**How speakers of different languages extend their turns: Word-linking and glottalisation in French and German**

**Abstract**

 A speaker who issues a confirming turn starting with particles like *yes, oui, ja* and so on, may mean to extend it and provide further material. This study shows that French and German speakers employ the same phonetic contrast to indicate the nature of that turn-continuation.  In spite of the typological difference between the German use of glottalisation and the French use of linking phenomena for word boundaries involving word-initial vowels, speakers of both languages exploit this contrast systematically in their design of multi-unit turns. Initial confirmations are joined directly to subsequent vowel-fronted turn components when speakers respond with an internally cohesive multi-unit confirming turn. The components are separated by glottalisation when responses involve multiple actions or departures from a trajectory projected by the turn-initial confirmation. This is further evidence that sound patterns shape interaction, and are not solely determined by language-specific phonologies. Data in French and German with English translation.

**Keywords**

Turn extension, confirmations, French, German, glottalisation, phonetics

Introduction

Although many of the seminal studies on the systematic organisation of interaction have been conducted using data from English native speakers, conversation analysts have been interested in the interactional order of other languages from early on in the history of the discipline (e.g. Moerman, 1977, 1988). However, it is only relatively recently that conversation analytic work has begun to compare interactional practices across languages more systematically (e.g. Enfield & Stivers, 2007; Sidnell, 2009; Stivers et al., 2009; Enfield, Stivers & Levinson, 2010; Fox, Maschler & Uhmann, 2010; Dingemanse & Enfield, 2015).[[1]](#footnote-1) In a seminal study Sidnell and Enfield (2012) show that the same social action, agreeing with a previous assessment, is common across three languages; however, it is accomplished through different linguistic means according to the language in question and therefore co-occurs with different accompanying ‘collateral effects’ on the actions being accomplished.

The analysis presented here contributes to this emerging strand of work in that it compares a specific action, multi-unit responses to confirmation-elicitations, across two typologically different languages. However, in contrast to Sidnell and Enfield’s (2012) research which investigated a *social action* cross-culturally, this study concerns similarities of *linguistic* *form,* especially where they are unexpected from a typological perspective. The work presented here shows that the same linguistic means are used for the same interactional purpose in French and German, even though phonological descriptions of the two languages would postulate the opposite. Such commonalities, if they can be shown in a variety of languages and contexts, would allow a perspective on sound patterns as cross-linguistic social practices, rather than determined exclusively by language-specific phonological systems.

To date, cross-cultural comparisons of conversational practices have not paid much attention to sound patterns. What has been emerging so far is a picture of certain organisational structures showing the potential for universality (e.g. turn-taking, Sidnell, 2001; Stivers et al., 2009). Phonetic and prosodic practices have up to now been treated as ‘context sensitive’ (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) features that may vary across languages and varieties (e.g. Wells & Peppè, 1996). This study shows that a certain basic structural contrast in interaction (extending a single social action over a multi-unit turn vs. implementing a complex of multiple actions) is achieved through the same phonetic and prosodic distinction (word linking vs. glottalisation) across two languages which phonology classifies as typologically different with respect to precisely those patterns. While French is known for various forms of linking across word boundaries which involve a vowel at the beginning of the second word, German is known for inserting a glottal stop at precisely such boundaries. In the following we show that both languages use the contrast between linking and glottalisation when speakers distinguish between various types of multi-unit turns.

Confirming in natural talk

Response tokens are one of several ways by which the action of confirming can be accomplished in interaction. Response tokens implement a comparatively acquiescent turn design and thus favour the progression of the sequence towards closure (Heritage & Raymond, 2012; cf. also Raymond, 2003). Therefore, the space immediately following a confirmation is one where participants need to manage sequence-organisational concerns, such as contingent amendment of a potentially complete answer, skip-connecting with earlier talk, and shifts in activity and topic.

There is substantial work on response tokens in some languages other than English. For instance, there is extensive work on Finnish; Sorjonen (e.g. 2001) examines *nii(n)*, *joo* and repeats as answers to different forms of polar questions, as well as in other contexts. The study intermittently considers the use of prosody for managing sequence-organisational issues in confirmation-initiated turns. For instance, in responses to B-event statements, continuations after the *nii(n)* particle are done in the same prosodic unit, displaying that the confirmation needed some amending (2001, p. 66).

More specific turn-types beginning with confirmation, such as ‘yes but’-utterances, have also been examined in Finnish by Niemi (2014), in German and Danish by Steensig and Asmuß (2005), and in English by Barth-Weingarten (2003) within a larger study of concession. These studies show that both prosodic and lexical distinctions are drawn upon for differentiating between confirmation-fronted turns with respect to what type of turn-continuation they project. For Swedish, Lindström (2009) has shown that a confirmation token with a certain prosody—the “curled *ja*/*aa”* (‘yes’)—is used for projecting upcoming disalignment. Similar results are found for English (Raymond, 2010, 2013): *yes*/*no* responses can be prosodically modulated to project turn-continuation rather than turn-completion.

Raymond (2013) finds that responses to double-barreled *yes*/*no*-interrogatives have two components: the response to the interrogative (*yes*/*no*) and the response to the action implemented *via* the interrogative. The two components may consist of materials from different lexico-syntactic unit-types (lexical/phrasal/clausal/sentential). In the unmarked case, these two components are nevertheless produced as one single Turn-Constructional Unit (TCU) within a single intonation contour. Single TCUs may thus be organised in smaller components filling the two ‘slots’, which each deal with one of the relevancies set in motion by the first pair part. Slots and TCUs are independent levels of organisation; several TCUs may also be deployed for dealing with a single slot. Raymond (2013) also touches on how participants manage complex responses to the interrogative (e.g. a turn-initial confirmation token followed by some adjustment) in such a way as not to be hearable as responding to both slots. Clearly, one set of issues relevant to participants is how to manage the “sequential address” of each component in *yes/no*-fronted turns.

