INTERJECTIONS AND RESPONSE TOKENS: INTEGRATING FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS WITH SEQUENTIAL ANALYSIS

Background

- Aarhus University

- Samtalegrammatik.dk

- PhD project *The Prosody of Response Tokens in Danish* (2016-2020)

- Postdoc in GEL – *Grammar in Everyday Life*

- Today: Best of both worlds

This is a slightly less funky version of my "Functions"-talk

PHD THESIS AND ARTICLES

0) Thesis report – Overall introduction, discussion & conclusion

1) Article in *Scandinavian Studies in Language*:
"Danish dialogue particles in an interactional perspective"
(Steensig & Sørensen 2019)

2) Article for *okay* project.
"Rising OKAY in Third Position in Danish Talk-in-Interaction"
(Sørensen & Steensig 2021)

3) Article in ROLSI on *ja* and *nej*.
"Affiliating in second position: Response tokens
with rising pitch in Danish." (Sørensen 2021)

4) Draft manuscript on *mm*.
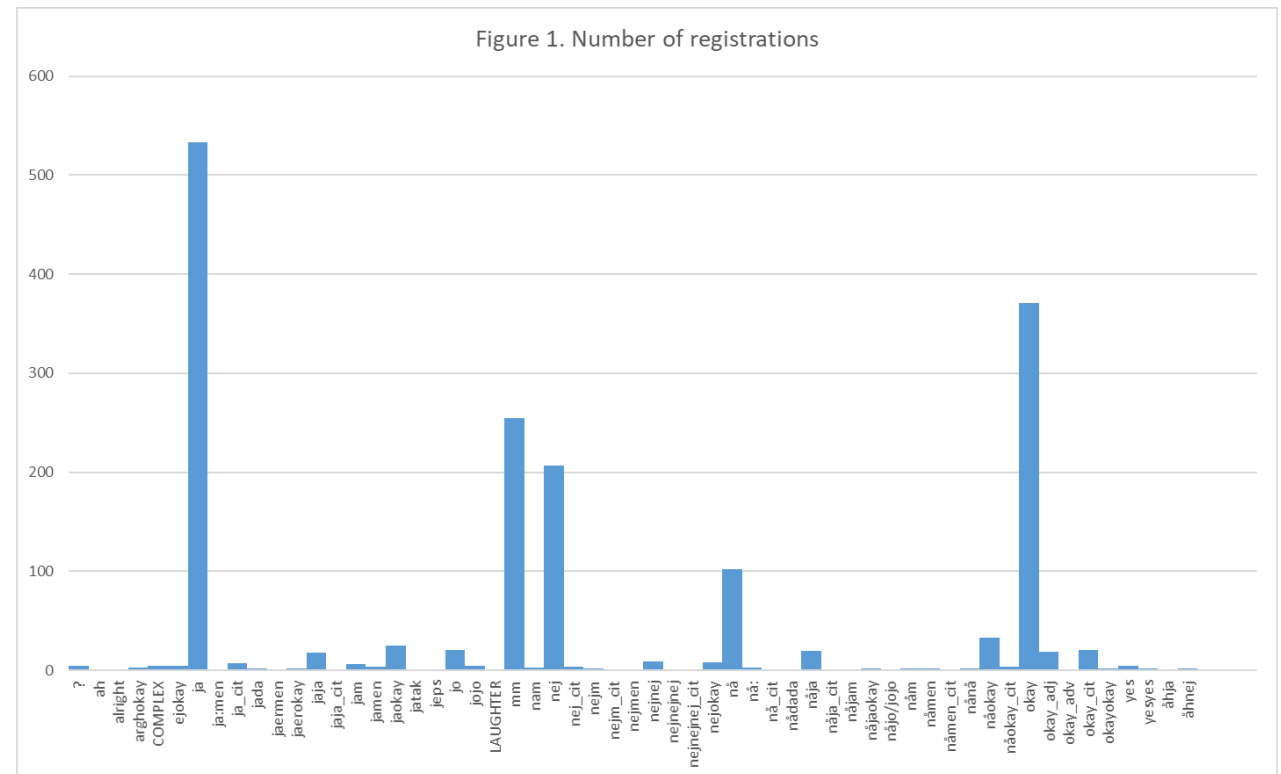"*Mm* – just a continuer? Understanding vs. affective *mm*"

DATA

Mainly Samtalebanken & AULing: Mostly mundane everyday activities in Danish

Spreadsheet with 1700+ registered instances of *ja, nej, nå, okay, mm* and more

Subcollections for each articles.

Figure 1. Number of registrations

INTERACTIONAL LINGUISTICS

Conversation Analysis (Sacks et al. 1974)

Method: next turn proof procedure

- Intersubjective: Meaning grounded in the explicit display of other people
- Empirical through recordings and collection analysis

Interactional Linguistics (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018)

- Conversation Analysis with linguistic focus (of some sort)
- Combined with analyses used else, e.g. acoustics (for phonetics)
- Different ways to relate to linguistic terminology (import, rethinking, etc.)
- Danish context
  - Danish topological field model (Steensig et al. 2023)
  - Reduction phenomena (copula drop etc., Sørensen, under review)

INTERACTIONAL DESCRIPTION

Interactional terminology and observations

- Turn, TCU, projection, turn-ending & turn-continuing etc.

