Persée

"Yes" "No" and "Mhm": Variations in Acknowledgment choices

Harrie Mazeland

Voir l'article en ligne

"YES", "NO" AND "MHM": VARIATIONS IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT CHOICES

Harrie Mazeland [1]

University d'Amsterdam

Abstract

Recipients of talk use so called 'minimal responses' or 'acknowledgment tokens' - such as mhm *or* yes *- to exhibit their reception of prior turn. In the first part of the paper I will develop the plausibility of a description of some uses of* no *as a member of this class. No-receipts co-occurring with a negation-marked lexical item in the preceding utterance appear to have sequential and interactional consequences that differ observably from non co-occurring uses. Next, I examine whether* yes-*receipts also may exhibit some specifiable type of 'congruency' with particular features of the preceding utterance, and if 'incongruent' uses of the token are treated differently. Finally it is shown that whereas both co-occurring* no-*and congruent* yes-*receipts appear to display some kind of organizational and interactional alignment, the descriptive 'emptiness' of* mhm-*receipts may account for some of the more distancing ways this token is used by professionals in medical encounters in a General Practice.*

1. introduction

Whereas linguists often seem to treat discourse as a 'single mind's product' (Schegloff 1982), the conversation-analytic perspective emphazises the interactional and collaborative nature of talk. On the other hand, conversation-analytic research often seems to use lexical and other grammatical features of talk only as a subsidiary, not-yet-further-analyzed resource. For instance, the utterance types I look at in this paper   - minimal responses such as *yes* or

mhm - are primarily investigated with respect to what they do organizationally.[2] However, the ways an item such as *no* may be used (cf. § 2) suggest that the lexical properties of a specific response type might play a role in the work these items do; not as properties of the object per se, but as a relation it may establish with the utterance it attends to, solely because of the item's specific lexical features. Having made this observation about *no*, I got interested in the possibility of the operation of comparable principles in the way tokens such as *yes* (§ 3) and *mhm* (§ 4) are used. I shall concentrate on some of the mechanisms that seem to be operative in the choice of an acknowledgment token of a particular lexical type; though the details of pronunciation and intonation convey important information about the sequential and interactional status of these items, I shall not consider them here.

The transcriptions of the vocal interaction in a corpus of five medical encounters in a General Practice make up the main data of this report. Allthough it was originally a purpose of my analysis to investigate the eventual specifics of physicians' use of acknowledgment tokens, it appeared necessary to first work out some characteristics of *yes*/*no*-receipts that also seem to hold for their use in other discours types. On the basis of that description I will point only in the last paragraph to a difference in the use of *yes* and *mhm*, which would typically be used for recipiency in professional/lay interactions.

The conversation analytic literature contains many observations on the use of items such as 'uh huh' or 'yeah'. Although these refer to American and English conversations, they also seem to hold for their Dutch equivalents, even when these are used in a setting such as medical consultations. For example, both of the sequential functions Schegloff (1982) describes for the use of 'uh huh' in conversations - the 'doing continuity' (cf. Sacks 1971 [3] and indicating the not being-relevant of recipient- initiation of repair - appear to be appropriate characterizations for what the recipient does by the use of '*mhm*' in lines (184) and (190) of fragment (1):

(1)   (HVM&CD)1:173-195

```
174    A:      een beetje beweging is ↑goed.=
175            [=vindt u dat ook niet
176    P:      [ ja↑  wa(n') als  ik ] fiets=
177            =want ik heb nog al vrij: vee:l gefietst
178    P:      (om)da w'op de camping zijn=
```

```
170   A: *     [=j↑ah
180   P:        [ en mijn man is nogal een fietser,[·hhh
181   A: *                                         [↓jah
182            (.)
183   P:       da dacht ik eerst dat dat ge[forceerd was=
184   A: ->                                [hm↓:.
185   P:       =daarom ben ik niet zo gauw gekomen.
186            ·hhh maar- (.) ik was <gistere:- heb ik
187            'n beetje gelope en in ('n) auto gezete.=
188            =we zijn naar 'n begra:fenis geweest.
189            ·h[hh en toen wilde ik ga- veel gaan
190   A: ->     [mh°↓m:
191   P:       ↑zi:tten, ·h[h dan krijg ik veel ↑meer last
192   A: *                 [°jah,
193            (0.4)
194   P:       dus 't is [ eh-
195   A:                 [ met lopen ook?
```

```
174   A:       some movement is alright
175            [ don't you think also
176   P:       [ yes (wh-) when I bike,
177            for I have biked quite a bit
178            because we are on a camping site
179   A: *     [ yes
180   P:       [ and my husband is rather a biker, [·hhh
181   A: *                                         [yes
182            (.)
183   P:       I th- thought at first that that was s[trained
184   A: ->                                         [hm:
185   P:       that's why I didn't come immediately
186            ·hhh but- (.) yesterday I was-
187            I did walk a bit and sat in a car
188            we were at a funeral
189            ·h[hh and then I wanted to go- go sitting
190   A: ->     [mh°↑m:
191   P:       a lot, ·h[h I  became much more troubled
192   A: *              [↑yes
193            (0.4)
```

```
194   P:      so it is [ uh-
195   A:              [ with walking also?
```

The literature also gives suggestions concerning variations in the selection of consecutive response tokens by the same recipient. Schegloff (ibid.) claims that tokens such as 'uh huh' and 'yeah' operate in essentially the same way. The selection of a different token is primarily seen as allowing for variance. When a recipient would use the same token four or five times, this might allow for inferences of disinterest which could be avoided through varying the token type.

Jefferson (1981a and 1981b) proposes a more context-dependent explanation: she describes variation in the selection of consecutive response types as the result of a recipient's evaluations of the informativeness of the prior turn. Through the production of recognizably distinct responses, recipients would exhibit "that they have been 'informed' by the intervening materials" (Jefferson 1981b, p. 114). On the other hand, repeating the same response type would indicate that "the subsequent materials are inadequate to revised response" (Jefferson 1981a, p. 70). This is to say, that through the selection of the same response token a recipient treats the intervening materials as less informative, i.e., inconsequential.

Again both descriptions could be applied complementarily to explain variance and invariance in the use of consecutive recipient items of the same recipient in doctor / patient interactions. For example, one could see the selection of a different next response token in fragment (1) - as the first '*mhm*' in line (184) after the foregoing '*jah*' in line (181) - as an exhibition of the distinctive informativeness the recipient subscribes to the ongoing turn, whereas the repeat of this token in line (190) assigns *no* specific relevance to the information delivered in the subsequent turns and thus would allow for inferences such as disinterest.

Jefferson also proffers a yet somewhat more specific description of differences in the use of 'mm hm' and 'yeah' (Jefferson 1984). Some speakers seem to systematically differentiate between the use of 'mm hm' as a display of 'passive recipiency' and 'yeah' ('*yes*' for British speakers) as a "pre-shift object": when such a speaker selects 'yeah' instead of '*mhm*', s/he appears to propose and to negotiate a topic-shift and therefore a change in the distribution of local conversational identities: the recipient proposes to become next speaker and negotiates the accompanying alignment of prior speaker as next recipient.