More generally, the research reviewed in this section suggests that the turn-internal juncture between response tokens and what follows them is an environment in which issues of sequence organisation are regularly made relevant and managed via practices drawing on various prosodic, grammatical and lexical resources. This is borne out in the phenomena we analyse in this article.

Contrasting patterns for managing word boundaries: Glottalisation and linking phenomena in French and German

Research has shown that phonetic practices, such as glottal stop and creaky voice, play an important part in the design of multi-unit turns (Auer, 1996; Ford & Thompson, 1996; Ogden, 2001, 2004; Local & Walker, 2004; Szczepek Reed, 2014). Glottal stops occur when speakers completely close their vocal folds, as one might do at the onset of a cough. The release of that closure is often accompanied by a release of air; both the closure and the release of air contribute to a clearly perceptible break in phonation.

A weaker version of a glottal stop is creak, which involves irregular vocal fold vibration. In natural speech, it is common across languages for glottal stops to vary in phonetic realisation between a full glottal stop and creak (Kohler, 1994; Garellek, 2014). Especially in intervocalic positions, what is heard as a glottal stop is often a short phase of creaky voice (Ladefoged & Maddieson, 1996, p. 75). The two realisations are often auditorily similar and have in common the percept of a glottal gesture or a disruption of the modal voice (Redi & Shattuck-Hufnagel, 2001, p. 408). Full glottal stops may also be preceded or followed by a phase of creak. For these reasons, and despite the possible conceptual distinction, we use the inclusive term ‘glottalisation’ to refer to both glottal stops and creak.

Glottal stop is non-phonemic in French and is often claimed to be produced at vowel onsets for emphasising a word, frequently together with a secondary (word-initial) pitch accent, a so-called *accent d’insistance* (Léon, 2001, p. 109; Battye et al., 2000, p. 64). But generally, French vowel onsets are said to be produced “softly, without the glottal stop as it occurs in German” (Léon & Léon, 2004, p. 74, our translation). Thus, it is typically claimed, when two vowels are produced adjacently in French, “the transition from one vowel to the other […] is produced smoothly, without a glottal stop, as would happen in German, for example” (Léon & Léon, 2004, p. 57, our translation). Instead of glottalisation, word-initial vowels in French often entail different linking processes at the word boundary. Three commonplace linking phenomena are (1) elision*,* (2) *enchaînement* (or more properly *enchaînement consonantique*), and (3) *liaison*.

Elision is a linking process through which the production of two adjacent vowels at a word boundary is avoided by means of deletion of the first vowel. Elision is obligatory in some morphosyntactic contexts: *le* + *ami* necessarily becomes *l’ami* (cf. Léon, 2001, p. 151; Battye et al., 2000, pp. 105–106).

*Enchaînement* (or ‘forward syllabification’) is a prevalent syllabification process in French, whereby word-final consonants are “moved” from the coda of the word-final syllable to the onset of the following syllable, as far as possible (Fagyal et al., 2006, pp. 53–54; Encrevé, 1988, p. 24): *la porte* (‘the door’) would be /la.pɔʁt/, but *la porte ouverte* (‘the open door’) would be /la.pɔʁ.tu.vɛʁt/, with the syllable /tu/ spanning across a word boundary.

Finally, *liaison* in French is a phonological phenomenon occurring at word boundaries, where a latent, ordinarily absent, final consonant of the first word is pronounced and typically resyllabified to the onset of the initial vowel of the subsequent word (Fagyal et al., 2006, pp. 63–64; Encrevé, 1988, pp. 23–24). In some morphosyntactic contexts *liaison* is obligatory, whereas in others it is optional or ungrammatical (Léon, 2001, pp. 151–155). *Liaison* consonants are analysable as remnants from older pronunciation (Léon & Léon, 2004, pp. 39–40) and they are always represented by a consonant letter in the orthography, whether pronounced or not.

More generally, in terms of syllable structure, there is a tendency in French to prefer open syllables with consonant onsets, even if this results in word boundaries that do not co-occur with syllable boundaries (Fagyal et al., 2006, pp. 52–55; Léon & Léon, 2004, p. 74). The three linking phenomena mentioned above can be seen as manifestations of that same general tendency (elision and *liaison* are two different ways of avoiding adjacent vowels, which are realised in different morphosyntactic contexts). It is noteworthy that glottal stop insertion between two adjacent vowels would also be aligned with this tendency (cf. Léon, 2001, p. 143), insofar as the glottal stop is a consonant, albeit non-phonemic in French. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement in the literature on French pronunciation (cf. works cited above) that adjacent vowels are produced as linked, and this is usually exemplified with clause-internal vowel hiatus.

German directly contrasts with French with respect to the phonetic design of word boundaries. Pronunciation dictionaries for German, such as Krech et al. (2009), state that a glottal stop must be inserted at the beginning of words that start with a vowel, as in *guten ʔAbend (‘good evening’)*. In German phonology, glottal stop ‘epenthesis’ (insertion) has been described as the default pattern for Northern and Standard German varieties, while Southern speakers seem to use it less frequently (Alber, 2001; Fleischer & Schmid, 2006). The phenomenon has also been related to stress (Kohler, 1994; Rodgers, 1999; Alber, 2001; Malisz, Żygis & Pompino-Marschall, 2012), phrase boundaries (Rodgers, 1999), certain segmental contexts (Kohler, 1994; Pompino-Marschall & Żygis, 2010), and speech rate (Pompino-Marschall & Żygis, 2010).

