Prosody as dialogic interaction[1]

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Abstract

In this paper I will be arguing that in a very real sense participants' prosodic behaviors in focused encounters are inter-calibrated with one another and that this is one important means of bringing off social interaction. I will present some new findings in this vein based on an empirical analysis of the freestanding particle *oh* in response to informings and of the freestanding particles *okay/ alright/ sure* in response to requests in everyday American English conversation. In conclusion I will touch on the methodological challenges of studying prosody dialogically and outline some of the analytic pay-offs of viewing prosody this way.

Dialogism – Particle – Informing – Request – Prosodic Orientation – Upgrade – Downgrade – Transition Timing

Dieser Beitrag argumentiert, dass das prosodische Verhalten der TeilnehmerInnen in fokussierter Interaktion in einem sehr buchstäblichen Sinne aufeinander abgestimmt ist und dass dies eine wichtige Ressource zur Herstellung sozialer Interaktion ist. Er präsentiert einschlägige neue, empirische Befunde zur Analyse der freistehenden Partikel *oh* als Antwort auf Mitteilungen (*informings*) sowie der Partikeln *okay/ alright/ sure* als Antworten auf Bitten (*requests*) in amerikanischenglischer Konversation. Der Beitrag schließt mit einer Diskussion der methodologischen Herausforderungen, die die dialogische Untersuchung von Prosodie mit sich bringt, sowie des analytischen Nutzens solch eines Verständnisses von Prosodie.

Dialogismus – Partikeln – Mitteilungen – informings – Bitten – requests – prosodische Orientierung – upgrade – downgrade – zeitliche Koordination von Sprecherwechseln

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1. Rethinking prosody dialogically

In a recent volume with the subtitle "Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making" Per Linell (2009) makes a strong plea for "rethinking language, mind and world dialogically", by which he means that we must acknowledge 'the other' as being constantly present whenever the individual engages in thinking or communication. This other-orientation is all-pervasive, not only in situated interactions but also in how the mind works: in short, it is an attribute of human sense-making.

What might it mean to think of *prosody* dialogically? A recent paper by Goodwin et al. (2012) hints at what is involved. They write with respect to the prosodic production of a response cry in the data fragment they are analyzing:

> It requires an analytic framework that extends beyond the voice of the actor producing the prosody to encompass the target being responded to and operated on. It is an interactive, dialogic action rather than the expression of something internal to a single individual. (Goodwin/ Cekaite/ Goodwin 2012: 23)

This highly suggestive remark holds the key to a dialogic view of prosody. The crux of the matter is that prosody, or rather its sense-making import in interaction, must be conceptualized as residing not in the voice of the individual but in the way that individual voice relates to the voice of the co-participant.

This is basically what Szczepek Reed (2006) had in mind with the term *prosodic orientation*. She describes prosodic orientation as "…the conversational activity of displaying awareness of another speaker's prosody in the prosodic design of one's own next turn" (2006: 33f). In this paper I will be building on the notion of prosodic orientation and showing how speakers orient to another's prosody, e.g., by *matching, upgrading* or *downgrading* the pitch and loudness of an interlocutor's prior turn, and/ or by adjusting the timing of their next-turn incoming so that it will be *well-timed, early,* or *late* with respect to the pacing of an interlocutor's prior turn. I will also be showing how these kinds of prosodic orientation become interpretable in specific sequential contexts.

Dialogic prosody makes itself especially noticeable in responsive position. In this sense the present study can be seen as building on earlier work by Müller (1996), Couper-Kuhlen (1996), Wells (2010), and Gorisch et al. (2012), where various types of prosodic repetition in responsive position are discussed. However, it goes one step further by bringing in a *relational* aspect. It argues that what is relevant is not just whether the prosody of a response is the same or different from that of the turn it is responding to, but also whether the response displays more or less of some prosodic feature in the prior turn and whether it is earlier or later than the beat anticipated from that turn. In this respect it views prosody as emerging from, and indeed constituting interaction with prior talk.

