marker themselves are nonetheless familiar with its use. Marker *why* is still heard in the stilted, ersatz RP dialogue of American films from the thirties and is known to many from its abundant occurrence in pre-twentieth century dramatic texts and narrative dialogue. \(^{22}\) Moreover, the use of *why* to

\(^{22}\) Interjectional uses of *why* are common in Shakespeare’s plays, where they far outnumber marker uses of *well*. *Why* remains common in seventeenth and eighteenth century drama. Vanbrugh’s *The Provok’d Wife* (1697), for example, contains 76 uses, versus 37 of *well*. Use of *why* falls off in the nineteenth century and is relatively uncommon by late century. Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), contains just two examples, while Shaw’s
frame irony (as in the two examples in the previous paragraph) is alive and well in modern English. 23) Why is capable of marking ironic usage precisely because it has become faintly archaic: archaism facilitates the dissociation that is central to irony (see Wilson and Sperber, 1992).

Interjectional why introduces a response. 24) The ‘reference’ of the response can be anything to which the speaker chooses to indicate a reaction, can vary in extent, and if it is an utterance or a portion of an utterance, may originate either with the same speaker or with a prior speaker. The response introduced by why is, however, subject to various constraints: it is necessarily verbal and must have propositional (or at least conceptual) content; it is spoken by the same speaker who issued the marker; it must follow the marker directly; and it must be the sort of thing that can plausibly be heard as having arisen abruptly in the speaker’s mind. Why modifies a response in two ways. While it primarily indicates that the linguistic response has come to mind immediately, without effort or deliberation, and with some degree of emotion, why also displaces the verbalization of the speaker’s response forward in time. By saying why, the speaker, therefore, evokes a distinction between mental events and speech. The convenient fiction that my words are an immediate and direct representation of my current thoughts is momentarily compromised in order to give the ensuing utterance its proper ‘spin’. The speaker first issues an unelaborated

lengthy Major Barbara (1905) contains none.

23) Examples of Why, yes and Why, no, for example, abound on the Internet, where they are particularly common beginning answers to FAQs (frequently asked questions). Such uses signal that the writer is only pretending, for rhetorical reasons, to provide a spontaneous reply to an actual question.

24) Goffman (1981: 35) characterizes responses as: “acts linguistic and otherwise having the following properties: 1. They are seen as originating from an individual and as inspired by a prior speaker [etc.]. 2. They tell us something about the individual’s position or alignment in what is occurring. 3. They delimit and articulate just what the ‘is occurring’ is, establishing what it is the response refers to. 4. They are meant to be given attention by others now, that is, to be assessed, appreciated, understood at the current moment”.


marker of reaction which specifies the manner in which the response came to mind, marks the real time point at which it came to mind, and 'commits' the speaker to verbalizing the response in the next instant. 25) This commitment need not actually be fulfilled, but when it is not, the speaker is heard as being unable or unwilling to complete the utterance owing to (for example) surprise, dismay, or confusion.

The abruptness of response conveyed by why is almost the opposite of the evaluative deliberation conveyed by well. Both markers have the potential for use in an extremely wide range of discourse situations, and in earlier times why and well were both used plentifully, if dramatic texts are an indication, to mark responses as unpremeditated or measured, respectively. It is only relatively recently that well has become the dominant member of the pair.

Why, like well and oh, indicates the occurrence of a current mental 'event'. Such markers can be characterized as having an 'evincive' function: they indicate to the hearer that at the moment at which the marker is said the speaker is engaged, or has just this instant been engaged, in a particular kind of mental activity (Schourup, 1985: 18). Many such evincive forms, including the three just mentioned, are gestural: they are interpreted as symptomatic of the speaker's mental state, rather than conceptually encoding information about that state.

Such gestural interjections punctuate the negotiated give-and-take of speech—where expression takes time and waits on considerations such as politeness and strategy—with ostensible points of anchorage in real time. That speakers should often wish to perform this sort of anchoring casts an interesting light on conversation: the drawn-out detailing of thought which is the chief business of speech can be at odds with the need for talk accurately to reflect momentary mental states and

25) This could provide a basis for Traugott's observation that why is "hearer-engaging" (see 1.3 above). It might also account for the requirement that the addressee be identifiable (Section 5): it makes little sense to commit to continuation without a specific other to commit to.
events. Conversation is largely built 'in the air', but when they wish to (as they frequently do), the participants can bring it down to earth for a moment by interjecting a marker that reflects real-time mental processing. When such a marker is used to preface an utterance, it marks the utterance as having arisen in the fashion indicated by the marker — in the case of well, out of evaluative inference, and in the case of why, suddenly and without deliberate inference. Both well and why commit the speaker to subsequent verbalization, though with why the commitment is stronger than for well since why does not ordinarily bear tone and thus has trouble standing alone. Although why and well are near opposites in what they indicate about the speaker’s state of mind, they share a very general rhetorical function. Both are essentially evidential and, in the broadest sense, epistemic; they deflect attention from the strategies and manipulations of the speaker in the interest of establishing a less subjective basis for credibility. With well that basis is found in an appeal to measured consideration of 'what is', and with why, in the immediacy of direct apprehension.

26) Brinton (1996: 232) notes:

The separation of epistemicity, which concerns matters of certainty and confidence, and evidentiality, which concerns sources of knowledge and modes of knowing, is a matter of scholarly dispute. For Palmer (1986: 51) epistemicity encompasses evidentiality: "the speaker’s understanding or knowledge ... clearly includes both his own judgments and the kind of warrant he has for what he says"; he sees "inference" and "confidence", for example, as two types of epistemic modality.
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文発話に先行する間投詞としての why

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間投詞的談話標識 why（具体例：'Why, that's a brilliant idea!'）は、現代英語では比較的まれで、古めかしさやわざとらしさを連想させる。本稿では、whyがそれに後続する文発話の意味にいかに貢献するかを考察し、文発話に先行して多く用いられる間投詞 well（Schourup 2001）と同様、whyは、発話の直前に話し手が持っていた心的状態をジェスチャー的に表すものとして解釈されると主張する。whyは、発話の出だしに用いられると、聞き手に表意（explicature: 関連性理論の用語で、発話により伝達される想定を意味し、論理形式を推論によって発展させたものを指す）の構築を促すことで、whyに後続する発話の解釈に貢献していると考えられる。つまり、whyは、それに後続する文発話によって表出される命題を高次節の記述に埋め込むことで、表意に貢献すると結論づけられるのである。さらに、wellとwhyの機能に関しても詳細に比較検討した。両者は、本来ジェスチャー的であり、高次表意（higher-level explicature）に貢献し、他の様々な特徴を共有するが、この二つの標識によって表される心的状態は本質的に正反対のものである。最後に、whyと他の非命題的表現との関係についても議論し、疑問詞whyからどのような歴史的過程を経て間投詞whyが生じたのかに対しても、説明を提案する。

（受理日 2001年12月29日 最終原稿受理日 2002年5月7日）