

The construction of units in conversational talk

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ABSTRACT

The notion of Turn-Constructional Unit (TCU) in Conversation Analysis has become unclear for many researchers. The underlying problems inherent in the definition of this notion are here identified, and a possible solution is suggested. This amounts to separating more clearly the notions of TCU and Transition Relevance Place (TRP). In this view, the TCU is defined as the smallest interactionally relevant complete linguistic unit, in a given context, that is constructed with syntactic and prosodic resources within their semantic, pragmatic, activity-type-specific, and sequential conversational context. It ends in a TRP unless particular linguistic and interactional resources are used to project and postpone the TRP to the end of a larger multi-unit turn. This suggestion tries to spell out some of the assumptions that the seminal work in CA made in principle, but never formulated explicitly. (Conversation Analysis, turn construction, utterance design, linguistic resources in interaction, interactional linguistics.)*

The basic unit of talk suggested by Conversation Analysis (CA), the Turn-Constructional Unit (TCU) has been the focus of much research interest. Although the notion of the TCU as introduced by Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson 1974 is now widely accepted, the details of its interpretation are far from clear. The TCU still seems to be very much an intuitive and holistic notion, awaiting deconstruction (or decomposition) and reconstruction of the possible components and of the constitutive practices or signaling resources that participants deploy in order to make TCUs interpretable.

Recently, uncertainty has arisen as to what precisely a TCU is, and how it can be recognized in conversational talk:

(a) Some researchers have shown hesitation when talking about “units” in talk: What units are there, and on what levels?

(b) In discussing and devising the transcription system known as GAT (Selting et al. 1998), our research group found it necessary to avoid the notion of TCU, and to introduce the notion of “phrasing unit” to capture production units as transcribed from conversational talk.

(c) Some of the footnotes in Schegloff 1996 suggest that Schegloff and Charles Goodwin do not always agree on criteria for segmentation of talk into TCUs; they seem to have different notions of what a TCU is.

(d) In their recent work, Ford et al. 1996 suggest that we move away from the segmentation of talk into TCUs, and toward analysis of the practices used to form turns and make them interpretable.

All this is evidence that the notion of TCU needs to be clarified and related to other units in talk. In this article, I want first to show in detail that the notion of the TCU needs clarification, and why; and then to suggest some solutions. We need to separate TCUs more clearly from Transition Relevance Places (TRPs, see below), to distinguish TCUs that do not end in TRPs from those that do. As a consequence, we need to clarify the relations among different kinds of units: Under what conditions are units to be defined as TCUs? what kinds of units should be so defined? and under what conditions do TCUs end in TRPs?

“UNITS” IN CA AND CA-RELATED RESEARCH

The seminal paper of Sacks et al. 1974 posed, as one of the most fundamental problems for conversationalists to handle and for conversation analysts to explain, the problem of how smooth turn-taking can be achieved without too much overlap and without too many gaps. Their solution was the proposal of “a simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation.” They proposed a mechanism for the organization of turn-taking which relies on two components:

- (i) A turn-constructural component which deals with the construction of TCUs.
- (ii) A turn-allocation component which deals with the regulation and negotiation of turn allocation, at the end of each TCU, for the next such unit.

The turn-constructural component thus describes the units at the ends of which turn allocation and transition become relevant. This basic unit of talk is the TCU. How is this defined in detail?

TCUs and TRPs

TCUs end with points of possible completion of unit-types – the TRPs, which make turn transition relevant but not necessary. This means, as Schegloff insists (1996:55), that TCUs are potentially complete turns: “By ‘turn-constructural unit,’ it may be recalled, we meant to register that these units CAN constitute possibly complete turns; on their possible completion, transition to a next speaker becomes RELEVANT (although not necessarily accomplished).” The TCU is thus a “unit” in conversation which is defined with respect to turn-taking: a potentially complete turn. The TCU is not defined as a linguistic unit.

In their further discussion of TCUs, Sacks et al. 1974 mostly used examples of one- or multi-unit turns in which the “units” were indeed TCUs in this sense,

suggesting a systematic relation between TCUs and grammatical units. “There are various unit-types with which a speaker may set out to construct a turn,” they stated:

Unit-types for English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions . . . Instances of the unit-types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type under way, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that unit-type to be completed.” (Sacks et al. 1974:702)

Linguistic units – in particular, syntactic constructions such as sentences, clauses, phrases, and lexical constructions – allow the projection of possible completion or TRPs of TCUs. With respect to sentences, Sacks et al. (1974:709) said:

Sentential constructions are the most interesting of the unit-types, because of the internally generated expansions of length they allow – and, in particular, allow BEFORE first possible completion places . . . Sentential constructions are capable of being analyzed in the course of their production by a party/hearer able to use such analyses to project their possible direction and completion loci. In the course of its construction, any sentential unit will rapidly (in conversation) reveal projectable directions and conclusions, which its further course can modify, but will further define.

But other construction types can be projected, too. Sacks et al. gave the following characterization: “Various ‘turn-constructive units’ are employed; e.g., turns can be projectively ‘one word long,’ or they can be sentential in length” (1974:701). The fact that next speakers start immediately and without gap after single-word units like *What?*, or single-phrase turns such as *Met whom?*, without waiting for possible sentence completion, was taken by Sacks et al. as evidence for the projection of such single-unit turns (cf. 1974:702).

Later in the same essay, Sacks et al. continued to point out the relevance of their model:

We have proposed that the allocation of turn-space is organized around the construction of talk IN the turn. That organization appears to key on one main feature of the construction of the talk in a turn – namely, that whatever the units employed for the construction, and whatever the theoretical language employed to describe them, they still have points of possible unit completion, points which are projectable before their occurrence. (1974:720)

What matters for turn-taking is thus projected TRPs, i.e. “possible completion points” of constructions: “These turn out to be ‘possible completion points’ of sentences, clauses, phrases, and one-word constructions, . . . and multiples thereof” (1974:721). Sacks et al. pointed out, however, that the details of projection in their model still needed research: “How projection of unit-types is

accomplished, so as to allow such ‘no gap’ starts by next speakers, is an important question on which linguists can make major contributions” (1974:703).

It perhaps should be pointed out that the unit Sacks and his colleagues had in mind was fundamentally different from the units that other researchers, among them linguists, have generally looked for: units that display “self-determined, independent, recognizable completeness.” This, Sacks et al. hold, “appears to contrast with the main turn-organizational character of conversation, which is the interactional shaping of turns” (1974:727).

Sacks et al., when commenting on the structure and recognizability of units, mostly mentioned and elaborated on their syntactic structure. However, though not dealing with the matter in detail, they were well aware of the importance of prosody and intonation for the formation and recognition of units, and possibly of unit types. They comment on the role of intonation as follows:

Clearly, in some understanding of “sound production” (i.e. phonology, intonation etc.), it is also very important to turn-taking organization. For example, discriminations between *what* as a one-word question and as the start of a sentential (or clausal or phrasal) construction are made not syntactically, but intonationally. When it is further realized that any word can be made into a “one-word” unit-type, . . . via intonation, then we can appreciate the partial character of the unit-types’ description in syntactic terms. (1974:721–22)¹

As the TCU is defined with reference to linguistic structures, it is naturally of interest to students of spoken language, and to interactionally oriented linguists who feel that the conception of social interaction in ethnomethodology and CA is a useful and inspiring model of the “social interaction” in which language use is normally embedded. Yet it must be kept in mind that, as Schegloff 1996 insists, the TCU is defined with respect to the organization of turn-taking: A TCU is a potentially complete turn. It is not per definition a linguistic unit; it is an interactionally relevant unit that ends in a TRP. How, then, does it relate to linguistic units?

As we have seen, the definition of TCUs relies largely on two kinds of criteria:

(a) Syntactic structure; or better, possible syntactic construction in the given context.

(b) Projectability – or more precisely (as Schegloff 1996 makes clear), the capability of the respective unit to constitute a possibly complete turn, ending in a TRP.

As I will show, the problems mentioned result from the fact that neither of these criteria is watertight. On one hand, not every sentence, clause, phrase, and so on – even if intonationally presented as a “unit” of some kind (see below) – ends in a TRP; on the other hand, units that do end in a TRP can have multiple sentences, clauses, phrases etc. before their possible completion points (Sacks et al. 1974:721). There are many cases of semantically, pragmatically, or prosod-

ically projected further talk in a turn that exceeds the scope of a single syntactic construction before reaching a TRP. To deal with this in detail, there are two possible solutions, which in turn result in different kinds of slight amendments to the model of turn-taking as presented by Sacks et al. 1974.

THE PROBLEM

The difficulties arise with more complex TCUs. This becomes evident with such problems as the analysis of syntactically continued but prosodically independent constructions; or the analysis of “compound TCUs”; or the analysis of “big packages” or “large projects,” such as stories told in conversation. For instance, we all know intuitively that stories are produced in a number of smaller units, utterances which we delimit by notation symbols such as period, comma, semicolon, dash, and question mark. What kinds of units are these, and how do they relate to TCUs?

As pointed out above, there seems to be some disagreement within CA with respect to the segmentation of talk into TCUs. Thus, when Schegloff 1996 discusses the relation of syntax and prosody for the formation and recognition of TCUs, his conception seems to be the following: Sometimes prosody can prevent possible syntactic units from being heard and interpreted as independent TCUs. In general, however, syntax is stronger and overrides prosody in signaling TCUs and their continuation. Thus continuations of a prior sentence with a following causal clause introduced by *because* seem always to count as the continuation of the TCU, regardless of their prosodic packaging (Schegloff 1996:59). At the same time, however, Schegloff admits (fn. 26) that this is a controversial point, and that Goodwin opts for an analysis in which the prosodically independent causal clause is regarded as a new TCU. A similar problem recurs at another place (Schegloff 1996:74–5). This controversy about the segmentation of talk into TCUs indicates the necessity to clarify the notion of the TCU.

