

# INTERACTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS?



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

AARHUS UNIVERSITY

FUNCTIONS IN DANTIN  
27 MAY 2020

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# POINT OF THE TALK

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- Discuss central notions of grammar and action
- Ask questions??? What is grammar? What is function?
- I might be critical/controversial – I might be stating the obvious
- I might have misunderstood central parts of CA/IL
- Maybe give people ideas for future seminars



# WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU THINK OF AS A FUNCTION?



tional



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# WHO SAID IT FIRST?

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- Prague School 1920s
- Some terms are actually antique
- Important in Simon Dik's (1968) thesis – Functional Grammar
- Many separate developments of the word "function" – no obvious history
- "Interactional function" is very widespread – but not discussed?



# INTERACTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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Interactional Linguistics is functional

- West Coast Functional Grammar
- Phonetics in York and Germany

“have now, for all practical purposes, merged into one” (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018:12)  
(no mention of e.g. Dik)

What we’re doing:

Comparing to topological fields (Diderichsen)

Finding phonetic “reduction” phenomena (copula-drop + verb inflection)

Are we the same?



# MEANINGS OF FUNCTION

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Functional approaches take the stance that:

*"Language is essentially a means of communication between human beings" and that this explain why "languages are as they are"*  
(Butler 2003, preface)

The word "function" is used for many things! Let's look at them



# “LEDFUNKTION” ~ “SÆTNINGSLED”

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Function of PHRASE in CLAUSE

Subject, (indirect, direct) object, adverbials – maybe predicate? – etc. – ancient concepts!

i.e. the “function” of a phrase – connected to syntax and sometimes called “syntactic function”

School Grammar but also syntactic functions in e.g. Functional Grammar

Related to “semantic functions” – agent, undergoer, recipient, patient, theme etc.

>sometimes at different levels (e.g. SAO in typology, “macroroles”)

Vary in universality and relation to other constituent functions



# INFORMATION STRUCTURE

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Topic, Focus

Given, New

Theme, Rheme

“Pragmatic function” in some places

Also something phrases can have?





# “SENTENCE FUNCTIONS”

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If you google this, you get DECLARATIVE, INTERROGATIVE, IMPERATIVE, EXCLAMATIVE

And I remember this confusion with a reviewer



# PHONOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS

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Function: “to make words/lexemes distinct”

Functional load = “importance of certain features in making distinctions in a language”  
(Wikipedia)

Phonemes has distinctive function – paradigmatic “function”

And phonological features and processes may contribute or obscure distinctions

*But does CA believe in the concept of “phoneme”?*



# MORPHOLOGY?

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Function: to have meaning? (not just allow 'distinctions')

<i>Morpheme</i>	<i>meaning</i>
Danish <i>-es</i>	passive (~subject as undergoer)
PAS	reciprocal (others)

- Compositional meanings
- Is it a necessary level?

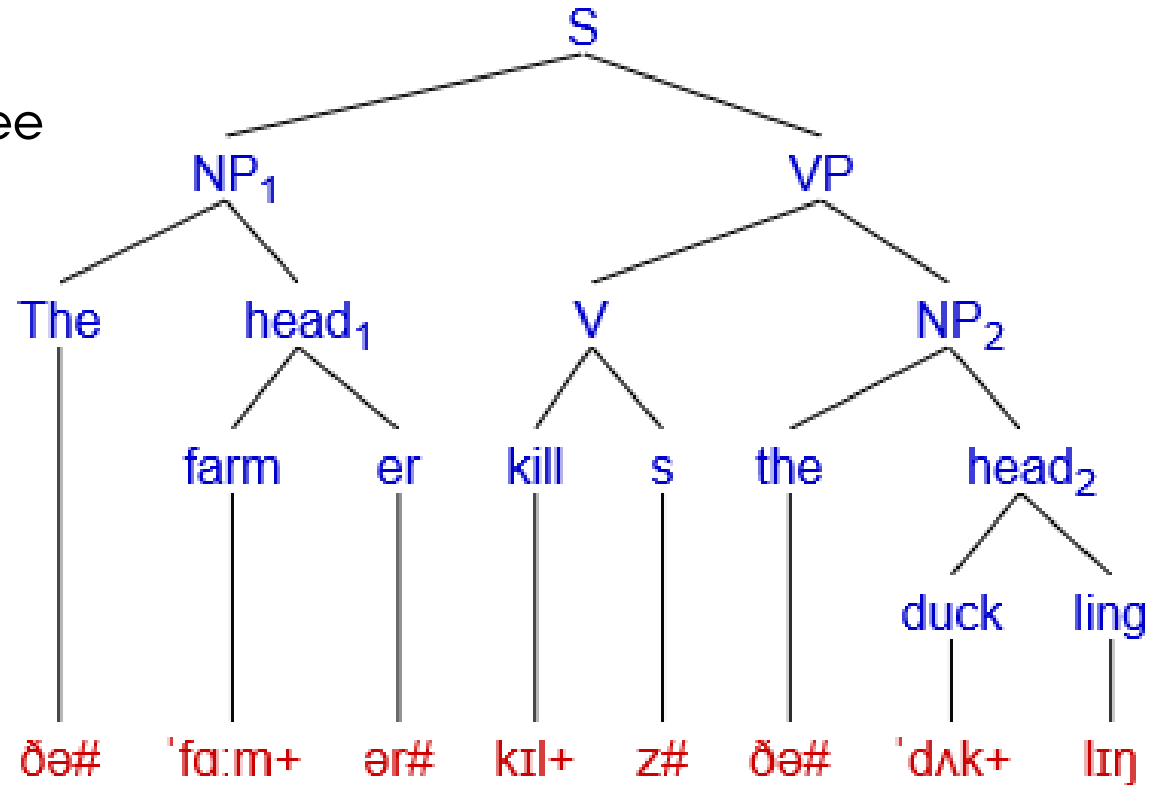


# MORPHOLOGY? DOES IT EXIST?

Why not just put all ordered stuff in a tree

Phonology can apply difference between “morpheme” and “word” boundaries

What’s the point of having more layers?