A recent empirical study (Szczepek Reed, 2014) has shown that German speakers in fact do not glottalise vowel-initial words with the consistency that is claimed in phonological accounts of German. The analysis of 1865 vowel-initial TCUs revealed that while approximately 60% of cases were glottalised, 40% were joined directly to preceding words. The data showed a close link between phonetic design and action formation. While joined-up TCUs implemented one single social action, such as a response to a question, TCUs that were separated by glottalisation implemented multiple actions, such as an assessment followed by a new first pair part.

The findings of that study inspired the comparison with a typologically different language. In order to make the analysis particularly visible and relevant to a cross-linguistic comparison this research limited the collection to turn-internal junctures that only involved vowels; that is, unit-final vowels followed by unit-initial vowels, with no intervening pause. When the same vowel occurs in both positions, linking typically results in a single occurrence of that vowel, as in French *oui=il* or in German *ja=aber* (cf. Szczepek Reed, 2015a, 2015b). At times, the resulting vowel is lengthened; however, in many instances it is not.

Figures (1) and (2) show frequency analyses and waveforms from the data presented below that represent the distinction between glottalised and joined-up word boundaries.



Figure 1: Linked *so aber*, example (5), line 2765.



Figure 2: Glottalised *ja aber*, example (7), line 473.

In one strand of phonetic research, articulatory variability at the edges of prosodic constituents has been investigated as a cue to hierarchical prosodic structure (e.g. Fougeron & Keating, 1997; Garellek, 2014). In particular, word-initial glottalisation is one such domain of articulatory variability; Dilley et al. (1996) show that in American English radio news speech, word-initial vowels are more often glottalised when occurring at the beginning of higher prosodic constituents. Similar results are obtained for French by Fougeron (2001), who notes that articulatory properties such as glottalisation work as cues to levels in prosodic hierarchy. Kohler (1994) also reports on glottalisation as a boundary marker in read German speech, showing that glottalisation of vowels is frequent word-initially, and at morpheme boundaries within polymorphemic words, and when the word is preceded by a pause. This research points to a role of glottalisation for managing boundaries in speech that is borne out in the naturally-occurring data we present below.

Data and transcription

The investigated French data come from a variety of corpora (comprising a total of 15 hours) recorded in a range of mundane and institutional settings, including ordinary telephone conversations, tourist office encounters, and radio phone-ins. The majority of the data come from telephone calls, but some audio-only recordings of co-present interaction have been included. The final core collection of analysed confirmation sequences contains 68 instances.

The corpus of German data consists of 5 hours of video-recorded dinner table talk amongst German native speakers of different varieties. The recordings were made in the spring of 2013. Each conversation involves the host, Ulla, who participates in all interactions, and one or two dinner guests at her apartment. The final core collection of analysed confirmation sequences contains 37 instances.

Names and all other identifiers have been anonymised in all extracts and consent has been given by all participants in private, non-broadcast data that recordings can be used for research and dissemination purposes.

All confirmation sequences were analysed auditorily and subsequently in PRAAT 5.3.77[[2]](#footnote-2). The symbol ʔ is used in the transcripts to represent glottalisation, while the = symbol indicates vowel linking. At the relevant word boundary pitch accents are recorded as capitals where they occur, with an indication of the pitch movement. Throughout the transcript syllable lengthening and pausing are also represented (see Appendix for transcription symbols). None of these prosodic parameters account for the contrast described below; as a result their analysis has been kept to a minimum. Similarly, finer phonetic detail has not been transcribed and is not referenced here, since the primary explanation for the contrast between glottalisation and linking in the context of turn extension after initial confirmations is an action-based rather than a phonological one.

Transcript lines are translated into English in a separate line. The translations aim to strike a balance between an interactionally appropriate gloss and a sufficiently strong sense of the original lexical choices. We draw attention to the fact that translation of all the nuances of the original is not possible. Ashmore and Reed (2000) note that transcripts of natural data are twice-removed from the original event through recording and subsequent notation. Translation adds another layer to this process, and neither the transcripts in the original language nor their translations should therefore be considered ‘data’.

The turn design of extended confirmations

The data show that participants fundamentally have two options for designing multi-unit turns, i.e. turns composed of several lexico-syntactic units. The choice is between designing a turn as a single, unified response, that is, a multi-unit turn that starts with an initial confirmation and is extended by talk that straightforwardly furthers the progressivity of that turn; or as a complex multi-unit multi-action turn where only the turn-initial confirmation is straightforwardly responsive to the confirmation-eliciting turn and subsequent talk forms a departure from the turn-so-far.

The first scenario includes cases where the second turn component implements further confirmation, but also cases where the immediately preceding first pair part is effectively ‘double-barreled’ (Schegloff, 2007) in that it makes relevant not only a confirmation but also another action alongside it. For example, a confirmable first pair part may be designed in a way that elicits both a confirmation and an account—or a clarification—of what is being confirmed (Steensig & Heinemann, 2013; Persson, 2013). Participants differentiate between designing responses to such double-barreled turns as either a unified and internally cohesive multi-unit turn, or as a complex multi-unit turn where subsequent response components depart from what the first projects (cf. Raymond, 2003, 2013 on responses to *yes*/*no* interrogatives). The complex-action scenario also includes instances in which speakers resume prior talk after an inserted confirmation sequence, and cases in which an entirely new sequence is initiated after a completed confirmation.