An instance of longer TCUs is also given in what have been termed “compound TCUs.” In perfect agreement with the turn-taking model, Lerner 1996 analyzes *if-then* and *when-then* constructions as “compound TCUs” – even if a prosodic break, signaling preliminary component completion, displays the entire construction in two prosodic or intonation units. An example is given here (for the notation conventions, see the Appendix and Selting et al. 1998):²

(1) K3: 103–4 ((after Nat has said that she helped her father a lot))

- 1 Nat: *bloß wenn es darum ging*
only when it happened
- 2 *daß ICH seine hilfe BRAUCHte? .hh*
that I needed his help .hh
- 3 *is egal wie? (.)*
doesn't matter how
- 4 *dann gIng das I:Rgndwie GINGS dann nich;*
then it worked somehow it didn't work then

- 5 *dann gabs Immer irgndwelche grÜNde bei ihm*
 then there were always some reasons on his side
 6 *warum er mir nich HELfen konnte; ((etc.))*
 why he couldn't help me ((etc.))

Here the beginning of the syntactic construction *if-then* or *when-then* – or, as I would rather say, the compound syntactic construction – is looked on as projecting an entire complex TCU, in which both the *if/when* and the *then* clause have been projected via syntactic compounding devices. Prosody, and intonation in particular, can signal the completion of a preliminary component of the TCU under way, or the possible locus of certain kinds of recipient responses, such as anticipatory completions of the TCU by another speaker or collaborative turn completions: “The intonation contour of an utterance can certify various syntactic constituents as complete; however, it is the syntax (informed by its sequential location) that will show if the completion of an intonation unit is a preliminary component completion or a TCU completion” (Lerner 1996:243). TCU-internal preliminary component completion, as furnished by a compound TCU, is also projectable and “provides an additional syntactic resource for recognitional entry” (1996:252). Since Lerner treats *if/when-then* constructions as projected syntactic constructions – i.e. complex sentences that end in a TRP – he is here able to confirm the primacy of syntax over prosody for the interpretation of the entire complex sentence as a TCU. Yet his treatment makes it clear that different kinds of units may occur before a TRP that are relevant for interaction – i.e. those component parts of the “compound” TCU that correspond to the single *if/when* and *then* clause, and that are signaled and delimited via intonation. The first one does not end in a TRP, and the second one does.

Other kinds of activities that routinely seem to be constructed with more than one clause or sentence are “big packages” or “larger projects,” e.g. the telling of stories or jokes, descriptions, direction-giving, and the formulation of complex arguments in argumentation sequences. In fact, ex. 1 is a fragment from a longer conversational story:

(1') K3: 77–112 (Laufnr. 036 ff.) ((Nat's entire story about her father; this story is produced after several other stories that Nat told about her and her father's relationship))

- 1 Nat: *und: (.) das WAR ne zeitlang war das SCHON*
 and for some time that was quite
 2 *ne recht gute beziehung;*
 a good relationship
 3 *aber: ähm (2.0)*
 but uhm
 4 *<<all>> also JETZ überHAUPT nich mehr; =*
 well now it isn't at all
 5 *=un jEtz is auch> so (.) geFÜHLSmäßig total*
 and now the feeling is so completely
 6 *das GEgenteil bei mir, =ne,*
 the opposite for me you know
 7 (3.0)

CONSTRUCTION OF UNITS IN CONVERSATIONAL TALK

- 8 *un man SCHLUCKT auch viel so als als tochter*
and one swallows a lot being a a daughter
- 9 Ida: [ja;
yes
- 10 (.)
- 11 Nat: *dem VATER gegen[über. =*
from your father
- 12 Ida: [hm,
hm
- 13 Nat: =SEHR viel.
very much
- 14 (1.5)
- 15 Nat: *also: (.) mir is das jEtz erst so bewUsst*
well I only realized now
- 16 *geworden was da: hh so für mechaNISmen*
what kind of mechanisms were
- 17 *abgelaufen [sind; =das'*
active there that
- 18 Ida: [man is viel zu NACHsichtig;
one is much too understanding
- 19 Nat: <<(ingressiv) JA- >> (.)
<<(ingressively)>> yes)
- 20 *geNAU;*
exactly
- 21 *man verSTEHT alles;*
one understands everything
- 22 *und SO-*
and so
- 23 *und mein VATER: (.) kAm nun auch*
and my father came to my place
- 24 *HÄU<<(all)fig an; =*
quite often
- 25 =GUT;) (.)
well okay
- 26 *seine ARbeitslosigkeit,*
his being unemployed
- 27 *daß er auch den ganzen tag .hh äh: dann*
that he was the whole day then
- 28 *eben alLEIne war,*
in fact alone
- 29 *weil seine freundin geARbeitet hat, (---)*
because his girlfriend was out working
- 30 *.hh un dann hatte er n HERZinfarkt vor: (.)*
and then he had a heart attack at
- 31 <<(all, flach) d also d mein VATER is recht JUNG; =
<<(all, flat) d well d my father is quite young
- 32 =der is erst vierVIERzig; =>
he is only forty-four)
- 33 =d vor drEi JAHren,
d three years ago
- 34 Ron: hm,
hm
- 35 Nat: *un:dh äh: dann sowieSO- =*
and uh then even more
- 36 =dann hat er ab und zu mal beKLEmmungen-
then he felt anxiety every now and then

- 37 *und Ich dann nach SANDkrug ge:(.)RAST–*
 and I then hurried to Sandkrug
- 38 *damit wir zusammen MITtag essen können–*
 so that we could eat lunch together
- 39 *damit er jemanden DA hat un so–*
 so that he had someone there and so
- 40 Nat: *.hh bloß wenn es darum ging*
 only when it happened
- 41 *daß ICH seine hilfe BRAUCHte? .hh*
 that I needed his help .hh
- 42 *is egal wie? (.)*
 doesn't matter how
- 43 *dann gIng das I:Rgndwie GINGS dann nich;*
 then it worked somehow then it didn't work
- 44 *dann gabs Immer irgndwelche grÜNde bei ihm*
 then there were always some reasons on his side
- 45 *warum er mir nich HELfen konnte;*
 why he couldn't help me;
- 46 *[.hh das (.) das is mir auch HINterher erst*
 that it was only afterward
- 47 Ron: [*((holt tief Luft))*
 ((takes a deep breath))
- 48 Nat: *so auf]gegangen;*
 that I noticed
- Ron:]
- 49 Nat: *wie das (.) wie die beziehung eigentlich*
 how that how that relationship in fact
- 50 *ABgelaufen is.=ne, (.)*
 worked you know
- 51 *daß die nämlich sehr EINseitig war.*
 that namely it was very one-sided
- 52 Ida: *hm,*
 hm
- 53 *(2.5)*
- 54 Ron: *und wie is das bei DIR zu deinem vater? ((etc.))*
 and how is it with you and your father ((etc.))

Sacks 1992 pointed out that activities like story-telling are often projected as needing more than one sentence to accomplish. Story-tellers seem to seek and/or be allotted an extended turn by producing a “preface” or “pre-sequence” such as an “announcement/invitation – ratification” before launching of the big package of the story proper (cf. Jefferson 1978). In ex. 1', lines 4–22 can be analyzed as a complex pre-sequence before the telling of the story, while lines 23–51 show the story proper. The story proper is detailed in many such internal units. These internal units may also be relevant for, e.g., the placement of continuers and other reciprocity responses by the story recipients. Story-internal side-sequences, which can be oriented to possible completions of internal units, postpone the completion of the story but do not delete its projection. In lines 31–34, the story-teller inserts an aside into such a unit; the complex unit is acknowledged by Ron with *hm*. The same kind of organization holds for other “big projects” such as extended descriptions or arguments (cf. also Kallmeyer & Schütze 1977). How are activities like this to be analyzed? What is a TCU

here: every syntactic clause, or every component part of the story, or the entire projected story?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Considering the two criteria for TCUs, we run into serious problems which show that we have to separate the notions of TCU and TRP. For the analysis of such activities as the telling of the story proper, we need to decide between two alternatives:

(a) We can rely on the criterion that “TCUs can constitute possibly complete turns,” and therefore end in TRPs. We thus treat the entire story that is being told – after its preface and ratification, up to the first point of possible story completion – as a single TCU which is organized internally into smaller units of other kinds.

(b) Alternatively, we can rely on the criterion of the syntactic unit. Then we will treat each sentence, clause, phrase etc. as a TCU, claiming that activity-type internal completion points of TCUs are blocked from being treated as TRPs (cf. Houtkoop & Mazeland 1985:599).

What are the arguments for or against each solution? The number of cases in which TCUs do not end in TRPs cannot be ignored, and we need to decide on a clear and explicit treatment of such cases.

Possible solution 1: TCUs as possibly complete turns that end in a TRP, and other kinds of units below the TCU. In this solution, we will treat the entire story, as it is told after its preface and ratification and before its possible story completion, as a projected single TCU which is organized internally into smaller units of other kinds. This has the advantage of starting out from the projected activity type and treating the formation of internal units as contingent on the constitution of activities; it is not the “units” as such that matter to the participants, but rather the constitution of activities in conversation (Schegloff 1996). In this view, it is no problem to recognize other means of projection besides syntax – prosody, semantics, pragmatics, and activity-type-specific organization schemata. Furthermore, it is no problem to explain why, within longer “projects,” not every internal unit needs to end with turn-holding devices, thus manifestly signaling incompleteness as long as the larger projection is operative; single internal units need to expound holding devices only if they are ambiguous with respect to ending in a TRP. In this view, “units” which are story-internal and thus TCU-internal will be analyzed as production units below the TCU, constituted in order to formulate the story incrementally as a whole in an orderly and recipient-designed way. An advantage of this solution is that the notion of TCU is reserved for those units that are indeed immediately relevant for the operation of the rules of turn-taking. Thus we can distinguish terminologically between units that do not end in a TRP and those that do.