  - Timing among speakers

  - Position within turn (initial, final)

- Action, stance (epistemics, deontics, affect)

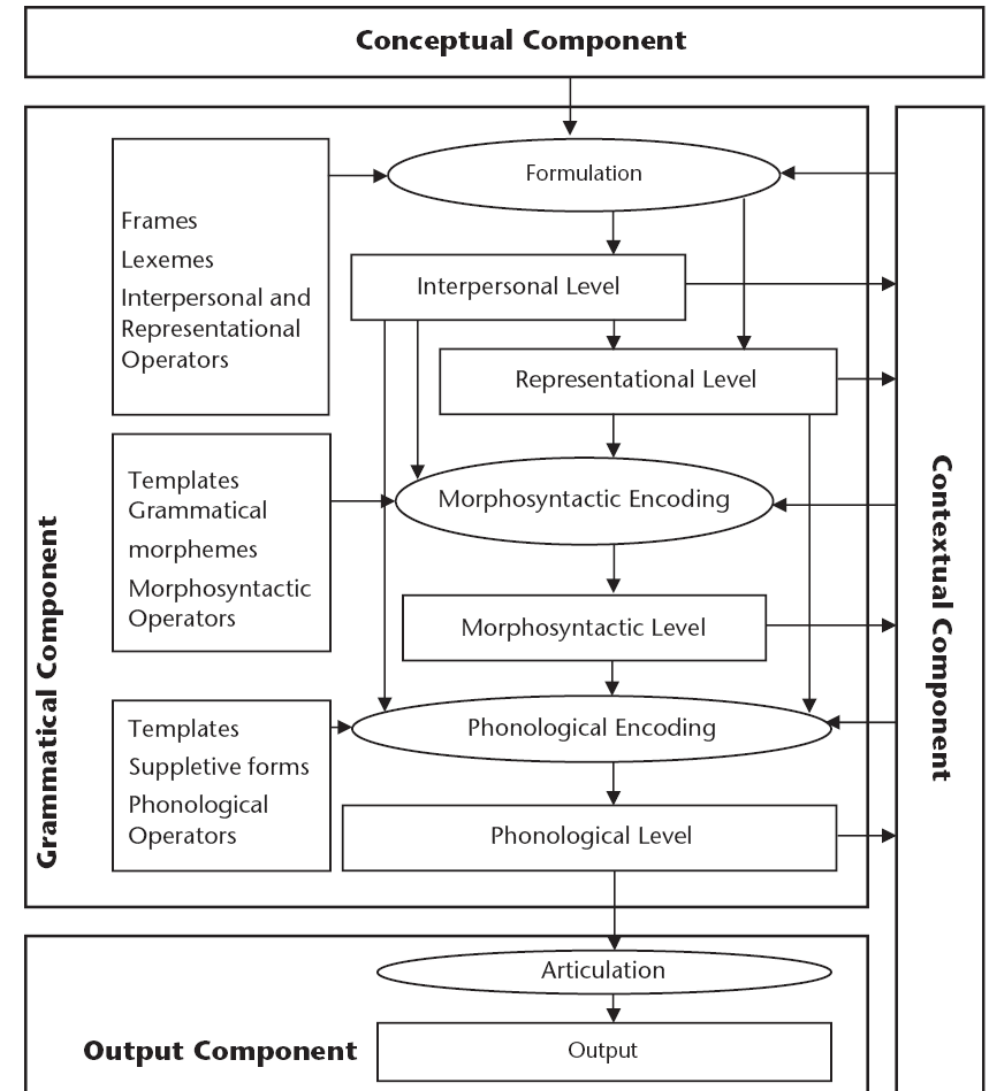 - "job" of a turn

  - In a sequence

FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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)

But also: Function as separate from form

(cf. Dik 1968)

systemic FUNCTIONAL linguistics,
FUNCTIONAL discourse grammar,
danish FUNCTIONAL linguistics, and others

FIGURE 2. General layout of FDG

FUNCTIONAL DISCOURSE GRAMMAR

Focus on word classes (part-of-speech)

- and their flexibility (Rijkhoff & van Lier 2013)

For instance (Jf. Hengeveld 1992)

- Nouns can be heads of NPs without modificatio
- Verbs predicate
- Adjectives modify Ns,
  Adverbs modify Verbs

Flexible parts-of-speech systems	Type 1 (Samoan; see below)	Contentive			
	Type 2 (Ngiyambaa)	Verb		Non-verb	
	Type 3 (Ngiti)	Verb	Noun	Modifier	
Rigid parts-of-speech systems	Type 4 (English)	Verb	Noun	Adjective	Adverb
	Type 5 (Wambon)	Verb	Noun	Adjective	
	Type 6 (Galela)	Verb		Noun	
	Type 7 (Cayuga; see below)	Verb			

