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## The interactional accomplishment of action

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## CHAPTER 2

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### Confirmation or elaboration: what do yes/no declaratives want?<sup>1</sup>

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#### **Abstract**

Recent analyses have argued that when requests for confirmation are implemented with declarative word order, they are closure-implicative due to the relatively knowing stance indexed with the declarative. This paper demonstrates, however, that in some cases participants show an orientation to both confirmation and elaboration as a relevant next action. By comparing requests for confirmation that are closure-implicative to those that are expansion-implicative, it is argued that in addition to epistemic stance, participants also orient to the lexical design features and sequential placement of these declarative yes/no-type initiating actions to determine the relevant type of response. Data are in Dutch with English translations.

*Keywords:* Information requests, Confirmation request, Epistemics, Action-Formation.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Requests for information and confirmation have for a long time been a major hurdle for researches dealing with the action-formation problem (Levinson,

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<sup>1</sup>This chapter is a slightly modified version of a paper that was published as Seuren, L.M. & Huiskes, M. (2017) Confirmation or elaboration: what do yes/no declaratives want? *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 50(2), 188–205.

2013; Schegloff, 2007). While a one-to-one relation between the linguistic form of an utterance and the action it implements would be highly preferable, it is clear that for information requests such a relation does not exist (Paardekooper, 1968; Sadock & Zwicky, 1985; Schegloff, 1984). In particular, while some languages like English and Dutch have an interrogative word order that is considered the prototypical format for an information request, the declarative order (or default order) is also frequently used to do inquiries (Labov, 1970; Stivers & Rossano, 2010). The response to these declarative inquiries typically consists of yes/no-type tokens, (dis)agree tokens, (partial) repetitions, or even a combination of some of these features depending on the grammar of the language (Sadock & Zwicky, 1985).

Recent work in conversation analysis has begun to address this issue. Heritage has shown in his seminal paper on the role of knowledge for interaction, that when participants distinguish between actions that provide or request information, they orient primarily to their respective rights to know and talk about the information addressed: their epistemic status (Heritage, 2012a). An utterance, be it interrogative or declarative, is treated as requesting information when all participants attribute epistemic primacy to the addressee. Declarative word order is used to index the speaker's epistemic stance. That is, with a declarative inquiry a speaker claims to be relatively knowledgeable about the addressed information compared to when s/he would have used an interrogative.

That is not to say that the linguistic design of a turn—for example, morphosyntax or intonation—has no role to play in action formation. It is precisely because declaratives index a certain epistemic stance that they can be used for particular action types (Seuren et al., 2015). In fact, both Lee (2015) for Korean and Park (2012) for English argue that declaratives, or morphosyntactically unmarked questions, have very different sequential implications than interrogatives, and that because of these sequential implications, interrogatives are used to launch a larger sequence, whereas declaratives are used to launch what Schegloff (2007, chapter 9) calls sequence-closing sequences (see also G. Raymond, 2010a).

Our aim in this paper is three-fold. First, we will show that while YNDs do indeed request confirmation, they can also create an environment in which the interlocutor can provide additional talk, and in fact when that talk is not provided, it can be pursued.

Second, we will argue that YNDs that project only confirmation and YNDs that also project some form of elaboration can be distinguished based on their sequential and epistemic context. Mere confirmation is treated as the relevant response when the YND returns to a prior action, that is, requests confirmation

of some belief or understanding that has already been established or made highly salient earlier in the interaction. Elaboration, on the other hand, is treated as a relevant response when the YND requests confirmation of a belief or understanding that has not been addressed.

Finally, we will show that YNDs can be oriented to different types of elaboration and that this is made recognizable, at least partly, by their turn design and sequential position. Our analysis is focused on Dutch, but we will suggest in our discussion that English has similar practices.

### 2.1.1 Questions in Dutch

Lee's and Park's findings are in line with Englert's (2010) for Dutch, a language that is structurally very similar to English. In typical Dutch declarative clauses the subject is clause-initial and immediately followed by the finite verb. Unlike English, however, inversion of subject and verb is in Dutch an insufficient condition for a clause to be considered a yes/no-type interrogative. A clause is considered a yes/no-type interrogative when (a) the subject follows the finite verb and (b) the finite verb is clause-initial. Dutch has these two conditions, because in declarative clauses other constituents than the subject can be clause-initial. For example, a clause such as *Morgen ga ik werken* ("lit. Tomorrow go I work"/"I go to work tomorrow") is still a declarative even though the subject *ik* follows the finite verb *ga*.

As an example consider excerpt (1), where Jane responds with just a confirming *ja* to Lisa's turn in line 1. Note that although the subject in Lisa's utterance, *het* ("it"), is not clause-initial, her utterance is in fact considered to be declarative because the adverb *dan* ("then") precedes the finite verb *zou* ("should").

(1) GR2-03:40.6-04:10.2 [A]<sup>2</sup>

```
01 Lis =>dus dan zou het begin augustus een keer
      so then should it start August a time
02 kunnen<
      could
      =>so then it would be possible at the beginning
      of august<;
03 (1.0)
04 Jan JA
      YEAH
```

<sup>2</sup>All pauses, except the ones in excerpt 3, were computer timed. This means that they are measured as slightly longer when compared to conventional counting techniques in which a counting phrase such as one Mississippi, two Mississippi is used (Kendrick & Torreira, 2015).

05           (0.4)  
 06 Lis       ja  
              **yeah**

Lisa and Jane have been trying to make arrangements to get together during the summer, but this has proven difficult as each is on vacation when the other is available. Lisa offers a suggestion in lines 1–2, speculating that they could get together at the start of August. By using the conjunction *dus* (“so”) and the adverb *dan* (“then”) she shows that her suggestion is based on prior talk, and in this way she claims relative certainty that August is indeed a viable option. The final-falling intonation of her turn is also frequently associated with indexing certainty (see Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). Yet Jane has primary rights to talk about when she is going to be available (Heritage, 2012a, 2013b; Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Both participants orient to this epistemic status by treating confirmation as the relevant next action: Jane by providing the confirmation particle *ja*<sup>3</sup> and Lisa by acknowledging it and treating it as expected, also with *ja*.