This view seems to be the one advocated by Sacks in his lectures. For story-telling, he stated (1992:227),

The fact that stories take more than an utterance to produce involves that tellers should in the first instance see that they're intending to tell a story, and that it might take more than a sentence to produce, and seeing that, they turn it into at least a two-utterance thing in which they first say they're going to tell a story, get permission to do that, and then tell the story. So it's a systematic occurring fact that stories, taking more than a sentence to produce, turn out to take more than an utterance to produce. (Cf. also Jefferson 1978.)

If "utterance" is here used in the sense of the later TCU, then Sacks states that, when stories are being produced in more than one sentence, they are produced in more than one TCU; possible speaker transition is provided for after the first TCU (the story preface or story announcement). This, however, entails that, after story-telling has been projected and ratified (notwithstanding embedded side-sequences such as identification or repair sequences), the entire story that is then being told – in however many sentences or other syntactic and prosodic units until its TRP, or possible story completion point – should be viewed as one projected unit, i.e. one TCU. This corresponds to the fact that, shortly before the quoted passage, Sacks (1992:2.226) spoke of story-telling as an activity in which the story preface and ratification are designed to secure permission for a "multi-sentence utterance." This point was reinforced when Sacks related the coherence of a story to the story as a whole:

Hearer's business is not to be listening to a series of independent utterances, but to a series of sentences that have their connectedness built in (so that their connectedness has to be understood to understand any one of them [sic]). (Sacks, unpublished lectures, quoted by Psathas 1995:23)

In this view, the TCU is by no means coextensive by definition with linguistic units defined in terms of syntax and prosody. It can be coextensive with single sentences, clauses, phrases, etc.; but it can also be much longer than one such unit. At the same time, according to this view, these "big packages" must contain some other kind of "unit" below the TCU. However, a major disadvantage is that this solution is not the one chosen by Sacks et al. (though they are not always very explicit) in their articles of 1974 and later.

Possible solution 2: TCUs as possible linguistic units, and TRPs as the endings of possibly complete turns. Sacks et al. 1974 suggested that, in most cases, TCUs consist of some kind of possible syntactic construction. This has become the more common view, though it is mostly held implicitly. For this solution, we rely on syntactic criteria and treat every syntactically possible unit as a TCU. In fact, the basic components of the turn-taking model are now linguistic units. In this case, the projection of larger activity types, such as stories which project

“projects” longer than single sentences, would have the effect of constraining, overlaying, and blocking story-internal completion points of TCUs from being treated “as normal transition relevance places” (Houtkoop & Mazeland 1985:599). In their argument for this solution (which they call “closed discourse units”), Houtkoop & Mazeland consequently go as far as suggesting that, in this view, the single story-internal TCUs display story-incompleteness: “Telling a story displays a property of story-incompleteness of the speaker’s project at the end of most of the syntactical units by which the story is produced” (1985:599). There is indeed evidence that, e.g. in performing story-prefaces, participants do routinely project stories as larger “projects;” but there is no evidence that they deploy each story-internal unit, in each story, to display story-incompleteness overtly. Recipients also seem to orient to and rely on the larger projection of the story, and not necessarily to the non-story-completion of each internal unit. In the long ex. 1’, lines 25, 43, 45, 48, and 50 do not end with manifestly observable turn-holding devices.

In this view, we need to distinguish TCUs that end in TRPs from those that do not. Non-final TCUs in the turn often, but not always, project turn-holding; final TCUs project turn-yielding. The TRP of non-final TCUs in the turn is suspended until the possible turn-final TCU. The production of larger projects is describable as an incrementally produced interactive achievement in which speakers suspend TRPs, and recipients refrain from making use of suspended TRPs.

One critical point of this solution needs amendment: There are means other than syntactic ones to project single TCUs and longer “projects,” e.g. prosodic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic, and activity-type-specific devices. I will deal with such devices below. In this view, the reliance on syntactic criteria alone is unjustified (cf. Local & Kelly 1986, Local 1992, Ford et al. 1996, Selting 1996). TCUs are interpreted as the result of the interplay of syntactic, lexico-semantic, pragmatic, activity-type-specific, and prosodic devices in their sequential context.

As this is now the more common and accepted solution, I will adhere to it, taking it as the basis for discussion and for suggesting amendments. That is, I will call the smallest linguistically possible unit in a given context a TCU; one TCU or more constitutes a possible turn that ends in an operative TRP. The questions remaining are: What exactly is such a TCU? i.e., how is it made recognizable? Under what conditions do TCUs end (or not) in operative TRPs? i.e., how is projection achieved for single- and multi-unit turns? For simplicity, I will speak of TCUs “with or without” TRPs.

In the following, it should be kept in mind that I deal with the TCU as the smallest linguistically possible unit IN A GIVEN CONTEXT. I am focusing on the devices of unit and turn production. In doing so, I presuppose that TCUs are context-sensitive inferences, and thus are absolutely contingent on the activities constituted by participants via the production of TCUs and turns in that context. As some of the examples will show, there is no way to describe linguistic structures and devices as independent from the activities for which they are used. In

K3: 103-104

((Laufnr: 049))

(Nat. über ihren Vater)

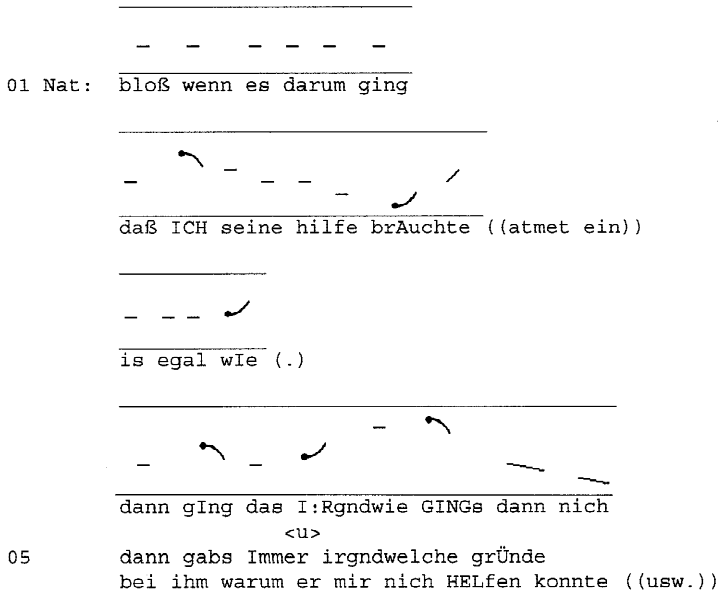


FIGURE 1: Detailed prosodic transcript of ex. 1.

particular, it is impossible to make any judgments about possible completion of units in a context-free manner. Nevertheless, it is possible to start from the inferred TCUs in a given context, trying to reconstruct the general devices that participants use in order to make recipients infer just those units as their TCUs in constituting activity in conversation.

UNITS AND TURNS

Let us look at the excerpt from ex. 1 again; see also the detailed prosodic transcript in Figure 1.³

In this excerpt, the units in lines 1–3 cannot be analyzed as a complete turn. Let us recall that, before this excerpt, Nat started out by stating that, in contrast to former times, her relationship to her father now was not good at all. After Nat has just told her recipients that she has helped her father a lot, her utterance in lines 1–2, *bloß wenn es darum ging daß ICH seine hilfe BRAUCHte?* ‘only when it occurred that I needed his help’, is not hearable as a complete turn. Apart from syntactically projecting a compound sentence (a *then*-clause following the *when*-clause), the continuation also is expected to present negatively evaluated infor-

mation that warrants Nat's change to bad feelings for her father (cf. ex. 1', 1–6). The same holds for her next utterance in line 3, *is egal wle?* – a parenthetical remark that only postpones the projected lexico-syntactic and semantic continuation. It is only at the ends of the next utterances in lines 4 and 6 – *dann gIng das I:Rgndwie GINGS dann nich* and *dann gabs Immer irgndwelche grÜnde bei ihm warum er mir nich HELfen konnte* – that a turn might be complete.

As Lerner 1996 has shown for *if/when-then* clauses – and as Couper-Kuhlen 1996, Günthner 1996, and others have shown for other kinds of compound sentences – the formulation of such compound syntactic constructions in one prosodic unit or more is interactionally relevant. Furthermore, Crystal 1979 has shown that the traditional notion of “sentence” involves many problems when applied to data from (English) conversational talk. He therefore argues that “the CLAUSE is the unit in terms of which the material is most conveniently organized . . . To work in terms of clauses, moreover, correlates much better with a prosodic analysis of such data” (Crystal 1979:159–60). Perhaps this is why Sacks et al. 1974 included not only “sentential, . . . phrasal, and lexical constructions,” but also “clausal constructions” as the types of syntactic units that can be used to form a TCU.

This can also be seen in the example: The component parts of the entire stretch of talk are organized in syntactic clauses which are packaged as units by prosody. The single clauses – the *when*-clause, the parenthetical clause, and the two *then*-clauses – are used as components in the incremental formulation of this part of the speaker's turn. If we listen to this fragment, we immediately recognize these smaller units. Each smaller unit is presented as a syntactically and prosodically independent utterance, with its own accents and thus its own semantic foci. Each of these clauses can also be interpreted as a component part of the activity that is constituted here. I therefore suggest that such clauses, if they are packaged as independent units by prosody, should be analysed, for all practical purposes of conversational interaction, as the smallest linguistically possible units constituted in the given context.

Many types of compound sentences which are composed of two clauses (causal, concessive, relative etc.) can be constructed in a prosodically integrated way to constitute one TCU – and thus as performing one kind of interactional task; or they can be constructed in a prosodically independent way to constitute two TCUs, and then as performing another kind of interactional task. It is the interplay of syntax and prosody that constitutes and delimits TCUs in general: Possibly complete syntactic constructions, in co-occurrence with possibly complete intonation contours, constitute and delimit “units” which are interpretable as semantically possible chunks and recipient-designed information units (cf. Chafe, e.g. 1993). In our example, then, the possible turn is composed of the clearly separate TCUs in lines 1–2, 3, 4 and 5–6 – all clauses of a compound sentence which I suggest should be all analyzed as TCUs. Only the TCUs in lines 4 and 6 end in TRPs.

