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On tempo in dispreferred turns: A recurrent pattern in a Dutch corpus

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Abstract

Purpose This paper addresses the question as to whether dispreferred response turns in spoken interaction have recurrent prosodic characteristics. Following observations on the phonetics of dispreferred turns found in the literature, the paper focuses on the temporal organisation of dispreferred turns. In particular, it investigates whether the tempo of dispreferred turns correlates with the tempo of the immediately prior turns to which they respond.

Methodology The paper focuses on a collection of dispreferred turns taken from a corpus of Dutch conversation. Dispreferred turns are identified and analysed structurally and pragmatically using the methods of Conversation Analysis. Relevant components are subjected to temporal phonetic analysis, and patterns are quantified where possible.

Findings The paper suggests that dispreferred turns of the type considered are consistently paced relative to their prior turns. In particular, the turn component that most clearly implements the dispreferred action is, in a majority of cases, slow relative to the turn to which it responds. While dispreferred turns without this characteristic are found, the paper suggests that these may be oriented to as unusual or problematic by participants in the interaction.

Value The paper increases our understanding of the organisation of dispreferred turns, which continue to attract debate in the conversation-analytic literature, and, more generally, of the systematic use of prosodic resources by participants in spoken interaction.

Key words *Prosody, Tempo, Preference, Conversation Analysis, Dutch*

Paper type *Research paper*

1 Introduction

It is commonly observed in conversation-analytic work that in everyday interaction, some actions offer a clear choice between alternative next relevant actions. For example, an invitation occasions a choice between acceptance and declination; an assessment such as *it's nice* occasions a choice between an agreeing assessment, along the lines of *yes it is nice*, and a disagreeing one, along the lines of *no it's not nice*, or *it's horrible*; and following a *yes/no* question, both *yes* and *no* constitute next relevant actions, and the recipient of the question is faced with a choice between the two options. Research has shown that in these cases, the two options are typically associated with different turn designs (Pomerantz, 1984). One — agreement, acceptance, affirmation — is typically brief and delivered without delay or further explanation, while the other — disagreement, refusal, negation — is typically prefaced by *well*, accompanied by delays, hesitations and repetitions, and followed by accounts of why the action is necessary.

In Conversation Analysis, this recurrent difference in turn design is taken as a reflection of the fact that following the first pair part of an ‘adjacency pair’ (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) that offers a choice of next relevant actions, such as an invitation, one of these actions is conventionally *preferred* while the other is *dispreferred*. Following an invitation, an acceptance is conventionally preferred, and more generally, there appears to be a preference for agreement in interaction (Sacks, 1987). Interactants display their orientation to these conventions in the design of second pair parts, such that dispreferred actions require more interactional and formulational work than preferred ones.

So far research on dispreferred turn types has focused on identifying recurrent turn components (Pomerantz, 1984; Davidson, 1984; Raymond, 2003; Mazeland, 2004) and on clarifying the relationship between dispreferred *action* and dispreferred *turn* in various interactional contexts (Bilmes, 1988; Schegloff, 1988; Kotthoff, 1993; Goodwin et al., 2002). For example, it has been shown that in some interactional contexts, disagreement is treated by participants as a preferred action. We will return to this issue — which has a number of methodological implications — below. Relatively little attention has so far been paid to how dispreferred turns are produced phonetically. Given the association between dispreferred actions and the practices of delay and hesitation the *temporal* characteristics of dispreferred turns would seem a particularly interesting area of inquiry. Nevertheless, while Auer et al. (1999: Ch.4) confirm that dispreferred turns are recurrently characterised by ‘rhythmic non-integration’ with the prior turn, most commonly through a markedly late start, they leave open the question as to whether any ‘rhythmic non-integration’ at the onset persists throughout the turn.

Subsequent observations by Plug (2005) and Ogden (2006) suggest that dispreferred turns, or at least some of their components, may indeed be recurrently temporally marked relative to prior talk, although the findings appear inconsistent as to how this marking is achieved. Plug (2005) observes that the Dutch discourse marker *eigenlijk* ‘actually’, which is prone to extreme phonetic reduction, is typically realised in its full form in dispreferred turns; he further notes

that non-reduction and relatively slow production characterise not just *eigenlijk*, but the turn-constructional unit in which it is embedded. Ogden (2006), on the other hand, investigates second assessments in English, and finds that overtly disagreeing second assessments tend to have a similar tempo to the first assessment, while weakly disagreeing assessments are characterised by a *higher* tempo. While these observations are significant *per se*, it has remained unclear to what extent they are generalisable beyond Plug and Ogden’s data collections.

This paper reports on a study of the temporal characteristics of dispreferred turns — or, as explained below, turn components — taken from a corpus of Dutch conversation. The study was built on that presented by Plug (2005). It considered a more extensive collection of fragments, only some of which contain the discourse marker *eigenlijk*. It set out to address the question as to whether dispreferred turns have recurrent temporal characteristics, in particular relative to the prior turn. The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 describes the data and methods employed in the study. Section 3 illustrates the types of dispreferred turn considered. Sections 4 and 5 discuss the results of the phonetic analysis. Section 6 concludes.

2 Data and method

Before we turn to a description of the dispreferred turns considered in this study, this section introduces the corpus from which they were taken (Section 2.1), the criteria for inclusion in the collection (Section 2.2), and the methods of phonetic analysis (Section 2.3).

2.1 The Ernestus Corpus

The observations presented below are based on a corpus of ‘casual’ Dutch, designed and recorded by Mirjam Ernestus between 1995 and 1996 (Ernestus, 2000). Ernestus’ corpus contains speech by ten pairs of male speakers of Standard Dutch, mostly pairs of friends or colleagues, involved in several tasks, recorded in a professional recording studio. Most of the material comprises informal interviews which Ernestus undertook with each of the pairs, and one-to-one conversations between the two members of each pair on a range of topics — some suggested by Ernestus, others offered spontaneously. In total, the material amounts to approximately 13 hours of talk-in-interaction.

2.2 The scope of this study

Given the structural complexity of many dispreferred turns, and the complexity of the notion of ‘dispreference’ itself, it is important to be explicit about the scope of the study presented here. As indicated above, the relationship between dispreferred *action* and dispreferred *turn* is a point of some contention in the conversation-analytic literature. The distinction between action and turn is not a trivial one, because emphasis on one or the other in defining ‘dispreference’

determines how one deals with cases in which an apparently dispreferred action is implemented with a turn that displays no orientation to this status. As Schegloff points out, according to those who focus on the actions involved, ‘If [a] question is built to prefer “yes” then “no” is a dispreferred response, even if delivered without delay and in turn-initial position, and vice versa’; according to those who focus on the design of the second pair part, ‘Speakers ... do the response they do “as a preferred” or “as a dispreferred”, rather than doing “the preferred or dispreferred response”’ (Schegloff, 1988: 453).

For the purpose of this study, a ‘dispreferred turn’ is defined as a turn which implements a dispreferred action *and* shows an orientation to this in its design. In other words, in the context of this study, ‘dispreferred turn’ does not refer to any turn which expresses some kind of disagreement with a prior turn. Rather, it refers to a general linguistic structure conventionally associated with a range of actions — declining an invitation, disagreeing with an assessment, refusing an offer and so on — that are interactionally dispreferred. This general linguistic structure is constituted by a range of individual design features, including the use of *well*, delays, hesitations and repetitions, weak formulations of the dispreferred action, following accounts of why the dispreferred action is necessary, and so on. This study set out to investigate whether turns that are characterised by one or more of these design features also have recurrent temporal phonetic characteristics.