In the following I examine the dialogic prosody of freestanding particles when used to build preferred responses ("+" actions in Schegloff's (2007) terminology) to (1) news deliveries and informings, and (2) requests for action in American English conversation. This work arose as part of a large-scale study on the grammar of responsive actions in everyday conversational interaction (Thompson et al.

forthc.). It was in conjunction with this joint project that the need for a dialogic perspective on prosody imposed itself on me anew.[2]

2. Particle responses to informings

With an 'informing' Thompson et al. (forthc.) refer to a turn in which the speaker assumes a K+ (knowing) stance vis à vis a recipient who, accordingly, is cast in a K- (unknowing) position (Heritage/ Raymond 2005). Informings in this understanding include news deliveries as described by Maynard (1997, 2003) as well as also other sorts of tellings as described, e.g., by Jefferson (1978, 1988). The preferred, or "+" action, response to an informing is a claim by the recipient that whereas they were previously uninformed about the matter in question, they are now informed, i.e. they now know something they did not know before. As Heritage's (1984) seminal work has shown, the prime way to do this in English is with the particle *oh*. With a news-receipt *oh*, recipients propose to have undergone a change of state from not knowing (K-) to now knowing (K+). Building on earlier studies of the prosody of *oh* by Local (1996) and Reber (2012), I will argue that it is also the *dialogic* prosody of a freestanding news-receipt *oh* that is interactionally relevant, i.e. how its prosody relates to the prosody of the co-interlocutor's informing turn.

The particle *oh* is found as a response to at least two different kinds of informings in English conversation. In one case the informing is simply *volunteered*, with or without a more or less elaborate preliminary sequence or 'pre-' (Maynard 1997, Schegloff 2007), often as part of a longer telling. The news-receipt particle *oh* then appears as a response in second position. Here is a fragment where this happens twice:

(1) "Bud just left" (NB 008)[3]
(From a telephone call between Emma and her friend Nancy. Bud is Emma's husband. We join the call soon after Nancy has announced that she has had a raise. When Emma suggests that she should go shopping with her new money, Nancy replies with a smile "Well I should but you know at eight dollars a month anything I'd buy'd be using up my raise for half a year". The excerpt begins immediately after Emma agrees with "Yeah".)

```
->  1 Emm: .hhhhh[Bud just left]to play go:lf he's gotta go to Riverside=
    2 Nan:       [  °Y e  a h°]
=>  3 Nan: =[↓ O h : .  ]
    4 Emm: =[on a compan]y dea:l so, .t.h[hhhhh
    5 Nan:                               [Oh::?
    6 Emm: ↑GOD [it's be-]
    7 Nan:      [To River]side toda:y?
    8 Emm: .hhh Yeah they: they're gonna tee off at twelve it's a company
    9      dea:l so (.) the couple was supposed to come do:wn to(.)la:st
   10      ni:ght 'n you know k-Harry and Kathryn they're uh k-
-> 11      cuz Harry was gonna play k-
=> 12 Nan: Oh[:.
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2   Earlier explorations into dialogic prosody are reported in Auer et al. 1999; Couper-Kuhlen 1992, 1993, 1996, 2009b; Schegloff 1998; and Ogden 2006.
3   The transcription system used in this and all following excerpts (with the exception of (10)) is Jeffersonian (see, e.g., Jefferson 2004) with standardized orthography. The single arrow refers to the informing, the double arrow to its receipt.

```
13 Emm:   ['n company and then .hhh there was a death in their fa:mily
14      so: (.) [.hhh
15 Nan:            [Aww::::.
16     (.)
17 Emm: ↑THE:Y gosh uh this has really been a wee:k ha:sn't it?=
```

The two cases in question occur in line 03, where Nancy produces an *oh* in response to Emma's out-of-the-blue informing that Bud has left to play golf in Riverside, and in line 12, where Nancy produces another *oh* in response to the volunteered information that actually Harry was going to play golf on the company deal.

But a news report or telling can also be *question-elicited*. In this case, the 'news' appears in second position and the news-receipt *oh* comes in third position. Here is a fragment where two pieces of news are presented in response to a query and each is receipted with *oh*:

(2) "Came down Friday night" (NB 007)
(From a telephone call between Emma and her sister Lottie. Lottie lives at Newport Beach, where Emma also has a vacation flat that she rents out when not using it herself. Bud is Emma's husband.)