This suggestion entails that syntactically compound sentences can, via prosody, be packaged as one or more TCUs. If, by syntactic compounding devices, a

second component part has been projected, then a TCU may be complete at the end of the first clause; but only the second (i.e. the projected) TCU can end in a TRP. In general, if we accept that the interplay of syntax and prosody (in the given semantic/pragmatic and sequential context) can package and chunk talk into units that may end in TRPs but need not do so, and thus may but need not be coextensive with a possible turn, then we need to distinguish TCUs as the basic linguistic units, and TRPs as the ends of possible turns made up of one or more than one TCU.

In ex. 1, TCUs are in most cases coextensive with intonational or prosodic units that configure and delimit possible or designedly complete syntactic constructions, e.g. sentences, clauses, phrases, or one-word constructions. However, as I will show, prosody and intonation cannot be seen as providing a unique criterion overriding, e.g. syntax. The TCU is not identical with an “intonation unit” or “prosodic unit.”

Single TCUs and their combination in multi-unit turns seem to be designed to effect the emergent and incremental intra-turn organization of activities. This includes, e.g., the organization of story-telling (cf. also Selting 1994, 1995); or the distinction between certain activity types performed with prosodically differently phrased kinds of causal and concessive constructions (cf. Günthner 1996, Couper-Kuhlen 1996); or the chunking of information (cf. also Chafe 1993) in an interactionally relevant and recipient-designed manner.

The interpretation of a TRP presupposes the completion of a TCU. That means that every unit ending in a TRP is also a TCU; but a TCU need not necessarily end in a TRP. The definition of the TCU by Sacks et al. 1974 entails the condition under which a TCU ends in a TRP: namely, if and only if it is also a possibly complete turn.

In single-unit turns, a TCU always ends in a TRP. In multi-unit turns, however, there are both non-final and final TCUs within the turn. If a turn is possibly complete, all the prior TCUs taken together form the multi-unit turn that ends in a TRP. But as long as a possible turn-final TCU is not complete, the turn is not complete, and there is no TRP. If a possible turn-final TCU is complete, there is a TRP. This means that the turn may end here, but as we will see, it need not end here: all kinds of units are flexible and expandable (Selting 1996).⁴ A turn ending in a TRP can thus be built with one TCU or more than one, and TCUs can be built with one or more intonation units. We can build the following abstract model of the turn:

Single-unit turn:

[TCU] ([] ...)
TRP1 (TRP2 TRP3 ...)

Multi-unit turn:

[TCU 1] ([TCU 2] ...) [TCU n] ([] ...)
TRP1 (TRP2 TRP3 ...)

Parentheses denote optional components of the model.

Brackets denote possible TCUs; further, right-hand brackets denote possible further TRPs.

Following this, we can always begin by analyzing TCUs, and then further analyze how interlocutors distinguish and recognize operative TRPs – i.e., how they distinguish non-final TCUs from final TCUs in a turn (cf. Selting 1996).

I will next look more closely at TCUs and their relation to TRPs in their sequential context. What is a TCU, precisely? What are the roles and relations of linguistic structures such as single-clause and compounding syntactic, prosodic, lexico-semantic, pragmatic, and activity-type-specific construction schemata? How are TRPs projected and made recognizable? To elaborate on both the criteria used to define the TCU, I will first deal with the interplay of syntax and prosody for the formation of single TCUs, in order (a) to show that syntax cannot be used as the only criterion; and (b) to show how “units” are formed and made recognizable in talk – in particular TCUs, and possible turns ending in TRPs. After that, I will deal with the types of projection of larger multi-unit turns to show that we need to distinguish TCUs with and without operative TRPs.

UNIT-FORMATION IN GENERAL: THE INTERPLAY OF SYNTAX AND PROSODY

Recent research has shown that, by deploying co-occurring practices – signaling cues or construction schemata from pragmatics, lexico-semantics, syntax, prosody, and non-verbal cues – participants in conversation can construct not only unclear and camouflaged cases, but also more or less clear yet flexible “units” which are, e.g., syntactically and prosodically constituted and delimited (cf. Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996, Selting 1995, 1996, Ford et al. 1996). To be sure, Ford et al. want to direct their attention more to participants’ practices of turn construction, rather than to the segmentation of TCUs; and Schegloff 1996 maintains that the production of units is contingent on the constitution of activities in conversation, while I myself conclude that the signaling and constitution of “units” is an epiphenomenon of devices such as turn- and/or unit-holding, yielding, starting, and ending. But these devices nevertheless result in retrospectively recognizable “units” which have to be deconstructed and reconstructed as resources for constituting activity in conversation. Internal cohesion of such units is displayed by deploying and continuing recognizable syntactic and intonational/prosodic construction schemata; and delimitation of such units is achieved by displaying syntactic and prosodic breaks in talk (cf. Local & Kelly 1986, Local 1992). Clear cases of units are produced by using converging practices; the use of diverging practices or signaling cues results in larger units, unclear cases of units, camouflage of boundaries, split-up units etc.

Since the possible completion of turns presupposes the possible completion of TCUs, we can start by analyzing TCU formation in general; later, we can ask under what conditions TCUs are interpreted as possibly complete turns that end in a TRP. For TCUs in general, we have to answer the following questions: How are units formed and made recognizable? Why can we not define units with ref-

erence either to syntax alone or to prosody alone? What are the construction methods or practices that participants use to make TCUs, and possible turns with their TRPs, interpretable?

The simplest case is that in which a simple sentence co-occurs with an intonation contour, and the designed completion of the syntactic construction co-occurs with the designed completion of the intonation contour – e.g. a turn-yielding final fall or rise in pitch, in order to signal and delimit a single-unit TCU and turn. Because this simple case is unproblematic, I will not deal with it further.

Elsewhere (Selting 1996), I have dealt with TCUs that could be described syntactically as flexible possible sentences, and their expansions which are configured as units via the co-occurrent use of flexible possible intonation contours. I will take this as my present starting point, and will then focus on more difficult cases in which possible syntactic structures and possible intonation contours are in conflict.

Syntax and prosody are conceived here as linguistic construction schemata which are used as production devices in unit and turn construction. With reference to linguistic resources of social interaction, the term “construction schema,” or simply “schema,” is used to denote the way in which a flexible, dynamic, and situationally adaptable linguistic structure is organized. Construction schemata provide knowledge about constitutive entities of a structure which can be expectably linked, in more or less tight and in more or less varied ways; their exact relation and enactment are dependent on and open to the task at hand. Schemata are assumed to be cognitively and interactionally relevant.⁵ Linguistic construction schemata seem to have gestalt-like properties; i.e. they foreground the holistic (and yet analytically decomposable or deconstructable) nature of a “unit.” Linguistic schemata typically have a beginning, a trajectory, and an end. The initiation of a particular construction schema, as well as its emergent production, can be used as a device to project schema closure or completion. Since schemata are flexible, however, this projected completion can be flexibly organized and can be adapted to the task at hand. Both syntax and prosody provide holistic construction schemata that are realized with flexible beginnings and ends, as well as flexible details of their internal structure. Irrespective of the flexible and variable details, the actual tokens are recognizable as realizations of a particular holistic schema on which participants rely for their orientation in constructing and interpreting units, e.g. the schema of a “possible sentence,” a “possible clause,” a “possible phrase,” or a particular kind of “intonation contour” with a “possible unit or turn-ending pitch (movement).”

In the following sections, I will first deal with cases in which the differential prosodic packaging of possible syntactic constructions (and their expansions) shows that TCUs in general, and possible turns ending in a TRP in particular, cannot be determined with reference to syntax alone. Then I will deal with cases in which the splitting of syntactic constructions into several prosodic units shows

The relative clause in line 826–27 is prosodically integrated into a single TCU with the prior clause; but all the other expansions in lines 827–32 are accomplished by the use of downsteps and thus exposed in separate TCUs, also ending in TRPs, which are nonetheless formulated as grammatically cohesive with the prior TCUs (for details see Selting 1996). See also the more detailed representation in Figure 2.

My argument is that possible completion points of syntactic structures constitute potential completion points of TCUs and/or possible turns; but it is the prosodic contextualization that signals whether possible completion points of such structures – though they are loci of participant responses, such as reciprocity tokens and early starts – are designed to be actual TRPs. If the speaker deploys continuing prosodic devices in order to contextualize continuation of the unit-under-production for another clausal or phrasal expansion, then this expansion is indeed displayed as an expansion of the same unit beyond its prior possible syntactic completion point. If, however, prosody is used in order to constitute a prosodic break between a possible syntactically complete construction and its grammatically cohesive expansion, then this grammatically cohesive expansion is packaged and contextualized as a new unit; and if it completes a possibly complete turn, this expansion is also a new TRP. The contextualization of expansions either as prosodically integrated into the same TCU, or as exposed in a new TCU, can of course be used as a resource for quite different interactional purposes (for more detail, see Selting 1994, 1995, 1996).

An example that shows even more clearly that syntactic units themselves can be recognized only by attending to their prosodic packaging is the following, in which an instance of the same wording is used twice, but with different prosodic packaging. This example shows the relevance of the interaction of syntax and prosody for the constitution of units.

(3) K1: 980ff.