Dispreferred turns can be structurally rather complex. An example of this complexity is given in (1) (see also Plug, 2005: 136). Here E’s opening inquiry (line 1) functions as an invitation for C to offer a newsworthy topic for discussion. C in effect declines the invitation: he has no topic to contribute. E treats C’s response as dispreferred by offering a newsworthy topic himself (line 10).

(1) C–E/One-to-one/08

- 1 E: heb je verder nog wat gedaan van de week
 have you further still something done of the week
have you done anything else this week
- 2 (0.5)
- 3 C: eh:m d- j:::a wat heb ik gedaan (0.5)
 erm well what have I done
erm well what have I done,
- 4 wat heb ik gedaan
 what have I done
what have I done
- 5 (0.8)
- 6 nou niet veel ei[genlijk
 well not much actually
well not much actually
- 7 E: [nee:?
 no
no
- 8 C: nee [de dagelijkse routine: afgedraaid
 no the daily routine taken-care-of
no taken care of the daily routine

9 E: ['n beetje bijgekomen ja
 a bit rested yes
rested a bit yeah

((Several lines omitted, during which no further talk from C is forthcoming))

10 E: .hh ik ben lekker naar het strand geweest
 I am nicely to the beach been
I made a nice trip to the beach

The thing to notice in this fragment is that the turn-constructive unit that implements the dispreferred action — C's decline of the invitation to offer a topic for discussion — is *nou niet veel eigenlijk* (line 6), with which C offers an inadequate candidate response to E's inquiry in line 1. This unit *could* constitute a pragmatically coherent and complete turn on its own, but in this case at least one additional turn-constructive unit precedes: the apparently self-directed, repeated interrogative *wat heb ik gedaan* (lines 3 to 4). Notice that the latter unit would *not*, taken alone, constitute a pragmatically coherent and complete turn in response to C's inquiry.

In order to ensure comparability across instances, this study focuses on the temporal characteristics of turn-constructive units like *nou niet veel eigenlijk* in (1) — that is, those units that most directly implement the dispreferred action within the context of a dispreferred turn. In some cases, this unit constitutes the dispreferred turn on its own; in many, however, there are additional turn-constructive units about whose phonetic characteristics this paper makes no claims. To summarise, the scope of the study reported here is turn-constructive units which implement a dispreferred action and which constitute or are part of a turn that shows an orientation on the part of the speaker to the dispreferred status of this action — that is, a dispreferred turn. Turns which express disagreement but have no obvious design features of a dispreferred turn were not considered in the study, and neither were additional turn components of complex dispreferred turns, such as accounts.

2.3 Phonetic analysis

All fragments in the collection were subjected to auditory analysis, focusing on a comparison between the turn-constructive unit implementing the dispreferred action and the immediately prior turn. For each fragment, relevant stretches of speech were transcribed phonetically, and a note was made on their temporal and rhythmical characteristics. In order to confirm auditory observations on tempo, measurements of articulation rate were taken. Articulation rate refers to the number of syllables per time unit excluding silent pauses. For the purpose of this study, a silence longer than 0.10 sec — excluding delimitable stop closure portions — was taken to constitute a silent pause; measurements were taken over relevant stretches between such pauses. Syllables with unusually long segment durations, or 'sound stretches' (Schegloff, 1979), were avoided where possible, so that the stretches under comparison have a similarly regular rhythm. Initial instances of *nou* 'well', *ja* 'yes' and *nee* 'no' were systematically excluded, since these

are frequently ‘stretched’ in the present collection. For each stretch the duration was divided by the number of syllables that a canonical realisation of the stretch would contain. This method has been used widely in previous research on tempo variation in Dutch: see for example Blauw (1995), Van Donzel (1999), Verhoeven et al. (2004) and Quené (2008).

In addition to comparing the tempo of the relevant turn-constructural unit with that of the prior turn (uttered by another speaker), an attempt was made to assess whether the unit was produced particularly fast or particularly slowly with respect to other talk by the *same* speaker. In some cases this was relatively easily done impressionistically, but in many cases measurement was deemed a more reliable basis for comparison. Therefore a mean articulation rate figure was calculated for each speaker, to serve as a reference point for measurements of specific stretches of speech. This was done as follows.

Interpausal stretches amounting to a total duration of approximately two minutes of speech were selected from the material; in most cases between 40 and 60 stretches were required to reach the total duration. The selection was random, although care was taken to sample from across the time-course of each pair’s material. For the resulting two minutes of speech, articulation rate was calculated as described above. Table 1 presents the resulting figures for each speaker and the overall mean. It can be seen that mean rates range between 5.7 sylls/sec (speaker N) and 7.8 sylls/sec (speaker S), with a mean across the twenty speakers of 6.7 sylls/sec. The measured rates are similar to those reported by Blauw (1995), who found an average rate of 6.9 sylls/sec in a large corpus of spontaneous interviews. However, they are high in comparison with more recent measurements reported by Verhoeven et al. (2004): they found an average rate of 5.4 sylls/sec in spontaneous interviews with 20 speakers from the Randstad area of the Netherlands.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

3 The collection

The observations presented in this paper are based on a collection of 76 dispreferred turns of the type described above. Most of these fall roughly into two groups: dispreferred turns which express disagreement with a prior turn, and dispreferred turns which provide a problematic response to an inquiry, such as that in (1). Straightforward second assessments of the type discussed by Ogden (2006) — for example, *I don’t like it* in response to *It’s great isn’t it* — were not attested in the material; neither were declinations of offers. This section describes 10 examples in detail, starting with dispreferred turns which express disagreement.

3.1 Turns which express disagreement with the prior turn

As a first example, consider the fragment in (2). In this fragment and those that follow in this section, the start of the first pair part of the adjacency pair is arrowed and numbered ‘1’, and

the start of the dispreferred second pair part is arrowed and numbered ‘2’. The part of the dispreferred turn that was considered in the phonetic analysis is in bold and underlined. Prior to this fragment, C has explained why he is interested in reading folk literature. In lines 1 to 2 Z asserts that reading folk literature provides insights into *cultuur*. This is the first pair part in an adjacency pair: it makes an expression of agreement or disagreement the next relevant action.