The transfer of these results to Dutch materials and - possibly - to another type of discourse appears to be a little more problematic than was the case for the comparatively general organizational properties of these tokens described above. When we only look at the last three recipient items in fragment (1) - the '*mhm*' 's in lines (184) and (192) and the '*jah*' in (194) - it is possible to hear them as pure displays of passive recipiency, whereas the subsequent '*jah*' (*yes*) indeed could function as a kind of indication that the recipient wants to leave his/her recipientship, as s/he actually does in an interruptive manner during the second next utterance of the patient (ln. 197). However, this speaker seems to use 'ja' also as a display of passive recipiency or as a continuer. This can be seen from the first two times the doctor does recipiency with 'ja' in fragment (2), - lines (178) and (181). So we have to be very cautious when we want to use Jefferson's results for the description of eventual differences between the use of '*jah*' and '*mhm*' by Dutch speakers for - at least - doctor- patient materials.[4]

So what we have are some general characterizations for how items like '*mhm*' or 'ja' might work sequentially in conversations: (i) they display recipient's analysis of the local state of talk with respect to the distribution of conversational identities; (ii) they exhibit the local absence of repair-initiation; (iii) and also might give some information about the organizational type of continuation that the recipient proposes.

These characterizations still do not account for the variation of consecutive recipient items. We do not know whether and how the selection of a particular token reveals specific features of the recipient's analysis of the preceding utterance and if such a display might have specifiable, sequential consequences. In the next section I will show that *no*, like *yes*-receipts, is also used as an acknowledgment token. I shall delineate a contextual feature of *no*-receipts that subsequently is examined for its relevance with respect to recipient's choice of using either a token of the *yes* or of the *no*-type.

2. co-occurring 'no'-receipts

As far as I know, the conversation analytic literature has never described '*nee*' (*no*) as an acknowledgment token. Dutch recipients, at least, may use '*nee*' in a fashion that is in many ways similar to the use of response tokens such as 'ja' (*yes*) and/or '*mhm*', - cf. fragment (2), line 104; (3), line 36 and (4), line 534:

(2)   (HVM&CD)2:102-107


```
102    P:        en- en daar is ↑verder (.) ↑niks aan te zien=
103              =all[↑een (aan de voet geen        )
104    A: ->        [nee.
105              (.)
106    A:        j↑ah
107              (0.7)
108    A:        ˙hh en u zegt dat heb ik voor↑na:melijk
109              as ik er wat ↑meer op gelopen heb.
110              (.)
111    P: *      ja↑:h=
112    A: ->     =ja
```

```
102    P:        and- and there is furthermore (.) nothing to be seen=
103              =on[ly (on the foot no         )
104    A: ->        [no.
105              (.)
106    A:        yes
107              (0.7)
108    A:        ˙hh and you say I have that especially
109              when I have walked a bit more on it.
110              (.)
111    P: *      ye:s=
112    A: ->     =yes
```


(3)   (HVM&CD)5:28-38 [simplified]


```
28    A:        j:Ah, in- in negentien zes- twee jaar geleden
29              heb ik u [ voor het la↑atst-
30    P:                 [ jaA, voor me oog:.
31              (.)
32    A:        jah,
33              (0.5)
34    A:        verder niet meer.
35              (.)
```

```
36  P: ->    ↑ne[e
37  A:          [kom zitten
```

```
28  A:     yes, in- in nineteen six- two years ago
29         I have [seen] you [ for the last- ]
30  P:                   [ yes, for my eye.
31         (.)
32  A:     yes,
33         (0.5)
34  A:     further not anymore.
35         (.)
36  P: ->  no[:
37  A:        [come sit down
```

(4)   (HVM&CD)2:531-536

```
531  A:     hebt u vroeger wel 'ns steunzolen gedragen?=
532  P:     =nooit
533         (0.4)
534  A: ->  °nee.
535         (1.0)
536  P:     ik had altijd heel makkelijke voete:::,
```

```
531  A:     did you ever wear arch supports ?
532  P:     =never
533         (0.4)
534  A: ->  °no.
535         (1.0)
536  P:     I always had quite good feet,
```

Similar to *yes* or *mhm* receipts, *no* may be used around the transition space of informative utterances as the sole component of a recipient turn. Moreover, sequentially this use of *no* seems to do identical work as Sacks (1971) and Schegloff (1982) describe for 'uh huh'. The *no*-receipts may be compatible with continuation of prior speaker - as in (2), line 103 and (4), line 536 - and in none of the fragments do participants orient to the token as initiating repair.

However, *no* may do a range of different tasks. For example, the item indeed can be used to accomplish the initiation of repair, - both to do the job of self-initiation (ln. 584 in (5) below) and of other-initiation of repair (ln. 585):

(5)   (HVM&CD)3:580-592 ['*no*' initiating repair]

[*patient has told the doctor about a medicine her sister has received from another physician*]

```
580   A:      waar heeft ze dat gekregen?
581           (0.4)
582   P:      ook bij d'r enkel
583           (.)
584   P: *    of [ ↑ne:↓e↑ u bedoelt ] eh
585   A: ->      [ ↓ne:↑e  www-
586           (.)
587   P:      [ op ↑Zeewijk
588   A:      [ waar heeft ze 't (g'had)]
589           (0.4)
590   A:      oh jah,
591           (0.7)
592   P:      jah,
```

```
580   A:      where did she get that?
581           (0.4)
582   P:      also on her ankle
583           (.)
584   P: *    or [ no you mean eh
585   A: ->      [ no www-
586           (.)
587   P:      [ in Zeewijk ((name village)
588   A:      [ where she (got) it
589           (0.4)
590   A:      oh yes,
591           (0.7)
592   P:      yes,
```

The item also might be used to mark disagreement - as is the case in line (190) of fragment (6) below, to answer a '*yes/no*'- question - as illustrated in fragment (7) -, or decide on a foregoing formulation [5] (line 643 in (8)):

(6)   (HVM&CD)4:185-191 [disagreement marker]

```
185   P:      't is nu haast over maar-
186           (0.3)
187   P:      't was verschrikke↑lijk,
188           (0.5)
189   A: ->   n↓ee↑: 't is nog niet over (°e[cht)
190   P:                                    [nee↑:
191   P: *    maar 't is wel 'n stuk ↑minder,
```

```
185   P:      it is nearly over now but-
186           (0.3)
187   P:      it was terrible
188           (0.5)
189   A: ->   no it is not over yet (re[ally)
190   P:                               [no
191   P: *    but at least it got a lot less worse,
```

(7)   (HVM&CD)1:66-70 ['*no*'-answer to *yes/no*-question]

```
66    A:      doet 't pij↑:n?
67            (0.6)
68    P: ->   nee dat ↑niet,
69            (.)
70    A: *    ne↑e:,
```

```
66    A:      does it hurt ?
67            (0.6)
68    P: ->   no not that,
69            (.)
70    A: *    no
```

(8)   (HVM&CD)3:639-644 [formulation-decision]

```
639   A:      als u d'r l:Ast van heeft dan is 't wat anders,
640           maar (as) U zegt [ ('t gaat) goed,
641   P:                      [ echt nou nie gaan dus
642           (.)
643   A: ->   neu [ (da) zou 'k nie doen.
644   P:          [ oh dat is prachtig,


639   A:      if it bothers you then it would be something else,
640           but (if) you say [ (it goes) well,
641   P:                       [ really no need to go now thus
642           (.)
643   A: ->   no [ I wouldn't do (that).
644   P:         [ oh that's fantastic,
```

One might ask how participants identify a specific 'hearing'. Its treatment as an answer or as a formulation-decision appears to be set primarily sequentially through preceding 'first-pair parts' - such as *yes/no*-questions (cf. ln. 66 in (7)) or formulations (ln. 641, (8)) -, whereas its status as repair- initiation or disagreement marker often is retrospectively highlighted via additional turn-components after the - now turn-initial - *no* (cf. the "*www*-" onset in line 585 of (5) or the disagreement clarification in line 190 of fragment (6)).