- 979 Nat: *ach dieses beneFIZkonZERT,*
 \ F(\ /)
 ⟨l l⟩
 oh this benefit concert
- 980 Ron: *ja; (.)*
 \
 ⟨all⟩
 yeah
- 981 Nat: *JAA.; geNAU; da mußt ich ARbeiten;*
 → M(\) M(\) M(\)
 yeah right at that time I had to work
- 982 Ron: *(.) AH: [jA;*
 M(/ \
 oh yeah
- 983 Ida: *[mhm,*
 \
 (.)
- 984 Nat: *genau da mußt ich ARbeiten un dann: war ich noch*
 → F(\
 right at that time I had to work and then I was

K4: 824-833

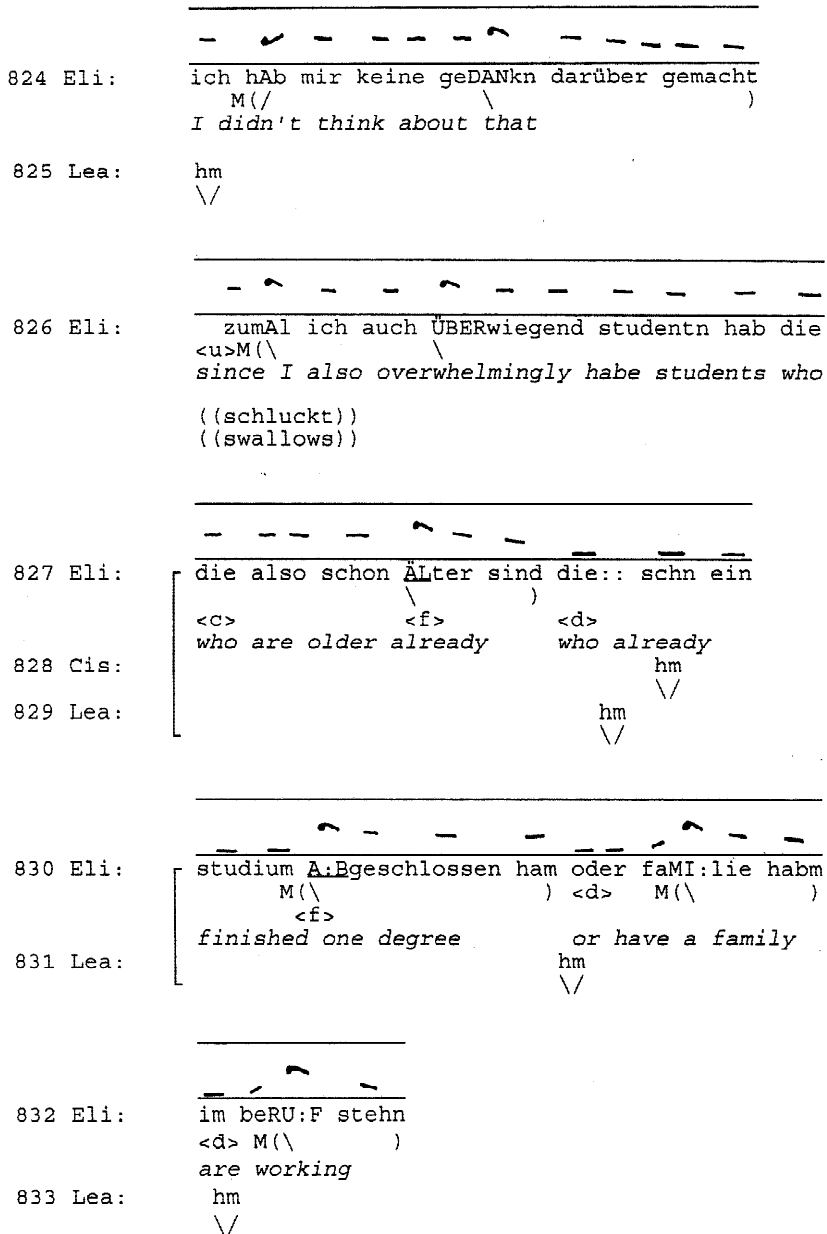


FIGURE 2: Detailed prosodic transcript of ex. 2.

The next two examples show how the clauses of a complex sentence can be prosodically displayed in different ways:

(4) K0: 37:7 ff. ((Dor tells a story about how a doctor found out that she smoked))

- 01 Dor: *aso MEIN: hausarz hat soFORT gemerkt daß ich rauche; (-)*
 so my doctor immediately noticed that I smoke
 02 *der hat mich ABgehört und hat gesacht RAUchen sie,*
 he listened to my lungs and said do you smoke
 03 *meint ich JAA,*
 I said yes
 04 *meint er JA;*
 he said yes
 05 *HÖRT man.*
 one hears it
 06 (--)
 07 Mar: *N Aja; is wahrSCHEINlich dEswegn weil die brONchien*
 M(\ F(\ / \)
 well it's probably like that because the bronchia
 08 *da IMmer drunter l[eiden.*
 ↑ \ _)
 always suffer from that
 09 Dor: *[JAA;*
 yes

(5) K1: 431–37

- 431 Nat: *in wElchem semester BIS du denn;*
 S(\ \)
 what semester are you in then
 432 (0.8)
 433 Ida: *also im (0.2) in kUnst im DRITten;*
 S(/ \)
 well in in arts in the third
 434 *und im (0.2) in dEutsch im VIERten.*
 F(\ \)
 and in in German in the fourth
 435 Nat: *hm,*
 \/
 436 Ida: *weil ich am anfang mal geWECHselt hab hin und her (und);*
 <all> M(\)
 because at the beginning I changed here and there (and)
 437 Nat: *hm,*
 \/

In ex. 4, a causal clause is prosodically integrated with the preceding main clause, in which it is already cataphorically referred to with *dEswegn* ‘like that’; but in ex. 5, the causal clause is added later, after the recipient’s continuer *hm*. In ex. 4, the causal clause seems to have been designed as a part of the TCU at least as early as the speaker approached the end of her main clause; but in ex. 5, the speaker seems to be reacting to her recipient’s continuer by extending her prior main clause with a causal clause. In the latter case, the causal clause is also built to connect cohesively with and to continue the main clause syntactically; but it is here displayed as a new TCU by Ida’s leaving space for Nat to provide her reciprocity token, and by her starting anew prosodically. In ex. 4, the main clause and

K2:30-32

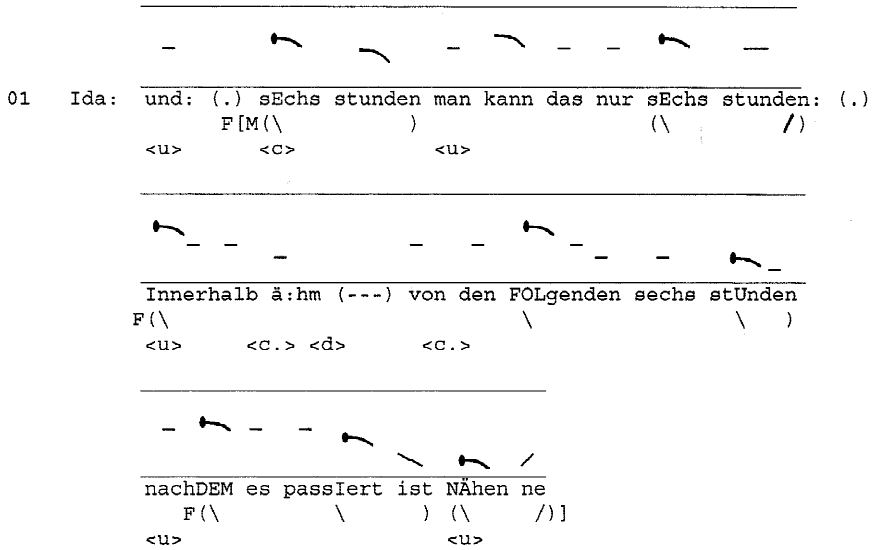


FIGURE 3: Detailed prosodic transcript of ex. 6.

Here the sentence is split into five prosodic units. The upstep for *man kann das nur sEchs stundn*: ‘you can only for six hours’ seems to present this as the beginning of a new prosodic unit. Another beginning of a new prosodic unit seems to be displayed when the upstep for *Innerhalb* signals a new beginning of a new prosodic unit for this repair of the prior formulation. Likewise, *nachDEM* and *NÄhen* are displayed as the beginnings of new prosodic units via upsteps in pitch. Almost all component parts of the entire turn, except *stundn*: at the end of line 31, end with possible prosodic and intonational completions. The first two prosodic units have one pitch accent each, and they end in falls to mid pitch; but the phrase *Innerhalb ä:hm . . von den FOLgenden sechs stUnden* ‘within uhm . . the following six hours’ is presented as a phrase that has three pitch accents on a descending line, ending with possible turn-yielding pitch. The same is true for the two falling pitch accents in *nachDEM es passIert ist* ‘after it happened’. Here, then, possible turn-yielding pitch contours are used in order to package phrases that do not by themselves constitute possible syntactic units in this context; a possible syntactic construction is split up into several component prosodic phrases. In spite of this prosodic incohesiveness, the entire clause is understood as a single syntactically complex sentence, with an embedded temporal clause *man kann das nur Innerhalb von den FOLgenden sechs stUndn nachDEM es passIert ist NÄhen ne* ‘you can only sew it up within the following six hours from when it happened you

know', produced after several self-repairs. Only the entire complex sentence is interpretable as a TCU.

The same happens in the next example; see the detailed prosodic transcript in Figure 4.

