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CHAPTER 6

Assessing Answers: Action ascription in third position[1]

ABSTRACT

Although the adjacency pair is a basic unit of interactional structure, many sequences consist of three parts. This paper is concerned with assessments used in third position to receive answers to inquiries. It argues that participants distinguish between two types of assessments: evaluative assessments and deontic assessments. By adopting a particular stance in third position, speakers not only display their understanding of what the answer was doing, but can also actively ascribe an action to it. They thereby build and maintain the architecture of intersubjectivity. Data are in Dutch with English translations.

Keywords: sequence organization, assessments, stance taking, deontics, proposals, action formation

6.1 Conversational Structure

Assessments have featured centrally in conversation analytic research since the 1970s (Pomerantz, 1975, 1978, 1984; see Lindström & Mondada, 2009

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[1]This chapter is a slightly modified version of a paper that was accepted as
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for an overview). They take up such a central role in the study of interaction, because they are one of the primary means participants have of showing social engagement and social solidarity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Pomerantz, 1984). By taking up some evaluative stance towards an interlocutor's prior turn, speakers can demonstrate that they have understood the import of an interlocutor's talk, and thus that they have been attentive recipients, but also that they share their interlocutor's point of view.

Most of the work on assessments has focused on their production in environments such as storytellings and news exchanges—that is, reports of past events—and their sequential implications (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992; Lindström & Mondada, 2009; Maynard, 1997; Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers, 2008). When speakers convey news or produce a story, they do not merely provide their recipient with information: they display a stance towards the reported event with which the recipient should subsequently agree (Maynard, 1997; Stivers, 2008). Assessments of another's talk therefore not only have a social function, their production also has sequential implications. By providing an assessment speakers can show that they have finished describing some event, and similarly recipients can display their understanding that a telling has come to completion by providing an assessment (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Jefferson, 1978, 1993; Sacks, 1974; Stivers, 2008).

But assessments are used to deal with more than just reports of past events. In this paper I argue that participants in Dutch talk-in-interaction respond to answers to inquiries with two types of assessments and that they thereby treat the answer as implementing different categories of actions. In addition, I show that this distinction has consequences for action formation and sequence organization.

The first type of assessment is the one that is typically discussed in the literature (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992; Lindström & Mondada, 2009; Maynard, 1997; Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers, 2008). These are assessments with which speakers adopt an evaluative stance towards the answer, treating it as a telling of news or a story. I call these evaluative assessments. The second type of assessment has not previously been discussed. These assessments are used to adopt a deontic stance towards the answer.[2] The deontic authority of participants concerns their rights and obligations to determine their own and other's actions

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[2]In this paper stance is used not in parallel with status to refer to the verbal and embodied resources that speakers use to claim some measure of for example knowledgeability (Heritage, 2012a), but to indicate that a speaker takes a position: "an assessment in third position articulates a *stance* [emphasis added] taken up toward what the second pair part speaker had said or done in the prior turn" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 123f.; see also Stivers, 2008).

(Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). In interaction, participants frequently orient to their respective authority. For example, in making a proposal for a future course of action, a speaker inherently encroaches on the recipient's authority to determine his/her own future actions. The degree to which the speaker has rights to make such an infringement is reflected not only in the design of the proposal, but also its uptake. With the deontic assessments discussed in this paper, a speaker treats the prior turn as a proposal and receipts it as an acceptable proposal.

I offer three forms of evidence for the distinction between these two assessment types. First, I show that these types of assessment differ in their turn design. Participants make use of a broad range of assessment terms such as *leuk* ("fun" / "nice") or *gezellig* ("lovely")[3] to adopt an evaluative stance toward a state of affairs. In contrast they use a specific practice for adopting a deontic stance: *is goed* ("∅ is fine").[4] Second, speakers orient to these assessments differently through different prefacing particles. Evaluative assessments are often prefaced by interjections that register the answer as informative such as *oh* (Heritage, 1984a).[5] By registering the answer as informative, these *oh*-prefaced assessments are designed to be understood as articulating a stance towards news or a report of past events. Deontic assessments on the other hand are often prefaced by *oké* ("okay"), a particle that is used to receipt answers that are not primarily concerned with informing, but with such activities as arrangement making or requesting (Beach, 1993; Schegloff, 2007). These *oké*-prefaced assessments are therefore designed to be dealing with some action in which informing does not feature centrally.

Third, I show that the two types of assessments can be combined into a single turn at talk, suggesting that speakers treat them as doing different work. Speakers can take up a deontic stance, treating an answer as an acceptable proposal, and subsequently take some evaluative stance towards the proposed course of action and the agreement.

The distinction between these assessment types raises questions about sequence organization. Work on action formation and ascription has historically focused on the adjacency pair: how sequence-initiating actions make conditionally relevant type-fitting responses, and how recipients in their response

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[3]The meaning of Dutch adjectives, particularly *gezellig*, depends largely on the context; "lovely" is chosen here for convenience, but *gezellig* is used far more broadly, akin to Danish *hygge* and German *gemütlich*.

[4]Speakers sometimes use *das goed* ("that's fine") when providing deontic assessments in second position. The ∅ denotes the lack of a subject in *is goed* ("is fine").

[5]Dutch *oh* seems to be used in a very similar way to English *oh*.

display an understanding of and ascribe an action to that sequence-initiating action (Levinson, 2013; Sacks et al., 1974). This paper instead investigates instead how speakers of some first pair part take up the response, that is, the second pair part, in a way that does not project further sequence expansion (see Schegloff, 2007).

Prior research on English has shown that participants use three practices to implement such sequence-closing thirds (Schegloff, 2007, p. 118) and that they can either be produced as a stand-alone turn-constructional unit or combined into a composite. First, speakers can use *oh* to receipt a second pair part as informative: When the first pair part was done to request information, *oh* conveys that the answer was adequately informative, thereby proposing sequence closure (Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 2007). Second, speakers can use *okay* to accept the second pair part and the stance it encodes, proposing sequence closure for such actions as requests, offers, or invitations (Schegloff, 2007, p. 120; see also Beach, 1993). Third, speakers can use an assessment to articulate a stance towards the second pair part (Schegloff, 2007, p. 123f.). These do not, or at least do not seem to deal with specific action types.