My interpretation of stuff I don’t know. Maybe based on Anderson, S. (1992). A-Morphous Morphology, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.



# OTHER FUNCTIONALITIES

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- Cognitive
- Frequency
- Easy of articulation etc.
- > “Functional” because tied to use, but not clearly “a function” of specific material
- Nichols 1984 deals with different notions of “function(al)”
- Halliday also has “metafunction” 😊
- And “function words”
- What about parts of speech? Other levels?



# HOW DO WE GET AT IT?

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- Complexity: How does those different levels contribute to the interaction?
- And: What if they just contribute to each other?
- My project: It's easy to work with one-syllable stuff?
- Maybe we could start thinking about *why* this organization is as it is:
  - **Why are some things done with** one-word-constructions and some not?
  - Other grammatical resources etc



# AN EXAMPLE

How would we put some  
“functions” on the material  
here?

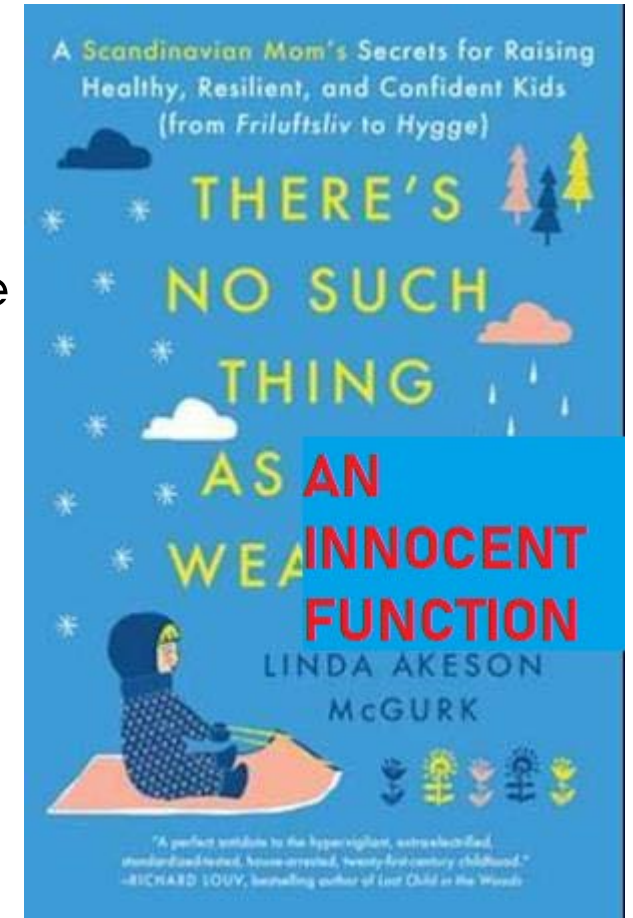
Can we illustrate how they  
are interactionally relevant?

```
1584 *TOR: jeg ude↗ •
1585 %glo: I out
1586 %eng: I'm out
1587 * (0.3) •
1588 *TOR: hm h[m
1589 *LIV: [y[es
1590 *SVE: [allere:de↗ •
1591 %eng: already
1592 *TOR: ja↗ •
1593 %eng: yes
1594 *SVE: hvorfor↗ •
1595 %eng: why
1596 * (0.3) •
1597 *TOR: hun ducked- duck of doomed me å jeg havde kun en
1598 %glo: she duck-PST duck of doom-PST me and I have.PST only a
1599 * to[er↗ •
1600 %glo: two-NMLZ
1601 %eng: She "ducked- duck-of-doom'ed" me and I had only a two
1602 *SVE: [a::rgh↗ det kender jeg godt det der
1603 %eng: argh it know-PRS I well it
1604 *SVE: det s:kideirriterend[e↗ •
1605 %glo: it shit-irritating
1606 %eng: it's so annoying
1607 *MAR: [jeg vil gerne sammenligne med dig↗
1608 %glo: I will PRT compare with you
1609 %eng: I would like to compare with you
```

# SUMMARY ON “TRADITIONAL” FUNCTIONS

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- There are so-called functions at every level!
- Many “functions” can be attributed to the same material at once
- There could be some that shouldn’t be called “functions”
  - McGregor (1997) prefers *sign* for some
- Are they always relevant for the interaction?





# “INTERACTIONAL” FUNCTIONS

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- Action
- Turn-taking/construction
- They are intertwined of course



# ACTION

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Auer 2003 (fn1): “The notion of an “action” is notoriously ill-defined in conversation analysis”

“What a turn does”

Levinson 2013: “The sense of ‘main job’ or primary action intended here is *what the response must deal with in order to count as an adequate next turn.*”

Other doings are “off-record”, e.g. “of course” & epistemics in assessments (“overlay” has also been used about affective stance, Couper-Kuhlen 2009)



# ACTION + STANCE

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## Stance

- Epistemic
- Deontic
- Affective
- (others?)



I consider it separate from action

Rossi 2018 argues for composite actions (“informing+request” & “criticism+request”)  
> But I can’t follow why both parts has to be ‘action’ – looks like one action with stance

“off-record” & “unaccountable” – is this really the case?