Fig. 1. Basic classification of parts-of-speech (PoS) systems (based on Hengeveld 1992; adverb, manner adverb).
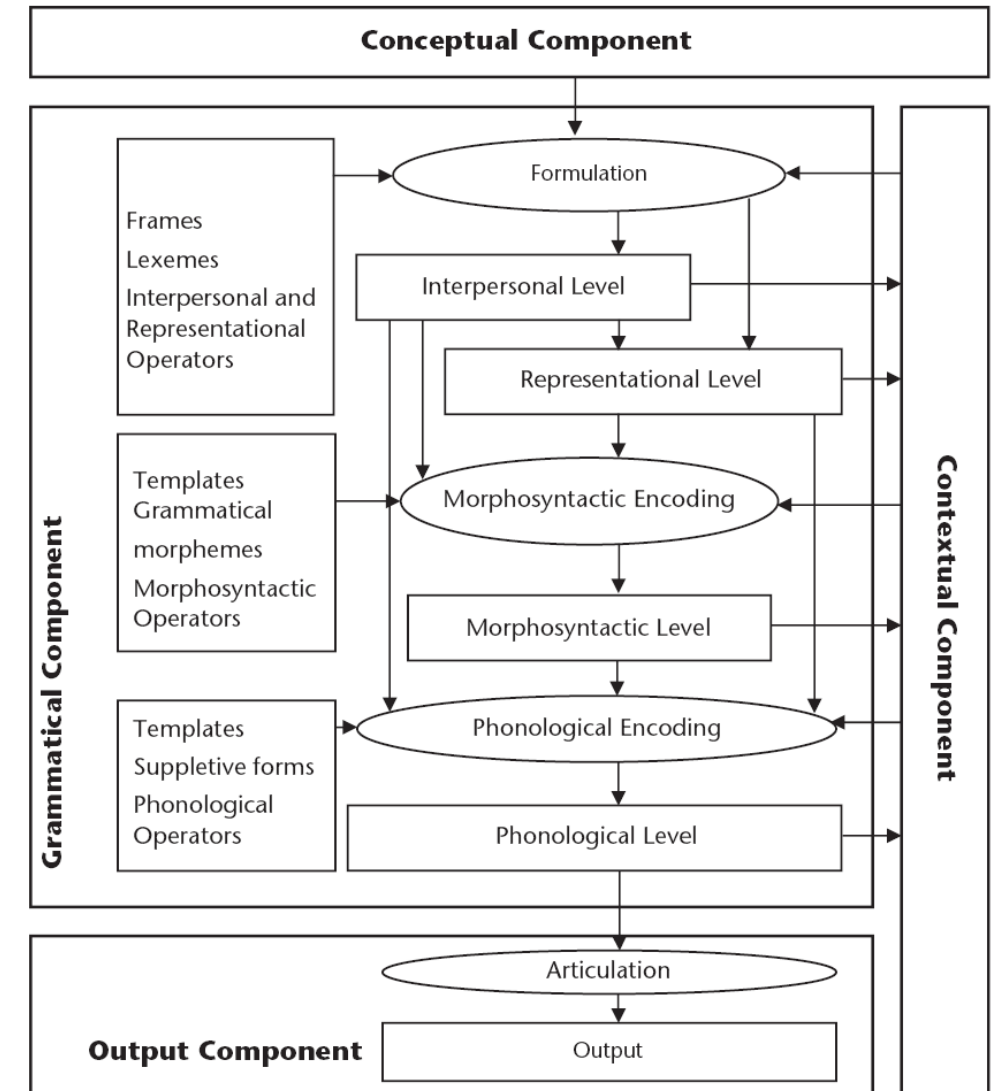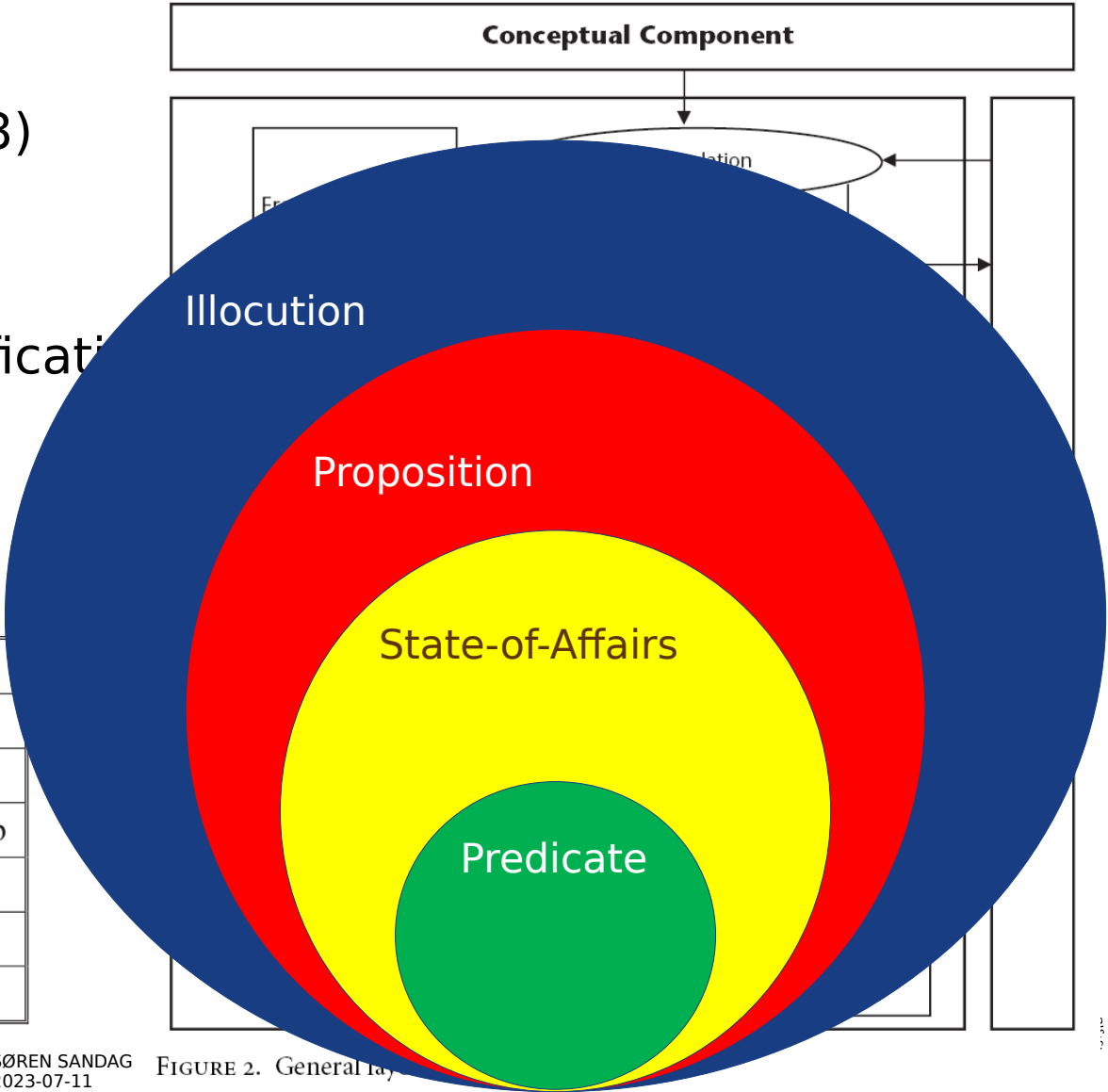