However, there is a specific contextual feature that seems to do the work of prospective exclusion of these latter two functions, that might allow for the identifiability of *no*'s use as a minimal response. It is the occurrence of a negation- marked lexeme in a preceding non-first-pair-part utterance, - such as "niet" (*not*) in line 34 of fragment (3), "niks" (*nothing*; ln. 102 in (2)) or "nooit" (*never*; ln. 532 of (4)). The correspondence between a negation-marked item in the preceding utterance and the 'negative' receipt obviously rules out the 'negating' quality inherent to the isolated form [6]; thereby blocking off treatments as repair-initiation or disagreement-marking. On the other hand, if the recipient uses *no* after a non-negation-marked utterance it is probably the disparity between the preceding utterance and the response type that allows for 'not-let-pass-through' readings as repair- initiation or disagreement-marking.

So there is both 'negative' evidence - *no* is not used as answer or repair-initiation, for example -, as well as a series of structural and organizational similarities - sequential placement, turn-constructional format, organizational tasks - that seem to support the description of some uses of *no* as an 'acknowledgment token'. In so far as no more precise descriptions of 'acknowledgment tokens' than those that are presently available, are deployed, I do not see any grounds for assigning a *no*-receipt such as the one in line 230 of (9) to a different category as the *ja* that follows it (ln. 232):

(9)   (QW1/io/hm) [7]

```
228   B:       nou ik wist niet wat 't WAS:=
229            =E[N DIE PIJN DIE BLEEF ↑WEL,
230   A: ->      [↓NEE:
231            (.)
232   A:       °ja[:
233   B:          [eˣh:n eh doordat je op de been ↑bent,


228   B:       well I did not know what it was=
229            =a[nd that pain that went on [still]
230   A: ->      [no:
231            (.)
232   A:       °ye[s
233   B:          [and uh because one walks around
```

The close correspondence the recipient accomplishes with the negation-markedness of the preceding utterances not only might explain this type of variance in the selection of consecutive acknowledgment tokens, it also demonstrates the stress the conversation analytic literature lays on the purely technical character of response-types like *yes* and *mhm*. For instance, Jefferson (1984), e.g., accounts for the term 'acknowledgment token' by referring to the way these 'minimal' or 'transitory' recipient-items treat the information delivered in the foregoing turn of the prior speaker: this turn "is neither disattended nor taken up. It is 'acknowledged'." (p. 199). According to that description, this type of recipient reactions does not exhibit a specific kind of substantial analysis of prior turn, - as would be the case with, e.g., assessments and commentaries (cf. Jefferson 1981b) or some types of other- initiation of

repair. The tokens would primarily display an organizational position with respect to the current state of talk: it indicates the participant's current status vis-à-vis recipiency and speakership.

Contrary to these characterizations, the co-occurrence phenomenon shows that a token such as '*no*' probably does more than purely 'acknowledging' the prior turn. In its form the item may refer to a particular feature of the preceding utterance [8]. The fact that the recipient displays an analysis of prior-turn precisely through taking up this aspect of prior-turn might be relevant. When a speaker says that 'something is not something' and recipient attends to that utterance with *no*, then the response not only leaves out the specific 'somethings' or 'contents' of prior turn, but also takes up that particular aspect of which the contents can be 'duplicated' in a non- topicalizing form. The recipient does not elaborate on the specific evaluative perspective   prior-speaker presents when using a negation-marked lexeme (cf. Labov 1972, p. 380 ff.), - as is done, for example, in the modified restatement of prior turn in line 148 of (10):

(10)   (HVM&CD)2:144-151


```
143    A:       ·hh u hebt bij 't lopen ↑geen last van uw kuite,
144             (0.5)
145    P:       nee
146             (0.3)
147    P:       [ (°nee)
148    A: ->    [ helemaal niet.=
149    A:        [ ='t zit a:ltijd in de voorvoet=
150    P:        [ =ik- ik (heb-)
151    P:       =ik kon altijd lope wat i[k wou
152    A:                                 [jah,
153    P:       al was 't naar (Ameide) toe.
```

```
143    A:       you do not have problems with your calfs when walking,
144             (0.5)
145    P:       no
146             (0.3)
147    P:       [ (°no)
148    A: ->    [ not at all.=
149    A:        [ =it is always in the forefoot=
```

```
150   P:        [ =I- I (have-)
151   P:        I could always walk as much I [ wanted
152   A:                                       [yes,
153   P:        even if it was to (Ameide)
```

Though locating the negation-markedness of the preceding utterance, co-occurring *no*-receipts do not fix this feature of prior-turn in such a way that it is made 'ready' for topicalization. The recipient only 'repeats' the negation- markedness of the prior utterance in a format through which no further talk with respect to that particular feature is initiated. S/he primarily appears to display his/her 'tracking' of the topical development of the preceding utterance and demonstrates s/he has recorded its position with respect to one specific parameter.

The 'work' co-occurring *no* receipts do seems to be based not only on the semantics of the isolated form plus a device for counting sequential negation-duplication as formal agreement. Through the use of a topically corresponding response the recipient also displays his/her orientation to exhibiting to speaker his/her staying close to the specific direction of the preceding utterance without elaborating on its substantial particulars themselves.

3. congruent *yes*-receipts

Since '*nee*' (*no*) is usually treated as a member of the same set of which 'ja' (*yes*) is the other element, it is tempting to look whether ja-receipts likewise take a value with respect to the polarity of the utterances they respond to, - such that one could speak also for each ja-receipt of its being correspondent or not.