The practice(s) used to propose sequence closure therefore also provide insight into the action that the adjacency pair was concerned with. By receipting an answer with *oh*, a speaker can treat that answer as adequately informative, and show that an informing action had indeed been requested with the first pair part (Heritage, 2018). Similarly, composite practices can be examined for what they reveal about the multifaceted nature of the ongoing sequence. In fact, because many sequences run on more than one track, stand-alone particles like *oh* or *okay* can be examined as possible withholdings, that is, as keeping the sequence open (Schegloff, 2007, p. 127ff.).

This paper builds on these findings by discussing how in third position speakers not only receipt a response in a move towards sequence closure, but can actively ascribe an action to that response. By using *is goed* in third position, speakes treat the second pair part as a proposal, even if the second pair part is not done as a proposal. The three-part structures that arise in this way, were not set up by the speaker when s/he launched the sequence (cf. Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1985; Jefferson & Schenkein, 1977; Kevoe-Feldman & Robinson, 2012; Kevoe-Feldman, 2015; Tsui, 1989). They arise locally, as speakers deal with contingencies raised in or ascribed to the response.

The analysis in this paper is organized as follows. In section 6.3 I discuss ways in which participants do evaluative assessments, and I compare that in section 6.4 to one way in which speakers do deontic assessments, where I briefly show that the same practice is used in second position to accept proposals and

offers. In section 6.5 I show that deontic and evaluative assessments can be produced in one turn at talk, providing additional evidence that they do different work. Finally in section 6.6 I discuss the sequential implications of the resulting structures.

6.2   Data & Method

The data used in this paper come from a corpus of 21.5h of informal phone conversations that were recorded by students at Utrecht University as part of a course assignment in 2011 and 2012. These conversations are primarily between the students and their friends or family, and concern mundane topics of everyday life, such as studies and relationships. All speakers provided written informed consent allowing use of the data for research and publication purposes, and the transcripts have been anonymized.

All cases of *is goed* / *das goed* ("is fine" / "that's fine") were gathered from the corpus, but the cases that were produced in response to a first pair part were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in a collection of 21 cases of *is goed* in third position that were collected from 235 dyads. Since evaluative assessments are produced a lot more frequently, they were gathered from a subset of the corpus: 3.5h of conversation, or 34 dyads. Only the cases that were produced in response to turn that was recognizable as a second pair part were selected. This resulted in a collection of 48 third-position evaluative assessments, 32 of which are treated as proposals for sequence closure (Schegloff, 2007).

Transcriptions have been made according to Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson 2004). Word-by-word translations are provided for each line and free translations are provided on a roughly turn-by-turn basis. All pauses were computer timed. This means that they are measured as slightly longer compared to manual counting techniques (Kendrick & Torreira, 2015). The method used is conversation analysis (Ten Have, 2007): recurrent practices, in this case two types of assessments, were investigated to determine the actions they are used to implement and the underlying principles that participants orient to in using these practices in their respective sequential positions (Sidnell, 2013).

6.3   Evaluative Assessments

This section discusses a few of the ways in which participants use assessments to take up an evaluative stance towards an answer. These assessments are frequently implemented with either a full clause, consisting of a demonstrative,

a copula, and an assessment term; or just an assessment term (see Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, p. 162). These evaluative assessments often address answers in which the recipient either tells a story or gives an answer to a request for information, in other words types of answers that are done, at least in part, to inform. The recipient of the answer often prefaces the assessment with an interjection that registers that answer as informative (Heritage, 1984a). Consider the following extract from a conversation between two sisters, Fleur and Loes. Loes is planning a trip to Barcelona with her mother and in line 1 Fleur asks how much time they will spend there. After Loes has provided an answer in line 3, Fleur receipts that answer with an *oh*-prefaced assessment.

```
(1)   BE1 – 02:27.8-02:31.7
01  Fle    hoe lang >gaan jullie nou:<?
             how long  go    you.PL PRT
           how long >are you going<?
02         (0.4)
03  Loe    e::h zeven dagen,
                seven days
           e::h seven days,
04         (0.8)
05  Fle -> oh das    la:ng.
           oh that's long
           oh that's lo:ng.
06         (0.4)
07  Loe    ja   lang hè,
           yeah long TAG
           yeah long right,
08         (1.1)
09  Loe    °(   [   )°
10  Fle     [°(ga ik)°
               go I
            [°(am I)°
11         (1.1)
12         wat  ga ik dan  doe:n?=
           what go I  then do
           then what am I going to do:?=
```

By assessing seven days as long in line 5, Fleur characterizes the time Loes and her mother will spend in Barcelona as longer than what she would consider normal for such a trip. Although Loes subsequently endorses Fleur's assessment in line 7, she did not provide an evaluation in her answer. In other words, Loes did not project an assessment with her answer. Fleur provides an assessment from her own perspective, recognizably so by using *lang* in both her inquiry and her assessment. Loes in her subsequent agreement also

displays her understanding that Fleur conveys a stance of her own: she uses turn-final *hè*, a tag that is normally used in first position to solicit agreement with some assessment (Enfield et al., 2012). With this particle, Loes implies that her assessment is independent of Fleur's; that is, Loes and Fleur agree that seven days is *lang* ("long"), but they came to that assessment independently of each other (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; G. Raymond & Heritage, 2006). By conveying her own perspective, Fleur treats Loes' response not as a telling that displays a stance to be agreed with, but as an answer to an information request.

The *oh*-preface provides further evidence that Fleur takes an evaluative stance. It is used to receipt the answer as informative, treating its informative content as its primary focus (Heritage, 1984a, 2018). The assessment is thereby construed as dealing with an informative response, as evaluating a telling of news. That is, the assessment is designed to be understood as evaluating news.