FIGURE 2. General layout of FDG

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Conceptual Component

Illocution

Proposition

State-of-Affairs

Predicate

Flexible parts-of-speech systems	Type 1 (Samoan; see below)	Contentive			
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FIGURE 2. General lay[out]

INTERJECTIONS AND RESPONSE TOKENS
INTERNATIONAL PRAGMATICS CONFERENCE 2023

SØREN SANDAG
2023-07-11

Note that Illocution is in a different Level then the rest
Onion loosely based on Engberg-Pedersen et al. (2019)

Off-putting things about FDG

To interactional people (potentially)

- Illocution is described as "communicative intention"

- Illocution can seem like a restricted set of functions

- Primarily formulates how structures are produced

Response tokens

- Words like *yes* and *no* and others
- Here also including things like *nå, okay, oh*

- Also known by other terms:
  - Response particles
  - Response signals (Heine 2023)
  - "Minimal response"

- Pro-propositional (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008:147)
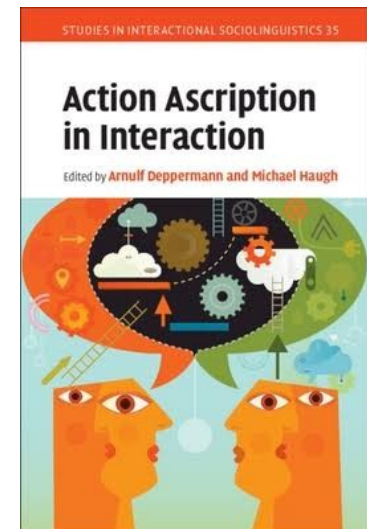
"INTERACTIONAL FUNCTIONS"

- Action

- Turn-taking/construction

- They are intertwined of course

The term "interactional function" is already in widespread use

Action and other pragmatic meaning

- "Action" (broadly construed) or "Illocution" as a function (= meaning component)
  - Action can be achieved by grammatical features of one turn in relation to the previous
    - "(dis)confirmation", "continuer"
  - Stance (sometimes called "overlay", but need not be secondary)
    - Epistemic: Knowledge rights (own, other's), information status
    - Deontics: More/less authority to decide
    - Affective: Positive/negative
    - Affiliation: affiliative/disaffiliative