When ja-receipts occur after negation-marked turns, the disparity with the polarity of the preceding utterance does not occasion the same kinds of 'discontinuities' as were described for non-corresponding uses of '*no*' (§ 2). Non-corresponding ja- receipts neither initiate repair nor mark interactional disagreement [9], - cf. lines 770/72 in (11):

(11)   (JT/hm) [simplified] *


```
767    B:        >ze wille gewoon heel lekker rustig zitte< >of ↑e:h

768              0,4

769    A:        jah, (.) ↑ja,=

770    B: *      =e:n ja niet e::h< >n:- niet nog met iets bezig zijn,

771              0,3

772    A: ->     jah,

773              2,2

774    A:        dat e:h- (.) dat hebbe jullie wel geprobeerd
```

```
767    B:        they just want sit in an easy relaxed way or e:h

768              0,4

769    A:        yes, (.) yes,=

770    B: *      =and yes not e::h< >n:- not yet being busy with something,

771              0,3

772    A: ->     yes,

773              2,2

774    A:        that e:h- (.) that's what you have been trying nevertheless?
```

Participants nevertheless do not seem to treat such unmatched uses of *yes* as flawless displays of recipient alignment. The comparatively long gap after the receipt (ln. 773) in (11)) and the subsequent movement into speakership of former recipient (ln. 774) suggest that participants might orient to non- corresponding ja-receipts as revealing a subtle type of disalignment. The following fragment displays a similar configuration:

(12)   (HVM&CD)5:323-330 [simplified]

```
323    P:        >(en nou) dan ga ik (weer met dinge) verder,

324              (0.5)

325    P: *      ('k) ga d'r n[ie(t) bij stilzitte,

326    A:                    [(°jah,)

327              (.)

328    A:        °ja, (.) ja↑:h

329              (1.2)

330    A:        hoe ging 't verder met u de laatste tijd
```

```
323   P:        >(and well) then I go on (again with things)
324             (0.5)
325   P: *      (I) don['t going to hang around with it,
326   A:             [(°yes,)
327             (.)
328   A: ->     °yes, (.) yes
329             (1.2)
330   A:        how were you doing furthermore these days
```

Again, a long gap after the ja-receipts (ln. 329 in (12)) indicates some kind of discontinuity that might be engendered partially through the succession of a negation-marked utterance and a receipt with a positive value: Instead of aligning himself 'topically' with the negation-markedness of the preceding utterance, the recipient selects a response type that does not correspond with the negative polarity of the preceding utterance (ln. 325) [10]. The ensuing re-negotiation of topical and organizational matters might be engendered through this kind of 'de-tracking' recipiency. The fact that in both fragments the former recipient finally continues as 'primary' speaker with a topic-shifting inquiry (ln. 774 in (11), 330 in (12) and 151-52 in (14); cf. also lines 103/106 in (2)) even suggests that non-corresponding ja-receipts indeed may be used as a pre-shift object (Jefferson 1984; cf. § 1). Through attending to the previous turn in a way that is topically unspecific where more specific attendance would have been possible, the recipient's exhibit of topical disalignment might occasion negotiation on both the development of topic and the distribution of local organizational identities.

Prior speaker may counter-act the disengagement displayed through non-corresponding *yes*-receipts. In (13) below, the patient's return to the 'business-at-hand' (ln. 69) after a series of accounts on the circumstantials of her troubles, seems to ward off the topical 'off-line' quality of the non- matched ja-receipt in line 68:

(13)   (HVM&CD)3:63-71 [simplified]

```
39    P:        en nou eh (0,5) zou'k willen hebben dat u nog
40    P:        's keek of 'ter niks zat achter m'n knie,
41             (0,6)
42    A:        mjah,
43             (0,8)
```

```
44   P:        wan:t, (.) eh me zus gaat op 't ogenblik naar Geldrop
               ...
63   P:        ik zeg ja maar dan moe'k eerst even naar:, (.) u toe,
64             (0,3)
65   A:        [ jah
66   P: *      [ want ik ga niet zo maar op me eigen ↑hout↓je
67             (.)
68   A: ->     jah
69   P:        (op de) eerste plaats moet u 's kijken of t'r wat zit,
70             (0,5)
71   A:        °jah.
72             (.)
73   P:        dus daar ↑kwam ik eigenlijk ook voor.
74             (.)
75   A:        °jah,
```

```
39   P:        and now eh (0,5) I would like [to have] that you
40   P:        just looked if there's nothing behind my knee,
41             (0,6)
42   A:        myes,
43             (0,8)
44   P:        because, (.) eh my sister now is going to ((city-name))
               ... [ ((patient tells about the circumstances
                       that occasioned her request)) ]
63   P:        I say yes but then I first just have to go to (.) you [to],
64             (0,3)
65   A:        [ yes
66   P: *      [ because I do not go just on my own account
67             (.)
68   A: ->     yes
69   P:        (in the) first place you just have to look
               if there is something
70             (0,5)
71   A:        °yes.
72             (.)
73   P:        so therefore I actually came too.
74             (.)
75   A:        °yes,
```

Participants thus may orient to the non-corresponding status of *yes*-receipts subsequent to negation-marked utterances. The friction unpaired ja-receipts occasion could even be seen as indirect evidence for participants' capability to deploy *yes*-receipts systematically in a co-occurring way.

However, a substantial number of *yes*-receipts do not co-occur with an explicit polarity-marking feature of the preceding utterance (cf. lns. 178/81/92 in (1); ln. 30 in (3) and ln. 152 in (10)) [11]. Though utterances that are unmarked with respect to the [positive / negative] dimension might be regarded as having a positive polarity as their default-value, a description of the *yes*-receipts in, for example, fragment (13) above (lns. 65, 71 and 75) as somehow corresponding with an unstated positive polarity of the utterance they are responding to, at first sight seems to be rather artificial. At best the receipts could be seen as accomplishing some unspecified organizational attendance to and/or acceptance of prior turn; the accomplishment of whatever type of topical alignment with the preceding utterance does not seem to be relevant.

Nevertheless, evidence may be found that recipients accomplish some type of topical correspondence with the polarity of the preceding utterance through the response type they select. For example, both *yes*- and *no*-receipts may occur subsequent to incomplete utterances in such a way that they seem to reflect the projected polarity of the unsaid utterance part. In (14) the projected then-part of an 'if/then'-unit is left uncomplete after the recipient's duplicated [12] *yes*-acknowledgment. This follows the short silence after the speaker's then-onset (lns. 221-223):

(14)   (HVM&CD)4:214-225 [simplified]

```
214    A:      laat 's kijken dan,=
215    P:      =alleen me armen=
216    P:      [ =nou ik wist geen ↑raa↓:d [ van de jeuk=
217    A:      [  ja↓:(°↑jah)              [ uchuh
218    P:      =as d'er maar 'n be[etje zon op scheen,
219    A:                         [(°mh↑m)
220            (0.3)
221    P: *     °dan
222            (.)
223    A: ->   ja↑jah
224            (0.5)
```

```
225   P:       want dat is niet bruin
```

```
214   A:       let me just see it then,=
215   P:       =only my arms=
216   P:       [ =well I did not know where to turn [ because of the itch
217   A:       [  yes (°yes)                        [ uchuh
218   P:       =if only the sun was shining a litt[le bit on it,
219   A:                                          [(°mh↑m)
220            (0.3)
221   P: *     °then
222            (.)
223   A: ->    yesyes
224            (0.5)
225   P:       because this is not tanned
```