# WHAT ACTIONS

---

1584 \*TOR: jeg ude↗ •  
1585 %glo: I out  
1586 %eng: I'm out  
1587 \* (0.3) •  
1588 \*TOR: hm h[m  
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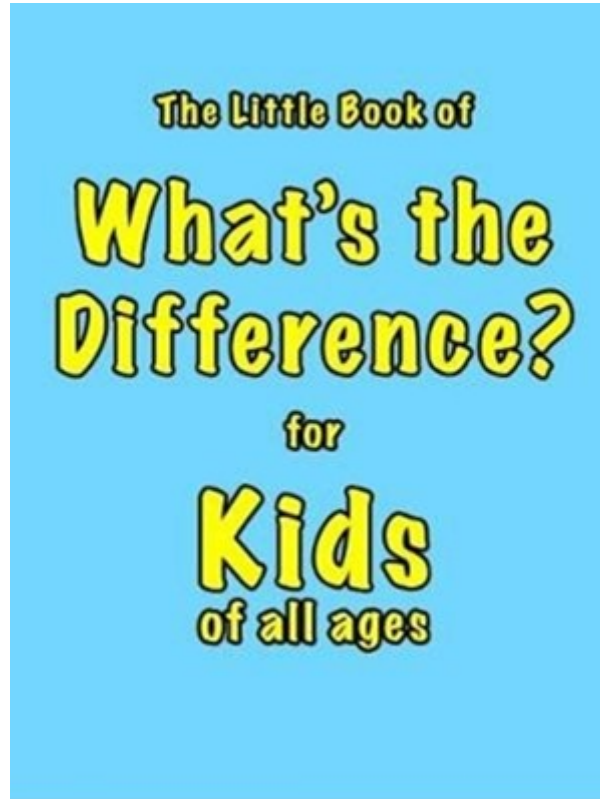
# PRAGMATICS VS. SEMANTICS?

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Is there a difference?

Do we need a difference?

Your thoughts?



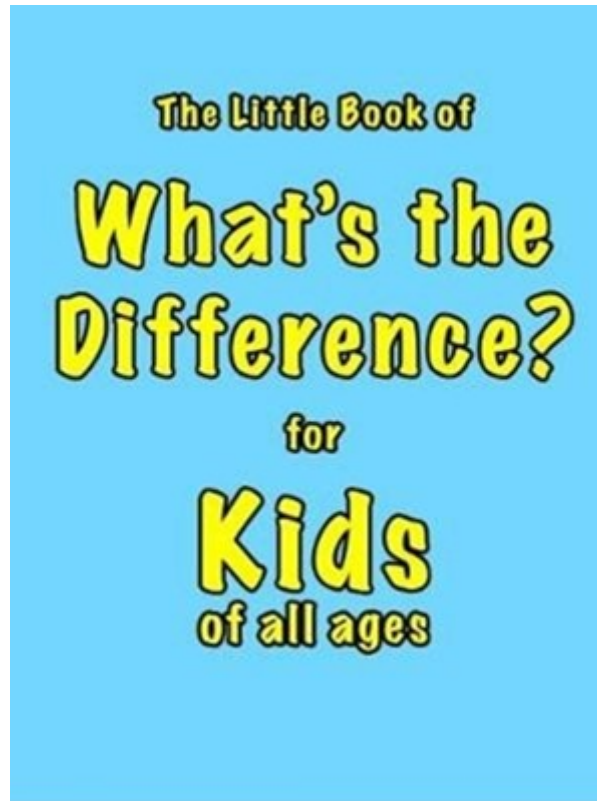
# PRAGMATICS VS. SEMANTICS?

---

Is there a difference?

CA often seen as “pragmatics”  
Because it’s language use

McGregor 2007 (and others):  
Encoded = semantic  
Inferred = pragmatic



Do we need a difference?

But if we find e.g. that  
*ja* = confirmation, is that  
is somewhat encoded?



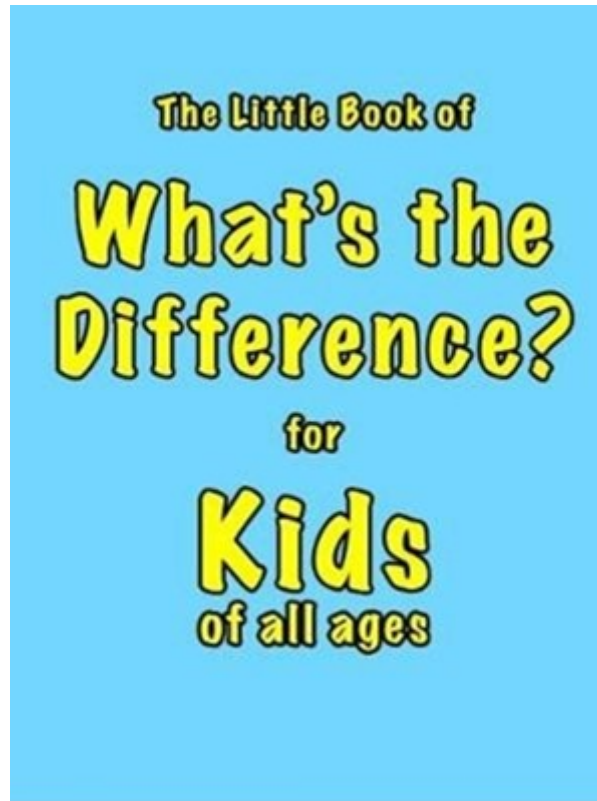


# PRAGMATICS VS. SEMANTICS?

—  
CA often seen as “pragmatics”  
Because it’s language use

Counterpoint: It’s dependent  
on sequential position

=> It’s not clear if “action” is  
semantics or pragmatics or both



But if we find e.g. that  
*ja* = confirmation, is that  
is somewhat encoded?

Counter-counter:  
Is this different than a  
word being more POS?



# SØREN'S PHD'S ACTIONS

Lexical differences gives us access to the differences

>Those (and only those) necessary for describing the system

>Except continuer/receipt?

Based on Sørensen 2019

Table 1	<i>ja</i>	<i>nej</i>	<i>nå</i>	<i>okay</i>	<i>mm</i>
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Assessment	+	+	-	-	+



# LEVELS OF ACTION - GRANULARITY

Action "substance" / pre-linguistic  
"meaning"

- Questioning
- Recruitment
- Assessing

Infinite divisions

*Emic/etic - substance/structure - purport/form*  
*Grammaticalized/not - etc.*

Action "structure"

*With specific 'formats'?*

- Asserting primary right to assessments in second position
- Requesting confirmation with minimal clausal pronominal interrogative

"Grammaticalized divisions"

Action has to be "typified" (Brouwer & Rasmussen 2019: 19)