(2) C–E/Interview/33

- 1→1 Z: en je krijgt ook een stukje cultuur
and you get also a piece-of culture
and you also get a bit of culture
- 2 van: ja (.) andere landen mee
of well other countries along
of well, other countries with it
- 2→3 C: .hhhhh j: :::a:
well
well
- 4 (1.0)
- 5 Z: [(wel)
- 6 C: [j:a: (0.3) ja .kn hhh n- en mis- mee- **meer**
well yes and more
well, yes, n- and mayb- mo- more
- 7 **het gedachtengoed maar niet echt** eh: ja de:
the philosophy but not really er well the
the philosophy but not really er well the
- 8 (0.6)
- 9 E: is toch ook cultuur
is DM also culture
that's also culture isn't it
- 10 C: ja: wel cultuur is ook zo'n zo'n vreemd
yes DM culture is DM such-a such-a strange
yes it is, culture is anyway a a strange
- 11 begrip ofzo vind ik (.) een beetje
concept or-something find I a bit
concept or something I think, a bit

C starts the second pair part with a long inbreath; this already suggests that Z's assertion is problematic for him in that he cannot express agreement with it. His long form of *ja* (line 3) is glossed 'well'. In the terminology of Pomerantz (1984), these forms of *ja* constitute markers of 'weak agreement': in terms of their lexical semantics, they would appear to express agreement, but by virtue of their placement and form they suggest that an expression of disagreement is imminent. C's subsequent talk is further delayed by a 1 sec silence. Note that Z appears to orient to the absence of a strong expression of agreement in C's talk by line 5. If her utterance is *wel*, it could be glossed 'it is so', or 'is it', both of which would confirm that Z is orienting to an imminent disagreement. However, unfortunately the signal is weak at this point, and the hearing of *wel* uncertain.

C's talk in lines 6 to 7 indicates that he disagrees with Z's use of the term *cultuur*. Notice that C does not mark *cultuur* as inappropriate explicitly, instead proposing an alternative —

gedachtengoed. Notice also that his turn is *treated* as expressing disagreement with Z's prior by E (line 9), who challenges C's suggestion that *cultuur* and *gedachtengoed* are different concepts. C's subsequent talk (lines 10 to 11) attributes his dispreferred action to the general difficulty of defining *cultuur*.

C's response to Z's assertion has various of the design features of dispreferred turns introduced above: its progress is delayed by silences and long in- and outbreaths, it contains variants of 'well', it is characterised by apparent hesitations and repetitions, it does not express disagreement categorically, and it contains an account attributing the disagreement to an external factor. Many of these features are also observable in the fragment in (3). Here M offers a negative assessment of the music played at a recent party (lines 2 to 3). The relevant next action for N is to express agreement or disagreement with this assessment.

(3) M–N/One-to-one/08

- 1 M: eh het is geen wonder dat je dat dan draait
 er it is no wonder that you that then play
and it's no wonder that you play that then
- 1→2 maar niet echt eh: (0.3) leuk vind ik
 but not really er nice find I
but not really er, nice I think
- 3 om d'r de hele avond naar te luisteren
 to there the whole night to to listen
to listen to it all night
- 2→4 (0.4)
- 5 ja
 yes
 yes
- 6 N: .mmmmth nee: nou ik: n- ik doe het zelf wel hoor
 no well I I do it myself DM DM
no well I n- I do do it myself you know
- 7 (0.5)
- 8 maar dan gewoon eh: (0.2) lekker achteruit zitten
 but then just er nicely back sit-INF
but then just er, sit back and relax
- 9 op de bank eh::
 on the sofa er
on the sofa er

The pause at line 4, to which M orients by expanding his turn (line 5), already suggests that an agreement is not forthcoming. N's subsequent talk is further delayed a long inbreath (line 6), and, as in the case of (2), starts with a 'weak agreement' marker: in this case *nee*, which matches the polarity of *niet* in M's prior turn-constructural unit (see Mazeland 1990 on expressing agreement with *nee*). Notice that *nee* is immediately followed by *nou*, which confirms N's orientation to the dispreferred status of the action which his turn-in-progress implements.

The turn-constructural unit that most overtly implements the dispreferred action is *ik doe het zelf wel hoor*. In the same way that C in (2) does not explicitly mark Z's use of the term *cultuur* as inappropriate, N does not offer an assessment in direct opposition to M's prior: that

is, he does not explicitly assess the activity of listening to the type of music in question along the lines of ‘I do think it’s nice to listen to it all night’. However, his use of the discourse marker *wel* marks *ik doe het zelf wel hoor* as *contrasting* with the prior, and its assertion that N engages in the activity which M has assessed negatively clearly implies a disagreeing assessment. Notice that in lines 8 to 9, N suggests that the contexts of M’s and his own assessment of the activity are different. This can be seen as an attempt to downplay the disagreement: if the contexts of the assessments are different, there can in principle be no direct disagreement.

Two more examples are given in this section. In the first, in (4), the dispreferred turn is structurally less complex than those in (2) and (3). Here the speakers are discussing the role of television and other media in spreading news. L’s turn in lines 6 to 7 negatively assesses the level of precision of K’s prior assertion.

(4) K–L/Interview/69

- 1→1 K: en vanuit- vanuit duizend mensen eh::
and from from thousand people er
and spreading news fro- from a thousand
- 2 nieuwsverspreiden (0.5) gaat natuurlijk heel wat
news-spread goes of-course considerably
people er, is of course a lot
- 3 sneller wanneer- van dat handjevol wat er
faster when from that handful that there
faster when- than from that handful that
- 4 toevallig bijgestaan heeft
accidentally witnessed has
accidentally witnessed it
- 2→5 (2.9)
- 6 L: ja: is wel iets ingewikkelder denk ik
well is DM a-bit more-complex think I
well I think it’s a bit more complex than that
- 7 maar goed
but anyway
but anyway
- 8 (1.2)
- 9 Z: ja dat handje wat erbij gestaan heeft is
yes that hand-DIM that witnessed has is
yes that handful that has witnessed it is
- 10 natuurlijk wel eh ja een stuk meer bij de zaak
of course well DM er well a lot more with the case
of course well er a lot more involved
- 11 betrokken dan die duizend die er maar
involved than those thousand that there just
with the case than the thousand that just
- 12 naar kijken
at look
look at it

While L’s turn does not constitute an expression of outright opposition to K’s assertion, it does display a *lack of agreement* with it, and L orients to the dispreferred status of this action in

the construction of the turn. It is delayed by a long silence (line 5) and prefaced by the ‘weak agreement’ marker *ja*, and the assessment is formulated in less than categorical terms, with *een beetje*, *denk ik* and finally *maar goed*, which marks the issue as not worth pursuing further. Note that L’s turn is indeed treated as expressing a lack of agreement by Z, who, in affiliation with L, takes issue with K’s assertion (lines 9 to 12).

Finally, the fragment in (5) provides an example of a claim of insufficient knowledge which functions as a marker of disagreement — or lack of agreement. This fragment is briefly considered by Plug (2005). Our focus here is on T’s response to S’s assertion in lines 1 to 3, which concerns the consequences of a defeat suffered by a Dutch football club.

(5) S–T/One-to-one/13

- 1→1 S: dat wordt echt eh de het wordt oorlog in
 that becomes really er the it becomes war in
that’s really er the it will be war in
- 2 de stad en er wordt ge::: met kussentjes
 the city and there is with cushions-DIM
the city and er people are
- 3 gegooïd en eh::
 thrown and er
throwing cushions and er,¹
- 2→4 (0.2)
- 5 T: ja of dat nou altijd zo is ik weet het niet
 well whether that DM always so is I know it not
well whether that’s always the case I don’t know,
- 6 .hh kijk i- i- ((name)) speelde natuurlijk niet
 see played of course not
you see ((name)) of course didn’t play
- 7 slecht
 badly
badly
- 8 (0.5)
- 9 S: nee
 no
no

Again, T’s response is not early and starts with a ‘weak agreement’ marker, *ja* (line 5). T’s turn-constructive unit in line 5 questions the generality of S’s assertion, but claims insufficient knowledge to reject it outright. Notice that the interrogative construction *of dat nou altijd zo is* precedes the claim of insufficient knowledge, which foregrounds the action of questioning the prior turn. In the subsequent sequence, only part of which is shown here in lines 6 to 9, T proposes circumstances under which S’s assertion of supporter unrest might be incorrect.