It might be the case that the placement of the *yes*-receipt primarily exhibits 'recognitional' work (cf. Jefferson 1973 and 1983b): the recipient indicates being sufficiently informed by the turn-so-far. However, in (15) the recipient also acknowledges an incomplete utterance, but now selects a *no-* receipt (ln. 399). The token seems to be responsive of a contrastive 'negative' statement that is projected through the conjunctional but-onset in line (397), but which is "trailed off" initially in a post-conjunctional silence (cf. Jefferson 1983a):

(15)   (HVM&CD)2:395-405

```
395   P:       en (niets) dan tobben
396            (1,2)
397   P: *     je moet wat, °maar,
398            (0.5)
399   A: ->    ↑ne↓e
400            (1.0)
401   P:       da's lastig
402            (0.5)
403   P:       ik ben verder goed gezond (.) maar- ·hh
404            (0.8)
405   A:       maar di's 'n lastige ↑klacht
```

```
395   P:       and (nothing [else]) then worry
396            (1,2)
397   P: *     you got to do something, but
398            (0.5)
399   A: ->    no
400            (1.0)
401   P:       it's nasty
402            (0.5)
403   P:       I am otherwise very healty (.) but- ·hh
```

```
404          (0.8)
405   A:     but this is a nasty complaint
```

Instead of starting up a topic-continuing completion-proposal of the abandoned utterance - as he does later on in line 405 -, the recipient attends to the prior turn in such a way that the response type exhibits a substantial property of the anticipated utterance-completion.

This kind of phenomenon makes it not unlikely, that apart from all other things these tokens eventually may accomplish, recipients exhibit some 'topical' tracking when receiving a prior utterance with a receipt of either the *no-* or the *yes-* type. Though not locating a particular lexical feature of the preceding utterance, as co-occurring *no*-receipts do, *yes*-receipts of unmarked priors might be seen as accomplishing some kind of global topical 'congruency' or at least being selected so as to be 'not-incongruent' with the default polarity of the preceding utterance.

In using a receipt of the *yes*/*no*-type, participants thus seem to consider the contents, that is the semantic value of both the token selected and the utterance it attends to with respect to the [positive / negative] dimension. This is done in such a way that the type of co-occurrence or congruency the token accomplishes is oriented to in the receipt. *no*-receipts appear to take the most precise values with respect to congruency: their use is generally describable in terms of their being 'co- occurring' or not with the lexical properties of prior turn. When not used incongruent or subsequent to utterances containing explicit markers of their positive polarity, *yes-* receipts only seem to indicate some lexically unspecified, topical 'congruency' with respect to the prior the turn. The degree to which a *yes*/*no*-receipt may establish a specifiable relation with the polarity of the preceding utterance seems to converge with the extent to which their use might occasion specific sequential consequences.

Whereas non-co-occurring *no*-receipts engender specific sequential discontinuities with respect to the repair and/or disagreement mechanisms, the consequences incongruent *yes-* receipts may have are less specific, i.e. the result of negotiation. And where co-occurring *no*-receipts exhibit specific topical tracking of a particular property of the preceding utterance, the congruent *yes*-receipt often only seems to avoid its being incongruent with the polarity of the preceding utterance. Of all relations *yes*/*no*-receipts may constitute with respect to the polarity of the environments in which they are used, 'non-incongruent' *yes*-receipts appear to accomplish the most unspecified type of recipiency. After unmarked priors

they seem to be used as a nearly universal passkey, opening the door to widely divergent types of continuations.

4.   lexically empty *mhm*-receipts

When selecting a response of the *yes/no*-type, the recipient still uses a form that binds lexically specifiable interpretations. *mhm*-receipts, on the other hand, are not associated with these kinds of 'meanings'; together with objects such as 'oh' (cf. Heritage 1984) or 'Ah:::' (cf. M.Goodwin 1980) they are - in a sense - lexically 'empty' [13]. As a consequence, *mhm*-receipts do not display the kind of topical tracking that may be accomplished through receipts of the *yes/no*-type. In this paragraph I want to make some suggestions concerning how some uses of *mhm*-receipts in General Practice medical encounters might be related to this difference.

In § (1) I already referrred to Jefferson's report of 'Mm hm' (or 'Mm') as an exhibition of 'passive recipiency': the recipient proposes that the co-participant is the current speaker and shall go on talking. On the basis of that possible systematicity, she considers a discrete use of the token. Recipients may exploit [14] the object's properties in doing 'perverse' exhibits of 'passive recipiency': especially at points where movement into speakership would have been appropriate, recipients may use 'mm hm' as observably 'withholding' more preferred types of next actions (Jefferson 1984, pp. 206 ff.). Doctor's "m:" in the following fragment (ln. 356) seems to be an instance of such 'perverse passive':

(16)   (HVM&CD)3:338-361

```
338   A:      bent u (.) l:aat begonnen met menstru[eren,
339   P:                                           [nee vroeg
340           (.)
341   A:      u bent vroeg °begonnen=
342   P:      =heel vroeg
343           (0.9)
344   A:      erg vroeg. op uw (hoe [ eh eh)
345   P:                            [nou ja
346           (.)
347   P:      dertien veertien,
348           (0.9)
349   A:      [ (°normaal,)
```

```
350   P:      [ m'r ja da zegt ook niks,
351           (.)
352   A: *    °nee,
353           (1.0)
354   P:      maar dat was voor ↑toen in die leeftijd
355   P:      natuurlijk wel jong
356           (0,3)
357   P:      tegenwoordig denk 'k nie meer=°maar,
358           (0.7)
359   A: ->   ↑m:
360           (2.0)
361   P:      nou jah, daar heb ik dus verder geen klachten van
```

```
338   A:      did you (.) start late to menstru[ate
339   P:                                        [no early
340           (.)
341   A:      you started early=
342   P:      =quite early
343           (0.9)
344   A:      very early. on your (how [ eh eh)
345   P:                                [ well yes
346           (.)
347   P:      thirteen fourteen
348           (0.9)
349   A:      [ (°normal,)
350   P:      [ but yes that also means nothing
351           (.)
352   A: *    °no,
353           (1.0)
354   P:      but that was for that time in that age
355   P:      of course [surely] young
356           (0,3)
357   P:      nowadays I think not anymore=°but,
358           (0.7)
359   A: ->   ↑m:
360           (2.0)
361   P:      well yes,
              so I don't have any more complaints about that
```

The receipt attends to patient accountings (ln. 352-54) on the correctness of former assessments regarding the 'earliness' of her first menstruation (lns. 339 and 342). After an assertion to a recipient who is knowledgeable on the matter, the patient might have expected the doctor to confirm (as he did via a co- occurring *no*-receipt in ln.352) or disconfirm (as was done 'under cover' through the normal; ln.349) those commentaries in lines 354-357 (cf. Pomerantz 1984b). But the m:-receipt that follows the last comment only seems to exhibit the recipient's passivity with respect to speakership and does not contain a definite decision on the foregoing assertion. However, the long gap that follows the receipt (ln. 360) and the patient's subsequent abandonment of her complaint (ln. 361) show that the speaker treats the response as an indication of recipient disagreement.