As further exemplification of evaluative assessments consider extract (2). In line 1 Eline produces an itemized news enquiry (Button & Casey, 1985), inviting her friend Melanie to talk about her weekend by requesting an assessment with *hoe was* ("how was"). Melanie first deals with the format of the news enquiry, providing an assessment in line 3, before she begins telling about her weekend (Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell, 2017a).

```
(2)   BR1–00:47.8–01:16.6
01  Eli    hoe was ↑jouw    weekend.
              how was  your.SG weekend
              how was ↑your weekend.
02         (0.3)
03  Mel    ja. (.) was echt   heel lek↓ker.
              yeah    was really very nice
              yeah. (.) was really very nice.
..         <6 lines omitted>
10         enne:h ja  je    kent het wel: winkelen (.)
              and    yeah you.SG know it  ADV  shopping
11         uitgaa:n: (.) uit ete:n, (0.3) .h leuke dingen
              clubbing      out dinner        fun   things
12         doen: >en  zo:<?
              do     and such
              ande:h yeah you know what it's like: shopping (.)
              clubbing: (.) out to dinner, (0.3) .h doing fun
              things >and such:<?
13         (0.8)
14  Eli -> o::h lekker ma[:n:?]
              oh   nice   man
              o::h nice ma[:n:? ]
15  Mel                  [ja::] echt  ↑super leu:k.
```

```
             yeah   really super fun
        [yea::] really ↑super fu:n.
```

Melanie's story is moving to completion in lines 10–12 where she provides a list of things Eline should be able to recognize—*je kent het wel* ("you know what it's like"). She moves from the specifics of her weekend to a more general description of activities one does when visiting a city. Eline also orients to this list as a point of possible completion by providing an *oh*-prefaced assessment. Throughout her telling it is clear that Melanie is taking up a positive evaluative stance. She uses assessment terms such as *lekker* ("nice"), *top* ("great"), and *leuk* ("fun"), thereby projecting how her story should be taken up by Eline, who in line 14 provides an affiliating response. By using the same adjective as Melanie did in her initial assessment, *lekker*, Eline's assessments is fitted to that answer: she adopts Melanie's stance, treating her response as a telling that carries some valence to be adopted.

As in the previous case, the assessment is prefaced with *oh*. Eline thereby treats the story as informative and its informative nature as the primary focus of her uptake. Her assessment is thus designed to address some state of affairs about which she had limited prior knowledge, that is, news or a story. The *oh*-preface thus indicates that in her assessment Eline articulates a stance towards that state of affairs.

In addition to *oh* there are other response cries (Goffman, 1978) or reaction tokens (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006) that provide evidence that a speaker is adopting an evaluative stance. The following excerpt is a case in point. It is from the same conversation as (2) and takes place shortly afterwards. Melanie is talking about an Asian restaurant she visited where they serve an all-you-can-eat buffet that includes drinks for €22. In lines 1–4 she compares it to a similar type of restaurant in Best, a place they both live nearby, where drinks are not included.

(3)   BR1–01:38.6–01:54.0

```
01  Mel   en as je- (.) bij best heb je    dan  ook e:h
            and if you.SG at  Best have you.SG then also
02          (0.5) alleen eten >maar hier had je    dan  ook
                   only   food  but  here had you.SG then also
03          nog <onbeperkt drank #derbij:#,=dus 'twas   echt
            yet  unlimited drinks with.it   so   it.was really
04          super #chill:#.
            super  chill
            and if you- (.) at best you then have e:h (0.5)
            just food >but here you then also had< unlimited
```

```
                drinks #with it#,=so it was really super #chill:#.
05              (1.0)
06   Eli        hoe- hoe duur     was dat  bij  mekaa:r?
                how  how expensive was that with together
                how- how expensive was that all together?
07              (.)
08   Mel        tweeëntwintig euro:
                twenty.two    euro
                twenty two euro:
09              (1.0)
10   Eli  ->    >WOW DAS< (0.4) echt    niet duu[r:?
                 wow that.is    really not  expensive
                >WOW THAT'S< (0.4) really not expensi[ve?
11   Mel                                           [(das)    echt
                                                     that.is really
12              goedkoo:p jonge:,
                cheap     man
                                                          [(that's)
                really chea:p man:,
13              (0.4)
14              JA[:.
                YEA[:h.
15   Eli          [↑ja
                  [↑yeah
```

After Melanie has finished describing the restaurant, taking a very positive stance in lines 3–4—*super chill*—Eline does not provide an affiliating assessment. Instead she asks how expensive it was, information she treats as necessary to evaluate (see Pomerantz, 1984). Melanie answers in line 8 and after a 1.0s pause Eline provides an assessment of the answer.

The structure of the sequence in (3) is the same as in (1). Eline launches the sequence by requesting information, and after Melanie has provided the answer, Eline gives an assessment. Although Eline's inquiry in line 6 initiates repair on Melanie's story—Melanie had already named the price prior to the data shown—her assessment in line 10 is designed to deal primarily with the price and not the telling as a whole. She uses the same assessment term—*duur* ("expensive")—in both her repair initiating inquiry and her assessment. Note that in her assessment she negates it: *echt niet duur* ("really not expensive"). Eline thus does not adopt a stance projected by Melanie, but provides her own perspective, although one that is clearly in line with Melanie's.

While the evaluative assessments in (1) and (2) were *oh*-prefaced, Eline prefaces her assessment with *wow*. In combination with the preceding silence, which can be glossed as doing being at a loss for words, it indexes surprise or even astonishment (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006), which means that Eline

treats the answer as noteworthy and thus the prior turn as informative. Like *oh*, *wow* thus indicates that the prefaced assessment addresses some new and in this case surprising information, and displays an evaluative stance.