```
    1 Emm: ...morning.
    2 Lot: Well WHERE'VE YOU BEE:N.
    3 Emm: .hhhh OH I'VE BEEN DOW:N HE:RE,
    4      (0.2)
    5 Lot: I was down there over:: Memorial Day'n you weren't
    6      the:re.
->  7 Emm: Oh I wasn't here Memorial: no buh– Bud had to WORK
    8      Fri:day.
    9      (0.4)
=> 10 Lot: .k Oh::::[:::.   ]
   11 Emm:         [And he] had to] take a]
   12 Lot:               Go:d  ] I went] do:wn there=
   13      =I think it w-Yeah it was Fri:day.h
   14      (0.2)
   15 Emm: .hh Well I was here Sa:turday: uh: (0.5) uh let's see oh
   16      I came down: uh Friday ni:ght,
   17      (0.3)
   18 Lot: Yah:ah.
-> 19 Emm: Well Bud had to play go:lf uh Thursday.
   20      (.)
   21 Emm: So he [didn't take] Sa–uh f–] Friday o:ff s[o
=> 22 Lot:       [O h : : :] :_: : : . ]              [Yeh rode down
   23      muh my bi:cycle th[ere en:nu:h h]uh=
   24 Emm:                   [O h : : :_:? ]
   25 Lot: =was nobody wa(h)s the↑::re.
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In line 02 Lottie asks where Emma has been and on learning that Emma has been down at her beach flat, delivers in line 05 what Pomerantz (1980) has called a 'my-side' telling: she reports that she came down to look for Emma on Memorial Day but didn't find her there. This turn is question-like in that it elicits information from Emma about where she was on Memorial Day. Emma's subsequent information, namely that Bud had to work Friday, which meant that she couldn't come down for Memorial Day, is receipted by Lottie with *oh* (line 10).

When Lottie now reiterates her my-side telling about coming down on Friday (lines 12-13), Emma furnishes more information about her situation: she specifies

when she got down to the beach (lines 15-16) and explains that Bud couldn't take Friday off because he had to play golf on Thursday (line 19). This information too is receipted by Lottie with an *oh* (line 22). Both these *oh*s (in lines 10 and 22) are produced as news receipts by the same party (Emma) who elicited the information from the co-participant (Lottie).

Observe that in (1) and (2) there are other tokens of *oh* that do not function as news receipts: see, e.g., line 05 in (1) and line 24 in (2). These *oh*s are alike in having overall rising intonation, in contrast to news-receipt *oh*s (see above), which have overall falling intonation. As Thompson et al. (forthc.) argue, rising-pitch *oh*s, do not position the speaker as someone who is in the know, but rather as someone who doubts what they have just been told.[4] In the following we focus exclusively on *oh*s with overall falling intonation that function as news receipts.

Yet, overall falling news-receipt *oh*s do not all sound alike. Some are short, others are long; some are peaked, others are flat; some end low in the speaker's voice range, others end mid; some have an overlay of breathy voice, others have creaky voice. Prosodic features such as these can be described independently of the specific context in which *oh* appears. However, I would like to argue that there are further distinguishing features in the delivery of a news-receipt *oh* that can only be appreciated if they are calibrated with the prosodic context in which the *oh* token appears. It is these 'dialogic' prosodic features (I will argue) that contribute significantly to the interactive work that news-receipt *oh* particles do.