- Perspectives on the nature or functional and formal features of action

STUDIES IN INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS 35

Action Ascription in Interaction

Edited by Arnulf Deppermann and Michael Haugh

CONFIRMATION

First position	Positive polar interrogative (+)	Negative polar interrogative (-)	
Response:	ja (+)	Nej (-)	
Mismatch [jo]	Match		Mismatch
Disconfirmation	confirmation		disconfirmation

JA [AULing|sofasladder]
1159 B: går de fra os
                are they leaving?
1160   (0.2)
1161 A: **ja**
                yes

NEJ [Samtalebanken|sam2|preben_og_thomas]
1383 PRE: er der ikk flere
                are there NEG more? (aren't there more/are there no more)
1384   (0.3)
1385 THO: *ne:j*

                 no
1386   (0.3)
1387 PRE: (så må vi gemme dem vi har)

                (then we have to save those we have)

CONFIRMATION

The negation is within the proposition - and the scope

```
JA
[AULing|sofasladder]
1159  B:        går de fra os
                are they leaving?
1160            (0.2)
1161  A:        ja
                yes

NEJ
[Samtalebanken|sam2|preben_og_thomas]
1383  PRE:      er der ikk flere
                are there NEG more? (aren't
1384            (0.3)
1385  THO:      *ne:j*
                 no
1386            (0.3)
1387  PRE:      (så må vi gemme dem vi har)
                (then we have to save those we have)
```

First position	Positive polar interrogative (+)	Negative polar interrogative (-)	
Response:	ja		
Mismatch [jo]		ch	
Disconfirmation		ati	

Illocution
CONFIRMS->

Proposition:

[Imported from previous turn →]
"they are leaving"

"there are no more"

ACCEPT OF REQUEST

```
[AULing|kc]
1120  A:        spol lige tilbage og
1121  A:        fortæl mig hvad det er for en [(at)
                go back and tell me what that is

1122  B:                                          [okay

[AULing|mayercam]
64    *A:       [ska vi slå om hvem der starter
                 should we play dice about who starts?

65    *B:       [(great)
66              (0.3)
67    *B:       ja
                yes
```

Separate from CONFIRMATION because *okay* cannot be used there (Mortensen & Mortensen 2009), (cf. distinction between epistemic and deontic)

Acceptance commits to performing

Negation is within the scope of a nej *which means it leads to the "negative" result!*

CONTINUER

[Samtalebanken|sam2|preben_og_thomas]

1698 THO: jam det det (folk å) samfundet ska

1699   jo gerne have lidt sundt oss
             *yeah.but that's it, (people and) society should
             have something healthy too*

1700 PRE: **mm** ↘

1701   (0.4)

1702 THO: å så lavede de det samarbejde med cykelholdet oss jo
             *and then they did that collaboration with the biking
             team too*

RECEIPTING

```
[AULing | board-game-coffee1]
05 Dorte:var det det_
         was it that
06 Sus:  ja, det var det vi så (det) i avisen;
         yes, it was we saw (it) in the newspaper
07       (0.3)
08 Dorte:ok↓ay_
```

```
[AULing | board-game-coffee1]
04    MAR:     det du snakkede om_
               that's what you talked about
05    SVE:     ja_ (yes)
06    MAR:     ja_ (yes)
```

```
[TH | 292-293 M2/10 (Heinemann 2017:250)]
01 KM:   Har du Jens hjemme¿
         Have you Jens at home?
02 Fie:  Nej. (no)
03 KM:   Nå, (oh)
```

```
[Samtalebanken|225_deller]
01    TO:      Mette det var rigtigt du ikk har
02             puttet ø::h salt i det vand her °ikk[å]°,
               NAME, it was true that you had not put salt in
03    ME:                                       [j]eg
                 har ikk puttet noget
04             salt i [vandet n]ej,
               I have not put any salt in the water, no
05    TO:             [nej_     ]
```

Expressing stance + receipt etc.

Response tokens (in 3rd position) may relate to a response that may be a response token too!

(Examples from Steensig & Sørensen 2019)

MEANING IN THIRD POSITION?

Stance – with scope over a proposition

"change-of-state" = receipt + certain epistemic stance

3rd as receipts to answer.
Based on table in Steensig
& Sørensen (2019:79), p. 78

Tokens differ in information sufficiency, alignment, affiliation and more.

Sufficient confirmation: *ja, nej, mm*
Stance-oriented: *nå, okay*

→ multiple components of what a turn is doing

Function\Particle	*ja*	Confirming *nej*	*mm*	Falling *okay*	*nå*	Rising *okay*
Information sufficient, acceptance of sequence closure	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	not fully
Alignment with activity	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	not fully
Polarity in question and answer	positive	negative	positive	neutral	neutral	neutral
Commitment to role of recipient	yes	yes	not fully	yes	yes	yes
Signalling change-of-state	no	no	no	to some degree	to a high degree	yes
Affiliating with stance or perspective	neutral	neutral	neutral	neutral	not fully	yes

Table 2: Summary of the interactional functions of the particles in third position.