- (7) K1: 947–52 (from Selting 1995:77–78) ((on Ron's band))
- 947 Ron: *wir HAM in diesem semester Einige Auftritte gehAbt;*
 M(↑\ \ \ \ \)
 we did give several performances this semester
- 948 ((räuspert sich))
 ((clears his throat))
- 949 *Auch: ähm:– (1.0)*
 M(\)–
 <d>
 also uhm
- 950 *Überwiegend muß ich sagn– (0.5) Anläßlich ähm:– (1.5)*
 M(\)– M(\)–
 <c> <c>
 mainly I must say occasioned by uhm
- 951 *jAa des STREIKS der gewEsen is: (0.5)*
 T,F(\ \ _)
 <d>
 well the strike that was going on
- 952 *m:[uSIK soll ja[(.) hier ganz ver[schwInden. =*
 T(\ _)
 <u><all>
 music is as you know threatened to be abolished here
- 953 Nat: [mhm, [mhm,mhm,mhm, [mh[m,
 \/
 \/
- 954 Ida: [mhm,
 \/
 \/
- 955 Ron: =*die IEhrerausbildung. =nech,*
 <c>T(_ /)
 the teacher training you know

Here Ron produces numerous signalings of “trouble,” and parentheses, in the course of the production of his complex sentence *wir ham in diesem semester einige auftritte gehabt, auch überwiegend anläßlich des streiks der gewesen is*. Besides inserting the parenthetical phrase *muß ich sagn* ‘I must say’, the hesitation signal *ähm:*, and the discourse marker *JAA*, the speaker seems to begin a new “attempt” with each of the phrases *Auch ähm:* ‘also uhm’, *Überwiegend muß ich sagn* ‘mainly I must say’, *Anläßlich ähm* ‘when uhm’, and *jAa des STREIKS der gewEsn is* ‘yeah the strike that was going on’. The pitch peaks in each of the first three beginnings reach about equal height; thus they do not configure the pitch accents as constituting a cohesively falling global pitch contour with descending pitch peaks. The fourth beginning, at *jAa des STREIKS der gewEsn is*, steps down in pitch and starts a new contour – which is then itself constituted by three successively falling pitch accents. In some of these component elements, the speaker uses holding devices (such as *ähm*, sound stretches, or level pitch) before pausing, and he starts the next prosodic unit with continuing pitch (denoted by <c>);

schAusprecher ‘I also think that different announcers of the daily news’ (with a self-repair *tagespau schAusprecher*), ending with the “hesitation signal” *öh*, already with downstepped pitch, and a pause. But then the speaker produces the parenthetical phrase *oder überhAupt öh: NACHrichtensprecher* ‘or newscasters in general’. This is a self-repair, replacing the prior reference to speakers of a particular news program with speakers of all news programs. The parenthetical phrase is already begun with a downstep for the *öh* that signals the interruption of the possible sentence, and low pitch is continued for the rest of the parenthetical phrase. After another pause, the speaker resumes the suspended sentence, and continues it with *dieSELbe nAchticht GANZ unterschiedlich vOrlesen* ‘read the same news item quite differently’. This latter part, however, is produced with two different global contours (with two falling pitch accents each) and an upstep in between; thus the prosody here seems to suggest two different prosodic units. These seem to be constituted here in order to signal emphasis: After Nat has voiced her opinion that all newscasters speak in a very similar way, Ron emphasizes his argument against Nat’s. Here, too, in spite of the prosodic lack of cohesion, the entire construction is heard as one possible sentence and TCU, with an internal repair phrase. Ron’s addition of another expansion in a new prosodic unit (line 701) confirms the interpretation of emphasis for his device of splitting a possible syntactic unit into several prosodic units.

In contrast to the possible sentences and their expansions looked at previously, the examples considered here present cases in which the prosodically packaged stretches could not be analyzed as possible TCUs by themselves. Such examples show that in cases of conflict between the syntactic and the prosodic signaling of possible units – i.e. when possible prosodic completions are used at places other than possible syntactic completions – syntax may be stronger and may override more local prosodic signaling. Discrepancies and divergences between syntactic and prosodic signaling of units can be used for interactive purposes, e.g. to contextualize and “edit” hesitating speech and/or self-repair, with the new beginning of a new unit after the old one has been relinquished and left unfinished. This is also contextualized by hesitation signals, recycled beginnings etc., or to contextualize emphasis; for this a syntactic unit is often packaged as more than one prosodic unit, without signals of hesitation or self-repair (cf. also Halliday’s 1967 notion of “tonicity”). In both cases of discrepancy, syntax will override prosody, and a syntactically possible construction will be heard as a TCU – or, in the appropriate context, as a possible turn. This analysis is also attested by the recipient responses which, if provided at all, are normally provided around the ends of such entire TCUs.

This shows that TCUs cannot be determined with reference to prosody alone, because the prosody may package different phrases that are not complete units by themselves. As long as syntax, in yet unfinished units, has projected a continuation that is continued and fulfilled in the following constructions; then syntax

overrides prosody for the interpretation of units. Since it is here only the entire syntactic unit that “CAN constitute possibly complete turns” (Schegloff 1996:55), in these cases it is the syntactic unit that must be analyzed as a TCU and/or possible turn. This analysis corroborates my earlier analysis of syntax as the more far-reaching and global device, and prosody as the more local contextualization device (Selting 1996).

The examples in this and the previous section show that a syntactically possible unit and a prosodically possible unit need not be coextensive; thus, neither needs to be constitutive of TCUs or possible turns. In one set of cases, prosody seems to override syntax; in the other, syntax seems to override prosody. A TCU is thus a unit that is constituted and delimited by the interplay of syntax and prosody: It is constituted as a cohesive whole by the deployment of syntactic and prosodic construction schemata, and it ends with the co-occurrence of a possible syntactic and a possible prosodic unit completion in its sequential context.

In most cases, a TCU is indeed coextensive with an intonation unit. However, there are cases in which syntactic segments smaller than a syntactically possible construction, in its given sequential context, are produced as prosodic or intonation units. These intonation-unit-packaged stretches of talk cannot be interpreted as possibly complete TCUs because they are syntactically not possibly complete in the given context. It is precisely such cases that show that we cannot equate the prosodic or intonation unit with the TCU.

THE PROJECTION OF MULTI-UNIT TURNS WITH INTERNAL TCUS

The projection of single units is achieved both syntactically and prosodically. Now I want to consider larger turns. I will show that, if we accept and take seriously the projection criterion for the turn, then we have to recognize different kinds of projection that produce not only single-unit turns, but also multi-unit turns. In these cases, non-final TCUs in the turn do not end in operative TRPs; thus the projection of multi-unit turns results in blocking TRPs at the ends of the non-final TCU(s) in the projected turn.

For the projection of multi-unit turns, speakers can use syntactic compounding as well as semantic, pragmatic, or activity-type-specific devices. I will present examples of each type. These devices, however, are not intended to form a closed list; there may be other types of devices that also should be incorporated.

Larger turns projected via syntactic compounding

Syntactic compounding devices for projecting more than a single clause include the initiation of complex sentences that are constructed of two clauses, i.e. *if-then* and *when-then* clauses which construct a compound sentence and also form a complex turn (cf. Lerner 1996). To be sure, these kinds of syntactic constructions can also be constructed in a single prosodic unit (cf. the causal clauses given above; also, e.g., the prosodically integrated construction *wenn die dich Abhören*

dann HÖRN die ob du rauchs (Selting 1995:348). However, they are often produced in two component parts. Consider ex. 1 once more: After the topic of complaining about their fathers has been established, and after Nat has told her recipients that she helped her father a lot, Nat's first complex clause – *bloß wenn es darum ging daß ICH seine hilfe BRAUCHte* – is not a possible turn. Because she begins with a *when*-clause, something additional has been projected: a *then*-part of this compound sentence and turn. The next line, *is egal wie*, is a kind of parenthetical side-remark before the projected next component of Nat's turn. Nevertheless, both after the first clause of the compound sentence and after the side-remark, prosodic or melodic breaks are clearly displayed, suggesting that several TCUs combine to form the turn.

Lexico-semantically or pragmatically projected larger turns

Ex. 1 can also be analyzed as a case of semantically projected larger turns. Not only does the starting of a compound syntactic construction with a *when*-component make a syntactic *then*-component expectable, but Nat's talk in her prior units has also made some specific semantic/pragmatic relation expectable. Nat has just previously told her recipients that, in contrast to former times, she now does not have a good relationship with her father. By saying that she has helped her father a lot – a positively evaluated piece of information – she has led hearers to expect some piece of negatively evaluated information, to warrant the change in her feelings toward her father. This is why, in this sequential context, the first part of her construction in line 4, *dann GING das*, cannot be heard as a possibly complete TCU.

Other kinds of lexico-semantically or pragmatically projected complex turns that may be produced with one or more TCUs are illustrated in the following:

(9) K1: ((Ida explains why she does not want to change universities))

- 441 Ida: *das: MÖCHT ich nich; =das LOHNT sich nich (---) für mich.*
 I don't want that that's not worth it for me
- 442 (.)
- 443 Ida: *Ersmal m: würd ich dann irgndwo hInkommn.:*
 M(\ \
- 444 *womÖglich noch in ein anderes BUNdesla:nd, (—)*
 \ \ /)
 maybe even in another state
- 445 *und dann da mÖcht ich nich BLEI:bm, (.)*
 M(\ \ /)
 < all > < all >
 and then I don't want to stay there
- 446 *weil Lehrer ja wohl (.) NUR in dEm bundesland*
 because from what I know teachers are only employed
- 446 *angestellt werden wo se auch studert habm. =ne,*
 in that state in which they also studied you know
- 447 (.)
- 448 Nat: *JA;*
 really

- (10) K1: ((Ida explains why she commutes every day))
- 820 Ida: *das kAm auch- (.) ich mUßte mich entSCHEIDEN.*
 (\)- F(\ _)
 that was because I had to make a decision
- 821 *entweder (0.7) zuHAUse wohn und fürn AUto arbeiten, (.)*
 M(/ /)
 either live at home and work for a car
- 822 *oder HIER wohn und für ne WOHNung arbeit[n.]*
 F(\ _)
 or live here and work for a flat
- 823 Nat: [mhm,
 \/
 (1.0)]
- 824 Ida: *un da hab ich mich LIEber für das AUto entschieden;*
 M(/ \)
 <all all>
 and then I decided in favor of the car

In 9, in Ida’s explanation why she does not want to transfer to another university, she uses the expression *Ersmal* ‘first of all’ for a first component of her explanation; she thus projects another component, which she provides with the unit beginning *und dann* ‘and then’ in line 445. Similar projections can be made with expressions such as *erstens–zweitens* ‘first–second’, or *einerseits–andererseits* ‘on one hand–on the other hand’. In 10, Ida first introduces the fact that she had to make a decision, then she elaborates on this by formulating the alternatives; by first providing an *entweder* ‘either’ component, she projects an *oder* ‘or’ component.