Particles like *oh* and *wow* deal with the informative nature of the response, and thereby provide evidence that the assessments they preface articulate a stance towards an informative answer. But that is not to say that they are necessary when speakers provide an evaluative assessment. Consider the following case where the speaker provides only an assessment. Prior to the data shown, Lisa asked Kees, her boyfriend, how things are at his internship. At the start of the excerpt in line 1 Kees says that he is now working more independently.

```
(4)   BO1 – 00:49.4-00:53.9
01  Kee    wel e:h ik ben nu  steeds meer zelfstandig bezig,=
              PRT     I  am  now ever   more independent busy
              well e:h I am working ever more independently,=
02             =dus ik e:h n- (.) ('k) neem   nu  ook  zelf
               so   I               I   answer now also self
03             telefoontjes aa:n, ↓en e:h
               phone.calls  on      and
               =so I e:h a- (.) (I) answer the phone now also on
               my own, and e:h
04             (0.7)
05  Lis    ↑oh das    wel [↑leuk.]
              oh that.is ADV   nice
              ↑oh that's [↑nice.]
06  Kee                     [(   ) ] vragen (.) aan de  balie:,
                                     questions   at  the desk
                            [(   )] questions (.) at the desk,
07             (0.5)
08  Lis    dus steeds meer verant[woord]elijkheden.
              so  ever   more responsibilities
              so ever more responsib[iliti]es.
09  Kee                            [(    )]
10             (0.8)
11  Kee    ja:h,
              yeah
              yea:h,
12             (.)
13  Lis -> leu[k
              nice
              ni[ce
14  Kee       [inderdaa:d °(maar)°
                indeed        but
              [indeed °(but)°
```

Lisa assesses Kees' telling at two points, first in line 5 and then in line 13.

Her first assessment is designed in a way we have come to expect: it registers Kees' telling as news with a turn-initial *oh*, and it subsequently provides a positive evaluation of that news. Lisa's second assessment comes at a point where Kees' story has come to possible completion. Although his turn-final intonation in line 6 could suggest that he is not finished yet, Lisa's subsequent summary formulation (Heritage & Watson, 1979) treats the story as complete and this move is not resisted by Kees. He simply provides an affirming *ja*, after which Lisa gives her assessment, *leuk* ("nice").

By providing a summary formulation Lisa conveys her understanding that Kees is getting more responsibilities (see Heritage, 2010, 2012a; G. Raymond, 2010a). His response in line 11 thus merely affirms what she has come to expect and there is no contingency with which *oh* would deal. The positive development of Kees making progress in his job has, however, not yet been evaluated. By formulating Kees' story without also assessing it, Lisa launches a sequence in which her subsequent assessment will be understood as an evaluative assessment, even though a confirming answer no longer conveys news.[6]

The evaluative assessments in the data shown are all responded to with some form of agreement. In other words, they all seem to be taken up as first pair parts of an assessment sequence (Pomerantz, 1984). Indeed, a large number of evaluative assessments in the data studied—21 out of 48—receive an acknowledging or (dis)agreeing response. This suggests that these third-position assessments are not sequence-closing thirds, but are used to launch some form of non-minimal post-expansion.

Minimal, however, does not mean that after the adjacency pair only one turn is provided. It signifies that the action provided in third position is used to proposes sequence closure (Schegloff, 2007, p. 118). In most cases recipients align with that proposal. Consider excerpt (1) where after Loes' second assessment in line 7 the sequence is closed. And even when they do not align, the recipient shows that the assessment was a move towards closure, by doing re-opening: for example, Kees uses *maar* ("but") to re-open the sequence in line 14 of excerpt (4) after his agreeing *inderdaad* ("indeed").

Nonetheless it is unclear whether these second assessments are optional or conditionally relevant. If they are optional, they might receive uptake so frequently because the speaker evaluates recipient-oriented news (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; G. Raymond & Heritage, 2006). In that case they are still sequence-closing thirds but unlike particles such as *oh* and *okay* have

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[6]Summary assessments (Jefferson, 1984) already take an evaluative stance, and so they do not seem to set up the same contingency.

the potential to be taken up. They might, however, also be first actions in a sequence-closing sequence (Schegloff, 2007, chapter 9), in which case a response is normatively due. They need not even all fall into one category; some could be optional and others conditionally relevant. There is not enough evidence in the data to allow the choice of one alternative over the other. Further research could shed more light on the matter.

This section has been concerned with assessments that are used to take an evaluative stance towards an answer. Speakers do them as assessments by producing either a clause consisting of a demonstrative, a copula, and an assessment term; or just the assessment term. As they are used to deal with informative answers, they are also frequently prefaced by interjections that treat the answer as informative. *Oh* is the most prevalent, appearing in 25 of the 48 cases analyzed for this paper, but *wow* is also sometimes used (7 cases), as well as other forms of response cries (Goffman, 1978) or reaction tokens (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006).

6.4   Deontic assessments

The previous section showed how participants use assessments to evaluate an answer. In this section I show that participants can also use assessments in which they articulate a deontic stance. Whereas the assessments in the previous section were produced in response to news or tellings, the assessments in this section are produced in response to answers that formulate a future course of action involving both participants: they are used to treat these answers as implementing a proposal (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Stivers & Sidnell, 2016). The turn design of deontic assessments is also different from the evaluative assessments. They consist of a copula and assessment term, but speakers make use of a specialized practice: *is goed* ("∅ is fine").

I first briefly discuss these deontic assessments in cases where the co-interactant has made acceptance conditionally relevant to show that these assessments implement acceptance of a proposal. Subsequently I show that they are used to the same effect in third position.