# IT'S NOT NEW

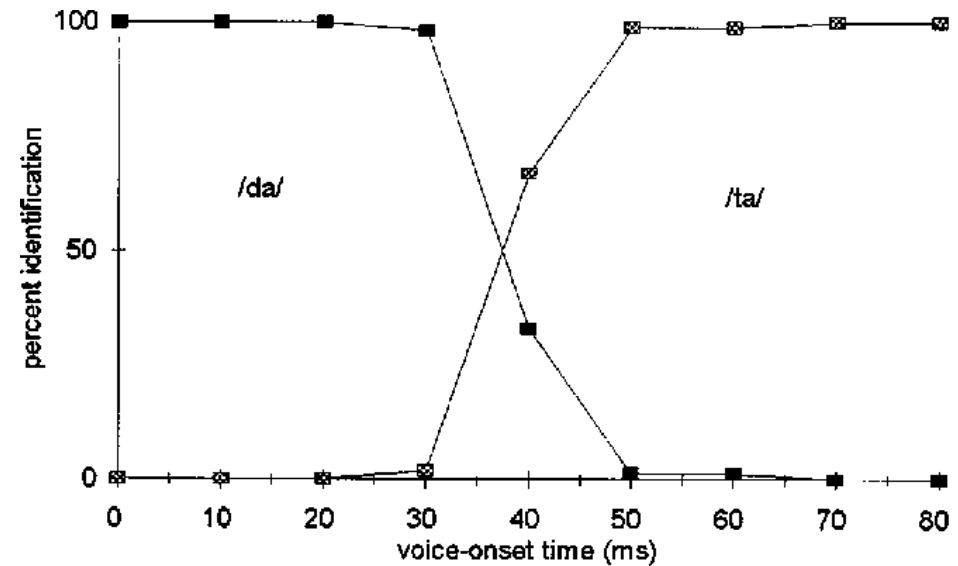
- Heritage (1998) proposes some “semantics” of *oh* – often cited as general, but framed in inferences

- Comparable to categorical perception

- (picture from Sharma & Dorman 1999)

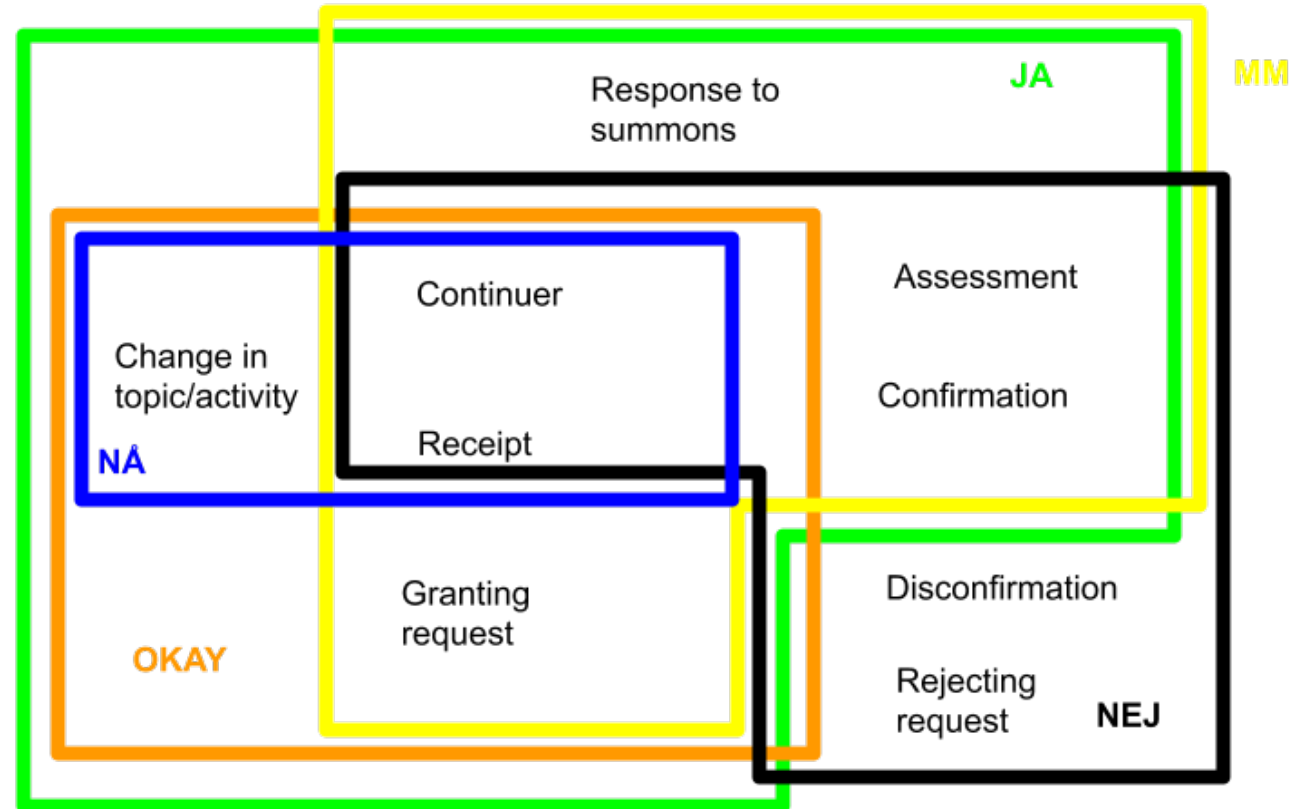
- Categories still fuzzy

- “action families”



- Thompson (2019) on the clause as grammaticalised for interactional purposes in English – and potentially more or less grammaticalised in other lgs

# SEMANTIC MAP???



Inspired by Haspelmath 1997



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# MY PROJECT

I'm not looking at turn-taking!

Being “freestanding” is a collection **criteria**

But how many actions and stances?