Englert (2010) reports two main action types that are associated with what she calls *declarative questions* in Dutch: confirmation requests and initiation of repair. Surveying a corpus of Dutch informal telephone conversations, however, we found that there are plenty of cases in Dutch where declaratives receive a more elaborate response than just confirmation. And on occasion, when elaboration is not forthcoming, speakers will pursue it, showing that the elaboration is noticeably absent.

## 2.2 Data & Method

The corpus used in this study consists of a little over 10.5 hours of spontaneous interaction in Dutch.<sup>4</sup> These are 103 separate conversations: 97 audio-taped telephone conversations and 6 videotaped face-to-face conversations (the excerpts are marked respectively with [A] and [V]). The number of participants in the videotaped conversations ranges from two to seven, and all conversations are between family members and/or friends who gathered for the purpose of conversation. All participants signed informed consent forms, allowing use of

<sup>3</sup>The rather lengthy gap of 1.0 seconds might be a result of Jane checking her diary whether she is indeed available early August.

<sup>4</sup>The corpus used in this dissertation consists of 21.5hrs of recordings in total, but for some studies only parts of it were used. For studying rare practices data were gathered from the entire corpus to get enough material, but for more common practices such as discussed in this chapter, a smaller collection was sufficient to provide an exhaustive analysis.

the data for research purposes. The data have accordingly been anonymized, meaning that all proper names used in this paper are pseudonyms. The conversations have been transcribed according to the conventions of Jefferson (2004).

From these conversations we selected all requests for confirmation that had declarative word order, so-called yes/no declaratives (YNDs) (G. Raymond, 2010a). These are declarative utterances that address information that falls in the addressee's epistemic domain and therefore project confirmation, typically in the form of a yes/no-type response particle (Labov, 1970).

As our focus was on the type of response that was made conditionally relevant, we excluded all sequences where the addressee did not conform to the constraints set in the YND (see Hayano, 2013), for example, by providing a transformative response (Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). We thus only considered YNDs that received a type-conforming response (G. Raymond, 2003). Furthermore, we also excluded all sequences that contained a dispreferred response, as these are by their dispreferred nature accountable and thus frequently receive some form of elaboration, even when it has not been made relevant by the YND. The final collection that was used for the analysis in this paper consists of 125 YNDs that receive a type-conforming, preferred response.

These 125 sequences were first split up into two collections based on the response that was provided. One collection contained all responses that consisted of only a yes/no-type particle, the second collection contained all other responses. We then considered the action that was implemented with these more elaborate responses and found that 30 responses were primarily used to do confirming: in these 30 cases, the additional TCUs consisted of such things as epistemic modifiers (e.g., *geloof ik* / "I believe"), vocatives (e.g., *jongen* / "man"), or (partial) repeats of the first pair part (see Stivers, 2005a). Because these responses were designed to do just confirming, we added these 30 cases to the first collection. The resulting collection of cases where the response was designed to only confirm consisted of 66 cases; the collection of cases where the response contained some form of elaboration consisted of 59 cases.

Finally, we analyzed the turn-final intonation of each YND to see if there was a relation between the turn-final pitch movement and action. As can be seen from the results in table 2.1, the type of response—(a) *confirmation* or (b) *confirmation* plus elaboration, what we call *confirmation+*—does not depend on whether the turn-final intonation of the sequence-initiating YND was rising, flat, or falling.<sup>5</sup> While this is not to say that prosody plays no role in our

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<sup>5</sup>Earlier research argued that participants distinguish between declarative assertions and

Table 2.1

*Frequency of response types in relation to the turn-final intonation of the YND*

Response type	Turn-final intonation of YND (first-pair part)						Total
	Rising		Flat		Falling		
Confirmation	13	(20%)	5	(8%)	48	(73%)	66
Confirmation+	11	(19%)	5	(8%)	43	(73%)	59

data, at least turn-final pitch does not seem to be an a priori relevant factor in distinguishing between YNDs that make relevant only confirmation, and YNDs that also project elaboration. Instead, prosody likely plays a role at the level of individual activities (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012).

We will first discuss the first set of cases where responses were used to implement confirmation. To keep the contrast clear, we will discuss cases where confirmation was done with only a yes/no-type particle. We will argue that YNDs that make relevant these minimal confirming responses are done in specific sequential positions where they typically address information that has already been interactionally established or is highly salient based on the prior talk. We will then show that YNDs that project elaboration are done in different sequential positions, and convey a prior belief, that is, claim epistemic access to a domain of the interlocutor to which the speaker has not been given access in the conversation so far (Turner, 2012).

### 2.3 YNDs that get a simple yes/no response

In this section we will discuss some examples of YNDs where confirmation is treated as an adequate next action. We selected cases where confirmation is implemented with only a yes/no-type particle, so it is done with the most minimal linguistic means available. In each case the addressed information clearly falls within the epistemic domain of the addressee (Heritage, 2012a; Stivers & Rossano, 2010), and the information of which confirmation is requested has already been interactionally established or can be easily inferred from the prior

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questions in Dutch using only the turn-final pitch movement (Haan, 2002). It should be clear, however, from table 1 that Dutch has no turn-final questioning intonation (Seuren et al., 2015; T. Walker, 2014).

talk. The speaker can thus be held accountable for claiming a shallow epistemic gradient (Heritage, 2010; Stivers et al., 2011). The requests for confirmation in this section are thus instances of prototypical YNDs (G. Raymond, 2010a). That does not, however, mean that all actions are completely identical. We will distinguish between two types of requests for confirmation based on the sequential environment in which they are produced: in the closing section of the conversation or at the end of a larger sequence.

In the following excerpt the YND is produced when the participants are recognizably moving towards closure of the conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The excerpt also serves as an example of a prototypical sequence initiated by a YND: confirmation simply by means of a polar response particle is treated as a relevant next action. The YND (in lines 5 and 6) formulates an agreement that was made a few minutes earlier in the conversation (data not shown), and the speaker uses specific lexical items to show that she holds the information to be true and that she bases her knowledge on prior talk. The excerpt is from the end of a telephone conversation in which Loes has called Karel, her boyfriend. Earlier in the conversation, Loes had asked whether Karel could come over on Friday for her mother's birthday. He had, however, already made plans to play soccer with his friends. Because he had to come on Saturday anyway, they agreed that he will sleep at her place on Friday.