In exx. 9–10, the projection is achieved by using particular lexical expressions which form one part of a paired sequence; but in other examples, the projection is achieved by relying on pragmatically conventional sequencing devices:

- (11) K4: 107–11
- 107 Cis: *man k' (..) aso frAu kann eigentlich nich sAgn:*
 F(/ \)
 you c’ well women can’t really say
- 108 *daß es so: äh !DIE! feministische theoloGIE gibt. =*
 / _)
 that the single feminist theology exists
- 109 *=sonnern da gibts gAnz viel verschiedene STRÖmungn- und**
 <all >M(\ ↑-) -
 but there are very many different branches and
- 110 Eli: *mhm, =*
 \/
 111 Cis: *=VIEle arbeiten halt auch so mit ((usw.))*
 many work with ((etc.))

Here Cis first rejects a presupposition inherent in the participants’ prior talk about feminist theology (‘women can’t really say that a single uniform feminist theology exists’); she thus projects a correction to come, a *sonnern* ‘but’ component – the information, in lines 109 ff., that there are different branches of feminist theology. Similarly, in ex. 10, the mention that Ida had to make a decision (line 820) projects the elaboration that is then given. Another kind of lexico-

respective second parts; they are not designed to form complete turns by themselves in their given contexts. They are designed as separate TCUs, the TRPs of which are blocked until the end of the projected multi-unit larger “project.”

Activity-type projected larger turns

This kind of projection results from participants’ knowledge about particular activity types such as story-telling, describing, direction-giving, or argumentation, and their normal trajectory in interaction. As noted before, these “big projects” are usually prefaced by “invitation/announcement” and “ratification” in order for the prospective speaker to gain the floor for an extended multi-unit turn at talk (cf. above, and Houtkoop & Mazeland 1985). In comparison to the more general pragmatic projection devices dealt with above, which can be deployed within various types of “big projects,” activity-type-specific projections are more specific of the activity type at hand.

For story-telling, the teller who has been yielded the extended turn is expected to “make the point of the story” in as many TCUs as necessary; this “point” may be the climax of the story, or another “tellable point.” As long as this far-reaching projection is under way, and the story is thus recognizably not complete, the turn needs to be held with particular turn-holding devices only when possible internal syntactic and/or semantic completion points must be prevented from being prematurely interpreted as TRPs. In ex. 1’, after the initiation of story-telling in lines 23–24, the telling of the complaint is projected; after the first mentioning of this complaint in *I:Rgndwie gIngs dann nich* (line 43), a further explanation, and thereafter a kind of assessment or coda, is expectable in order to complete the story-telling. This is indeed provided by Nat in lines 46 ff. At places where no manifest turn-holding signals are being used, the projection of the story is still valid because of the participants’ knowledge about the activity of story-telling. In cases of, e.g. argumentation, the activity-type-specific projections also include the distribution of tasks for the proponent and the opponent (cf. also Kallmeyer & Schütze 1977).

Local prosodic projection of “more-to-come”

Apart from the more far-reaching types of projection, there is the more local prosodic turn-holding for the projection of “more-to-come” at the end of otherwise possibly complete turns. In previous work, I have used ex. 13 to demonstrate a particularly clear case of prosodic turn-holding at the end of syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically possible turn completions. Here level pitch accents – i.e. pitch accents which may be used as final pitch accents in non-final TCUs, but not as final pitch accents in designedly complete final TCUs in the turn – are used to signal turn-holding. They project a continuation of the turn with, e.g. further TCU(s) that end in falling or rising pitch; these then signal designed turn completion.

- (13) K1: 422–31 (from Selting 1996:376)
- 422 Nat: *aber KUNST is aber nich kein gutes Angebot hier. =oder,*
 L,F(\ \ /)
 but there's not much offered in art here is there
- 423 Ida: (0.5) *ES GE:HT. NEE:; (0.3) NICH so sOnderlich gUt.*
 F(\ _) M(\) F(\ \ _)
 it's all right no not so very good
- (0.5)
- 424 Nat: *mhm–*
 –
 (1.0)
- 425 Ida: *A:ber ich mach das jetzt hier zuENDe– (0.7)*
 → M(– ↑–)
 ⟨f⟩
 but I'm going to finish this now here
- 426 Ida: *wEil: eine ausbildung BRAUCH der mensch– (1.4)*
 → M(– ↑–)
 because everyone needs an education
- 427 Ida: *aso s hAb ich mir jetzt so geSA:GT. (0.2)*
 ⟨all⟩ F(\ _)
 or so I've said to myself now
- 428 Ida: *und: (0.2) ich KÜMmer mich da nich wEiter drum– (0.7)*
 → M(\ ↑–)
 and I'm not going to worry about it any more
- 429 Ida: *ich m Ach das hier zuENDe– (0.7)*
 → M(– ↑–)
 ⟨ all ⟩
 I'm going to finish this here
- 430 Ida: *un mal sEhn was DANN kommt. (1.0)*
 F(\ _)
 and I'll see what happens then
- 431 Nat: *in wElchem semester BIS du denn;*
 R(\ \)
 what semester are you in anyway

On syntactic, semantic, and discourse-pragmatic grounds, Ida's turn could be complete after each of the TCUs in lines 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, and 430. They all end after syntactically possible sentences; they present semantically complete pieces of information, and no announcement or preface has projected a longer contribution. Yet the TCUs in lines 425, 426, 428, and 429 are produced with final level pitch accents, to which Ida has jumped up from preceding lower pitch. After each of these units, she even leaves quite long pauses, but the recipients do not take the floor. In each case, the level pitch accent is used as a prosodic turn holding device. (See Selting 1996:376–7 for further evidence of the interactional relevance of this analysis of level pitch accents.)

With reference to the activities constituted here, one might argue as follows: By admitting that her university does not offer much in her subject, as Ida did in line 423, she is now expected to give an account for staying here. In this view, the utterances in lines 425 ff. would have been projected pragmatically. Nat's continuer in line 424 could be analyzed as allocating the turn to Ida for just such an account. Yet this account could, in principle, have been given only as *A:ber ich*

mach das jetzt heir zuENde, with falling pitch; in this case, the fact that Ida wants to finish what she has begun at her present university would have been presented as the account. Furthermore, if line 426, *wEil: eine ausbildung BRAUCH der mensch*, had been presented with final falling pitch, the account could have been understood as saying that she wants to finish at her university in order to complete her education. However, in the example as it was produced, Ida presents these utterances as only parts of the account, prosodically projecting more to come. In line 427, she ends a possible turn-final commenting unit with possible turn-final pitch, thus signaling possible turn completion here. But neither in the gap at the end of line 427, nor in the gap after starting her next unit in line 428, does the recipient Nat take over; Ida then continues her turn by providing more units of account in lines 428–30. Again, if the continued account had been presented with falling pitch, it could have been complete after any of the utterances in lines 428, 429, and 430. But again, Ida chooses to present the TCUs in lines 428–429 not as possibly final, but as pre-final TCUs of the turn. It is only the TCU in line 430 that is formulated with falling pitch again, and thus signals possible turn completion for the second time. After a pause, Nat takes over.

Thus, even if a TCU is possibly complete – syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically – prosody can be used on its own in order to project turn continuation. Prosody is manifestly used in ex. 13 to prevent an interpretation of the completion points of the TCU as TRPs. At the same time, we can clearly recognize the internal TCUs, some of which in this case are even followed by quite long pauses. The recipient holds off her response until the prior speaker has clearly produced a syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and prosodic completion – in which she has also oriented away from the point elaborated on here, and has oriented toward the future by using the commonplace expression *un mal sehn was dann kommt* ‘and I’ll see what happens then’. For a further example, see ex. 1’: Mid rising intonations (lines 26–33) and level intonations (35–39) are used as prosodic turn-holding devices in order to display the current TCU as non-final in the turn, and to project continuation.⁸

In general, rising and falling pitch at the end of possible syntactically complete constructions can be used to signal turn-yielding, whereas final level or only slightly rising pitch is used to signal turn-holding for more to come (see Selting 1996 for more detail). This deployment of pitch at the end of TCUs in German corroborates the rules of turn-taking of Sacks et al. 1974. In unmarked cases, a speaker is allotted the floor for one TCU, at the end of which turn-allocation has to be organized or negotiated again. In these unmarked cases, the speaker uses falling or rising final pitch as a possibly turn-yielding pitch. In marked cases, when speakers intend to hold the turn for more than one TCU, they need to use special turn-holding devices which project more to come. Besides syntactic compounding and other projection devices, there is also a quite specific prosodic device which can be used: final level or slightly rising pitch. The specific use of this pitch matches the marked kind of device for

which it is used, namely turn-holding. This then corroborates that turn-yielding is the unmarked device and turn-holding is the marked device in turn-taking, just as modeled by Sacks et al. 1974.

CONCLUSIONS

All the “larger projects” that I have looked at are organized internally in several TCUs. Most of them do not end in TRPs. In the examples given here, recipients seem to show their orientation to the entire larger projected turn by providing their reciprocity tokens or other responses at the ends of the turn-final TCU that ends in a TRP. Yet the single internal TCUs without TRPs fulfill important functions in the construction of the turn. This is evident for the following reasons.

(a) In their production of larger turns, speakers manifestly and recognizably configure TCUs as units: They produce them as internally cohesive units and delimit them from neighboring units.

(b) Neither TCUs nor possible turns can be defined with reference to syntax or prosody alone. Rather, TCUs and turns are the result of the interplay of syntax and prosody in a given semantic, pragmatic, and sequential context. Syntactic and prosodic construction schemata are flexible schemata which participants deploy and exploit in a flexible and recipient-designed way in their practices of unit construction and interpretation in talk. In principle, units are always flexible and expandable; hence the actual completion of units can be recognized only retrospectively. The differential combination of syntactic and prosodic construction schemata in a given context differentiates activities that have diverse semantic and interactional meanings – e.g. different kinds of causal and other subordinate or coordinate clauses, different kinds of relative clauses (cf. Halliday 1967), and different kinds of continuations of prior syntactic constructions that can be used as a resource for different interactional purposes (see also Selting 1994, 1995).