6.4.1   Deontic assessments in second position

When speakers produce proposals, they make relevant acceptance or rejection (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Houtkoop-Steenstra (1985) discussed a few of the ways in which speakers in Dutch can implement acceptance, such as formulating the future course of action, articulating that complying is

not a problem, or evaluating the agreement. Providing a deontic assessment is thus but one way speakers of Dutch have of implementing acceptance. I briefly discuss two cases where a deontic assessment is used in second position to treat a future course of action involving both participants as an acceptable proposal.[7]

Consider extract (5). Anna has called Sofie to inquire about her plans for the weekend, and Sofie has answered that she is busy on Saturday but free on Sunday.

```
(5)   VK2 – 00:09.5-00:40.7
01  Sof    >↑zondag heb  ik ↑niks<.
             Sunday have I    nothing
           >↑sunday have I ↑nothing<.
02         (1.0)
03  Ann    oh oké.=>zullen we ↑dan  iets<    leuks gaan doen:.
           oh okay  shall  we  then something fun   go   do
           oh okay.=>shall we then go< do something fun:.
04         (.)
05  Sof -> ja   is goed?
           yeah is fine
           yeah is fine?
```

By answering that she is free on Sunday, Sofie provides Anne with the constraints for whatever plans she may propose. Anne receipts these constraints in line 3 with *oh oké* ("oh okay"), closing that phase of the arrangement making project (Beach, 1993; Schegloff, 2007). She subsequently proposes to do something fun on Sunday and this proposal is accepted with a type-conforming *ja* (G. Raymond, 2003) and the deontic assessment *is goed*.

When dealing with *remote proposals*, such as in (5) where Anne proposes a future get-together, some form of explicit commitment is conditionally relevant (Lindström, 2017; for a similar analysis of remote requests, see Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1985). That is, confirmation is not enough. A case of pursuit can be seen extract (6). In line 1 Amelie proposes to her sister that she make sushi for dinner. Fabienne initially responds with just *oké*, but this is not treated as adequate by Amelie. Just when Fabienne provides a commitment with *ja is goed*, Amelie almost simultaneously pursues that commitment with *ja* in line 5, thereby showing that *oké* was not enough.

(6)   VB1 – 00:59.2-01:17.5

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[7]Beach (1993) shows a case for English in which *okay that's fine* is used in second position to accept a proposal.

```
01  Ame    ja; h (0.2) maar: zal  ik anders  °sushi(s)°
              yeah       but   shall I otherwise sushis
02         ma↑ken?
              make
           yeah; h (0.2) but shall I make sushi(s) otherwise?
03         (0.6)
04  Fab -> o↓ké::? (0.3) >ja  [is goed<.
              okay          yeah is fine
           o↓kay::? (0.3) >yeah [is fine<.
05  Ame                        [ja?
                                 [yeah?
```

These cases show that *is goed* is used to accept proposals by taking a positive deontic stance. They implement acceptance of and commitment to a future course of action involving both participants.

6.4.2   Deontic assessments in third position

The previous section showed that *is goed* is used as a deontic assessment, treating the prior turn as implementing a proposal. In this section I focus on its production in third position where it is used to receipt answers to inquiries. With deontic assessments speakers also articulate a stance towards the answer, but instead of treating the answer as a telling or as news, they treat it as a proposal. Their preface provides additional evidence for this distinction: they are not prefaced by news receipt tokens like *oh*, but by *oké* ("okay"), which is used to close sequences "in which other actions than informing feature centrally" (Schegloff, 2007).[8]

Consider the following example from a conversation between two friends, Moniek and Esmee, who are trying to arrange dinner together. Prior to the data shown, Moniek asked whether Esmee is going to Anne's, a mutual friend, the following evening. But Esmee has to work that night. In lines 1–3 Moniek then asks if Esmee is available next week for dinner.[9]

(7)   VO1 – 01:12.4-01:24.6
```
01  Mon    maar e:h ↑kan je     anders     volgende w<u>ee</u>k
              but      can you.SG otherwise next       week
02         even wat      doen: dan. (.)
```

---

[8]Sometimes *oké* and *is goed* are phonetically realized as distinct TCUs while other times they are realized as a single TCU (see Ford & Thompson, 1996). There do not seem to be differences between these two types of turns in their respective action implications, but see extract (11) below.

[9]In line 8, Esmee actually says *all yours*.

```
              just something do     then
              but e:h ↑can you otherwise just do something
              next week then. (.)
03            [doen we volgende week even e[ten.
               do   we next     week just eat
              [we'll go for dinner next we[ek.
04    Esm     [.hh ja    (          )      [volgende wee:k. h
                  yeah                      next     week
              [.hh yeah (          )        [next wee:k .h
05            ja:  gewoon in het begi:- in het begin,=ja   ik
              yeah simply at the star-  at the start  yeah I
06            moet    nou voorlopig >gewoon iedere<
              have.to now for.now    just   every
07            donderdagavond    terug >maar de  rest< van de
              Thursday.evening back   but  the rest  of  the
08             week eh .HH >ben ik< #all your:s#.
              week     am  I
              yea:h simply at the star:- at the start,=yeah I
              have to go back >simply every< thursday evening for
              now >but the rest< of the week eh .HH I'm
              #all your:s#.
09    Mon ->  ↑oké, is goed.
               okay is fine
              ↑okay, that's fine.
10            .h nou  dan e:h contacten  we daar  anders nog even
                 well then    contact.PL we there else   yet just
11            over:.
              about
              .h well then e:h we'll talk just about that.
```

Moniek's turn reaches possible completion at the end of line 2, at which point she can be seen to inquire whether Esmee is available the next week, possibly as a pre to the future proposal in lines 10–11 (Schegloff, 2007). Although in line 3 Moniek transforms her action into an actual proposal by suggesting dinner, Esmee already begins addressing the query in overlap, confirming that she is available. She subsequently explains in lines 6–8 that she has to go back home (presumably to her parents) every Thursday in order to work on Friday, but that during the rest of the week she is at Moniek's beck and call (lines 7–8). This answer is taken up by Moniek in line 9, first with *oké* and subsequently with the assessment *is goed*. With this assessment she closes the part of the sequence that deals with availability, and she suggests in lines 10–11 that they'll talk specifics later. By providing a positive assessment *is goed*, Moniek shows that Esmee's answer here-and-now constitutes an acceptable proposal; the specifics can be filled in later.