*ja* and *nej*

- *Nej* does both confirmation and disconfirmation, but “same” stance
- > argument for distinguishing stance and action

i.e. stance not just *within* but also *across* actions

Status of prosodic features across lexical items

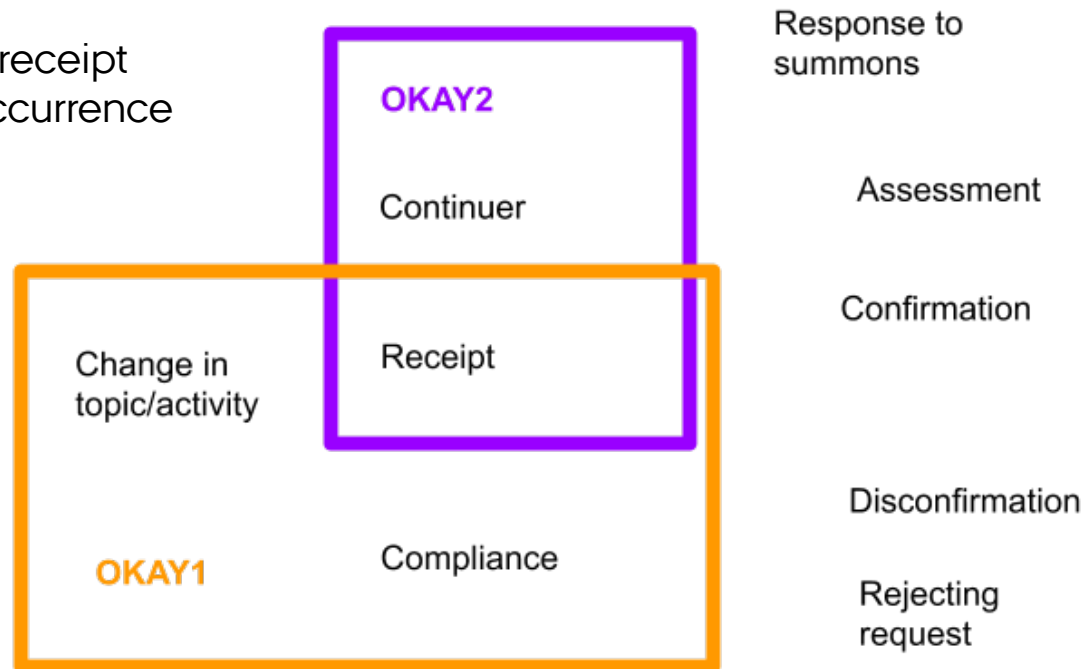
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Assessment	+	+	-	-	+



# EXAMPLE: OKAY1 AND 2

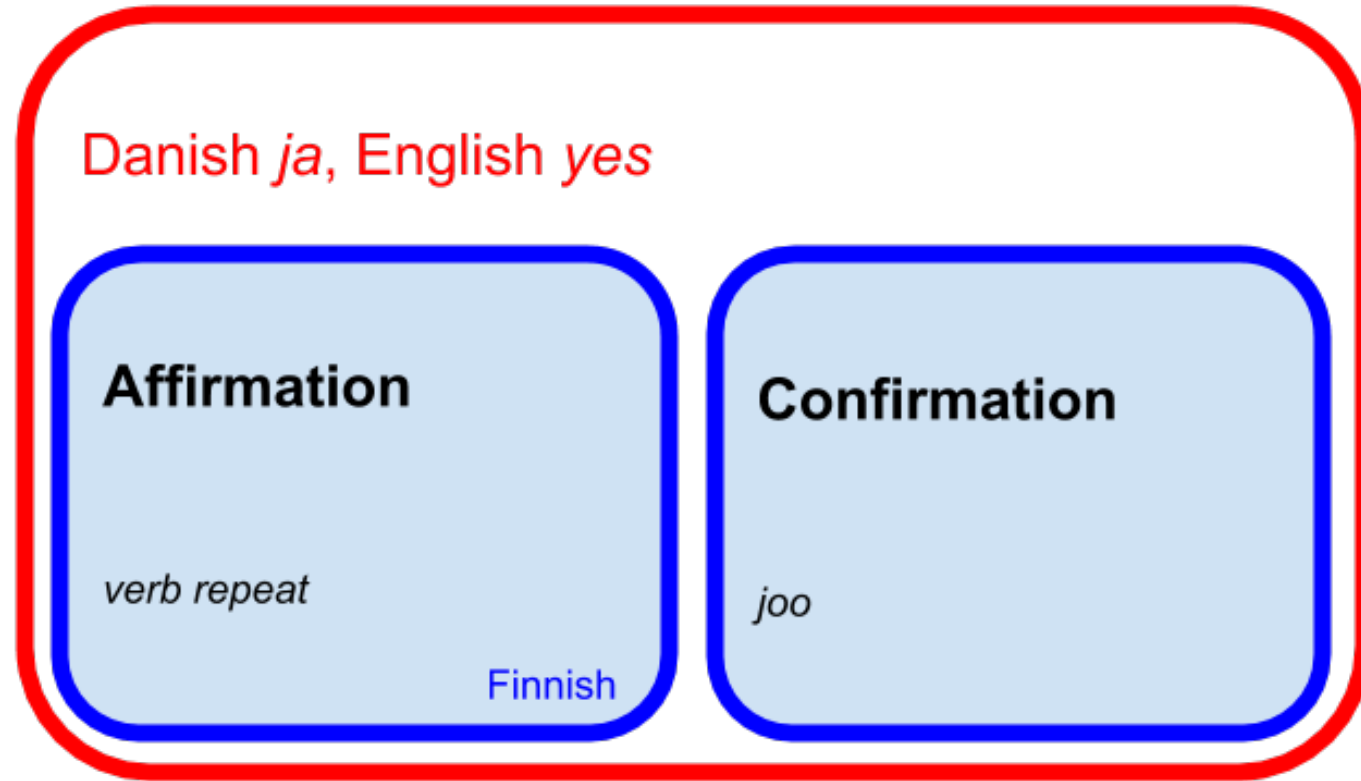
Action carved up differently

*Okay1* doing activity change/receipt  
is not necessarily distinct on occurrence  
- It may do both!



# TYPOLOGICAL COMPARISON?

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(Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018:238-240)



# HOW MANY ACTIONS?

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Robinson 2020: excluded forms

- Interrogatives not including subject or auxiliary (he go fishing)
- Negatively formatted interrogatives
- Declaratives
- With tag questions
- Non-clausal questions

That's a pretty long list – and some of these are categories

But seems worth studying the specific one in focus!