(2) BM-09:26.4-09:38.9 [A]

- 01 Loe .hh hEE maar ik zie je ↑morgen,  
           hey but I see you tomorrow  
           **.hh hEY but I'll see you ↑tomorrow,**
- 02 we houden effe contact?  
           we keep just touch  
           **we'll keep in touch?**
- 03 (0.7)
- 04 Kar ↓ja. (.) °pr[ima°.]  
           yeah fine  
           ↓**yeah. (.)°f[line°.]**
- 05 Loe -> [ wan]t e::h dan kom je ↑dus na<sub>dat</sub>  
   because then come you thus after
- 06 -> je met de jongens bent geweest.  
           you with the guys have gone  
   **[becau]se e::h ↑so then you'll come**  
   **after you've been out with the guys.**
- 07 (0.7)
- 08 Kar ↓j:a.  
           yeah  
           ↓**y:eah.**
- 09 (0.2)

10 Loe *oké gezellig.=h geef ik ↑dat [ook effe] door*  
*okay lovely give I that also just through*  
 11 *aan me ouders;*  
*to my parents*  
*okay lovely.=h I'll pass ↑that [ also ] along*  
*to my parents;*  
 12 Kar [( )]  
 [( )]  
 13 (1.0)  
 14 Kar ↑oke:. leu:k.  
*okay neat*  
 ↑oka:y. nea:t.

Loes articulates their plans to meet the next day and proposes that they keep in touch in lines 1–2 with which Karel agrees.<sup>6</sup> They thereby collaboratively move towards closure of the conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In this conversation-closing sequence, Loes uses a YND in lines 5–6 requesting Karel to confirm that he will come over after he has gone out with the guys—that is, on Friday after he has played soccer. Karel only provides a confirming response particle *ja*, which Loes accepts as an adequate next action both with her sequence-closing third in line 10, and by saying that she will provide that information to her parents.

Loes designs her YND in line 5–6 to show that she is in a relatively knowing position. She prefaces the turn with *dan* (“then”), which in this case does not have a temporal but a summative function. Furthermore, she uses the adverb *dus* (“thus”), which, while frequently used to mark some understanding as inferred from prior talk (see Heritage & Watson, 1979), is used here more generally to treat the formulated agreement as mutually known. Furthermore, Loes’ turn has a final falling pitch contour, which, at least here in the case of yes/no-type inquiry, also seems to index that Loes is relatively certain (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). These turn constructional features are in line with the sequential placement of the YND: Loes requests confirmation after she and Karel have already discussed and agreed on the formulated plan. She is not adding anything new to the interaction, but simply requesting confirmation on their earlier agreement. Confirming is thus all that Karel needs to do. The declarative syntax, the various lexical items, the final falling intonation, and the minimal response all show an orientation by both interactants to a shallow epistemic

<sup>6</sup>Loes implements her proposal also with declarative word order, and Karel’s response consists of more than a yes/no-type particle. However, the action implemented with the YND is a remote request: Karel’s turn is in fact a minimal way of committing to a remote request (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1985; Lindström, 2017).

gradient.

In the following two excerpts ((3) and (4)) we see two more examples of confirmation requests where a yes/no-type particle is treated as an adequate response. In both cases the YND is designed as a reformulation of a request for information or itemized news enquiry (Button & Casey, 1985) that was implemented earlier with a yes/no-type interrogative. The speaker is thus recognizably returning to the start of the sequence or topic (Schegloff, 2007, p. 184). Both YNDs are thus produced in different sequential environments from the one in (2): the YNDs in (3) and (4) are done as part of an ongoing sequence, whereas the YND in (2) returns to an already closed sequence.

Excerpt (3) is from a telephone conversation between a mother and son. The son is enrolled in a boarding school and they have discussed some mundane aspects of life, such as his homework. The YND we are interested in here is in line 15. Directly preceding excerpt (3) Jan has asked when he can come aboard his parents' boat, and Jan closes that topic with a sequence-closing third in line 1. In line 2 the mother then uses interrogative syntax to ask whether Jan was on time for the train the day prior to the conversation. The mother treats the following—affirmative—answer as requiring some elaboration by responding with *jah* (“yeah”) with a slight rising pitch and asking whether the distance to the station was not very far (both in line 5). After a brief discussion of the distance to the station, the mother in line 29 readdresses the issue of whether Jan was on time, but this time with declarative instead of interrogative syntax. In line 30 Jan responds to this question with a simple type-conforming answer (*j:a:h*).

(3) HMSC/294/328 [A]

01 Jan    okay.=  
          **okay.=**

02 Mot    =was je op tijd gistere voor de tre<sup>†</sup>in:?  
          *were you on time yesterday for the train*  
          **=were you on time yesterday for the tra<sup>†</sup>in:?**

03        (0.6)

04 Jan    e:h: ja↓::h. >°jajah.°=  
          *yeah           yeahyeah*  
          **e:h: yea↓::h. >°yeahyeah.°=**

05 Mot    =j<sup>†</sup>ah was 't nie zo ve<sup>†</sup>r:  
          *yeah was it not so far*  
          **=y<sup>†</sup>eah it wasn't that fa<sup>†</sup>r:**

06        (0.4)

07 Jan    neu↓:.. 'k geloof dat het dertig  
          *no           I believe that it thirty*  
          **no. I think it was about thirty**

08 kilometer ↓was. °↓f<toch nog wel.  
*kilometer was PRT yet still*  
**kilometers. °↓f<yet still**

09 (.)

10 Mot t↑och ↓nog:  
*PRT still*  
**y↑et ↓still**

.. [15 lines omitted]

26 Mot ja↑:  
*yeah*  
**yea↑:h**

27 (0.3)

28 Jan (jah)°↓ja  
*yeah yeah*  
**(yeah) °↓yeah**

29 Mot -> maar je was in ieder geval wel ↓°op tijd.  
*but you were in any case ADV on time*  
**but you were ↓°on time at least.**

30 Jan j:a:h  
*yeah*  
**y:ea:h**

31 (.)