Without explicitly asserting disagreement, the recipient seems to allow for such inferences by displaying 'passive recipiency' on a position where specifiable recipient continuations might have been expected. The discrepancy between the technical properties of the token the recipient uses, and the type of response that could have been expected sequentially, thus seems to be a deployable device that provides for a discrete use of the token which has specific consequences for the shape of the interaction (ibid., p.213).

Jefferson's analysis locates this kind of usability of the token primarily in the 'subversive' exploitation of the object's organizational properties: as a display of passive recipiency, the token does not fit in an environment where movement into speakership could be expected. However, the token's technical properties seem to be based ultimately on its lexical 'emptiness'. Fragments (14) and (15) show that the recipient in the environment of the post-conjunctional silence in line 358 also could have used an alternative response of the *yes*/*no*-type, that technically also might have been doing the work of a 'continuer'. Instead of accomplishing topical alignment with the projected direction of an uncompleted utterance through the use of a congruent *yes*/*no*-receipt (cf. § 3) , recipient selects an item that does not speak out itself with respect to the 'contents' of prior-turn. Against the background of the structural possibility of this kind of alternative, the lexical 'emptiness' of the response type the recipient chooses on this occasion, seems to be relevant for the constitution of the object's property in exhibiting 'passivity': recipient not only displays 'passive recipiency' in terms of turn-taking, but also on an informational level.

The relevance of the object's lexical emptiness for the constitution of its technical and interactional properties seems to be confirmed by a related way the token is used in General

Practice encounters. In the following fragment, for example, the doctor alternates *yes-* and *mhm*-receipts such that the selection of a particular token might be seen as responsive to specific features of the preceding patient contributions:

 (17)   6:214-247/hm

```
214   P:      u: ben no ↑nie kl↑aar °↑hoor
215           (.)
216   P:      ik heb nog me↑erhhh[h
217   A:                        [°nou, vertel 't 's:
218           (0.5)
219   P:      die neus van me (0.4) °en dat oor:hh
220           (0.8)
221           °aan de rechter (en de) linker kant,
222           (.)
223           ·hh dat zit maar di:cht
224           (0.7)
225   P:      ·hhh=
226   A: >    =ja↑:h
227   P:      's nachts slecht d'r van slape=
228           =(>wa dan) word ik wakker da me mond he:lmaal zo droog is:
229           (.)
230   A: >    ja↑:[h
231   P:          [en daar(or:) (0.5) drink ik erreg ve↑el
232           (0.4)
233   A: >    jah,
234           (0.8)
235   B:      w↑ant: (.) die suiker ik vertr↑ouw (dat) toch
236   P:      zelf ↑echt niet helemaal °hoor?
237           (.)
238   A: ->   m:↑m[:
239   P:          [ik (had 'm) waarschijnlijk nog 's 'n keer
240           bloed°onderzoek
241           (0.3)
242   A: ->   m:↑m::=da's g↑oed
243           (0.2)
244   A:      °('t is) nu weer twee jaar g[elede °of ↑zo
245   P:                                  [ik heb doorLO:pend dorst,
```

```
246              (0.4)
247   A: >      jah, (0.2) °dat kan,


214   P:        you are not yet ready °[you know]
215              (.)
216   P:        I still have morehhh[h
217   A:                           [°well, just tell it
218              (0.5)
219   P:        this nose of mine (0.4) °and that ear:hh
220              (0.8)
221              °on the right (and the ) left side,
222              (.)
223   P:        ·hh that's  always clogged
224              (0.7)
225   P:        ·hhh=
226   A: >      =yes
227   P:        in the night sleeping badly because of that=
228              =(>cause then) I wake up that my mouth is completely dry
229              (.)
230   A: >      yes:[h
231   P:            [and there(fore) (0.5) I drink very much
232              (0.4)
233   A: >      yes,
234              (0.8)
235   B:        because (.) that sugar [diabetes] I do not trust that
236   P:        myselve really [not] entirely °[you know?]
237              (.)
238   A: ->     m:↑m[:
239   P:            [I (had 'm) probably yet just another
240   P:        blood°examination
241              (0.3)
242   A: ->     m:↑m::=that's okay
243              (0.2)
244   A:        °(it is) now already two years b[ack [or so]
245   P:                                        [I am continuously thirsty,
246              (0.4)
247   A: >      yes, (0.2) °that's possible,
```

The selection of a different response-type seems to correlate with the kind of activity the speaker accomplishes in prior turn. The patient's reports of the symptoms of her complaint are received with *jah* (lns. 226, 230 and 233), whereas the commentary (lns. 235-36) and the request following it (lns. 239-40) are attended to through *mhm*-receipts (lns. 238 and *mhm* (ln. 242). The speaker's return to the fact-describing level (ln. 245) again is received with a *yes*-receipt (ln. 247). Those patient turns that are occupied by 'factive' descriptions get a *yes*-receipt, whereas the 'non-factive' evaluative commentary and the proposal based on it, are acknowledged through a token of the *mhm*-type.

In turn-taking terms the first series of *yes*-tokens as well as the first *mhm* (ln. 239) are oriented to as 'continuers'. Though used technically in a similar way, the selection of an observably distinctive response type might indicate the token is doing different work on an interactional level. Moreover, the second *mhm* is not treated as a continuer providing prior speaker with an opportunity to proceed. The recipient does not relinquish the floor, but goes on immediately by telling the patient he accepts her request (ln. 242). Whereas both *mhm*-receipts are thus used technically in a different way, it might be the case that the recipient's selection of a token of the same response type that was used before, exhibits similar work on an interactional level.

The noticeable turn-initial position of the second *mhm*-receipt provides us with a point of departure for a search to determine what kind of work this *mhm*-receipt might be doing interactionally. Through locating his second *mhm* before accepting the speaker's request, the recipient technically delays his decision on the speaker's proposal. He seems to postpone his definite reaction through an indication of having been dealing with prior-turn. As a consequence, the subsequent acceptance is not simply provided for, but seems to be marked prospectively as the observable result of recipient's deliberations about prior-turn.

Working back now to the first occurrence of *mhm* in this fragment (ln. 238), the recipient's second, non-revised selection of the same token might refer to similarities of its properties with the former use of *mhm*, even when the tokens are used differently in terms of the organization of turn-taking. Since the diagnostics the patient presents in the foregoing commentary have an assessment-like evaluative character, it could have been inviting the recipient to provide a second - preferredly agreeing - assessment (cf. Pomerantz 1984a). Instead the recipient uses a response type which, apart from what is evoked by its specific intonation contour, withholds explicit displays of acceptance or agreement. However, the recipient's exhibition of 'passive recipiency', at a point where movement into speakership

might have been appropriate, is not now oriented to by the prior speaker as a sequentially 'misfitting' response. Instead of remedying an inadequate response, prior speaker's subsequent action primarily elaborates a consequence of the commentary that prefaced it. Rather, the token seems to be treated as a kind of vocal "assessment marker" (cf. Goodwin & Harness Goodwin 1987, p. 14): the recipient acknowledges the assessability of prior-turn through the mere indication of its being considered. In turn- taking terms the token is used as a continuer; interactionally it also seems to acknowledge the relevance of prior-turn as an assessable without exhibiting the particulars of recipient's dealing with prior-turn.