# HOW MANY ACTIONS? DANISH

---

- From the website – requests for confirmation
  1. Questions with turn-final *eller* ‘or’
  2. *Eller hvad* ‘or what’
  3. *Hva*-initial interrogatives (‘what’)
  4. *Hvar* ‘huh’
  5. *Ik* ‘not’ – including varieties
- Besides the formats “interrogative” and “declarative” broadly (Heinemann 2010)
- It’s one “action family” – is it randomly organized?





# HOW MANY ACTIONS?

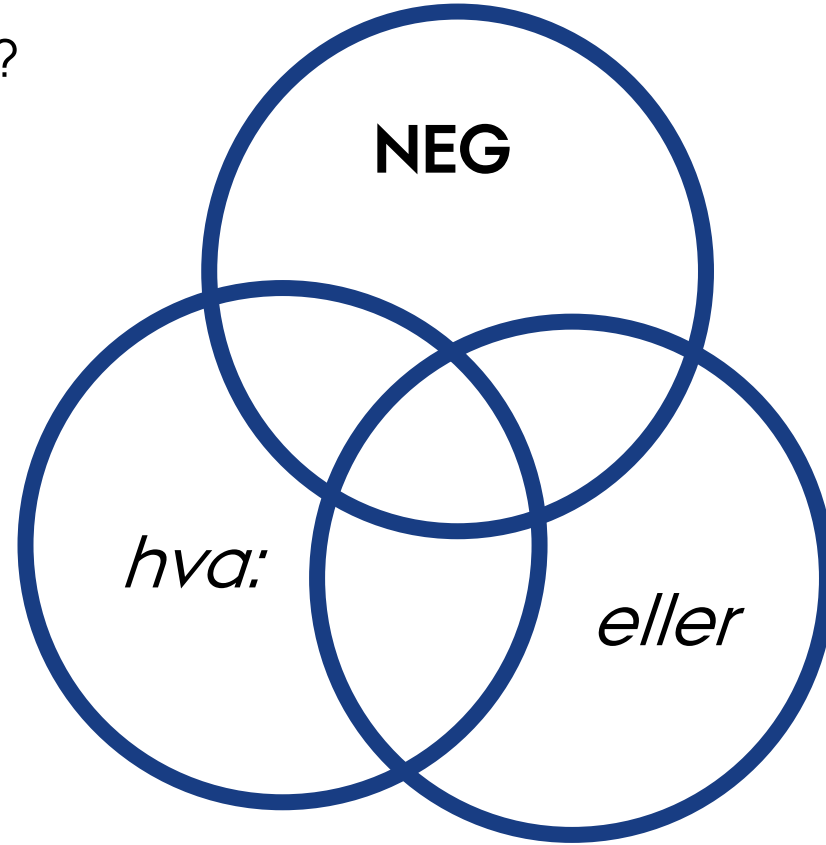
Can we translate that into some variables?

Is action/stance compositional?

“Parameters”?

- $\pm$  initial *hva:*
- $\pm$  polarity
- $\pm$  final *eller*

$[2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8]$



# WHAT'S IN AN ACTION

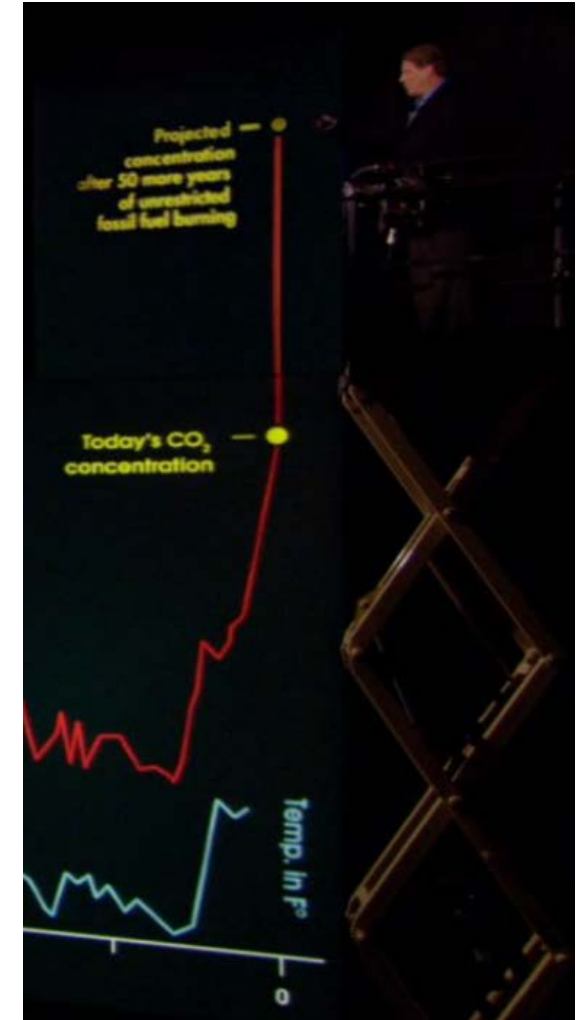
But wait! There's more.

Do all the possible combinations do different things?

If yes – what difference? If not – why does it differ?

“Parameters”?

- $\pm$  initial *hva*:
- $\pm$  polarity
- $\pm$  final *eller*
- +one of an unknown amount of intonation contours
- Interrogative/declarative/phrasal (if not other!)
- If clausal: Tense?
- If declarative: What's in the front field?



# COMPOSITIONALITY OF ACTION

Fox & Heinemann 2016: “formats” as  
host of various recurrent practices

How to unpack this?