Esmee begins answering when Moniek has only inquired whether she

is available the next week, and she only seems to inform Moniek of when she will be available. Esmee's response could thus be done and understood as an answer to a request for information: She provides Moniek with the information necessary to make a specific proposal for getting together. But by receipting Esmee's answer not as simply informative with a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984a) but with a deontic assessment, Moniek treats it as a proposal. And by delaying setting a specific time and date, she treats Esmee's answer as an acceptable next step in the process of making arrangements. Although a proposal may have been what she was looking for, as she suggests an activity—dinner—but not a time, her deontic assessment deals primarily with Esmee's answer and treats it as adequate.

The following example provides further evidence that *is goed* is used as a deontic assessment and deals with contingencies that arise in the answer. The excerpt is a slightly extended version of (6). Amelie has called her sister, Fabienne, to ask if she'll be home for dinner. When Fabienne has confirmed that she will be, Amelie proposes that she make sushi in line 1.

(6')   VB1 – 00:59.2-01:17.5

```
01   Ame    ja; h (0.2) maar: zal   ik anders  °sushi(s)°
            yeah          but   shall I  otherwise sushis
02          ma↑ken?
            make
            yeah; h (0.2) but shall I make sushi(s) otherwise?
03          (0.6)
04   Fab -> o↓ké::? (0.3) >ja  [is goed<. dan: >doen we dat wel
            okay            yeah is fine   then  do   we that ADV
05   Ame                        [ja?
                                 yeah
06   Fab    samen< °das    wel leuk°.
            together that.is ADV fun
04-06 Fab   o↓kay::? (0.3) >yeah [is fine<. then: >we'll do that
      Ame                         [yeah?
      Fab   together< °that is fun°.
07          (0.3)
08   Ame -> °oké is goed°.
             okay is fine
            °okay is fine°.
```

Fabienne accepts the offer after a slight pause with a type-conforming *ja* and the deontic assessment *is goed*. She goes on to suggest in lines 4–6 that they make the sushi together, as that will be fun. This suggestion is accepted as a modified proposal by Amelie in line 8 with *oké is goed*.

The contingency that Amelie deals with in line 8 was not projected in her sequence-initiating action. That is, she was not soliciting a proposal. But Fabienne does not just accept her offer: She modifies it. By suggesting that they make sushi together, she transforms the plan into a collaborative project; Amelie will no longer be doing something *for* her, but *with* her. Fabienne thereby encroaches upon Amelie's deontic rights, who sees an altruistic offer changed into a proposal. By responding to Fabienne's answer with *is goed*, Amelie treats Fabienne's response as implementing a modified proposal with which she subsequently has to agree or disagree. She claims the right to approve the revised course of action formulated by Fabienne.

Note that she does not treat Fabienne's proposal as launching a new sequence. In second position recipients preface their deontic assessments with a type-conforming *ja*, like Fabienne does in line 4 (see also excerpt 5), but Amelie uses *oké*. So while the sequence develops very different from the one in excerpt (7), Amelie similarly moves towards sequence-closure by using a deontic assessment to deal with a contingency that is raised in the response.

Although *oké* provides evidence that the assessment does not deal with the answer for its informative content, it is not an integral part of deontic assessments. The following excerpt is a case in point. It also shows that even when the sequence-initiating action looks like a request for information and the answer provides the requested information, that answer can still be treated as a proposal. In other words, whatever action potential the answer may have, with *is goed* a specific type of action is reflexively ascribed to it: it becomes a proposal by being treated as one.

Excerpt (8) is from a conversation between Kyra and her mother, Marie. Kyra no longer lives at her parents' house, and has called her mother early in the morning to congratulate her on her birthday. Marie moves to sequence closure by thanking her daughter, and subsequently produces an itemized news enquiry (Button & Casey, 1985), asking what plans Kyra has for the day.

```
(8)   DV1 – 00:23.4-00:38.5
01  Mar    ↑nou ↓dankjewel,<wa' ga je     doen vandaa:g?
           PRT  thank.you  what go you.SG do   today
           well thank you,<wha' are you going to do today?
02         (0.7)
03  Kyr    nou (.) 'k ga zometeen   trainen,
           PRT      I go in.a.moment exercising,
           well (.) I'm going exercising in a moment,
04         (0.7)
05  Mar    j:a:, h=
           yeah
```

```
             y:ea:h, h=
06  Kyr     =en dA:n: gaan  we mis↑schien heel even    nog
              and then  go.PL we maybe       very briefly still
07           (0.2) e:hm (0.2) rondlopen door    de stAd?<en
                               walk       through the city  and
08           dan  kom     ik wel een keertje: richting ↑huis.
             then come.SG I  ADV a   time      direction home
             =and then we'll maybe very briefly go (0.2) e:hm
             (.) for a walk through the city?<and then I'll
             come home at some point.
09           (0.5)
10  Mar ->  >'s ↑goed<?
              is  fine
             >'s fine<?
```

Marie's news enquiry does not show an orientation to some future course of action in which she will also be involved: its design suggests that it is done solely to inquire about Kyra's plans for the day.[10] Kyra also addresses the news enquiry as such, articulating in chronological order what her plans are: first she has training (line 3)—Kyra is an active rower—then maybe go for a walk in the city with her teammates (lines 6–7), and then visit her mother (lines 7–8).[11] Kyra's answer thus does involve Marie, albeit as a passive visitee, and Marie receipts it not as an answer to a news enquiry, that is, a story with some valence, but as a proposal: *is goed* is not used to convey that Kyra has good plans, but that those plans are acceptable to Marie. The contingency Marie deals with, when it's acceptable for her daughter to come visit, was not projected by her initial inquiry, but arises in the answer, and the sequence thus requires expansion before it can be closed.

In this section I demonstrated how participants in Dutch talk-in-interaction can make use of a specific practice when evaluating an answer as an acceptable proposal: *is goed* ("∅ is fine"). This practice is not just used when the sequence-initiating inquiry is oriented to arrangement making as in (6) and (7), but also when it seems a request for information as in (8). The contingency that *is goed* deals with arises in the answer: whether an answer is or is not a proposal, speakers use *is goed* to treat it as one. Since the answer is not treated as relevant for its informative nature but as a proposal, *is goed* is, at least in my data, never prefaced by *oh*, but instead frequently by *oké* ("okay"), a particle that is often used to propose closure of sequences in which actions other than informing

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[10]There is no birthday celebration planned for Marie, so her inquiry about Kyra's plans is not done to find out when Kyra is coming home for a birthday celebration.