Recipients thus appear to assign different sequential relevancies to prior-turn through the response-type that is selected. Whereas the *yes*-receipts at least exhibit recipient's keeping track with the fact-oriented descriptions of prior speaker, this kind of alignment is avoided after more 'evaluative' contributions. Instead of indicating the 'passed- through' status of turn through the exhibition of topically keeping-track, recipient indicates his being busy with prior- turn in such a way that its assessableness is acknowledged, while simultaneously withholding explicit information on how prior-turn is being dealt with. The receipt is used as a kind of 'gloss' of the recipient work that is exhibited as not - yet - being 'unpacked.' (cf. Jefferson 1985).

The use of *mhm* might thus be based not only on the exploitation of the object's properties with respect to the organization of turn-taking. Congruent *yes/no*-receipts appear to assign locally a 'passed-through' quality to prior-turn because of the kind of topical alignment they exhibit as lexically specifiable objects. On the other hand, the descriptive contentlessness of *mhm*-receipts does not allow for lexically-based inferences of the recipient's position regarding the contents of the preceding utterance. Its lexical emptiness provides rather for the usability of the token as a kind of pointer to the recipient's being busy with a proces of deliberating about the preceding utterance. Precisely through indicating only that 'work' is being done with respect to the processing of prior turn, without displaying its results, the recipient claims the assignment of a specific relevance to prior-turn as a noticeable 'assessable'.

In the setting of the General Practice encounter, this use of *mhm* may relate both to recipient's identity as a professional receiving lay-information that might get situation-dependent treatments, and to the staged character of the order in which participants exchange information in this type of discourse [15]. By indicating his deliberating about prior-turn, the recipient's exhibition of assessorship coincides with his overall interactional identity as the

expert who has to evaluate the information delivered by patient [16]. By simultaneously withholding the particulars of his dealing with prior-turn, the recipient might be seen as not only displaying his actual understanding of the local distribution of organizational identities vis-a-vis recipiency and speakership; but the recipient might also be exhibiting his orientation to some 'phasing' principles which globally govern the overall organisation of the discourse. In the General Practice encounter participants seem to orient to specific principles of appropriate orders of information exchange. The patient's delivering information first and doctor's subsequent, explicit informings on some consequences of the information the patient has given, seem to be features of that order. The doctor's recipiency not only allows for that order, but the kind of recipiency he does also might refer to the specific staging of the discourse type through the indication of the in-principle possibility of explicitly coming back later to matters now only marked as noticeable or assessable-worthy.

The considerations regarding the use of *mhm* indicate that in using a minimal response participants not only seem to orient to the organizational features of the token providing an opportunity to pass a full turn through "minimal lexical and auditory interference" (Goodwin 1986, p. 214). Recipients orient to the lexical features of the item they select as a way to display how they deal with prior-turn. The lexical informativeness of *yes/no*-receipts appears to be a source of the kind of alignment their selection may exhibit. The descriptive emptiness of *mhm*-receipts, on the other hand, may account for its doing 'passive recipiency', both in a technical and/or in an interactional sense.

Notes

(1) This paper is a contribution to a joint-project together with Paul ten Have on recipiency in 'display interactions' (cf. Ten Have in this volume). The research is done as part of a conversation-analytic investigation of social-scientific interviews supported by the "Netherlands organization for scientific research" (NWO; projectnr. 500-278-005 "Stichting Sociaal-Culturele Wetenschappen", S.S.C.W.).

Most data come from a corpus of five medical consultations. When not mentioned otherwise, the transcripts are made by Chris Driessen and Heidi van Mierlo and corrected by Ten Have and myself. The appendix of Ten Have (this volume) gives more information on the corpus and presents also some quantitative specifications on the distribution of different types of recipiency.

I wish to thank Mark Kuhn (University of Maine) for correcting my English and Charles Goodwin, Paul ten Have, Gail Jefferson, Martha Komter and Mark Kuhn for making some initial remarks with respect to weaknesses in my analysis.

(2) However, CA has paid considerable attention to lexical meaning and how that it is sensitive to recipient, the interaction of the moment, etc. Cf., e.g., Schegloff 1972; Goodwin 1981, Jefferson 1983.

(3) This sense of the work of acknowledgment tokens was initially worked up by Harvey Sacks. In his lecture of May 24, 1971, Sacks speaks of the business of 'uh huh' as "serving as a 'continuer' ". It might be conceived of as "listener marking the spots in the other person's talk where he could have started talking; where he's choosing not to by virtue of his appreciation that the other would like to go on." (Sacks Unpublished Lecture: Spring 1971, May 24, pp. 1-4)

(4) Jefferson herself stresses elsewhere that the freestanding acknowledgment token " neither shifts (...) nor continues": "it is topic-directionally neutral" (Jefferson 1981b, p. 86).

(5) Heritage & Watson (1980) show how a participant may 'formulate' an aspect of the foregoing interaction in such a way, that its recipient is expected to decide on its appropriateness.

(6) In the environment of a negation-marked utterance *no-* receipts even may precede explicit statements of agreement, - cf. ln. 199 in (i):

(i)   (HVM&CD)2:197-199 [simplified]

```
197   P: *    dat eh::- (.) dat dat is toch niet in ↑orde
198            (.)
199   A: ->   nee (.) (daar) ben ik helemaal mee eens

197   P: *    that uh (.) that that is not right really
198            (.)
199   A: ->   no (.) I agree with (that) entirely
```

The principle through which the negative polarities of sequentially subsequent utterances counterbalance each other (minus times minus makes plus), is also operative in other sequential environments. Answers to *yes/no*-questions (cf. lns. 143-45 in (10)) or formulation-decisions likewise

may be governed by a device through which co-occurring second pair- parts establish agreement with the preference expressed in the first pair-part, whereas non-corresponding seconds mark disagreement. (Cf., a.o., Pope 1973 or Wunderlich 1981; also Sinclair & Brazil (1982, S. 137)).

(7) The transcripts marked with "*" were selected from a corpus of sociological interviews.

(8) C. Goodwin (1986) shows that participants do specific organizational work to 'tie' a token such as oh to the unit it is responding to. The token would "display an analysis of the particulars" (ibid., p. 210) of what is being talked about. A comparison with how co-occurring *no*-receipts locate one particular feature of the preceding utterance leads to a somewhat different description: oh refers to a particular effect a preceding unit has on recipient.

(9) M. Harness Goodwin (1983) discusses how items like *yes* can do disagreement. In Dutch conversations the disagreeing use of *ja* often is marked formally via a subsequent particle: ja-wel.

(10) When the receipt in line (326) of fragment (12) indeed would be of the *yes*-type, recipient would have produced already a disparate response on the first recognition point of the negative polarity of the ongoing utterance.