E.g. action + stance

Confirmation + affiliation = rising *ja*

Ogden 2010 with constructions

Levels: lexis, phonetics, action, sequence

A-Complaint: [COMPLAIN ABOUT THIRD PARTY] ∪ [SEEK AFFILIATION]  
X-Complaint: [COMPLAIN ABOUT THIRD PARTY] ∪ [CLOSE SEQUENCE]

Table 6. Sketches of partial constructions to account for A- and X-complaints

CLOSE SEQUENCE	
PHON	f0: low in speaker’s range; lower than preceding turns; no wide span setting: relatively quiet; lax
LEX	{idiomatic expression, lexical recycling...}
ACTION	<i>close sequence</i>
SEEK AFFILIATION	
PHON	f0: sustained above speaker’s average; lower than preceding turns; wide span setting: relatively loud; lax
SEQ	place where affiliation is relevant: {first assessment; story completion}
ACTION	<i>make affiliative response relevant</i>
COMPLAIN ABOUT THIRD PARTY	
PHON	
LEX	{negative assessment...}
ACTION	<i>complain about (non-present) third party</i>



# WHAT'S IN AN INTERROGATIVE?

---

Is there some feature shared between interrogatives used for different (types of) actions?

“One parameter”

## **Request for confirmation**

Interrogative

Declarative

Phrasal

## **Request for action**

Interrogative

Declarative

Phrasal

Imperative

If not – how are they both interrogative?



# WHAT'S IN AN INTERROGATIVE?

Is there some feature shared between interrogatives used for different (types of) actions?

## Request for confirmation

Interrogative

Declarative

Phrasal

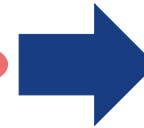
## Request for action

Interrogative

Declarative

Phrasal

Imperative



Low entitlement & low epistemic status?

If not – how are they both interrogative?



# WHAT'S IN AN INTERROGATIVE?

---

Is there some feature shared between interrogatives used for different (types of) actions?

## Request for confirmation

Interrogative

Declarative

Phrasal

## Request for action

Interrogative

Declarative

Phrasal

Imperative



Any reason why it could not be “asymmetrical”? But then why would we use the same words?

If not – how are they both interrogative?

————

The opposite:

Why interrogatives for X?

Why are “interrogatives” word  
order phenomena?

Why do *we* call them

“interrogatives” in CA?

TABLE 1. *Distribution of forms.*

<b>Declaratives</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>56 %</b>
declaratives of trouble	52	
<i>need/want</i> -declaratives	46	
<i>need</i> -declaratives	39	
<i>need</i> + NP (19)		
<i>need</i> + resultative (12)		
<i>need</i> + gerund (5)		
unclear (3)		
<i>want</i> -declaratives	7	
<b>Interrogatives</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<i>can</i> -interrogatives	23	
self-oriented (4)		
other-oriented (16)		
object-oriented (2)		
mixed (1)		
<i>be</i> -interrogatives	10	
other interrogatives	2	
<b>Complex clauses</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>24 %</b>
<i>wonder</i> -clauses	24	
<i>want to</i> -clauses	6	
<i>don't know</i> -clauses	8	
other	4	



# FORMALISATION?

Reber & Couper-Kuhlen 2010 – takes the whole turn as one unit

Is this a format? Is there more to an “action” than putting an action term in the right place?

‘Extra hohes und spitzes’ oh (Reber 2008)		
Segmentale Substanz		[əʊ]
Obligatorische prosodische Eigenschaften	Dauer	gelängt
	Tonhöhen-niveau	sehr hoch
	Tonhöhen-bewegung	steigend-fallend: beginnt hoch, steigt zu einem Gipfel im oberen Bereich des Stimmumfangs und fällt in den mittleren Bereich
	Rhythmische Integration	auf den nächsten Schlag
	Artikulatorische Stärke	stark

Tab. 5: ‘Extra hohes und spitzes’ oh (Reber 2008)

Lautobjekt		
Segmentale Substanz		
Prosodische Merkmale	Dauer	
	Tonhöhen-niveau	
	Tonhöhen-bewegung	
	Lautstärke	
	Rhythmische Integration	
	Artikulatorische Stärke	
	Phonation	
Visuelle-räumliche Merkmale	Auslaut	
	Sequenzielle Platzierung	
	Sequenz-organisationelle Funktion	
	Interaktionale Funktion	
	Turnexpansion bzw. Sprecherwechsel	

Tab. 9: Schema für die Analyse von Lautgestalten



# WHAT TO CALL OUR UNITS?

---

“Format”

“Construction”

“Gestalt”

“Expressions  
and phenomena”  
 (“sound objects”)

What’s the difference?

How to show it methodically?

If there’s none – then why call it anything?



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# OTHER FUNCTIONS

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## > Turn-taking

Formats and the 'shape' of actions is of course used to project their completion etc.

## > Reference

Many NPs 'refer' to things – as part of some other action – assuming appropriate recognition

But requests for recognition can be seen as reference achieved through action

## > Sequence?

Or it just categories of action?

*Intertwined like morphology and syntax*



# ‘CONDITIONS’ OF FEATURES

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Prosody:

- Intonation will always be there for voiced segments
- It is gradient
- It is (often) also related to stress and syllables

Why is prosody used for those functions that it is?

Stance etc. also marked with interrogatives, particles...

What would such ‘condition’ (or affordances?) be for other levels? Lexis, syntax?



# MY PROJECT

---

Potentially compositional actually

*Mm* + falling intonation/other prosodic features + context:story = ordinary continuer

OR

continuer+slight fall+stance => has to be *mm*

etc...

affiliation =



# MY PROJECT – INVENTORY?

Is prosody tied to action?

Table 1	<i>ja</i>	<i>nej</i>	<i>nå</i>	<i>okay</i>	<i>mm</i>
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Assessment	+	+	-	-	+



# MY PROJECT – INVENTORY?

Is prosody tied to action?

Clear rise on confirmation & disconfirmation

➤ Contrast (to level) within action family

(Sørensen something)

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AFFILIATION

# MY PROJECT – INVENTORY?

Is prosody tied to action?

Distinction between action  
(Steensig et al. 2013)

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# MY PROJECT – INVENTORY?

Is prosody tied to action?