In the following we show how the turn design of each of these options is accomplished through a distinct phonetic contrast: seamless word linking between the confirmation and subsequent talk on the one hand[[3]](#footnote-3), and a glottalised break between the two on the other. In order to make this phonetic distinction highly visible and particularly relevant to the languages involved we limit our analysis to unit boundaries that involve vowels. This constraint allows for a clear comparison between seamless joining and a glottalised articulatory break.

Confirmation followed by continued responding

Confirmation can be achieved in a single-component turn, for example, through response tokens such as *ouais* or *voilà* in French or *ja* or *ist auch so* in German. When confirmations are designed as more complex turns they typically involve an initial confirming token followed by talk that extends the confirming action. Extensions vary in their degree of conformity to the initial confirmation; some simply further the confirmation along the same lines as the first confirming item, others qualify or otherwise elaborate on it. Still others respond to further trajectories opened up by the previous turn. In the following we show that the phonetic turn design of these three types of extended confirming turns shows considerable similarities across French and German data.

*Confirmation followed by continued confirmation*

When confirmations are extended by additional confirming talk participants in both the French and the German corpora design the components as joined up phonetically. The following example comes from a French radio phone-in programme. Caller Karim has been telling host Éric about a couple who are travelling from Cambridge to Cape Town and are currently staying with him in Tunisia.

(1) [MOUV.2010-12-21.43:50]

1 K: ils ont décidé de faire ça en tandem

*they decided to do that ((journey)) by tandem bike*

2 (0.4)

3 E: en tandem h° d'accord

*by tandem bike h° okay*

4 K: **OUAIS,=en** tanDEM

*yes by tandem bike*

5 (0.2)

6 E: bon ben c'est bien

*right well that's nice*

Karim’s telling at line 1 is receipted by Éric at line 3. Karim’s response to this (line 4) employs two different ways of doing confirmation: the confirmation token *ouais* and a repeat of the confirmable (the prepositional/adverbial phrase *en tandem*). The two lexico-syntactic units thus constitute a multi-unit response turn with two confirming components. The second extends and only slightly amends the confirming action that was delivered in the first; the effect of adding the repeat is that Éric not only confirms Karim’s receipt as correct, but reasserts the first saying. With regard to the phonetic design of the unit boundary, the vowel at the end of the initial confirmation is linked directly to the vowel at the beginning of the second. A similar practice can be observed in the German corpus. In the following example, Michael has asked Ulla for milk to have with his dinner. She informs him that she only has UHT milk, to which he reacts by getting up from his chair at the beginning of the transcribed section below.

(2) Ulla and Michael, 16:43

1. M: jut (0.4) denn (0.2) essen wa in zehn minuten weiter

*fine in that case we’ll continue eating in ten minutes*

1. (0.5)
2. U: ↑ah (.) dann holsch du dir jetzt [milch]

*ah so you are going to get milk for yourself*

1. M: [**ja=ick**] HOL mir jetzt meine

*yes I’m going to get my*

1. HA-milch meine richtige milch

*UHT milk my real milk*

Ulla’s news receipt and formulation (lines 893) makes a confirmation relevant, which Michael provides. He does so by producing a confirmation token (*ja*), followed by an extended confirmation via a modified lexical repetition of Ulla’s talk (lines 894–895). The initial confirming token is designed without prosodic prominence and is joined directly onto the following word *ick* (line 894). The two components are integrated into a unified confirming response.

The examples above demonstrate the same phonetic practice being used for the same interactional purpose in French and German. The joining of the end of the initial confirmation to the beginning of the turn extension provides participants with a linguistic resource for presenting a multi-unit turn as a unified, internally cohesive action unit.

*Confirmation followed by elaboration*

Confirming turns that extend beyond a single confirming item may involve additional talk that does slightly more than continue the confirmation. In the following example from the French corpus a caller has phoned a university department in Vannes inquiring about organisations that offer summer courses in English. The receptionist has tried referring the caller to the Faculty of Humanities in the nearby city of Lorient. Following this suggestion, the caller tries once more to elicit advice with regard to Vannes itself.

(3) [UBS.017\_00000012.0:48]

1 C: par contre vou::s pouvez pas me: m'orienter vers eu:::h

*but you:: wouldn't be able to: direct me towards u:::h*

2 °hhh eu::[::h ] un organisme sur Vannes qui:::=

*°hhh u::::h an organisation in Vannes that:::=*

3 R: [vers Lorient]

*towards Lorient*

4 C: =qui s'occupe de ce genre de choses

*=that does this sort of things*

5 (0.3)

6 R: eu::hm:::: **NO:N,=a** prioRI NON j'vois PA:S eu:h

*u::hm:::: no off the top of my head no I don't see ((any)) u:h*

Following the caller’s confirmation request (lines 1, 2, 4) the receptionist initially delays her response, but then offers a confirmation (*non*) followed by more talk (line 6). Rather than merely doing more confirmation with a repeat or otherwise, the additional talk epistemically downgrades the confirmation (*a priori non je vois pas*) to a less categorical confirmation than a mere *non* would convey. The amending talk is joined directly to the initial confirmation token.

The same practice can be observed in the German corpus. In the following example, 11 year-old Sophie comments on the position of the camera behind Ulla’s back.