32 Mot oké.  
*okay*  
**okay.**

33 (0.2)

34 Jan jah?  
*yeah*  
**yeah?**

35 Mot nouh, verder heb ik geen bijzonder(s).  
*well further have I nothing remarkable*  
**well, I've got nothing else remarkable to tell.**

The mother's YND in line 29 is recognizably designed as a return to her sequence-initiating action from line 2. Not only does the YND address the same issue—whether Jan was on time for the train—but it recycles most of its lexical design (see Schegloff, 2007, 2011). Furthermore, through *maar* (“but”), *in ieder geval* (“anyway”), and *wel*<sup>7</sup> her YND is designed to convey that Jan's being on time was the primary locus of the preceding talk. With *in ieder geval* she treats the immediate prior talk about the distance to the train station as subordinate to Jan being on time (see Ferrara, 1997 on the dismissive *anyway*). This contrast is emphasized by *wel* (Hogeweg, 2009) and *maar*. That is, without *wel* the

<sup>7</sup>Untranslatable adverb. It functions as a sort of polar opposite of *niet* (“not”). In English this is typically communicated by emphasizing the finite verb: “but you WERE on time for the train” (Hogeweg, 2009; C. W. Raymond, 2016).

turn would still convey the mother's understanding that Jan was on time; *wel* is used to show that based on the prior talk this was not necessarily expectable. Finally, *maar* is used as a sequential conjunction: it shows that the mother is "is resuming an activity that was abandoned in the talk that led up to [the prior turn]" (Mazeland & Huiskes, 2001, p. 144). In other words, *maar* marks that the speaker is returning to a sequence from which the participants had moved away.

The turn-constructural features of the utterance in line 29 work together to initiate closure: by marking the utterance as a return to the main point (using *maar* and *in ieder geval*) and claiming a relatively knowing position with the YND and the turn-final falling intonation (Heritage, 2012a; G. Raymond, 2010a), the mother shows that she considers her information request, implemented with a yes/no-type interrogative in line 2, adequately addressed. The mother is recognizably returning to the start of the sequence, treating any further talk on the topic as no longer relevant. She thereby launches a sequence-closing sequence (Schegloff, 2007). Jan collaborates by doing only a minimal confirmation in line 16, which is received with a sequence-closing *oké* ("okay").

Excerpt (4) shows a similar situation in which a YND readdresses an issue that was introduced in the conversation by means of an interrogative request for information, and gets a simple type-conforming answer. The conversation takes place between a young boy (Stewie), his grandparents (Bonnie and Chris), and another man (Brian). For the past minute, Stewie has been talking about his vacation with his parents in a very enthusiastic manner following an invitation to tell by Bonnie (*was 't leuk* ("was it fun")—data not shown). In lines 3–5, Bonnie summarizes Stewie's narrative. In lines 4 and 7, Stewie produces a minimal confirmation.

(4) CE2608/444/456 [V]

01	Ste	mjah.	
		<b>myeah.</b>	
		(0.6)	
03	Bon ->	du:s 't was wel 'n hEele mooie vakAntie [die ]	
		so it was ADV a very nice vacation that	
		<b>so it was a vERY nice vacation [that ]</b>	
04	Ste		[j:a,]
			yeah
			<b>[y:eah]</b>
05	Bon ->	jullie gehad hebbe.	
		you.PL had have	
		<b>you've had.</b>	

06 (1.12)  
 07 Ste ja,  
 yeah  
**yeah,**  
 08 (0.3)  
 09 Bon hmm  
**hmm**  
 10 (0.3)  
 11 Bon? ((kucht))  
**((coughs))**  
 12 (0.7)  
 13 Bri ja 't weer dat is 'n- 'n toch wel  
 yeah the weather that is PRT ADV  
 14 behoorlijk [daar  
 decent there  
**yeah the weather is pretty decent over [there**  
 15 Chr [ja  
 yeah  
**[yeah**

As in the previous excerpt, the YND is designed as a return to the start of the topic, changing the syntax from interrogative to declarative. And here too the YND gets a minimal type-conforming response that is followed by a sequence-closing third (*hmm*, in line 9), after which topic transition is possible. After a 1.0s lapse (lines 10–12) Brian provides a general assessment about the weather over there which does not develop the topic beyond anything that was already said by Stewie, and it is only minimally acknowledged.

But while Bonnie's YND also constitutes a move towards sequence closure, it does so in a different way from the mother's YND in the previous excerpt. Bonnie prefaces her YND with *dus* ("so"), and thereby shows that she is formulating the prior talk (Heritage & Watson, 1979), and continuing an ongoing sequence. Compare this with the mother's YND that was prefaced with *maar* to signal resumption of an abandoned sequence. Bonnie also assesses Stewie's vacation from his own perspective: he and his parents must have enjoyed the vacation. Such a summary-assessment has been shown to be closure-implicative (Drew & Holt, 1998; Jefferson, 1984), and this is indeed the way Stewie treats this particular turn: he only produces a minimal response.

So the means in (3) and (4) are different: Jan's mother uses *maar* to show that she was resuming an abandoned sequences, whereas Bonnie uses *dus* to show that she is providing a summary-assessment of the immediate prior talk. The goal of both YNDs, however, is the same: Bonnie's YND is the first pair part of a sequence-closing sequence, just like the mother's YND. Both return to the start of the sequence, using declarative syntax instead of interrogative to

address the same issue, and both treat confirmation by means of a yes/no-type particle as the relevant next action. These YNDs thus share a set of distinct features and constitute a specific practice for requesting confirmation.

In this section, we discussed three examples of YNDs that only get a confirming, type-conforming response. The analysis presented here is in line with Lee's (2015) finding that because a declarative encodes a shallow epistemic gradient, a knowing position, it requests only confirmation. But there is more to the story apart from encoding of an epistemic stance: they all return to an earlier part of the conversation; either a sequence that has already been closed as in (2), or the start of the same topic or sequence as in (3) and (4). And it is precisely because these YNDs re-address a prior turn that they request only confirmation. In this way the speaker also behaves in line with his epistemic responsibilities (Stivers et al., 2011) which we will demonstrate further in the next section, by showing that YNDs that do not re-address a prior turn make relevant more than confirmation, or at least actively create an opportunity for the recipient to provide additional talk.