[11]*Huis* ("home") in line 8 does not mean her own home. Dutch students who no longer live at their parents' house will often still refer to it as (*t*)*huis*.

feature centrally (Beach, 1993; Schegloff, 2007).

6.5   Mixed assessments

In the previous sections I distinguished between evaluative and deontic assessments. As these two types of assessments do different work, the first evaluating some state of affairs, the second accepting a proposal, they can be combined into a composite turn (Schegloff, 2007, p. 127ff.). One case was already shown in extract (8), of which a slightly extended version is shown below. Marie receipts her daughter's answer not just with *is goed*, but also with *gezellig*. She thus first treats Kyra's answer as an acceptable proposal, and subsequently evaluates her plan as *gezellig*.

```
(9)   DV1 – 00:23.4-00:38.5
01  Mar    ↑nou ↓dankjewel,<wa'  ga je    doen vandaa:g?
            PRT  thank.you  what go you.SG do   today
           well thank you,<wha' are you going to do today?
02         (0.7)
03  Kyr    nou (.) 'k ga zometeen   trainen,
            PRT     I go in.a.moment exercising,
           well (.) I'm going exercising in a moment,
04         (0.7)
05  Mar    j:a:, h=
            yeah
           y:ea:h, h=
06  Kyr    =en  dA:n: gaan  we mis↑schien heel even   nog
            and then  go.PL we maybe      very briefly still
07         (0.2) e:hm (0.2) rondlopen door  de  stAd?<en
                            walk      through the city  and
08         dan kom    ik wel een keertje: richting ↑huis.
            then come.SG I ADV a  time     direction home
           =and then we'll maybe very briefly go (0.2) e:hm
           (.) for a walk through the city?<and then I'll
           come home at some point.
09         (0.5)
10  Mar -> >'s ↑goed<? gezel[lig?
            is fine    nice
           >'s fine<? ni[ce?
11  Kyr                  [°denk ik°
                          think I
                     [°I think°
12         (1.0)
13  Mar    'k zie 't ↑wel:;
            I see  it ADV
            I'll see what happens:;
```

Marie's deontic and evaluative assessment in line 10 are recognizably distinct: Marie uses a specific practice to take a deontic stance towards Kyra's answer, whereas the assessment term *gezellig* is fitted to the specific state of affairs being evaluated: Kyra's coming over for Marie's birthday. In other words, this example confirms that deontic assessments are done to be recognizably different from evaluative assessments.

As evaluative assessments formulate a stance towards states of affairs such as agreements in addition to tellings, they are sometimes prefaced by particles that do not receipt the response as informative. Of the 48 evaluative assessments analyzed, three are prefaced by *oké*. But these are still in line with the analysis presented here. The claim is not that only deontic assessments can be prefaced by *oké*, but that by receipting an answer with *oké* a speaker reveals a different orientation to the action status of that answer. In fact, these three cases support the claim that *oh*-prefaced assessments deal with informative answers such as tellings, whereas *oké* is used in environments of arrangement making. The three *oh*-prefaced assessments are used to evaluate an answer that formulates or affirms a future course of action involving both participants , but they do not treat the answer as either a proposal or as news.

Consider the following example from the closing section of a conversation between Karel and Loes, who are boyfriend and girlfriend. A few minutes earlier in the talk they made arrangements for the weekend: Karel will play soccer on Friday and then go to Loes to spend the night. In the closing section of the conversation, Loes asks Karel to re-affirm that arrangement (see Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

(10)   BM1 – 09:26.5-09:36.8

```
01  Loe    dan  kom  je ↑dus  nadat je  met  de   jongens bent
              then come you thus after you with the  guys    have
02          geweest.
              been
            then you'll come after you've been out with the guys
03          (0.7)
04  Kar    ↓j:a.
            ↓y:eah.
05          (0.2)
06  Loe -> o:ké gezellig.=
              okay lovely
            o:kay lovely.=
07          =.h geef ik ↑dat [ook  effe] door  aan me ouders;
                 pass I   that also just  along to  my parents
            =.h I'll pass that [just also] along to my parents;
```

After Karel has re-affirmed their arrangement in line 4, Loes moves to sequence closure with *oké gezellig*, acknowledging Karel's answer and giving a positive evaluation of their arrangement. She then reveals why she asked again: she needs to inform her parents of their arrangement. *Oké* thus has a dual character, both accepting the answer, while preparing the ground for next-positioned matters (Beach, 1993).

Loes uses declarative syntax to treat the arrangement as already established (Heritage, 2012a; G. Raymond, 2010a), and so Karel merely affirms what she already understands to be the case. By receipting his answer with *oké gezellig* Loes also treats it as doing re-affirming and therefore closure-implicative: She simply acknowledges it, and positively evaluates their plans. In other words, there are no contingencies that either *oh* or *is goed* would deal with: Karel provides neither new information nor a new proposal. Loes is simply verifying before she tells her parents.

While we see that *oké* on occasion prefaces an evaluative assessment, this does not contradict the analysis made in the prior sections. These assessments deal not with the answer, but with the arrangement that the participants have made. Loes in (10) does not treat the sequence as implementing a proposal, because the arrangement has already been made and is just re-affirmed.

6.6 Implications for sequence organization

The findings in the previous sections raise some questions about sequence organization. Sequence-closing thirds are typically fitted to the sequence; for example, because *oh* is used to receipt informings, it is the prototypical means of closing a Q-A sequence (Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 2007). This fittedness makes sequence-closing thirds useful as an analytic tool for understanding the interaction: By treating a preferred response as adequate for its informative content, the speaker can in third position tacitly convey that an informative response had been made relevant, and thus that the first pair part was a request for information (Heritage, 2018). The third position is used to reflexively characterize and reveal the agenda of the inquiry (Heritage, 1984b; Pomerantz, 2017; see also Schegloff, 1992.