ACTIONS

Lexical differences gives us access to the differences

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

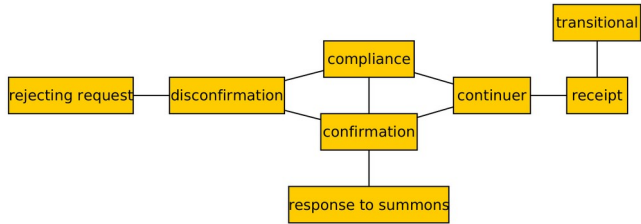>Except continuer/receipt?

Based on Sørensen 2019

| Table 1	*ja*	*nej*	*nå*	*okay*	*mm*
Continuer	+	+	+	+	+
Receipt	+	+	+	+	+
Confirmation (epistemic)	+	+	-	-	+
Disconfirma-tion	- (*jo*)	+	-	-	- (possible [m?])
Compliance (with request)	+	-	-	+	+
Rejection (of proposal)	-	+	-	-	- (possible [m?])
Response in summons-an-swer sequence	+	-	-	-	+ (?)
Transitional	+	- (?)	+	+	- (?)
Assessment	+	+	-	-	+

HOW MANY ACTIONS?

Units of a compositional meaning of action
(e.g. negation affecting a possible future *nej*)

"Parameters"? Formal features?
- ± initial *hva:*
- ± polarity
- ± final *eller*

[2x2x2=8]

NEG

hva:
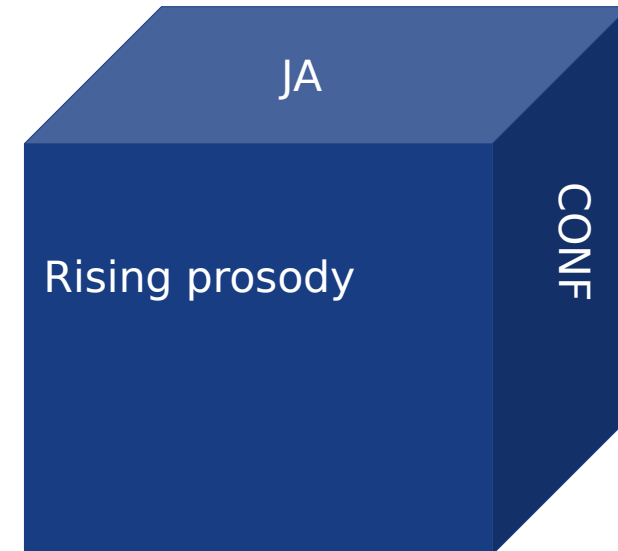
eller
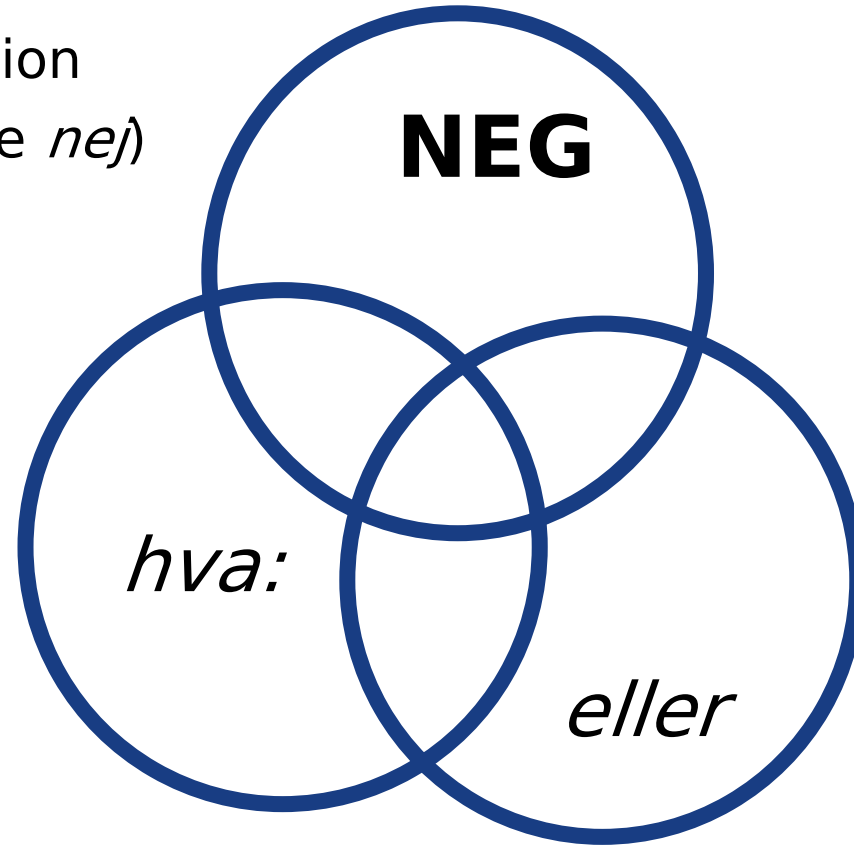
PROSODY AND PHD