## 2.4 YNDs that elicit more than confirmation

In the previous section we discussed YNDs that make relevant only confirmation as a next action. We argued that this is not just because these YNDs index a shallow epistemic gradient (Lee, 2015; Park, 2012), but also because they were also designed to recognizably return to a prior action (Schegloff, 2007). In this section we will show YNDs that elicit more than confirmation. By elicit we mean that the speaker has not requested this elaboration in a way that makes him/her accountable for having done so (Sidnell, 2017b). This is similar to how a my-side telling seeks an account without requesting one (Pomerantz, 1980) or how demonstrating a problem is not asking for help, but can be a step towards recruitment (Kendrick & Drew, 2016).

The YNDs in this section bear some similarities to the cases we discussed in the previous section: they address recipient-oriented events, index a knowing stance, and make relevant confirmation. There are, however, crucial differences: (i) in each case the speaker addresses a recipient-oriented event that has not been discussed in the conversation so far and cannot be inferred from the preceding talk, and so (ii) the YNDs in this section are not designed as a return to a prior action. In fact, as we will show, they frequently launch entire new sequences, although this is certainly not true for all cases.

We will begin our analysis by showing two YNDs that are oriented towards

a very specific type of elaboration: one an explanation (5), the other an account (6).<sup>8</sup> Although in both cases the speaker seems to make use of at least some design features to make clear that more than confirmation is being sought, they also rely heavily on the sequential environment.

Consider the following case in which the speaker formulates a prior belief about the recipient that contradicts what the recipient has just said. The recipient should confirm the prior belief and explain why there is no actual conflict. The excerpt is from a conversation between two friends, Francine and Hayley. Francine has been telling about the previous evening, when she went to watch the final of the national soccer championship on a big screen in the city. Later that night the winning team was greeted by fans, among them Francine, as they arrived in town via a street called De Singel. Before the team's homecoming, Francine went to a few clubs. She recounts the events in chronological order: she has already said she had watched the match, and she is in the middle of listing the clubs she had visited, but she has not said in this exchange that she also had gone to the Singel.<sup>9</sup>

(5) GL1-01:07.3-01:30.1 [A]

```

01 Fra      en toen gingen we naa:r; (.) ↑molly:,
           and then went we to Molly
           and then we went to (.) ↑molly:,
02          (0.6)
03          .h en toen gingen we naa:r; (.) ↑paddy:s,=
           and then went we to Paddys
           .h and then we went to (.) ↑paddy's
04          =en daarna ben ik nog uitgeweest bij aspen;=
           and afterwards am I still went.out at Aspen
           and then I went out at aspen
05          =dus (.) °ik heb [°(wel)°°
           so I have ADV
           so (.) °I have [°(ADV)°°
06 Hay          [>oh je bent ook nog
                 oh you are also still
07          -> uitgeweest<;=maar >je bent toch ook nog<
           went.out but you are PRT also still

```

<sup>8</sup>Explanations and accounts are near synonymous, but we distinguish between the two in the following way: an explanation is aimed at resolving some understanding problem, whereas an account provides the reason for some behavior.

<sup>9</sup>We have left *toch* untranslated. In its position here, in the middle of a clause, there is no simple English translation. It is typically used in what Foolen (1994) calls a *drieslag* ("three strikes"). One speaker takes a position, which is subsequently challenged by the recipient. After that challenge, the speaker repeats his position, this time using the particle *toch* to show that s/he is sticking to a position that has been challenged.



prior belief—she did display this belief earlier in the talk—that has somehow been challenged (Foolen, 1994), and with *maar* she projects that her TCU in lines 7–8 is contrastive. Hayley thus treats Francine’s prior turn as somehow contradicting her prior belief, and this provides Francine with the opportunity, and possibly even the obligation, to rectify the situation. In the very next turn Francine complies by not just confirming, but also providing an explanation for how she could do both.

The problem as it turns out is what it means to go out. After Francine has confirmed that she went to the homecoming and explained that she left Aspen at half past ten, Hayley states that she would not call that—that is, leaving at half past ten—going out.

Like the cases we discussed in the previous section, Hayley’s use of a YND conveys her commitment to the belief she formulates: she takes a relatively knowing stance. But she is not just looking for confirmation of something she already suspects. Hayley has not designed her turn as a return to a prior action, but to convey that a prior belief has been challenged by the prior talk and in this way she seeks more than confirmation: she requests an explanation for the perceived contradiction between the news that Francine provides and her own prior beliefs.

The following case also shows a speaker who uses a YND to claim epistemic access to a recipient’s domain, but does not return to a prior action. And here too the speaker elicits more than confirmation: in this case an account. In excerpt (6), Wendy and Melanie are on the phone. They have been talking about Wendy’s upcoming exams and a trip they are planning to take together. Wendy closes the latter topic in line 1 with a sequence-closing *oké*. She then says that there was something else she wanted to ask in line 2, demonstrating that she considers the prior topic finished and that there is room for topic transition. After failing to remember in line 6, she initiates a new topic in line 8 by mentioning that Melanie is not coming home the next weekend using a YND. Melanie confirms with a type-conforming *nee*, and after a 0.5s pause, continues with an account for why she is not coming home the following weekend.

(6) BN1–03:17.3–03:37.9 [A]

```
01 Wen      #oké:::h#.=
           okay
           #oka:::yh#.=
02          =en wat wilde ik nou ook alweer nog meer?
           and what wanted I now also again still more
           =and what else did I want to?
03          (.) vragen?
```

ask

(.) ask?

04 e::hm,  
e::hm,

05 (1.9)

06 °↓ah (.) ik weet het niet meer°.  
ah I know it not anymore  
°↓ah (.) I can't remember°.