¹The idiom *met kussentjes gooien* ‘throw little cushions’ is used to describe stadium unrest; it stems from the days when seats in football stadiums had removable cushions.

3.2 Turns which provide a problematic response to an inquiry

We now turn to examples in which the first pair part of the adjacency pair is not an assertion or assessment to agree or disagree with, but an inquiry: a turn which makes an offer of information the next relevant action. In these fragments, the response is problematic in that it is not of the type which the inquiry was designed to elicit. We have already seen an example with *eigenlijk* of this type, in (1). The fragment in (6) provides a further example. Here Z's initial inquiry is based on the assumption that B's children go to school, and is designed to elicit a location or name of the school. B's response does not provide this.

(6) A–B/Interview/23

- 1→1 Z: waar gaan dan die eigenlijk naar school?
where go then they actually to school
by the way where do they go to school
- 2→2 (0.4)
- 3 B: .hh heh die zijn eh: van school af
er they are er from school gone
er they've er left school
- 4 (1.2)
- 5 Z: oh
oh
oh

B's assertion that his children have left school marks Z's assumption as inaccurate, and the inaccuracy makes it impossible for B to offer a preferred response. Notably, B does not offer an alternative response of the type 'the school they went to is *x*': his turn closes the inquiry–informing adjacency pair. His turn has several features of a dispreferred: it is delayed by a silent pause (line 2) and an audible inbreath (line 3), and it contains the hesitation markers *heh* and *eh*.

The examples in (7) and (8) are more complex, and show some marked similarities. In both fragments, taken from different conversations, Z brings up the *Honeymoon Quiz* as a representative of a genre of intellectually undemanding TV programmes,² eliciting assessments of the programme as well as accounts of these assessments.

(7) C–E/Interview/41

- 1 Z: dus jij bent niet zo'n typische holn-
so you are not such-a typical
so you're not a typical
- 2 honeymoon quiz kijker
Honeymoon Quiz viewer
Honeymoon Quiz viewer
- 3 C: nee: nee vind ik vreselijk (.) nee
no no find I terrible no
no no I think that's terrible, no

²The *Honeymoon Quiz* is a TV programme in which couples compete at various tasks for the prize of a televised luxury wedding and honeymoon.

4 (0.6)
5 nee=
no
no
1→ 6 Z: =waarom dan
why then
so why
2→ 7 (0.8)
8 C: .hhhh j:a: ik hou niet zo van die dingen
well I like not so of those things
well I don't really like those things
9 ik- ja ik ik het het n- ja:
I well I I it it well
I- well I I it it n- well,
10 (0.4)
11 ik zit eh:: d- dit is een regeltje
I sit er this is a rule-DIM
I am er th- this is a little rule
12 van mhijhhehehe ((lachend)) ik moet er wat
of mine I must there something
of mine ((laughing)) I have to learn something
13 van opsteken op de een of andere vreemde manier
from learn in the one or another strange way
from it in some strange way

(8) A-B/Interview/27

1→ 1 Z: en wat vind je dan bijvoorbeeld heel erg
and what find you then for-example very
and what do you find for example very
2 stom aan de honeymoon quiz?
stupid about the Honeymoon Quiz
stupid about the Honeymoon Quiz
2→ 3 (1.6)
4 A: .thh ja god precies aan de honeymoon quiz
well god specifically about the Honeymoon Quiz
well god specifically about the Honeymoon Quiz
5 weet ik niet maar
know I not but
I don't know but,
6 (1.5)
7 quizen zeggen me gewoon niks
quizzes say to-me just nothing
quizzes just don't say anything to me
8 (0.3)
9 dan eh
then er
then er
10 (1.4)
11 doe ik liever zelf wat leuks
do I preferrably myself something fun
I prefer to do something fun myself

In (7) Z formulates the inference from prior talk that C is not a fan of this genre (lines 1 to 2). C marks the formulation as accurate with a strongly negative assessment of the programme or genre (line 3). He does not, however, provide a further account of his assessment. Z's inquiry in line 6 is designed to elicit such an account. While C eventually does produce what could be considered a fitted response — *ik moet er wat van opsteken* (lines 12 to 13) — this is long delayed, and his response as a whole has various design features of a dispreferred turn: notice the pauses, initial *ja* 'well', hesitations and repetitions.

Notably, the first turn-constructive unit in the turn, *ik hou niet zo van die dingen*, appears to constitute a candidate informing, in that it does not implement an entirely different action, like expressing gratitude before declining an invitation. While an expression of gratitude is clearly not a complete fitted response to an invitation, C's *ik hou niet zo van die dingen* could be a complete response to an inquiry. In this case, however, it does not offer the kind of response Z's inquiry is designed to elicit. That is, it does not offer an account of *why* C dislikes programmes like the *Honeymoon Quiz*; rather, it restates the negative assessment.

In the case of (8) A has expressed a dislike of TV quizzes. Underlying Z's inquiry in lines 1 to 2 is the assumption that A knows the *Honeymoon Quiz* and is able to offer an account of his dislike of this particular programme. A counters this assumption with a claim of insufficient knowledge (lines 4 to 5), and subsequently offers a restatement of his negative assessment of quizzes in general with *quizen zeggen me gewoon niks* (line 7). Notice that *gewoon* shows an orientation on A's part to the divergence of his turn from the trajectory set up by Z's inquiry. A's response is ill-fitted in terms of both its scope — that is, it is not about the *Honeymoon Quiz* — and the type of informing it provides within this scope — that is, it does not *explain* A's dislike of quizzes, but merely restates it. The long silent pauses between turn-constructive units and initial *ja* 'well' confirm that A orients to this ill-fittedness.

Finally, the fragments in (9) to (11) provide examples of the use of claims of insufficient knowledge — whose construction involves *ik* 'I', a form of *weten* 'know' and a negation marker such as *niet* 'not' — in the context of a dispreferred turn. In (9) F claims insufficient knowledge to provide the information that G's double inquiry concerning an upcoming event in the honour of a colleague — *wat heb jij met collega ((naam)) gedaan* and *is dat niet één dezer dagen* — is designed to elicit.

