

Intensive and Quotative ALL: Something old, something new

In the only publication on the subject, Waksler (2001:128) describes both quotative ALL and intensive ALL as “**new** constructions”:

- (1) QUOTATIVE: She’s **all**, “I didn’t tell you to call him.”
- (2) INTENSIVE: ... my mother was **all** mad

On the basis of a corpus of over 300 contemporary examples from California and elsewhere, and a search through the historical record, we provide a more nuanced picture of what is innovative about ALL, its distribution and usage.

Intensive ALL, contrary to Waksler’s claim and to folk-linguistic perceptions (Buchstaller and Deeringer 2005), is actually rather OLD. As an intensifier with AdjPs, and past participles, ALL has been in use since Old English:

- (3) Seo ealde cyrce wæs **eall** behangen mid cricum
‘The old church was hung all around with crutches’ (1,000 *ÆLS*)
- (4) Of himself he wex **al** sad (1400 Cursor)

Intensive ALL_{with PPs} goes back at least to the 16th century, and with NPs to the early 20th century:

- (5) His explosion filleth **all** fro the poynte (1533 Moore)
- (6) If Mr. Morley does go **all** Rider Haggard for a few pages (1935 *Punch*)

What IS new about intensive ALL is its extension to full verbs, including present participles:

- (7) She **all** walks in
- (8) The guys were **all** sitting there lonely

The expansion of intensifier ALL to a wider range of lexical hosts, syntactic contexts, and meanings is a classic case of grammaticalization, except for the persistence of potential ambiguity with quantifier float (e.g. 8 from “All the guys were ...”).

Quotative ALL, however, IS new, apparently originating in California in the 1980s. It introduces previous speech (9) and reported thought (10) as well as mimetic quotes (11):

- (9) I kinda teased him, I’m **all** "wow, you must reaaaaaally need attention back there..." ~~and he replies: "naw, I'm not starved for attention...well, maybe just attention from you..."~~
- (10) I slept 11 hrs on Sunday, and when I got up, I was **all**, "what?!"

(11) I was **all** "yeah" just put my arms up in the air

In these respects, quotative ALL resembles quotative LIKE. However, Wimmer's (1990) research and ours indicate that quotative ALL and LIKE differ quantitatively:

- ALL favors the historical present and pronominal subjects even more frequently than LIKE does.
- ALL favors third person singular over first person subjects even more than LIKE does.
- ALL is much less frequent than LIKE with "It" as subject.

In this last point may lie a clue to the larger pragmatic import of ALL, because it often seems to provide a subjective or affective characterization of a human subject and his/her words or actions:

(12) I'm **like** "Yeah," and she's **all** "no" [From song of the same name by the Mr. T experience]

(13) He's **all** [whining], "Tell me you like it." [F, 17, from Waksler 2001]

What ALL demonstrates is that when newcomers like ALL are added to the quotative pool, they do not simply replace existing forms, but develop a distinctive functional niche.

[482 words]

References

Buchstaller, I. and M. Deeringer (2005) "Attitudes towards new ways of reporting and intensifying: *All*" Stanford University ms.

Waksler, R. (2001) "A new ALL in conversation". *American Speech* 76.2:128-138.

Wimmer, A. (1990) *BE + ALL and other new quotative introducers in California English*. Stanford University Linguistics honors thesis.