07 (0.9)

08 -> maar je komt dus dit weekend niet thuis;  
but you come so this weekend not home  
**but so you're not coming home this weekend;**

09 (0.8)

10 Mel nee:..  
no:..

11 (0.5)

12 nee ik heb e::h een borrel met allemaal oud  
no I have a drinks with all former  
13 huisgenootjes,  
housemates  
**no I'm having e::h drinks with a bunch of former  
housemates,**

14 (0.2)

15 Wen °ja°  
°yeah°

16 Mel en ik moet zondag gewoon ↓hockeye:n,  
and I have.to Sunday just play.hockey  
**and I have to play hockey on sunday.**

17 (0.5)

18 Wen °oh[ja.° ]  
oh.yeah  
°oh[right.°]

18 Mel [°dus°] (0.2) e::hm >ja dat is een beetje  
so yeah that is a bit

19 onhandig< om heen en weer te gaan.=  
inconvenient to back and forth to go  
[ °so° ] (0.2) e::hm >yeah that's a bit  
**inconvenient< to go back and forth.=**

Wendy and Melanie have not discussed Melanie's plans for the weekend in this specific conversation. Nonetheless, Wendy uses *dus* ("so") in the design of her YND, with which she treats it as previously mentioned or talked about that Melanie is not coming home. Crucially, she claims in this way that while Melanie's plans for the weekend may fall in Melanie's epistemic domain, it is a domain to which Wendy also has access. She shows that she knows—that is, she does knowing—when her claim of epistemic access has not been licensed

in the prior talk (see Turner, 2012). By doing so in an environment that is topic-shift implicative Wendy elicits more than just a type-conforming *nee*. But not just any type of elaboration will suffice. Notice that Wendy formulates a negative action, something Melanie is not going to do. This is similar to what Schegloff (1988a, p. 120) calls “a noticing of a negative event.” Schegloff, however, discussed noticings where the speaker had visible access and this is not one such case: Wendy formulates an event that is not going to happen. But the practice still works in a similar way: Wendy formulates behaviour that is in some way deviant from what can be expected—although not necessarily a *failure*: Wendy later says that without Melanie she’ll be able to study better (data not shown)—thereby eliciting an account for that behaviour. So both the sequential position of Wendy’s YND and its design project that Melanie should do more than confirm.

In the previous two cases, the type of response that was sought was partly made clear through the design of the first pair part: in (5) Hayley uses *toch* to index a conflict between Francine’s prior talk and her own beliefs, and in (6) Wendy formulates a negative event for which Melanie bears responsibility. The next case is different: in it the speaker simply formulates an action that the recipient is going to perform. This is still understood by the recipient as not just making relevant confirmation, but also as creating an environment to provide additional talk. We will argue that the recipient understands the YND in this way, because the YND is produced following closure of a prior topic. Like in excerpt (6), the speaker has addressed a recipient-related topic in an environment that is topic-shift implicative, thereby not just initiating a new sequence, but a new topic as well (see Button & Casey, 1985; Schegloff, 2007). But unlike excerpt (6), the YND does not project a specific type of elaboration.

Diane has been telling about an upcoming training camp of her rowing team for which she is going to Venice, where she will also have some time to explore the city. After some reciprocal assessments, Susan provides a closing assessment in line 1 (*chill* is frequently used in Dutch talk-in-interaction as an assessment, especially by young adults, and means something like *relaxed* or *nice*). She then moves on to a new topic in lines 5–6 using a YND: Diane’s plans to go for a run with her brother. As in the previous case, the knowledge claim that is made with the YND has not been licensed in prior talk; Diana has so far not told Susan that she is going for a run with her brother, and yet Susan treats it as known.

(7) KS1–06:44.8–07:12.3 [A]

01 Sus .HH o:h maar wel chill (zeg)

oh but ADV chill say  
 .HH oh but that's chill  
 02 (.)  
 03 .h (.) MAAR [ehm]  
     but  
 .h (.) but [ehm]  
 04 Dia [(hm) mm]  
     [(hm) mm]  
 04 (0.4)  
 05 Sus -> jIJ gaat dus zo hardlo[pen m]et je  
     you go thus in.a.moment running with your  
 06 -> broer?  
     brother  
     so you're going for a [run w]ith your brother  
     in a moment?  
 07 Dia [#ja:#]  
     yeah  
     [#yea:h#]  
 08 (0.8)  
 09 j(h)a hu .Hh  
     yeah  
     y(h)eah hu .Hh  
 10 (0.2)  
 11 best ↑grappigh: huhu: .H  
     quite funny  
     kinda funny huhu .H  
 12 >moet alleen even kijken want< ik heb hier  
     have.to only just see because I have here  
 13 echt< totAal geen:, hardloopkieren ofzo.  
     really totally no running.clothes or.something  
     >just have to see< because I really have no  
     running clothes here or something.  
 14 (.)  
 15 (moet eens kijken) of #we <er#gens ↑ie:ts  
     have.to just see if we somewhere something  
 16 (.)  
 17 hebben>, .hh #maar# denk het ↑wel  
     have but think it ADV.  
     (have to see) if #we <some#where have something  
     else>, .hh but think so.

The initial response by Diane in line 9 is slightly delayed, possibly because she had already provided confirmation in line 7, but she subsequently does more than confirm: she provides an assessment in line 11 and says that she has no appropriate clothes (lines 12–17). How Diane confirms in line 9 projects that she is going to produce more than just the response particle: she says *ja* in a laughing way and follows with a laughter token (*hu*) and a loud inbreath.

It is thus clear from her confirmation that she takes Susan's YND not just as a request for confirmation, but as an invitation to tell, that is, as a topic proffer. Although her initial uptake in line 9 provides only confirmation, its design still shows that Diane embraces the topic and thus does a preferred next action (see Schegloff, 2007).

Unlike excerpts (5) and (6), there seems to be nothing in the turn design of Susan's YND that makes it recognizable as projecting more than just confirmation. She simply formulates something Diane is going to do, treating it as known with the YND and as previously talked about with *dus*. In other words, she simply claims knowledge about a recipient-oriented event. But this is precisely how topic proffers work: Susan offers a topic to Diane without actively launching or developing it by (i) addressing a recipient-oriented event after a prior topic has been closed, (ii) formulating what she already claims to know, and (iii) not returning to a prior action (Schegloff, 2007, p. 170; see also Button & Casey, 1985). The function of a topic proffer, at least when implemented with a YND, is thus primarily grounded in its sequential placement.