(9) F-G/One-to-one/12

- 1→1 G: wat heb jij met collega ((name)) gedaan
 what have you with colleague done
what have you done with colleague ((name))
- 2 is dat niet één dezer dagen?
 is that not one of-these days
is that not one of these days
- 2→3 (0.7)
- 4 F: **dat weet ik niet** eh dat is eh: andere
 that know I not er that is er different
I don't know that is er a different

2 dan het oud frans dan
 than the Old French then
than Old French then

2→3 (0.7)

4 N: ik weet van fran[s weet ikhh nhhie[ts
 ik know of French know I nothing
I don't know anything about French ((starts laughing))

5 M: [((laughs)) [ik ook niet
 I also not
 ((laughs)) *neither do I*

Note that the construction of his turn is complex. *Ik weet van frans* needs a direct object — for example *vrijwel niets* ‘almost nothing’ — to make a grammatical clause of the type ‘I know *x* about French’, but N abandons the construction of this clause at the incoming laughter of M: *van frans* is retroactively treated as the first constituent in the clause *van frans weet ik niets* ‘about French I know nothing’. As in (10), the claim of insufficient knowledge is treated by a coparticipant as a complete second pair part: M’s *ik ook niet* starts in ‘terminal overlap’ (Jefferson, 1986). And again, notice that the claim is delayed by a silent pause, which shows that N himself orients to the dispreferred status of the action of claiming to have no relevant knowledge.

4 A recurrent pattern: *Relatively slow dispreferred utterances*

We now turn to the temporal characteristics of the dispreferred turns and turn components illustrated above. For convenience, the dispreferred turns or turn components under consideration are here called ‘dispreferred utterances’, and the corresponding prior turns or turn components ‘prior utterances’. The phonetic analysis outlined in Section 2 suggests that the dispreferred utterances in the collection do indeed have recurrent temporal characteristics: in a considerable majority of fragments, the dispreferred utterance is produced slowly relative to the immediately prior talk, and in many cases also relative to the speaker’s average tempo. The following subsections illustrate the pattern with reference to the fragments introduced above (Section 4.1) and provide an indication of the prevalence of the pattern across the collection (Section 4.2).

4.1 Illustration of the pattern

As indicated above, Plug (2005) reports that in a collection of dispreferred turns with the discourse marker *eigenlijk* ‘actually’, the turn-constructive unit with *eigenlijk* is recurrently produced slowly, without much phonetic reduction. The fragment in (12), given as (1) above, illustrates.

(12) C–E/One-to-one/08 — see (1)

1→1 E: heb je verder nog wat gedaan van de week
8.6 sylls/sec
2→2 (0.5)
3 C: eh:m d- j:::a wat heb ik gedaan (0.5)
4 wat heb ik gedaan
5 (0.8)
6 nou niet veel ei[genlijk]
5.7 sylls/sec
7 E: [nee:?
8 C: nee [de dagelijkse routine: afgedraaid
9 E: ['n beetje bijgekomen ja

Here E's inquiry — which, as argued above, serves as an invitation for C to offer a topic for conversation — is noticeably faster than C's eventual candidate response *nou niet veel eigenlijk*. The articulation rate of the latter stretch is almost 3 sylls/sec lower, and well below C's own mean rate of 6.4 sylls/sec (see Table 1).

In fact, most of the following fragments show the same pattern. Consider the fragments in (13) and (14), which correspond to (2) and (3) above.

(13) C–E/Interview/33 — see (2)

1→1 Z: en je krijgt ook een stukje cultuur
2 van: ja (.) andere landen mee
8.9 sylls/sec
2→3 C: .hhhhh j:::a:
4 (1.0)
5 Z: [(wel)
6 C: [j:a: (0.3) ja .kn hhh n- en mis- mee- meer
7 het gedachtengoed maar niet echt eh: ja de:
4.8 sylls/sec
8 (0.6)
9 E: is toch ook cultuur
10 C: ja: wel cultuur is ook zo'n zo'n vreemd
11 begrip ofzo vind ik (.) een beetje

(14) M–N/One-to-one/08 — see (3)

1 M: eh het is geen wonder dat je dat dan draait
1→2 maar niet echt eh: (0.3) leuk vind ik
3 om d'r de hele avond naar te luisteren
8.8 sylls/sec
2→4 (0.4)
5 ja
6 N: .mmmmth nee: nou ik: n- ik doe het zelf wel hoor
5.0 sylls/sec
7 (0.5)
8 maar dan gewoon eh: (0.2) lekker achteruit zitten
9 op de bank eh::

In the case of (13) we focus on C's incomplete expression of disagreement with Z's prior use of the term *cultuur*: *meer het gedachtengoed maar niet echt*. This stretch is noticeably slow. Its articulation rate of 4.8 sylls/sec is, again, considerably lower than speaker C's mean rate measurement of 6.4 sylls/sec, and it is also lower than the measurements for the prior turn: fragment (13) gives 8.9 sylls/sec for the end of Z's turn, and across the stretch *en je krijgt ook een stukje cultuur van ja* a rate of 6.3 sylls/sec is measured. This confirms that the expression of disagreement in this dispreferred turn is slow in its local context as well as in more global terms. The same is the case for *ik doe het zelf wel hoor* in (14): this stretch is more than 3 sylls/sec slower than the second half of the prior turn, and below speaker N's mean rate of 5.7 sylls/sec.

Notice that in both (13) and (14), as well as in (12), the turn-constructional unit under consideration is preceded by pauses, hesitations and long, 'stretched' realisations of the 'weak agreement' markers *ja* 'yes, well' and *nee* 'no'. Together, these features contribute to the auditory impression that the dispreferred turns are both slow to start and slow to progress.

In (15), (16) and (17), which correspond to (6), (9) and (10) above, the onset of the dispreferred turn is similarly delayed, but the turn-constructional unit under consideration is not preceded by multiple hesitations or prefacing lexical items.

(15) A-B/Interview/23 — see (6)

1→1 Z: waar gaan dan die eigenlijk naar school?
7.6 sylls/sec
2→2 (0.4)
3 B: .hh heh die zijn eh van school af
4.2 sylls/sec
4 (1.2)
5 Z: oh

(16) F-G/One-to-one/12 — see (9)

1→1 G: wat heb jij met collega ((naam)) gedaan
2 is dat niet één dezer dagen?
7.5 sylls/sec
2→3 (0.7)
4 F: dat weet ik niet eh dat is eh andere
7.1 sylls/sec
5 vakgroep eh: ((G))

(17) O-P/One-to-one/09 — see (10)

1 P: ze hebben nu nieuwe liften
2 (2.0)
1→3 O: zonder doodskistgat
4.8 sylls/sec
2→4 (0.7)
5 mne[hh

dispreferred utterance is slower than its corresponding prior utterance. Not all of the slower-than-prior utterances are also slower-than-average, so that across the collection a smaller majority of 66% has an articulation rate in the lower half of the speaker's overall range of tempo variation. As for the extent of the temporal difference between a dispreferred utterance and its prior utterance, the greatest measured decrease in articulation rate is 4.1 sylls/sec, and the greatest increase is the same. A majority of 42 instances (55%) have a difference between -0.1 and -2.0 ; that is, the dispreferred utterance is between 0.1 and 2.0 sylls/sec slower than the prior utterance.