Potentially compositional actually

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

      OR

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

      etc…

affiliation =

JA

Rising prosody

CONF

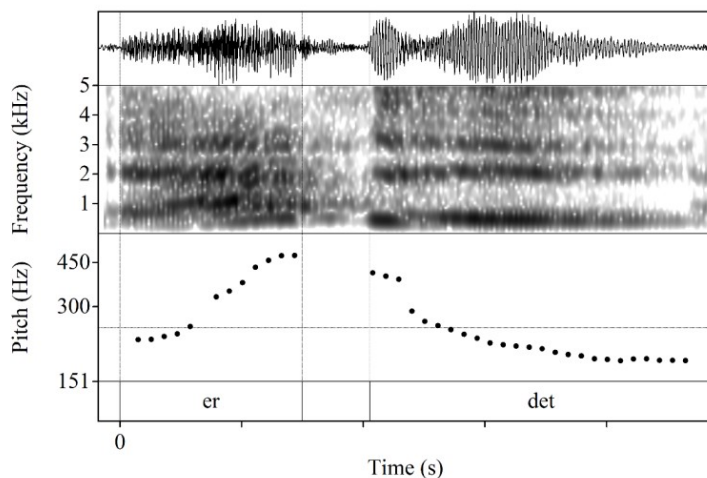# PROSODY AND PHD

Partial
repeat
16.8 ST

Figure 1. Pitch trace of *er det* in (3), line 6.

Ja
9.5 ST
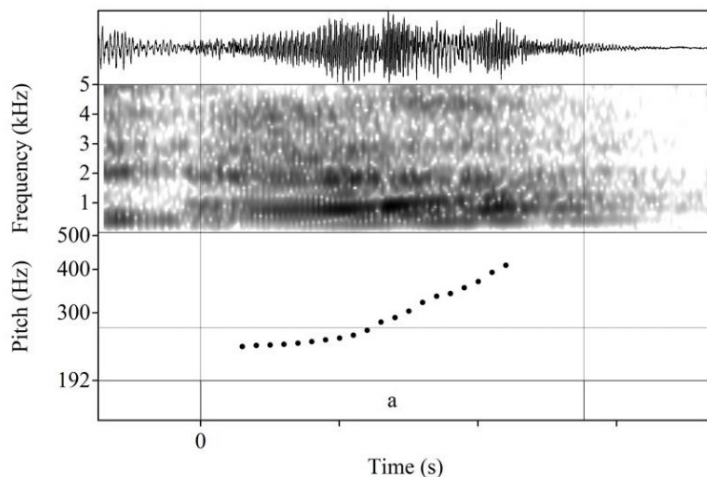
Figure 2. Pitch trace of *a:* in (3), line 7.

(3)   AULing:sofasladder:ja_082

```
01   AST: £°a° det tror jeg sån <nogen: ↑unipiger>£
          yes I think it's such uni((versity))-girls

02        (0.5)

03   BRI: ·mt er de*t-* hva-
              is it      what

04        (0.4)

05   AST: det universitet?=
          it's university

06   BRI: =er det+:.=
            is it
     ast            +smiles-->

07 → AST: =a:?
            yes

08   BRI: gud+
          god
     ast   -->+

09   AST: det tror jeg.
          I think so
```

Sørensen 2021
1: affiliation-rel. Q
2: response token

Pitch (/ →):
Rising affiliates
Level is non-affiliative
(=disaffiliatives in affil. contexts)

Polarity/lexeme (ja/nej)
-match = confirmation
-mismatch = disconfirmation

*Disconfirmation can be
affiliative, e.g. disconfirmation
of problem reg. socialization*

Midway summary

- Turning the "job" of a turn (illocution?) into something consisting of multiple units with functions
- Less restricted than limited list of illocutions
- More systematic description than prose description of action

Word-class description

Word class: Set of words characterized by being the ones used for certain functions without derivation

No 1:1-correspondence between word classes and their functions

Interjections often described as freestanding, monomorphematic (Dingemanse, in press)

RESPONSE TOKEN AS WORD CLASS

Sometimes treated as subtype of interjection, sometimes not

"*response token* […] refer to those tokens that can perform some responsive action when freestanding in second or third position, except if such use can be derived from other properties of the part of speech, e.g. nouns being freestanding in response to specifying questions"

(Sørensen 2020)

i.e. words that can

- Be freestanding
- Perform a responsive action
- …as their only function

Not a relation "derived" by the sequential context

RESPONSE TOKEN AS WORD CLASS

One-word-constructions
(Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018)

Other word classes can have freestanding functions
Also not the same as separate TCU (e.g. turn-initial/final elements)
~ *token*

Nouns

–   A: What have you brought today?
B: **Cake**

–   **Lort**! (*Shit!*)

–   B: ((walks into canteen))
B: **laksewrappen** (the salmon wrap)

Verbs

–   A: Hvad laver du? B: **Spiser**
A: *What are you doing? B: eating*

–   **Spis**! (*eat!*) ((i.e. imperatives))

Adjectives

–   Lækkert! *(delicious)*

–   Super!