Cases such as (6)–(8), however, suggest that the same does not apply when a speaker uses *is goed* as a sequence-closing third: Its relevance only becomes apparent when the second pair part is provided.[12] In (8), for example, Marie did

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[12]Kevoe-Feldman and Robinson (2012) show that in some arrangement making sequences the first-pair part is used to elicit a proposal as a second pair part, and so approval in third position

not elicit a proposal but a telling. A type-fitting sequence-closing third would be something like *oh* plus an evaluative assessment as in (2). But because Kyra responds by saying when she plans to visit, Marie is put in a position where she can or even should confirm that that plan is acceptable to her.

But the picture is even more complex. Not only do speakers use *is goed* to display their understanding of a second pair part as needing approval, they can use it to reflexively ascribe the action of proposing to it. Consider excerpt (11). Naomi and Romy are sisters. Their parents are away for the weekend and left Naomi in charge. Naomi is home at the time of the call, sometime in the evening after 9:15, while Romy is at a friend's place.

```
(11)   BM2 – 02:37.9-02:50.0
01   Nao    maare::hm: (1.1) ((slikt)) .pt.h
              but
              bute::hm: (1.1) ((swallows)) .pt.h
02            (0.8)
03            e:h >hoe laat< ben    je      thuis?
                  how late are.SG you.SG home
              e:h >at what time< will you be home?
04            (2.3)
05   Rom    over: <half uur:tje ofzo>.
              in     half our.DIM or.so
              in: <half an hour or so>
06            (0.5)
07   Nao -> oh. (.) oké. (.) is goed.=
              oh     okay     is fine
              oh. (.) okay. (.) that's fine.=
08            =.hh doe je     dan ↑wel effe::hm, (.) .pt (0.3)
                   do  you.SG then ADV just
09            de  deur op slot enzo,
              the door on lock and.such
              =.hh will you then just, .pt (0.3) lock the door
              and such,
```

In line 3 Naomi seems to merely inquire when Romy will be home and Romy provides that information in line 5 potentially completing the sequence. But in her uptake in line 7 Naomi does not just receipt it as an informative response, but she provides approval, treating Romy's response as a proposal. An agreement was, however, not the outcome anticipated when the launched the sequence.

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is conditionally relevant. In those cases the sequence-closing third can be used to ground an analysis of the sequence.

By first treating her sister's answer as news with *oh*, Noami implies that she was expecting Romy home earlier—an expectation Romy might have been aware of, seeing as she waits 2.3s before answering. By subsequently accepting the time Romy will be home with *oké* and finally approving with *is goed*, Naomi treats her sister's answer as a proposal and claims the right to approve. Through the design of her turn she shows that she treats Romy's answer as a proposal, because it was not the answer she had anticipated. In this way she reflexively characterizes her inquiry as not just a request for information, but one asked by the big sister who is making sure that her little sister is home on time. Approval is doubly required, as Naomi now has to get Romy to lock the house.

Sequence-closing thirds can thus be used not only as receipts of a second pair part, revealing a speaker's understanding of that second pair part, but as a means of ascribing an action to it. By ascribing and addressing specific contingencies speakers also provide insight into how the first pair was to be understood. They can do so not by tacitly reconfirming that the second pair part displayed an adequate understanding (cf. Heritage, 2018), but more generally by explicating why a third turn is considered necessary and thus what contingencies the recipient raised by addressing the first pair part in a particular way with the second pair part.

6.7   Discussion & Conclusion

This paper has argued that participants in Dutch talk-in-interaction distinguish between two types of assessments, taking up either an evaluative stance or a deontic stance to the prior turn by the interlocutor. This claim was supported in two ways. First it was shown that these types of assessments differ in their turn design. When taking an evaluative stance, speakers select an assessment fitted to the local sequential context from a broad range of possible assessment terms. These assessments are also frequently prefaced by interjections such as *oh* that treat the response as informative (Heritage, 1984a; see also Goffman, 1978; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006), showing that the assessments deal with turns that are done to inform. When assessing a proposal on the other hand speakers can make use of a specific practice: *is goed* ("∅ is fine"). These are often prefaced by *oké*, acknowledging the action in the prior turn instead of focusing on its informative content (Beach, 1993; Schegloff, 2007). Second, these two types of assessments can be produced as one turn-at-talk, suggesting that each does different work. In these cases the evaluative assessment positively evaluates the agreement.

Prior work on how speakers receipt responses has shown that by using specific practices in third position, speakers display their understanding of the action status of a response. Heritage (1984a, 2012b, 2018) has recurrently shown that speakers use *oh* not simply to index a change-of-state, but to treat the answer as relevant and adequate for its informative nature. Speakers can thereby reveal how that response relates to their sequence-initiating inquiry, and thus the agenda of that inquiry (Pomerantz, 2017). This paper has shown that participants can use assessments not only to display their understanding of the response, but to actively ascribe an action to it.

Whether the recipient provided a response to convey news or implement a (counter)proposal, or possibly even another action, its action status is ascribed to it by the speaker in third position. By providing these forms of uptake, speakers thus not only display their understanding of the response, but they build and maintain the architecture of intersubjectivity (Heritage, 1984b; Rommetveit, 1976; Schegloff, 1992; Sidnell, 2014). Action formation and ascription is thus shown to be a collaborative accomplishment (Levinson, 2013; Sidnell, 2014).

While these after-next actions do not prove what some sequence-initiating action was designed to do, they can provide evidence to recipients that they have provided an adequate response. In that way, they can also reveal to analysts what type of response is adequate for the particular sequence-initiating action. Understandings are displayed in each next action (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 728), and so each move forward re-confirms that the revealed understandings are the right understandings.

Mad about jorts

Image courtesy of xkcd.com