FIGURE 1 AND TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Further exploration of the measurement results reveals an interesting pattern regarding the temporal relationship between dispreferred and prior utterance. Across all fragments, the articulation rate figures for dispreferred and prior utterances are not significantly correlated. That is to say, it does not appear to be the case that when we look across fragments, a dispreferred utterance that follows a relatively fast prior utterance will have a higher articulation rate than one that follows a relatively slow prior utterance — and *vice versa*. However, when we consider just the dispreferred utterances that are *slower* than their prior utterances, we find a significant correlation. Figure 2 shows that within this set of utterances, faster prior utterances tend to be followed by faster dispreferred utterances, and a simple linear regression analysis confirms that the correlation is statistically significant ($R^2=0.19, p<0.01$).³ This suggests that speakers do not simply produce a dispreferred utterance *as slowly as possible*; rather, they pace their talk very precisely relative to the tempo set by the coparticipant in the prior turn.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

5 Accounting for *relatively fast* utterances

If the phonetic analysis presented above is on the right track, we are dealing here not with random tempo variation, but with a distinct speaker practice: that of producing a turn-constructive unit which implements a dispreferred action *relatively slowly*. Still, as indicated above, about a quarter of the fragments in the collection appear to display the reverse pattern — that is, the dispreferred utterance is *relatively fast*. This raises at least two questions. Firstly, are there fragments among these in which the fast production of the dispreferred utterance is oriented to by the coparticipant(s) as deviant? If so, this would provide evidence of the normative status of the pattern described so far. Secondly, is it possible to explain why the dispreferred utterances are produced *relatively fast* in the first place? This section briefly addresses these questions, in turn.

³The set of utterances produced at a higher articulation rate than their prior utterance is too small for a reliable regression analysis.

5.1 Orientation to *relatively fast* utterances as deviant

If there is an expectation on the part of participants that the design of a dispreferred turn involves the relatively slow production of the turn-constructive unit implementing the dispreferred action, it might be possible to find fragments in which the *absence* of this feature is treated as unusual, or at least noticeable. The collection under consideration contains one fragment in which this is arguably the case. It is given in (18). In this fragment S talks about his time at university. After checking her understanding of the particular university S went to, Z seeks to confirm that he enjoyed his time there. S offers what looks like a dispreferred response.

(18) S–T/Interview/07

- 1 S: toen ben ik gaan studeren ja (1.9) nederlands
then am I go study yes Dutch
then I went to study at university, yes, Dutch
- 2 (2.1)
- 3 Z: aan de uva
at the UVA
at the University of Amsterdam
- 4 (0.7)
- 5 S: aan de uva
at the UVA
at the University of Amsterdam
- 1→6 Z: en dat beviel wel
and that pleased DM
and you liked it
- 2→7 S: .hhhh nou: (0.2) nee eigenlijk helemaal niet
well no actually entirely not
well, no actually not at all
- 8 (0.2)
(laughter follows, first by T, then both S and T))
- 9 (0.2)
- 10 S: nee: (.) nou: ik eh in in het begin vond ik het eh::
no wel I in in the beginning found I it
no, well I er at at the start I found it er

((an extended account of why S did not enjoy being at university follows))

Notice that Z's turn in line 6 is not formatted as an interrogative, but as a declarative clause. Underlying this construction is the assumption that S *did* have a good time studying. S's response, however, marks this assumption as incorrect. S's turn in line 7 has several features of a dispreferred: its onset is delayed by a long inbreath, its first lexical items are *nou* 'well' and *nee* 'no', it contains a pause, and it contains the 'dispreference marker' *eigenlijk* 'actually' (Mazeland, 2004: 104–105). However, the tempo of *eigenlijk helemaal niet* is not relatively low: its articulation rate of 8.9 sylls/sec is noticeably higher than that of Z's prior turn (7.7 sylls/sec) and well above S's mean rate of 7.8 sylls/sec (see Table 1). Notice also that the turn-constructive unit contains a strong formulation — *helemaal niet* 'not at all' — which seems out of place: dispreferred turns routinely contain weak formulations of the dispreferred action.

Furthermore, the unit has a pitch contour which, together with the high tempo, makes it sound ‘upgraded’ rather than ‘downgraded’ (Ogden 2006). This, too, sets this turn apart from many in the collection.

In short, S’s turn appears to be associated with a somewhat incoherent set of design features. Its treatment arguably shows an orientation to this inconsistency on the part of S’s coparticipants as well as S himself. Firstly, S’s turn is the only dispreferred turn in the collection that is received with laughter — in other words, treated as humorous. While there is nothing particularly funny about S’s assertion that he did not enjoy his studies, it is likely to be the way in which he makes this assertion — that is, his turn design — that provides the motivation for T’s subsequent display of amusement. Secondly, notice that following the laughter, S restarts his turn. Following a return to seriousness with *nee* ‘no’ (Schegloff, 2001), S returns to the preface *nou* ‘well’ and subsequently formulates an extended dispreferred turn, of which only the start is given in (18). This turn does not have the unexpected lexical and prosodic features of S’s prior turn: notably, the articulation rate across *ik eh in in het begin vond ik het* is 6.6 sylls/sec — that is, *relatively slow*. It seems reasonable to interpret this in terms of an orientation on S’s part that his first formulation of the dispreferred response to Z’s inquiry was deviant in several respects; and this may include its relative pace.

5.2 Other *relatively fast* utterances

While in the fragment in (18), the *relatively fast* production of the dispreferred utterance contributes to a turn design which the participants arguably treat as amusing and open to repair, in most fragments with a *relatively fast* dispreferred utterance, this aspect of its production appears to be treated as normal. A comprehensive analysis of these fragments is beyond the scope of this paper; nevertheless, two observations are worth making at this point.

Firstly, in several fragments the structure of the dispreferred turn is complex, and it may be that the production of what we have called the ‘dispreferred utterance’ is subject to sequentially motivated constraints which promote a high rather than a low pace. The fragment in (19) is a case in point. Prior to the fragment, A has indicated that some years ago he used to enjoy watching German crime series on television. Z’s formulation of her inquiry in lines 1 and 2, which serves to elicit talk by A on his present watching habits, suggests she has understood that A still watches such series regularly. A’s response denies this.

(19) A-B/Interview/25

- 1→1 Z: en waar kijk jij dan nog meer naar dan alleen
and where look you then still more at than only
and what else do you watch apart from just
- 2 naar duitse krimies?
at German crime-series
German crime series
- 2→3 A: nou- daar kijk ik de laatste tijd niet zoveel meer
well there look I the last time not that-much anymore
well I really don't watch those much anymore
- 4 naar hoor
at DM
these days
- 5 .mmm eh::m (0.6) naar goeie films,
at good films
er, good-quality films

((A continues a list of TV programmes he watches regularly))

Leaving the relatively high tempo of *daar kijk ik de laatste tijd niet zoveel meer naar hoor* (7.2 sylls/sec vs 5.6 sylls/sec across the prior turn) aside for now, A's response turn has several features that suggest it is on a par with the dispreferred responses to inquiries discussed above. In particular, the first lexical item is again *nou*, and the correction of Z's misunderstanding is rather weakly formulated. However, notice that subsequent to the dispreferred utterance, A initiates a list of television programmes. This constitutes a pragmatically fitted response to Z's inquiry: the misunderstanding implied in the formulation of the inquiry is not such that no fitted response can be provided, as in the case of the fragment in (6) above. Rather, it makes relevant two next actions: addressing the misunderstanding and providing the information that the inquiry is designed to elicit. A does both, in a single turn, and it is the 'multi-unit, multi-action' make-up of the turn (Local and Walker 2004) that may explain the relatively high tempo of the dispreferred utterance.