Indeed, detailed interactional analysis shows that many news-receipt *oh*s accomplish more than merely receipting new information: they display their speaker's cognitive-affective stance towards the informing and/or the 'consequential figure' involved (see also Freese/ Maynard 1998, Wilkinson/ Kitzinger 2006, Couper-Kuhlen 2009a, Reber 2012, Golato 2012, Maynard/ Freese 2012, Koivisto forthc.).[5] In such cases, a freestanding news-receipt *oh* does not close down the sequence but instead invites more talk to deal with the stance displayed. Much as Reber (2012) has pointed out with respect to minimal responses in British English informing sequences, the type of stance displayed appears to depend on the specifics of the prior sequence.

The news-receipt *oh*s produced in response to *volunteered* informings range in cognitive-affective coloring from interest and/ or surprise to various forms of empathy or sympathy. Participants make these dimensions interpretable through the dialogic prosody of the *oh* delivery in relation to the informing (see also Freese/ Maynard 1998, 2012). Participant interpretations become analytically accessible through what happens next.

For instance, in lines 10-12 of (1), Emma volunteers the information that Harry and Kathryn were scheduled to come down and that Harry was supposed to play golf on the company deal:

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[4]   An initial appreciation of this can be had by examining what happens after Nancy's rising-pitch *oh* in line 5 of (1): Emma breaks off her next turn ↗*GOD [it's be-]* (line 6) to address Nancy's doubts by providing more information about Bud's trip to Riverside (lines 8-13).

[5]   See Maynard (1997:94) for more on the notion of consequential figure and its relevance to news deliveries. Reber (2012) also finds consequential figures relevant for the work that news-receipt *oh*s do.

(3) "Harry was gonna play" (excerpt from (1))

```
    8 Emm: .hhh Yeah they: they're gonna tee off at twelve it's a company
    9      dea:l so (.) the couple was supposed to come do:wn to(.)la:st
   10      ni:ght 'n you know k-Harry and Kathryn they're uh k-
-> 11      cuz Harry was gonna play k-
=> 12 Nan: Oh[:.
   13 Emm:   ['n company and then .hhh there was a death in their fa:mily
   14      so: (.)
```

The news-receipt *oh* that Nancy produces in line 12 is slightly lengthened and has a (rising-)falling contour. But just as important is how it is calibrated with the turn it is responsive to. For one, it is on time, i.e. it occurs without gap or overlap after the unit concerning Harry's playing comes to a point of possible completion. More precisely, it is the timing of accented syllables in Emma's informing that sets up a regular beat (see, e.g., Auer et al 1999) that can be expected to continue; Nancy produces her *oh* on the next regular beat after Emma reaches a transition relevance point (TRP) in her turn. Rhythmically, this could be represented as follows, where an accent mark (') indicates the speaker's accented syllables and slashes aligned underneath one another indicate that the temporal intervals created by these accents are roughly equivalent in duration:[6]

(3´) Rhythm of Nancy's incoming in line 12 of (3)

```
   11 Emm:   cuz   /'Harry was gonna   /
                   /'play              /
   12 Nan:         /'oh:
```

In addition to its timing, the volume on Nancy's *oh* (line 12) is *softer* than in Emma's informing, but its overall pitch is *higher* and its pitch span *greater*. This can be appreciated from a side-by-side combination of Praat pictures showing the pitch configuration of the informing and of its response separately, each scaled relative to the speaker's individual pitch range:[7] Figure 1 shows that Nancy's pitch contour on *oh* is both higher and wider than the overall pitch configuration of Emma's informing. Whereas Emma's pitch span in this segment is 8.5 semitones, Nancy's is 11.1 semitones. We will refer to such an increase in pitch height and width as a pitch *upgrade* vis à vis the prior turn-unit.[8]

How is Nancy's well-timed but pitch-upgraded *oh* to be interpreted? To answer this, we must take into consideration the immediate sequential context in which it is produced. Let us first note that Emma does not treat the information she is providing as a surprise source (Wilkinson/ Kitzinger 2006); that is, her turn-unit is not explicitly built to elicit surprise from her interlocutor. Instead, the information

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[6]   See Auer et al. (1999) and Couper-Kuhlen (1993, 2009b) for more on conversational rhythm and its notation.