(4) Ulla, Barbara, Sophie, 22:45

1. S: von dir filmen sie nur noch den rück[en]

*by now they’re only filming your back*

1. U: [ge]nau ja

*exactly yes*

1. S: <<giggling> weil sie dich schon so oft drauf habm>

*cause they’ve already got you on camera so often*

1. ((gigg[les))]
2. U: [**JA-=ich**] bin ja STÄNdich hier quasselpartnerin und ESS

*yes I am constantly chatting and eating*

1. (4.1)

Sophie’s playful postulation, that the reason for the camera’s positioning is that she has already been filmed so many times, is jokingly confirmed by Ulla, who not only provides a confirmation token (*ja*) but also elaborates on what being filmed entails for her, upgrading the temporal description of the events (*oft/often* → *ständich/constantly*). The continued talk after *ja* does not depart from the response first initiated by the *ja* token, but extends the confirmation along the lines suggested by Sophie’s talk. With regard to sound production, the confirmation token receives stress and a level pitch accent and is linked directly to subsequent talk. Note that unlike in (3), this elaborating extension does not epistemically downgrade the initial confirmation, but rather asserts the state of affairs in stronger terms.

*Confirmation followed by another elicited action*

Confirmations may also follow on from turns that elicit more than a confirmation, for example, in the form of ‘double-barreled’ first pair parts (Schegloff, 2007) or turns that express a knowledge gap, or make aspects of the confirmable accountable. Responses to such first pair parts can therefore contain confirmations that are followed by talk that addresses these other trajectories. This is typically achieved with a sequential organisation reminiscent of what Raymond (2003, 2013) describes for *yes*/*no*-interrogatives. In the following extract from the German corpus, Ulla interrupts Mark mid-turn as he relates a mutual acquaintance’s recent financial troubles.

(5) Ulla and Mark, 00.50.10

1. M: [wenn er sich n- ]

*if he-*

1. U: [e::cht (0.3) de::r hat] immer den eindruck gmacht dass er

*really he always gave the impression that he had a*

1. sein ding seriös kalkuliert hat

*good grip on his finances*

1. (0.8)
2. M: IS auch **so=aber** dann sind halt wohl n paar mal ABgesprungen

*that is the case but then a few people dropped out*

1. kurzfristich

*at short notice*

Ulla produces a noticeably loud and lengthened news receipt (*echt*, line 2762) before formulating her prior impression of the person being referred to (line 2762–2763). The increased loudness of the news receipt continues into the formulation, and additional lengthening on *der* (line 2762) contributes to a strong contrastive emphasis with regard to Ulla’s expressed previous assumptions. Mark responds with a confirmation (*is auch so*, line 2765); however, the discrepancy between his previous telling of the person’s financial difficulties and Ulla’s expectations regarding their financial acumen still needs to be addressed. Mark does so in his subsequent talk initiated by *aber* (line 2765), which is phonetically joined to his initial confirmation. In designing the two components as joined together Mark achieves a unified response that starts with a first component implementing the elicited confirmation and continues with a second component that addresses the discrepancy with Ulla’s expressed expectations. In contrast to previous cases, where responses to confirmables took the form of extended confirmations, here the overall response is to a confirmable turn that simultaneously implements another trajectory. The confirmation is therefore only the first component of the responding turn, followed by a second component responsive to the parallel action.

A similar pattern can be observed in the French corpus. In the following extract a customer in a tourist office has been asking for directions to a museum which is situated on Place de Lavalette.

(6) [OTG.1AP0240.0:20]

1 E: vous passez Place Sainte-Claire Place Notre-Dame

*you walk past Place Sainte-Claire Place Notre-Dame*

2 et tout de suite après Place de Lavalette

*and immediately after that Place de Lavalette*

3 C: d'accord

*okay*

4 (.)

5 C: c'est pas très loin

*it's not very far ((is it))?*

6 (.)

7 E: **non NON.=il** y en a pour même pas dix miNUTES

*no no it takes less than ten minutes*

The customer’s negatively framed question (line 5) is responded to with a confirmation using the negative answer particle twice (*non non*)—the second one receives primary stress—followed by a specification of the estimated walking time. Thus, the question is treated as double-barreled in that it requests not only confirmation but also an elaboration on the confirmable. The nasalised vowel of the second *non* is linked directly to the initial vowel of the elaboration. While the confirmation and the specification respond to different trajectories made relevant by the double-barreled first pair part and thus constitute separate actions, the vowel linking presents the adjoined specification as straightforwardly furthering the progressivity of the sequence. Thus, although the turn holds two actions, it constitutes one single, internally cohesive response.

The phenomena presented up to this point have involved seamlessly joined-up turn components. When a prior turn elicits more than one action, phonetic linking offers speakers a turn design that allows formatting two lexico-syntactically separate units as one internally cohesive response. However, speakers also have the option of phonetically designing their response to a double-barreled turn as a complex multi-unit, multi-action turn, in which the second action departs from the trajectory initiated by the first. The following extract is a representative example from the German corpus. Ulla has been telling Mark that both her telephone and her internet connections have not been working recently.