In particular, the high tempo of the dispreferred utterance, as well as the absence of any hesitation markers, is consistent with this turn-constructive unit being designed as a parenthetical unit (Local, 1992; Mazeland, 2007). That is, the design of the unit is consistent with A treating the action of correcting Z's misunderstanding as subordinate to the action of providing a fitted response to her inquiry. In fact, the start of A's list formulation is characterised by a noticeable decrease in tempo and step-up in pitch (*cf.* Local, 1992: 278), and notice that A's use of *naar* in line 5 explicitly links his list back to Z's inquiry, retroactively marking the dispreferred utterance as an aside (see Mazeland and Huiskes 2001 on practices of resuming and connecting back in Dutch conversation). In other words, this particular dispreferred utterance may in fact be designed as a *parenthetical* dispreferred utterance, and its tempo fits more with its parenthetical than with its dispreferred status.

The second observation worth making is that several other fragments with a *relatively fast* dispreferred utterance appear to fall in the category of sequences in which apparently dispre-

ferred actions are routinely implemented with turns that show no orientation to this arguable status. In particular, several studies have shown that disagreement is not necessarily associated with a dispreferred turn design (Kotthoff, 1993; Mazeland, 1994, Goodwin *et al.* 2002). Like Kotthoff, Mazeland (1994: 286) observes that in the context of argument sequences, disagreeing turns are treated as preferred ‘once a controversy has been made an obvious interactional given’⁴, and Goodwin *et al.* argue that in such contexts expressing disagreement promotes sociability and should therefore simply be analysed as a preferred action — not as a dispreferred to which participants fail to display an orientation.

The corpus described above contains many examples of turns expressing disagreement in the context of what might be labelled an argument sequence, in which a controversy is an obvious interactional given. Most of these do not contain any obvious design features of a dispreferred turn, and they were therefore not included in the collection for this study. However, several do contain some features associated with dispreference, and were therefore subjected to phonetic analysis. The fragment in (20) is a good example. The speakers are debating whether the Dutch conscription system, by which young adults can take up temporary posts outside of the military forces, creates unfair competition in the job market. Speaker H repeatedly attempts to make his point in non-terminal overlap, and finally manages to gain the floor around line 7. D subsequently expresses disagreement with H’s turn.

(20) D–H/Interview/09

- 1 D: nou ja kijk als [ik gewoon niet
well look if I just not
well look if I just didn't
- 2 H: [ja maar het is n-
yes but it is
yes but it's n-
- ((an extended turn by D follows))
- 3 D: nou [komt dat ook omdat ik natuurlijk de laatste
well comes that also because I of-course the last
it's also because of course I'm the last
- 4 H: [jawel maar dat is
yes but that is
yes but that's
- 5 D: lichting [ben dat scheelt ontzettend
generation am that makes-a-difference enormously
generation that makes a big difference
- 1→6 H: [dat is toch geen oneerlijke concurrentie
that is DM no unfair competition
that's not unfair competition or is it
- 7 dat is toch de zaak omdraaien
that is DM the matter turn-around
that's turning the matter upside down isn't it

⁴My translation of ‘wanneer een controverse eenmaal tot een manifest interactioneel gegeven gemaakt is’.

8 (1.6)
 2→9 D: nou [dat is niet helemaal waar] [dat is niet waar]
 well that is not entirely true that is not true
well that's not entirely true that's not true
 10 H: [het is- [jawel want je moet wel
 it it yes because you must DM
it is, yes it is because you have to

D's expression of disagreement with H's assertion is delayed and starts with *nou* — but is *relatively fast* at 7.3 sylls/sec, compared with 6.1. sylls/sec across H's prior turn. An account in terms of the questionable preference status of the expression of disagreement is plausible: it is arguably to be expected that in a context in which we routinely find such expressions that are not built as dispreferred turns at all, we also find expressions of disagreement which have some design features of a dispreferred, but not a full set (*cf.* Auer et al., 1999: 108 on 'noncongruency' in the relationship between preference status and rhythm).

As indicated above, these observations do not constitute a comprehensive analysis of all of the fragments with a *relatively fast* dispreferred utterance. Nevertheless, they strengthen the main finding of this study: namely, that dispreferred turns are recurrently characterised by a relatively slow production of the turn-constructive unit that implements the dispreferred action. If we leave aside fragments of the type discussed in this section, in which there may be good reasons not to expect the unit under consideration to adhere to this pattern, we are left with a minority of less than 20% of apparently exceptional cases. Given that a low tempo is only one of a set of design features which together constitute the linguistic structure 'dispreferred turn', the findings presented above strongly suggest that producing a dispreferred utterance *relatively slowly* is a practice *routinely* employed by participants in Dutch talk-in-interaction.

6 Conclusion

This paper started out with the question as to whether dispreferred turns have recurrent temporal characteristics, in particular relative to the immediately prior turn. The study reported in this paper suggests that in the dispreferred turns considered, at least the turn-constructive unit that overtly implements the dispreferred action has a recurrent temporal design: in a considerable majority of instances, it is produced slowly relative both to the prior turn and to the speaker's mean articulation rate.

This finding strengthens that presented by Plug (2005): while his collection contained only dispreferred turns with the discourse marker *eigenlijk* 'actually', this study has shown that his observation regarding tempo generalise to a sizeable collection of turns without this marker, too. On the other hand, the findings appear at odds with Ogden's (2006) observations on dispreferred second assessments in English. As suggested above, Ogden distinguishes between second assessments that express 'weak agreement', then disagreement, and second assessments that express outright disagreement. Many of the dispreferred turns in the present collection

would seem to fall in the first class, in that the dispreferred action is rarely implemented directly and with strong formulations. However, it is precisely in this class of second assessments that Ogden observes a high tempo relative to the prior turn. In the absence of straightforward assessment pairs in the corpus considered in this study, a full comparison with Ogden's findings remains a direction for future research.

The finding of a low speaking tempo in dispreferred utterances is not surprising given other previous work on the structure of dispreferred turns. Pomerantz (1984: 64) has pointed out that constructing a dispreferred turn involves 'utilizing the organization of *delays*', through silent pauses, hesitations, and restarts. Bilmes (1988: 173) has suggested that these features can be seen as 'reluctance markers', 'expressive of the speaker's reluctance to produce the response that follows'. A low tempo could be seen as one among a number of resources that speakers can draw on to delay the progress of a turn — or to display reluctance to this progress. Together, these resources may provide the coparticipant — that is, the speaker of the speaker of the prior turn — with an opportunity to address the problem that appears to have arisen from his turn himself (*cf.* Schegloff et al., 1977).