(c) Just as larger turns are projected with various kinds of devices and schemata, so also fragments of units can be incomplete for different reasons (Selting 1998). This in turn corroborates my analysis that we must analyse TCUs as the result of the interplay of possible syntactic and prosodic construction schemata within their semantic, pragmatic, and sequential context.

(d) Reciprocity responses within turns orient to TCUs: They are placed near the ends of TCUs.

(e) Speakers and recipients in general do not orient to the production of TCUs as such, but rather to the organization of interpretable activities that are constituted with and via such units. The production of units is only an epiphenomenon of the production of activities, so it is not surprising that participants do not show a manifest verbal orientation to each single TCU of larger turns that constitute activities. Recipients show their orientation to possible turns or larger parts thereof, e.g. component parts of a projected story-telling. However, by chunking the entire turn or component parts of projected activities into more than one internal

TCU, the speaker may orient to the recipients' non-verbal responses, and/or may design the formulation of single and successive TCUs for particular recipients and their responses, even if these do not end in TRPs (cf. Goodwin 1981).

(f) The devices of unit production do not contextualize and project TCUs as such, but rather as epiphenomena of the activities of turn construction and activity constitution and organization. In the organization of conversation, participants are not concerned with the construction of units; but the construction of units is contingent on devices or activities such as holding, organizing, and yielding the turn, organizing turn transition, and organizing question/answer sequences, assessments, and the telling of stories. It is thus not the TCUs as such that are relevant for participants, but the activities of turn-taking and activity constitution. TCUs are only contingent on these activities (cf. also Ford et al. 1996).

The TCU as epiphenomenon is, however, by no means irrelevant for the external and internal organization of turns in conversational interaction. TCUs must be conceived of as the smallest interactionally relevant complete linguistic units in their given context. They end in TRPs, unless particular linguistic and interactional resources are used in order to project and postpone TRPs to the end of larger turns.

The separation of the two defining criteria for the TCU – (i) syntax and prosody/intonation in their interaction in constituting TCUs, and (ii) their capability to constitute a complete turn – yields a clarification of the notion of the TCU, and a slightly revised model of the turn-constructive component of the turn-taking system proposed by Sacks et al. 1974. Besides defining TCUs as the smallest possible complete linguistic units in their context of interaction, as Sacks et al. did in principle (despite their scanty treatment of prosody) we can admit different kinds of projection that result in single TCUs ending in TRPs, or in multi-unit turns where the TRPs of internal TCUs are blocked until the final TCU of the turn that ends in a TRP. We can at least distinguish among compound syntactic, lexico-semantic, pragmatic, activity-type-specific, and prosodic projection.

The system of turn-taking now works as follows. The interplay of syntax and prosody in their semantic, pragmatic, and sequential context is used as a resource by participants in order to construct single TCUs, and to project possible and designed ends of current TCUs – as well as larger projects that extend the current TCU. Possible turns are the result of these different kinds of projection. Single-clause syntactic only has scope for single TCUs, but prosody reaches beyond the current TCU and can be used to project a TCU to follow. Compound-clause syntactic, lexico-semantic, pragmatic, and activity-type-specific schemata can be used to project larger turns. After a TRP at the possible completion of a turn, the turn may end; or it may still be continued by adding new material in a prosodically and syntactically integrated or exposed way. If this expansion of the inherently and fundamentally flexible TCU or

turn is displayed as prosodically integrated, speakers will present it as the continuation of the prior TCU. If this expansion is displayed as prosodically exposed in a new prosodic unit, the speaker will present it as a new TCU. Every complete turn is by definition also a TCU, but not every TCU is a possible turn.

This proposal modifies only the turn-constructive component in the model of Sacks et al. 1974. The rules of turn allocation operate exactly as proposed by Sacks et al.: They become relevant at every TRP.

NOTES

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¹ In recent research, the relevance of prosody for the organization of turn-taking and other sequencing in conversation has been given attention by some researchers in England and Germany; cf. Local, Kelly & Wells 1986; Local, Wells & Sebba 1985; and some of the papers presented in Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996, and in *Pragmatics* 6:3 (1996). In particular, work in the German research context is trying to bring together work in CA with that of Gumperz 1982, 1992 on "contextualization," since the latter allows a more flexible view of the relation of prosody and other linguistic structuring than do other approaches to the study of prosody and intonation (cf. Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996).

² The database from which the fragments of conversation are taken consists of four informal conversations with three participants, each of which lasted about two hours. Participants were students or junior staff of a Northern German university. In each conversation, at least two of the participants had been friends or had at least known each other before. In some of the conversations, these two had not known the third party before; in other conversations, all three had been friends for some time. To obtain high-quality recordings, the participants were asked to have their usual after-lunch coffee together in a room of the sound studio of the university, instead of in the cafeteria. They were given coffee and cakes, and they were asked simply to talk to each other about whatever they felt like.

³ The detailed prosodic transcriptions in this and the other figures in this paper are the result of auditory analyses verified by acoustic analyses with the program Signalyze (Eric Keller). The drawings were made either with Corel Draw or by hand.

⁴ This seems to be true for all kinds of units. Even a response token such as *oh* can be expanded retrospectively into a longer clause by adding, e.g. *I would say* or *that's nice*, or any other continuation with prosodic integration, even after pauses. Such devices can be used for many purposes, e.g. repair of problems of turn-taking after the response token.

⁵ Cf. Gumperz 1984 and Tannen 1979 on the notions of "schemata" and "frames." Although the notion of "frame" seems to have become more widespread than that of "schema" recently, to me "schema" seems to be more appropriate than "frame" to denote the kind of rather formal linguistic construction devices that I have in mind.

⁶ Nevertheless, there are some cases in which recipients do seem to react to syntax alone in a kind of context-free manner. Note the following examples, in which recipients react to minimal syntactic clauses which, in another context, could very well be syntactically complete, but are not complete in this context:

K4: 809–12 ((after Lea and Cis have argued about whether students nowadays are less interested in politics than in former times))

807 Lea: *also die WOLLen das wohl; =ne,*
so they do want it you know

808 Cis: *hm,*

CONSTRUCTION OF UNITS IN CONVERSATIONAL TALK

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

SEQUENTIAL STRUCTURE

[] overlap and simultaneous talk
 []
 = latching

PAUSES

(.) micropause
 (-), (--), (---) brief, mid, longer pauses of ca. 0.25–0.75 secs.; up to ca. 1 sec.
 (2.0) estimated pause, more than ca. 1 sec. duration
 (2.85) measured pause (notation with two digits after the dot)

OTHER SEGMENTAL CONVENTIONS

und=äh assimilations within units
 ;, ::, ::: segmental lengthening, according to duration
äh, öh, etc. hesitation signals, so-called “filled pauses”
 ‘ cut-off with glottal closure

LAUGHTER

so(h)o laugh particles within talk
haha hehe hihi laugh syllables
 ((*lacht*)) description of laughter

RECIPIENCY TOKENS

hm, ja, nein, nee monosyllabic signals
hm=hm, ja=a, nei=ein, nee=e disyllabic signals
 ‘*hm’hm* with glottal stops, usually used for negative responses

ACCENTUATION

akZENT strong, primary accent
ak!ZENT! extra strong accent
akzEnt weaker, secondary accents

PITCH AT THE END OF UNITS

? rising to high
 , rising to mid
 - level
 ; falling to mid
 . falling to low

CONSPICUOUS PITCH JUMPS

↑ to higher pitch
 ↓ to lower pitch

PITCH AT THE BEGINNING OF NEW UNITS

⟨u⟩ upstep
 ⟨d⟩ downstep
 ⟨c⟩ continuing

CHANGED REGISTER

⟨l⟩ low register
 ⟨h⟩ high register

NOTATION OF PITCH ACCENT MOVEMENTS

\ falling to mid
 _ falling to low
 / rising to mid
 /- rising to high
 — level
 /\ rising-falling
 \ / falling-rising
 ↑\ small pitch jumps up to peak of accented syllable
 ↓/ small pitch jumps down to valley of accented syllable

$\uparrow'SO, \downarrow'SO$ large pitch jumps up to peak or down to valley of accented syllable
 $\uparrow-SO, \downarrow-SO$ pitch jumps to conspicuously higher or lower syllables with level pitch accents

NOTATION OF GLOBAL PITCH REALIZED IN THE STRETCH OF SPEECH NOTATED ABOVE THE BRACKETS

F() falling
 R() rising
 M() mid
 H() high
 L() low
 M,F() falling within mid register
 H,R() rising within high register
 [() ()] combined contours constituting a paratone
 ({ }) embedded contour, e.g. for parentheses

CHANGES IN LOUDNESS AND SPEECH RATE (scope is noted by the position of the outer angle brackets)

<<f>> =forte, loud
 <<ff>> =fortissimo, very loud
 <<p>> =piano, soft
 <<pp>> =pianissimo, very soft
 <<all>> =allegro, fast
 <<len>> =lento, slow
 <<cresc>> =crescendo, continuously louder
 <<dim>> =diminuendo, continuously softer
 <<acc>> =accelerando, continuously faster
 <<rall>> =rallentando, continuously slower

BREATHING

.h, .hh, .hhh inbreath, according to duration
 h, hh, hhh outbreath, according to duration

OTHER CONVENTIONS

((hustet)) para- and extralinguistic activities and events
 <<hustend>> concomitant para- and extralinguistic activities and events with notation of scope
 <<erstaunt>> interpretative commentaries with scope
 () unintelligible according to duration
 (solche) uncertain transcription
 al(s)o uncertain sounds or syllables
 (solche/welche) possible alternatives
 ((...)) omissions in the transcript
 —> indication of relevant lines for the discussion

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