AND some of these are responsive

–   Responses to specifying Qs (or other)

–   Receipts

–   2nd assessments

Response tokens do not also have the other functions
(e.g. head of noun phrase*) > sequential aspects

Being freestanding is not exclusive to interjections

*possible exceptions include quotes and nominalizations referring to their action

Note: *øh* 'uh' points towards further talk > not freestanding (Sørensen et al. 2019)

(There is a discussion about the "one-word"-status vs. phrase)

(based on this, *okay* is not a response token!)

RESPONSE TOKEN AS WORD CLASS

One-word-constructions
(Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2018)

Freestanding responsive actions

Freestanding response often "unproblematic"
> by being type-conforming (Raymond 2003)

– A: Do we have more drinks?
  B: **Yes**

– A: What have you brought today?
  B: **Cake**

Phrasal answers to specifying questions do "simple answering" (Fox & Thompson 2010)

Non-freestanding turns can indicate problems

Sidnell (2010)

```
(32)   Deb and Dick
22   Deb:    →                      [ s]o don't you have all your
23           →   family coming today?
24   Dick:   →   Well: they're coming around two and I °hhh left
25               messages with Brian an:d mydad to(uh) see if
```

Dispreference, transformative answers (Stivers & Hayashi 2010)
Other types of resistance

Separate parameters:
• Freestanding vs. not
• May or may not repeat from previous
• Disconfirm or confirm (etc.)

(note: more than two distinctions, because of possible combinations)

POS summary

Response tokens are characterized by
- Doing response actions
- Form a freestanding turn
- Without other morphosyntactic functions

(cf. 'born' adverbs and derived adverbs (i.e adjectives))

Points
- There is more to say about being able to function as a turn on its own
- The freestanding template has some functions in some languages, which go beyond response tokens
- Freestanding vs. not is separate from other parameters

Overall summary

- Interactional terminology may offer nice descriptions on functions/structures
- This description at the "pragmatic" level can be combined with terms from other approaches
- Response tokens and freestanding things are cool and deserve more action
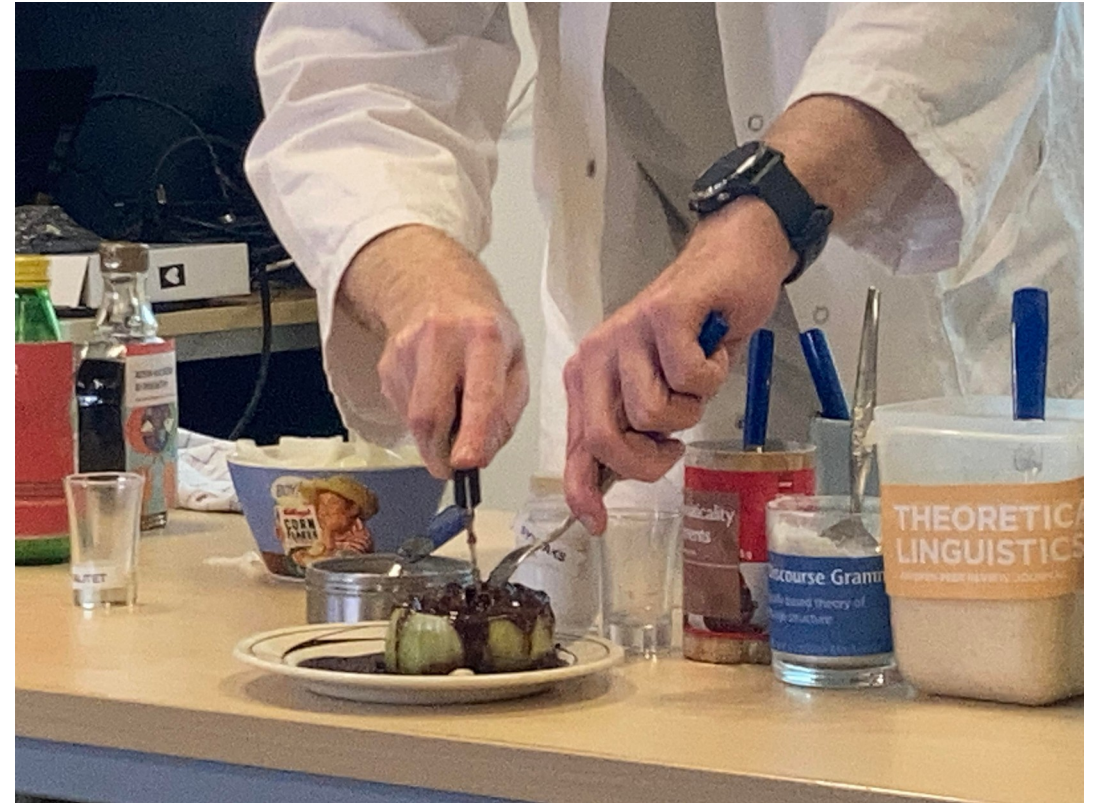
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