(7) Ulla and Mark, 7:20

1. U: telefon macht mir nix au:s weil ich ja handy hab

*I don’t mind the telephone because I’ve got a mobile*

1. und festnetzflat (0.2) a:ber des internet (.) ich sags dir

*and a flat rate but the internet I tell you*

1. was du gschwind mal nebenher erledigsch am netz (0.35)

*the things you quickly manage to get done online*

1. [des f::ehlt mir so: ]

*I miss that so much*

1. M: [aber du gehst doch übers handy] auch immer rein oder

*but you also always go online via your mobile don’t you*

1. U: °hhh **JA::,** **ʔaber** des isch natürlich s:ehr unkomfortabel mit

*yes but that is very tiresome of course with*

1. dieser kleinen taschtatu:r

*this small keyboard*

At line 472 Mark elicits confirmation from Ulla with regard to her mobile phone habits, challenging her claim that not having internet access is a basis for her so far rather elliptic complaint (lines 468–470). The use of the particle *doch* and the tag question *oder* implement a strong preference for a ‘yes’ response to Mark’s turn. Ulla provides the elicited and preferred confirmation token (*ja*, line 473) with rise-to-mid pitch and a lengthened vowel. The subsequent *aber*-prefaced clause addresses Mark’s challenge and provides an account for why her complaint is still valid. The second turn component is separated from the first by glottalisation and also by the speeding up of initial syllables. Interactionally, the second component of Ulla’s response is a second action (an account) that departs from the trajectory initiated by the first (the confirmation), rather than an unmarked continuation of the confirming turn.

The context is broadly similar to extract (5), where a confirmation-eliciting turn highlighting a discrepancy in recipient expectations is responded to with two action components. In contrast to (5), where the components are linked phonetically, the components in the above response are separated by glottalisation. An understanding of why this might be the case can be gained from a close analysis of the turns that precede the two responses in each case. Ulla’s confirmable turn in extract (5), lines 2762–2763, takes the form of a declarative grammatical construction (*he always gave the impression that he had a good grip on his finances*). While Ulla’s turn shows a discrepancy between her own expectations and Mark’s previous claim, there is no epistemic challenge to Mark’s (access to) knowledge and no claim to additional knowledge of her own. The confirmable turn makes no reference to Ulla herself, but only to the person referred to. Further, the declarative form does not implement a first pair part in the same way a tag question would do. Mark’s response in (5) does therefore not have to address two opposed trajectories; instead, his confirmation is straightforwardly followed by additional displays of knowledge addressing Ulla’s adoption of a K- position.

By comparison, Mark’s confirmable turn *but you also always go online via your mobile don’t you* in (7) openly challenges Ulla’s grounds for a complaint and assumes an epistemic position on a territory of knowledge that is hers by right (her phone, her internet habits). The tag question assigns Ulla a confirmation slot, which means that in order to address the confirmable *and* uphold her previous complaint she needs to respond to two directly opposing trajectories: confirming one claim and giving an account for the opposite claim. These separate and opposed trajectories are implemented through social actions where the second is designed as marking a departure from the first.

The French corpus shows a similar case of a glottalised disjunction between a confirmation and a response to a different action trajectory. A customer in a tourist office is asking for a sports brochure.

(8) [OTG.1SB0009.0:00]

1 C: j'aurais voulu savoir si vous aviez une brochure sur les

*I'd like to know if you have a brochure about the*

2 sports qu'on peut pratiquer à Grenoble

*sports that one can practice in Grenoble*

3 (0.4)

4 E: !t **OUI,** **Ɂelle** eXI:STE mais il m'en reste plus QU'UNE donc

*!t yes it exists but I only have one left so*

5 je vous la do[nne] PA:S

*you can't take it with you*

6 C: [ah ]

*oh*

7 E: sinon il faut aller la retirer à partir de quinze heu:res

*or otherwise you have to go and get one after three o'clock*

8 (.)

9 C: ouais

*yeah*

10 H: à l'OMS:

*at the OMS:*

At line 4 the employee initially confirms being in possession of the requested brochure, but then goes on to respond to the request with non-compliance. Similarly to the German extract in (7) here the initial confirmation token *oui* is separated by glottalisation from the subsequent sentential unit, which implements a dispreferred response (*it exists but I only have one left so you can’t take it with you*) and marks a departure from what the confirmation token alone projects. Once again a responding turn conveys two directly opposing social actions, confirmation in response to the question, and non-compliance with the request, which are packaged as disjunct response components.

The data presented in the three sub-sections above show that responses to confirmation-eliciting turns can take a variety of multi-unit forms. Firstly, speakers can extend confirmations with more confirming talk. Turns of this kind are characterised by phonetic joining between initial confirmations and subsequent talk. Secondly, initial confirmations can be amended. In those instances the confirming action is also being extended, but subsequent talk, for example, downgrades or upgrades the confirmation. These turns, too, show phonetic linking at the boundary. Finally, responses to confirmation-eliciting turns can consist of confirmations followed by turn components that address other aspects of the eliciting turn. Such multi-unit turns can either be designed as a cohesive, straightforwardly progressing single response, or as a complex response where confirmation is offered before the turn departs from the trajectory-so-far. The relevant unit boundaries are accordingly designed phonetically as either continuous (joining) or disjunct (glottalisation). Note that this distinction has to do with action trajectories and not with possible turn-completion; in neither case does the turn-internal unit boundary correspond to a transition-relevance place, so despite having several lexico-syntactic units, the response turn constitutes a single TCU.

Confirmation followed by non-continuation of response

While confirmation-eliciting turns make confirmation relevant in immediately next position, there are few constraints on response speakers in terms of what additional actions they might accomplish within their turn once confirmation has been provided. Confirmation-fronted turns may e.g. involve additional talk that is neither an extension of the confirmation itself, nor responsive to the confirmation-elicitation more generally. Such other talk can be roughly divided into two types: the resumption or continuation of talk that was initiated or in-progress prior to the confirmation-elicitation, and the initiation of entirely new sequences.