With reference to wider literature, it may be noted that recent psycholinguistic research has emphasised the extent to which participants in interactions align their linguistic behaviour to each other (Garrod and Pickering, 2004; Pickering and Garrod, 2004; Pardo, 2006); as Garrod and Pickering (2004: 9) suggest, 'Conversations succeed, not because of complex reasoning, but rather because of alignment at seemingly disparate linguistic levels'. Pardo (2006) provides an overview of previous research which suggests that this alignment includes details of phonetic realisation such as speech rate and amplitude (see in particular Giles et al., 1991) — that is, one aspect of participant alignment is *phonetic convergence*. Most of this work assesses convergence, and features of alignment more generally, over large amounts of speech material. The sequential approach of Conversation Analysis applied in this study yields notable insights into the extent of alignment between participants on a turn-by-turn basis. With reference to phonetic convergence, the study presented in this paper suggests that the context of dispreferred turns is one context in which convergence is *not* observed — that is, in constructing a turn as dispreferred, speakers deviate from the normative extent of temporal convergence between subsequent turns. Still, the findings presented in this paper confirm that participants in interaction closely monitor the production of each other's talk, including its temporal characteristics.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that this study has had a rather narrow scope. First of all, it has focussed on selected phonetic characteristics of selected turn-constructive units in dispreferred turns. The relationship between temporal and other prosodic — as well as segmental — characteristics remains to be investigated; as do the characteristics of any other turn-constructive units in the turns considered. Moreover, recall that the collection for this study consisted of turns that implement a dispreferred action and contain one or more of the lexical and sequential dispreference markers that have been discussed in previous literature. This of course leaves aside an important class of instances: those in which an apparently dispreferred

action is implemented without any of these lexical and sequential markers. If the analysis presented here is on the right track, some of these instances might be characterised by a *relatively slow* production of the turn-constructive unit which formulates the dispreferred action. Others may contain no dispreference markers at all. These might or might not be treated by co-participants as deviant; those that are not might or might not be reanalysable as turns implementing *preferred* actions. In sum, much work remains to be done on the phonetic correlates of ‘dispreference’ — and, indeed, on the notion of ‘preference’ more generally.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

- [Opening square brackets are used to mark the start of simultaneous talk.
- () Parentheses are used to mark silent pauses measured in seconds: for example '(0.8)'. A perceived pause measured at less than 0.1 sec is marked '(.)'.
- : Colons are used to represent grossly observed patterns of segmental duration. A grapheme followed by ':' represents an impressionistically 'long' sustention of the corresponding articulation, and multiple colons may be used to represent increasingly long sustentions. Note that these markings are not based on consistent measurement, and are not used as crucial descriptors of temporal reduction patterns.
- h The grapheme 'h' is used to represent audible exhalation. Again, multiple graphemes may be used to grossly represent increasingly long exhalations. The grapheme may be used in combination with others to represent laughter: for example 'hhehe', or 'lhheft'.
- .h The sequence '.h' is used to represent audible inhalation. Again, multiple graphemes may be used to grossly represent increasingly long inhalations. The grapheme may be used in combination with others to represent additional oral stricture or nasal airflow: for example '.hhf' for an inbreath with labiodental stricture, or '.mmh' for an inbreath with bilabial closure and nasal airflow.
- ? Question marks are used to represent a noticeable final pitch rise of the type usually associated with questions.
- , Commas are used to represent a slight final pitch rise; this usually projects continued talk by the same speaker across a TRP.
- . Full stops are used to represent a noticeable final pitch fall.
- Hyphens are used to represent a 'cut-off': an abrupt, premature end to the articulation of a word, often accompanied by a glottal constriction.
- () Parentheses are used to enclose uncertain hearings.
- (()) Double parentheses are used to enclose comments and generic descriptors for references to individuals: for example '((name))'.

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Figures

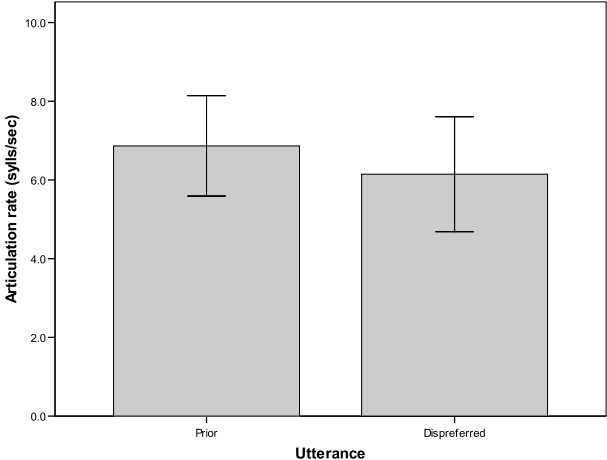


Figure 1: Mean articulation rate (in syllables per second) in dispreferred and prior utterances across the collection. Error bars represent one standard deviation.

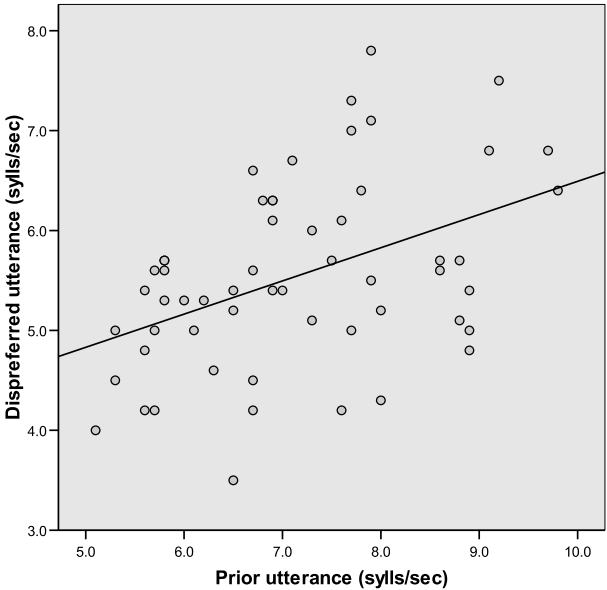


Figure 2: Correlation between the articulation rate of a dispreferred utterance (y-axis) and that of its prior utterance (x-axis) in instances with a *relatively slow* dispreferred utterance. The line is the estimated linear regression curve.

Tables

Speaker	Rate	Speaker	Rate	Speaker	Rate
A	6.3	H	6.8	O	7.5
B	5.9	I	6.9	P	6.8
C	6.4	J	6.4	Q	7.2
D	6.6	K	6.7	R	6.8
E	6.7	L	6.1	S	7.8
F	6.5	M	7.1	T	7.0
G	6.4	N	5.7	Mean (N=20)	6.7

Table 1: Mean speech rate measurements for individual speakers

Fragment	Prior utterance	Rate	Dispreferred utterance	Rate
(4)	<i>dat handjevol wat er toe- vallig bijgestaan heeft</i>	7.3	<i>is wel iets ingewikkel- der denk ik maar goed</i>	6.0
(5)	<i>met kussentjes gegooid</i>	6.5	<i>of dat nou altijd zo is</i>	4.7
(7)	<i>waarom dan</i>	7.7	<i>ik hou niet zo van die dingen</i>	6.0
(8)	<i>en wat vind je dan bij- voorbeeld heel erg stom aan de honeymoonquiz</i>	7.6	<i>quizen zeggen me gewoon niks</i>	6.1

Table 2: Articulation rate measurements (in syllables per second) for dispreferred utterances and corresponding prior utterances in selected fragments discussed above

	Dispreferred utterance	
	vs prior utterance	vs speaker's mean
Lower articulation rate	56 (74%)	50 (66%)
Same articulation rate	1 (1%)	3 (4%)
Higher articulation rate	19 (25%)	23 (30%)

Table 3: Comparison of dispreferred turns with prior turns and speaker's means across the collection