Known cases of rising intonatic

Not same function

>phonological inventory

But is it even same form?  
(various steepness of rises)

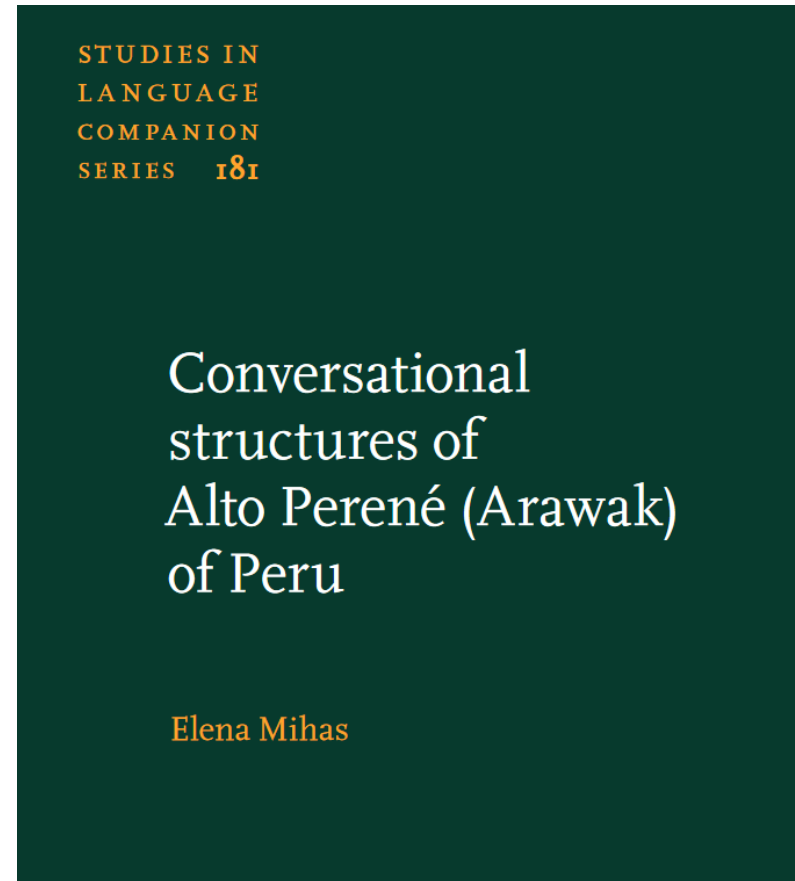
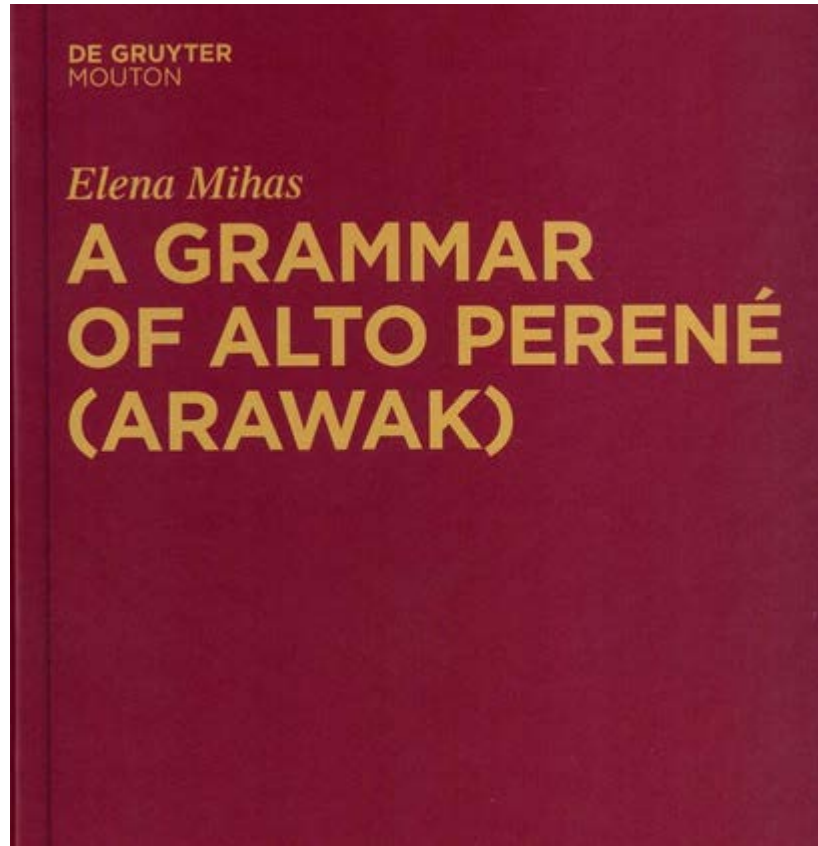
Word-specific phonology?

Or the prosodic varieties as independent lexemes

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Receipt	+	+	+	+	+
Confirmation (epistemic)	+	+	-	-	+
Disconfirmation	- (jo)	+	-	-	- (possible [m?])
Compliance (with request)	+	-	-	+	+
Rejection (of proposal)	-	+	-	-	- (possible [m?])
Response in summons-answer sequence	+	-	-	-	+
Transitional	+	- (?)	+	+	- (?)
Assessment	+	+	-	-	+



# WHAT IS AN INTERACTIONAL GRAMMAR?



Separate grammar and work on conversation?

I haven't read these but I would like to look at them (but the reviews are critical)



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

AARHUS UNIVERSITY

FUNCTIONS IN DANTIN  
27 MAY 2020

SØREN SANDAGER SØRENSEN  
PHD STUDENT



# TAKE-AWAYS

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- The question is not “is it a function”
- The question could be: How do we want to capture this – with the word “function”?
- Think about big questions – what does an answer look like in data?
- What is the point/necessity of various levels?
- And the relation to “traditional” terms
- How can we find out how a full, interactional grammar looks like?
- How are the linguistic material structured around doing certain actions?



What are we doing  
at the next seminar?



” The roughest message you might pick out of what I shall say is that in dealing analytically with conversations, you must be at least cautious in the use of what you’ve been taught about grammar.

- SACKS (1992: 334)



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