Although topic proffers do not necessarily request elaboration through linguistic means, participants do orient to these YNDs as projecting more than confirmation. Consider the following excerpt where the topic is not taken up by the recipient. In the subsequent talk both participants show through their actions that confirmation alone was not what the speaker was after: some form of elaboration is pursued and resisted, and thus treated as noticeably absent.

Prior to the data shown, there is an extensive sequence in which Marie has been complaining about a project she has to do, a complaint Anne treats as unjustified. After some discussion, Marie says that it is generally not fun to have to do things when you do not support them, broadening her complaint beyond her specific situation. This seems to constitute a move towards topical closure (see Drew & Holt, 1998). Anne minimally confirms in line 2, and Marie herself only produces a *maar ja* ('but yeah'), showing that she is not going to develop her complaint any further.

(8) DK2-12:09.5-12:27.4 [A]

```
01 Mar    maar ja: .hhh [( )]
          but yeah
          but yea:h .hhh [( )]
02 Ann                                [na:h ] das    waa:r.=
          well    that's true
          [we:ll] that's true:.=
03      -> =en eh ↑morgen heb je met jan ↑klaas nog
          and    tomorrow have you with Jan Klaas yet
```

04 -> je afspraak?  
 your date  
**=and eh tomorrow you have your date with  
 jan klaas?**

05 (0.4)

06 Mar >jA<  
 yeah  
**>yEAH<**

07 (1.7)

08 Ann o:ké; [ j]A is ook gezellig.=  
 okay yeah is also fun  
**o:kay; [ y]EAH is also fun.=**

09 Mar [(ja)]

10 =>jā ja ja<. [ d]a- da- fdat weet ik nietf,  
 yeah yeah yeah that know I not  
**=>yeah yeah yeah<. [ t]ha- tha- fthat I don't  
 knowf,**

11 Ann [ja]  
**[yeah]**

12 Mar fdat zie ik wel. ghuhu  
 that see I ADV  
**fI'll wait and see. ghuhu**

13 (0.2)

14 Mar? .h

15 (0.3)

16 Ann nou ja ↑goed dat zou gezellig kunnen  
 well yeah fine that could fun can  
 zi[jn.  
 be  
**well yeah ↑fine that could be fun**

18 Mar [fhet [zou gezellig kunnen wo]rden ja.  
 it could fun can become yeah  
**[fit [could maybe become] fun yeah.**

19 Ann [ °(< >)° ]

20 Mar ghuhaha[ha

21 Ann [°ja°  
 yeah  
**[°yeah°**

22 (.)

23 Mar .H #ja#. .H nee.  
 yeah no  
**.H #yeah#. .H no.**

First note that the YND in lines 3–4 is produced in a sequential environment similar to the one in excerpts (6) and (7). In lines 1–2, both Marie and Anne produce turns that do not expand the preceding sequence and instead move towards closure (Schegloff, 2007). At that point, Anne produces a YND to

which Marie responds in line 6 with a simple confirmation (*ja*).

In the subsequent talk, however, Anne shows that she was in fact looking for more than confirmation. First there is a 1.7 second silence after Marie's initial response. By not continuing her turn, Marie shows her orientation that Anne should speak next, whereas Anne, by keeping silent, shows her orientation that it is in fact Marie who should continue. When no elaboration is forthcoming, Anne provides what could be interpreted as a sequence-closing third: an *oké* with an assessment. But the design of her assessment does not constitute a closing move: (i) the *oké* and the assessment each have their own intonation contour, (ii) the assessment is prefaced by the polar response particle *ja*, and (iii) the assessment is almost fully clausal instead of consisting of just the relevant adjective (compare with Loes's *oké gezellig* in line 14 of excerpt (2)). Rather than moving towards sequence closure, Anne's turn provides the terms along which Marie can provide further talk: she does another attempt at launching the topic, treating Marie's minimal confirmation as a dispreferred response, as resisting the proffered topic. Marie also treats Anne's assessment as a second try, but her uptake is again dispreferred. With her multiple saying she actively resists the line of inquiry that Anne continues with her assessment (Stivers, 2004). Furthermore by refusing to commit to the assessment in lines 10 and 12 she demonstrates her unwillingness to talk on the matter. Despite all this, Anne again probes for elaboration in line 16–17, but Marie resists yet again. After this third failed attempt at getting Marie to talk about her planned date, both move towards sequence closure.

Notice that Anne attempts to establish a new topic in a very specific environment: not just following possible sequence closure, but following a troubles-telling. As was noted by Jefferson (1984) participants have a hard time keeping a conversation going after a troubles-telling and thus frequently move into closings. But Jefferson also noted that one way to keep the conversation alive is for the recipient of the troubles-telling, in this case Anne, to recognizably launch a new, other-attentive topic. And this is precisely what Anne does, and a for Marie potentially positive topic to boot.

Here we clearly see that Anne's YND in lines 3–4 was done as a topic proffer, but one that is not embraced by Marie (see Schegloff, 2007). By responding with just the response particle *ja*, that is, by designing her turn to be minimal, Marie demonstrates her unwillingness to produce more talk on the topic (Button & Casey, 1985; Schegloff, 2007). Furthermore, by producing a very short *ja*, Marie might actually show that she is not going to produce more talk in an environment in which more talk is relevant (G. Raymond, 2010b).

In excerpts (6)–(8) a YND is produced in a position where topic transition

is relevant. That is, if the prior topic stays closed, the participants will either have to move to a new topic or towards conversational closure (see Button & Casey, 1988). By producing a YND that does not return to a prior action but instead recognizably launches a new sequence by addressing a new issue, the speaker invites the co-interactant to not just confirm, but to provide more talk. In case of (6), this additional talk should take the form of an account, which is made recognizable through the design of the YND, whereas in (7) and (8) the recipient simply has to demonstrate a willingness to talk on the topic by doing what Schegloff (2007, p. 171) calls an expanded response. In these two cases the YNDs function as a topic proffer.

In this section we have argued that participants use declarative utterances in which they claim access to a domain of the recipient to do more than request confirmation: they seek elaboration. The difference between the YNDs in this and the previous section is not in their morphosyntactic design. Instead, while the YNDs in the previous section were all designed to recognizably return to a prior action and formulated some inference or upshot of the prior talk, the YNDs in this section addressed beliefs or understandings that, while also recipient-related, had not yet been discussed in the prior talk.