*Confirmation followed by resumption of prior talk*

Confirmation-eliciting news receipts and candidate understandings are frequently produced during in-progress turns, that is, recipients may elicit confirmation during, and sometimes in overlap with, a current turn holder’s ongoing telling. In responding to such turns, a current speaker may need to design their talk in a way that shows which turn components are responsive to the first pair part issued by another speaker, and which are part of their own ongoing telling. The following extract from the French corpus—from the same call as extract (1)—is an example. Caller Karim has talked about the visitors staying at his place, who had previously contacted him via the hospitality exchange network CouchSurfing.

(9) [MOUV.2010-12-21.45:31]

1 K: ensuite bo:n c'e:st on sait jamais où ça (nous) emmène hein

*then well it's you never know where that will take us y'know*

2 (.)

3 E: le [couchsurfing ouais ]

*couchsurfing yeah*

4 K: [on comm- ils commen]cent

*you st- they start*

5 (0.2)

6 K: **ouais Ɂils** commencent pour deux JOURS ça fait un mois qu'ils

*yeah they start with two days now they've been here for a*

7 sont LÀ: et puis euh °h ils vont parTIR ça va me faire CHIER

*month and then uh °h when they leave I'll be bummed out*

At line 3, Éric checks the reference of the pronoun *ça* (‘that’) in Karim’s turn at line 1. Karim confirms this at the beginning of line 6, with an unaccented *ouais*, before resuming the turn he began at line 4, thereby also resuming and extending the ongoing telling. The resumption is separated from the confirmation token by glottalisation. The components of Karim’s turn at lines 6–7 are designed as differentiated in terms of their directionality: the confirmation is responsive to Éric’s intervening candidate understanding, whereas the subsequent talk is a resumption of Karim’s ongoing telling *prior* to Éric’s turn. We find similar cases in our German corpus. In the following, Ulla is in the process of talking about her plans for the weekend.

(10) Ulla and Mark, 6:03

1. U: weil ich ja hospitation hab kommendes wochenende

*because I have my internship this coming weekend*

1. M: ach

*oh*

1. [auch schon wieder]

*that’s come round quickly*

1. U: [und da hab ich mit]

*and there I am*

1. **JA:; ʔund** da hab ich mit [katrin ] kontakt

*yes and there I am in touch with Katrin*

1. M: [((laughs))]

After a news receipt from Mark (line 359), Ulla continues with her telling (line 361); however, Mark also continues with a second TCU in overlap that continues to address Ulla’s prior turn and elicits confirmation (line 360). Ulla aborts her turn-in-progress (line 361) and provides confirmation (*ja*, line 362). She then resumes her telling, repeating the beginning of the previously aborted turn. The two actions, the confirmation and the resumption of prior talk, are phonetically separated by glottalisation (line 362).

The phonetic turn design of these examples matches the way the relevant actions relate to one another. The [elicitation]–[confirmation] sequences are inserted into an ongoing sequence-in-progress. They therefore require a phonetic design as a separate activity in order for prior and following talk to be recognisable as a sequence-in-progress. The break implemented through glottalisation allows recipients to locate the moment at which the confirmation is accomplished and prior talk is being resumed[[4]](#footnote-4).

*Confirmation followed by a new sequence*

In contrast to extracts in the previous section, confirmations can also be followed by initiations of new sequences. In these cases, while the overall activity is typically continued, neither the confirming action itself nor any prior talk is being continued or resumed. In the following example from the French corpus, a confirmation is followed by a first pair part. Élodie and Sarah are making arrangements for meeting later the same day.

(11) [CORAL.FTELPV06.2:28]

1 E: on se retrouve là bas quoi

*let's just meet there*

2 (.)

3 S: ouais (.) eu:h donc euh avant ton rendez vous par exemple

*yeah (.) u:h so uh say before your appointment*

4 E: ah oui: largeme:nt oui oui: ou[i]

*oh yes: well before yes yes: yes*

5 S: [o]ké ben vers eu:h ben vers

*okay well around u:h well around*

6 deux heures

*two o'clock*

7 (0.3)

8 E: o- **OUAIS. Ɂon** se donne rendez VOUS eu:h d:evant le:: ciNÉ

*y- yeah shall we meet u:h in: front of the:: cinema?*

Following Élodie’s confirmation of the time of the meeting (line 8: *o- ouais*), she initiates a new sequence concerning the meeting location. The turn components conveying these two social actions—a confirmation token and a mono-clausal sentential unit, respectively—are separated by glottalisation.

A similar pattern can be observed for German. In the following extract Julia and Ulla have been talking about giving birth, and Julia’s wish for children.

(12) Ulla und Julia 2, 04.50

1. J: da krieg ich schon wieder gänse[haut]

*that gives me goose bumps again straight away*

1. U: [oh:::] kla:r willsch du n

*aww of course you want a*

1. kind

*child*

1. J: weil dann war ich echt so und dacht mir so

*because then I was like and was thinking like*

1. (1.2)((corners of mouth down, gazing at U))
2. U: kla:r so n würmchen kommt auch zu dir