The precise placement of the *no*-receipt in the following fragment ((ii); ln. 121) immediately subsequent to the first onset of speaker's "n//iet" (not; ln. 120) shows that conversationalists have the "technical capacity" to accomplish such anticipating recognitional work (cf. Jefferson 1973):

(ii)   (HVM&CD)4:118-123 [simplified]

```
118   P:        ˙hhhh maar ehm
119             (0.3)
120   P: *      't is wel overgegaan maar nog n[iet helemaal
121   A: ->                                    [°nee↓:h
122             (0.3)
123   A:        nee:.

118   P:        ˙hhhh but ehm
119             (0.3)
120   P: *      it indeed went over but yet n[ot entirely
121   A: ->                                  [no:
122             (0.3)
123   A:        no:.
```

(11) Some *yes*-receipts indeed occur subsequent to utterances that contain markers of their 'positive' polarity. We already saw an instance in fragment (9). The first, negation-marked part of an ongoing utterance (ln. 228) is received with *no* (ln. 230), whereas the subsequent positively-marked wel-part ("wel": here partially equivalent with yet and/or still) is responded to with a ja-receipt (ln. 232). The order of the selected response types goes along precisely with the polarity of the utterance-part it comes after. Fragment (2) contains yet another example; there, the formulation-decision "ja:h" also is attended to through a recipient "ja" (lns. 111-12).

(12) Komter (1987) shows that duplicated 'jaja'-receipts (*yesyes*) often are used as claiming recipient's familiarity with the information provided in prior turn. (p. 110 ff.

(13) Further analysis might lead - among other things - to distinguishing systematically between the brief form 'm:', which gets only one intonation 'line' or the duplicated form '*mhm*', that allows for more differentiated pitch movements.

Ehlich (1979), for example, assigns very specific interactional functions to 'distinctive' pitch contours (falling-rising, rising, flat, falling) of both '*HM*' and its the duplicated form '*Hmhm*'. Jefferson (1981b and 1984) also points to phonetic and/or intonational differences in the shape of response tokens as a possibly relevant device to accomplish contrastively observable distinctions in the production of consecutive tokens of the same response type.

(14) Gail Jefferson brought to my attention that her report on the 'perverse passive' finally refers to Harvey Sacks' specifically talking of such an "exploitation" of the features of '*uh huh*'" with respect to the organization of turn-taking (cf. footnote (3)): by employing '*uh huh*' at a point where prior speaker has no intention of going on, a listener may elicit further talk of the party that spoke before. (Sacks Unpublished Lecture: Spring 1971, May 24, pp. 4-5)

(15) Cf. Ten Have's characterization of 'display-interaction' (this volume).

(16) The *mhm*-receipt in line 219 of fragment (14) seems to accomplish an even more pointed display of 'expertise'. While patient talks about her itching arms, the doctor investigates her arms (cf. ln.214). The *mhm* might exhibit primarily his being busy with 'professionally' assessing the properties of the physical object as potential symptoms of disease.

Bibliographie

Atkinson, J.M. & J. Heritage, eds., 1984. *Structures of social action. Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ehlich, K. 1979b. 'Formen und Funktionen von "HM". Eine phonologisch-pragmatische Analyse.' In: H. Weydt, ed., *Die Partikeln der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin: De Gruyter. pp. 503-517.

Goodwin, C. 1981. *Conversational organization*. New York: Academic Press.

Goodwin, C. 1986. 'Between and within: Alternative sequential treatments of continuers and assessments'. In: *Human Studies*, Vol.9, Nos.2-3. pp. 205-217.

Goodwin, C. & M. Harness Goodwin. 1987. 'Concurrent operations on talk: Notes on the interactive organization of assessments.' In: *Papers in Pragmatics*, Vol.1, no.1. pp. 1-54.

Goodwin, M. 1980. 'Some aspects of processes of mutual monitoring implicated in the production of description sequences. In: *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol.50. pp. 303-317.

Goodwin, M. 1983. 'Aggravated correction and disagreement in children conversations.' In: *Journal of pragmatics*, no.7, pp.657-677.

Have, P. ten. (this volume) 'The doctor is silent. Observations on episodes without vocal receit during medical consultations'.

Heritage, J. 1984. 'A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement.'. In: J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage, eds., (1984). pp. 299-345.

Heritage, J. & D. Watson, 1980. 'Aspects of the properties of formulations in natural conversations: some instances analyzed.' In: *Semiotica*, no. 30, pp.245-262.

Jefferson, G. 1973. 'A case of precision timing in ordinary conversation: Overlapped tag-positioned adress terms in closing sequences'. In: *Semiotica*, Vol.9, No.1. pp. 47-96.

Jefferson, G. 1981a. 'The Abominable "Ne?". An exploration of post-response pursuit of response. In: P. Schröder & H. Steger, eds., *Jahrbuch 1980 des IdS*. Düsseldorf: Schwann. pp. 53-87.

Jefferson, G. 1983. 'On exposed and embedded correction in conversation.' In: *Studium Linguistik*. no. 14, pp. 58-68

Jefferson, G. 1983a. On a failed hypothesis: Conjunctionals as overlap-vulnerable. TILL-paper 28, Katholieke Universiteit Brabant

Jefferson, G. 1983b. Notes on orderliness on overlap onset. TILL-paper 28

Jefferson, G. 1984. 'Notes on a systematic deployment of the acknowledgement tokens "Yeah" and "Mm hm".' In: *Papers in linguistics* 17 (1984). pp. 198-216

Jefferson, G. 1985. 'On the interactional unpacking of a "gloss".' In: *Language in Society*, Vol.14, Nr.4. pp. 435- 466.

Komter, M. 1987. *Conflict and cooperation in job interviews. A study of talk, tasks and ideas*. Dissertation Universiteit van Amsterdam (Dordrecht: I.C.G. Printing)

Labov, W. 1972a. 'The transformation of experience in narrative syntax.' In: W. Labov, ed., 1972. *Language in the inner city: studies in Black English vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 354-396.

Pomerantz, A. 1984a. 'Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred / dispreferred turn-shapes.' In: J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage, eds., (1984). pp. 57-101.

Pomerantz, A. 1984b. 'Pursuing a response.' In: J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage, eds., (1984). pp. 152-163.

Pope, E. 1973. 'Question-answering systems.' In: *Papers from the Ninth regional meeting chicago Linguistic Society*, April 1973. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society / Foster Hall. pp. 482-492.

Sacks, H. 1971. Unpublished transcribed lectures, University of California, Irvine. (Transcribed and indexed by G. Jefferson.)

Schegloff, E. 1972. 'Notes on conversational practice: formulating place.' In: D. Sudnow, ed., (1972). *Studies in social interaction.* New York: Free Press. pp. 75-119.

Schegloff, E. 1982. 'Discourse as an interactional achievement: some uses of "uh huh" and other things that come between sentences'. In: D. Tannen, ed. *Analyzing discourse: text and talk.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. pp. 71-93.

Schegloff, E. 1984. 'On some questions and ambiguities in conversation.' In: A.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage, eds. 1984. pp. 28-56.

Sinclair, J. & D. Brazil. 1982. *Teacher talk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wunderlich, D. 1981. 'Questions about questions.' In: W. Levelt & W. Klein, eds., *Crossing the boundaries in linguistics*. Dordrecht: Reidel. pp. 131-158.