Because their morphosyntactic design does not differ from YNDs that request only confirmation, we would not wish to argue that these YNDs request elaboration, that is, that the recipient has a normative obligation for providing elaboration and can be sanctioned for not doing so. For example, simply because in excerpt (7) Diane provides more than confirmation, the elaboration was not necessarily requested. Moreover, as was also argued by Schegloff (2007) and Button and Casey (1985), and as we have shown again in excerpt (8): resistance to a topic proffer is done through a confirmation, that is, by providing what seems like the preferred next action. But as we also showed: in such cases participants can and do treat elaboration as noticeably absent. So instead of recognizably requesting elaboration, these recipient-oriented YNDs create an environment in which the recipient can volunteer additional talk, meaning that the speaker is not accountable for requesting that elaboration, and neither is the recipient accountable when s/he does not provide it (Sidnell, 2017b).

The question is then why do participants not make their action recognizable as requesting elaboration through the turn design. That is, why do participants create an environment in which elaboration is relevant, but it is made to look like it is volunteered instead of requested. For example in excerpt (8), Anne could have asked if Marie is looking forward to her date if that is what she is interested in. One possibility is that these YNDs address delicate topics, and that a YND is the prime way to request elaboration without accountably doing so.

This was particularly clear in excerpt (8) where Anne and Marie had to move out of a troubles-telling, and similarly asking for accounts and explanations could very well be delicate actions. Such an analysis would also be in line with some my-side tellings discussed by Pomerantz (1980) and Schegloff's (1988a) noticing where a speaker formulates some behaviour by the recipient s/he observed, and is thus claiming access to the recipient's experiences that has in no way been licenced by the recipient. There are cases like (7), however, where it is not clear why the topic, in this case running, would be delicate to the participants. Clearly further work is still required.

## 2.5 Discussion

Earlier work on declarative yes/no-type initiating actions (YNDs), or declarative questions in more vernacular terms, has argued that they make relevant only confirmation, and that they do so because of the epistemic stance they index: a declarative is used to convey confidence in the formulated belief or understanding (Lee, 2015; Park, 2012; G. Raymond, 2003, 2010a). In Dutch, however, confirmation is not always enough. Focusing only on YNDs that receive a type-conforming (G. Raymond, 2003), preferred response, we found that almost half of 125 YNDs in our corpus get some form of elaboration. In fact, in some cases where elaboration is not provided as a next action, it is treated as noticeably absent and pursued.

In order to explain these findings, we have investigated the differences between YNDs that receive only confirmation and those that receive a more elaborate response. While these two types of YNDs cannot be distinguished based on their morphosyntactic design, they do differ in both their sequential placement and epistemic context.

YNDs that implement simple requests for confirmation formulate a belief or understanding that has already been discussed and established (excerpts (2)–(4)), or is at least highly salient (excerpt (1)). When launching a sequence-closing sequence, for example, we find that they recognizably return to the action with which the sequence or topic was launched by recycling large parts of its turn design, but change the syntax from interrogative to declarative (see Schegloff, 2007). This recycling is in fact what makes these YNDs so suitable for launching a sequence-closing sequence. By returning to the start of the topic or sequence and claiming a knowing position, the speaker conveys that that initial action—for example, an itemized news enquiry (Button & Casey, 1985)—has been adequately addressed. Further elaboration of the topic is

therefore no longer needed, and confirmation is a way for the recipient to go along with this closing move.

YNDs that seek more than confirmation on the other hand formulate a belief or understanding that has neither been addressed, nor made salient in the prior talk. In other words, the speaker formulates a recipient-oriented prior belief or understanding, and thereby claims access to a domain of the recipient when that access has not been licenced in the ongoing interaction (see Turner, 2012). The type of elaboration that a speaker elicits varies and in the case of topic proffers no specific elaboration is even being sought: the primary aim of a topic proffer is to establish a topic of talk, and the recipient simply has to display a willingness to talk on whatever topic has been proffered. But embracing a topic means doing more than confirming. In fact, as was demonstrated by Button and Casey (1985), itemized news enquiries that simply offer a recipient-oriented topic can elicit the telling of news. And so while the primary task of topic proffers may be different from YNDs that elicit a specific type of elaboration, they still need to be dealt with through some expanded response.

We have shown in this paper that when YNDs request confirmation, they can also create an opportunity for the recipient to provide some form of elaboration, and in fact, when that elaboration is not provided it can be pursued. Furthermore, we have shown two ways in which participants distinguish between YNDs that request only confirmation and YNDs that also elicit some form of elaboration. First, confirmation is treated as adequate when a speaker recognizably returns to a prior action and thus formulates a belief or understanding that has already been established or made highly salient in the prior talk. Elaboration is sought when speakers address a prior recipient-oriented belief that has not been locally addressed. Second, confirmation-oriented YNDs are produced in and create different sequential environments. They recognizably return to a prior, sequence-initiating action, thereby projecting sequence closure. Elaboration-oriented YNDs on the other hand set up a contrast with prior talk, or come in a position where topic transition is relevant, after closure of a prior sequence and topic.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Our analysis has shown that although participants do orient to the relatively knowing epistemic stance indexed with declarative yes/no-type initiating actions (Heritage, 2012a; Lee, 2015; Park, 2012; G. Raymond, 2003, 2010a), the response recipients provide can only partly be accounted for with the epistemic

stance alone. Based on these findings, we have suggested, following Sidnell (2017b), a direction in which the action-formation problem (Schegloff, 2007) can be further explored. Accountability is at the heart of this line of research. Participants have various means of achieving an interactional goal. In some cases, possibly most cases, they pursue these goals in a way that makes them accountable for having done so, but sometimes they are more circumspect. How and why participants manage to avoid accountability is a question that bears further investigation. Achieving some interactional outcome without the risk of being held accountable for pursuing that outcome is not just reserved to politicians: it is useful for and applied by all participants in talk-in-interaction.



*You're saying that the responsibility for avoiding miscommunication lies entirely with the listener, not the speaker, which explains why you haven't been able to convince anyone to help you down from that wall.*