*of course such a little mite will come to you too*

1. (1.8)
2. hasch doch gsagt zwei seelen warten

*didn't you say two souls are waiting*

1. (2.3)
2. J: **ja** **ʔaber** wo i jetzt bei der seelenfrau war des war schon

*yes but having been to this soul lady that was*

1. echt spannend

*pretty fascinating*

1. auch mit der entscheidung kein kind zu wolln oder °hh und

*also with the decision not to want a child you know and*

1. dass die seelen all- in der familie dass die see:len halt

*that the souls all- in the family that the souls are*

1. immer da: sind [und] des war schon spannend

*always there and that was pretty fascinating*

1. U: [hm]
2. J: °h weißt wie toll des war (1.3) °h ich wollt erst nich

*it was really great you know at first I didn’t want to*

1. hingehn

*go there*

At line 242 Ulla elicits confirmation with regard to Julia’s wish for children. Julia confirms this with a quiet and whispered *ja:* (line 244); however, her subsequent talk initiates a new sequence. While the initial lexical item *aber* suggests a topical continuation, what actually follows is a new telling, where Ulla relates and assesses her first-hand experience of going to a ‘soul lady’. Although issues around childbirth and the wish for children are tangentially connected to this telling (cf. line 246), and indeed seem to have touched it off, they are not resumed in subsequent talk.[[5]](#footnote-5) Julia’s second turn component (*aber wo i jetzt …*) is produced with initial glottalisation followed by modal voice quality. The return to a default loudness and phonation adds to the articulatory break introduced by the initial glottalisation of *aber*, as does an increase in speech rate on initial syllables (*aber wo i jetzt bei der*).

In sum, (11) and (12) show that when new sequences are initiated in the talk immediately following the confirmation, the unit boundary is designed with glottalisation, indicating the sequential disjunction between the confirmation and the action that subsequent talk implements. Note that here, the two turn components arguably do constitute separate TCUs; by initiating a new sequence, response speakers treat their own confirmation as having sufficiently dealt with the relevancies of prior turns, and the floor as open for new sequence-initiations.

concluding observations

Since confirmations can be potentially complete turns and may sufficiently satisfy the constraints of a preceding first pair part, they are also potentially implicative of sequence-closure. In line with prior research, the phenomena analysed here further demonstrate that the juncture between confirming response tokens and subsequent talk is the locus for a diverse range of practices through which participants manage sequential progression. One progression-related matter in particular has been considered here: designing next turn components either as extending the course of action implemented by the turn-so-far, or as departing from that trajectory and taking up a separate course of action.

The distinctiveness of the two extension types provides ample evidence that French and German speakers have available the same phonetic resources for managing these action-sequential contingencies. The articulatory break that glottalisation provides may be an unsurprising candidate for the implementation of unit separation, and vowel linking could be thought of as equally unsurprising for the implementation of cohesiveness. However, phonological descriptions of the two languages postulate directly contrasting practices. While glottalisation is considered the norm for vowel-fronted words in German, it would be considered atypical in French, which instead favours linking of various forms. That the two languages make available both practices in a similar way—as options serving differentiated interactional purposes—provides further evidence that language is a resource for social conduct, rather than defined solely by abstract notions of a linguistic system. While in the phonology of French the glottal stop is not phonemic, French – like German – allows for the communicative use of glottalisation. And while descriptions of the German phonological system do recognise the glottal stop as a form and stipulate its occurrence in a specific position, German also seems to allow for an interactional function of the glottalisation/linking contrast that at times overrides phonological rules and preferences.

We consider this study the starting point of a future programme of research that seeks to explore sound patterns and possibly other linguistic structuring mechanisms as *cross-linguistic* *practices for organising and managing talk*. This line of inquiry complements recent conversation analytic work on cross-cultural comparisons of social practices (Stivers et al., 2009; Fox et al. 2010; Dingemanse & Enfield, 2015) and actions (Enfield & Stivers, 2007; Enfield et al. 2010; Sidnell & Enfield 2012).

A cross-linguistic comparison of sound patterns as interactional practices also complements the more substantial body of knowledge accounting for phonetic and prosodic practices as language- or variety-specific. While we do not challenge the overwhelming evidence for phonologies (and phonologies-for-conversation) that are specific to individual languages and dialects, and while we do not claim that glottalisation can be accounted for with an interactional analysis alone, certain articulatory and phonatory gestures seem to lend themselves to marking universally relevant social-interactional contrasts. For example, previous work has shown that the sound design of utterances seems to be used by speakers across languages to indicate their sequential alignment with other speakers’ prior talk (for example, through prosodic matching, Szczepek Reed, 2012; Szczepek Reed & Li 2014). Another fundamental contrast is the one between continuing an action trajectory in progress, and beginning a new one. Where these interactional practices come into direct contrast with the phonology of a given language, linguistic enquiry has to be able to incorporate empirical realities of language use. Micro-analysis of naturally-occurring interactional data must therefore be placed at the heart, rather than at the periphery, of the linguistic endeavor.

APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions (adapted from Selting *et al.* 1998)

(.) micro-pause ( < c. 0.2 s)

(2.8) measured pause

: :: ::: lengthening

°h / h° inbreath / outbreath

ACcent primary accent

[ overlap of two or more speakers

[

Phrase-final pitch movements:

? rise-to-high

, rise-to-mid

- level

; fall-to-mid

. fall-to-low

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1. Although see Maynard (1990); Hopper & Koleilat-Doany (1989); Hopper et al. (1991); Clancy et al. (1996); Fox, Hayashi & Jasperson (1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Our instances of linked turn components are not cases of ‘abrupt-joins’ (Local & Walker; 2004). Our cases display no signs of sudden increase in speech rate or a step-up in loudness, and they are not designed to secure otherwise contested turn space. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In both (9) and (10), the resumption of prior talk involves recycling a prior turn-beginning. In such instances, it is particularly clear that the talk after the confirmation is not responsive to the elicitation. However, it also routinely occurs that the elicitation is produced in the clear, so that there is no overlap to be dealt with by recycling overlapped talk. In such cases, the glottalisation still serves to indicate where the speaker is resuming an ongoing telling, after doing a confirmation in response to e.g. a news receipt or a candidate understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Koerfer (1979) identifies the use of ‘ja aber’ for topic shifts. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)