[7]   The values used for Emma's overall pitch range were: 421-128 Hz; those for Nancy's were 487-119 Hz. These values represent an average of the three highest and lowest Hz measures for each speaker in a one-minute sample of speech.

[8]   Both Curl 2005 and Ogden 2006 speak of 'phonetic' upgrading for a cluster of features including increased pitch span. See also Plug, this volume.
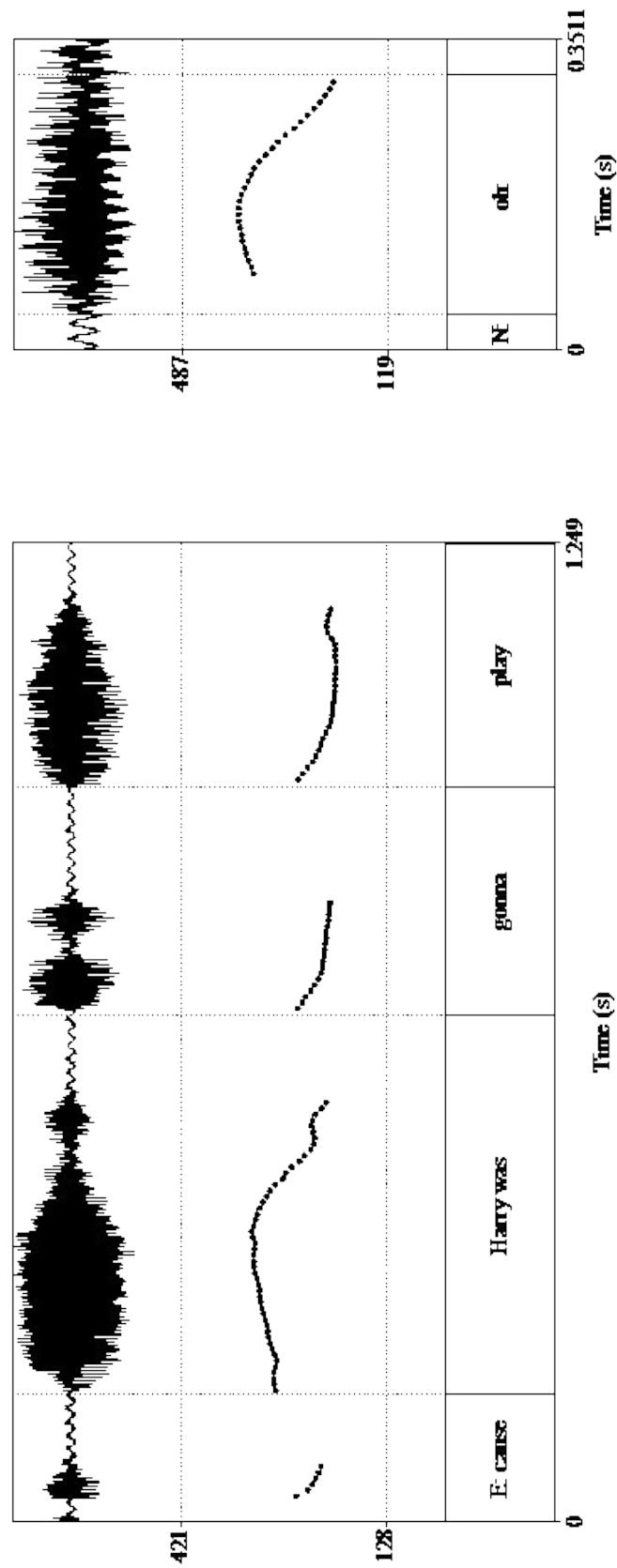
Figure 1: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 11 and 12 in (3)

appears to be given in a by-the-way fashion. Moreover, it is relatively innocuous in the sense that it does not foreshadow positive or negative consequences for either of the co-participants. Given these considerations, one working hypothesis might be that Nancy's options for next turn include displaying interest or the absence thereof. The well-timed, pitch-upgraded *oh* produced could then be said on iconic grounds to display (mild) interest, encouraging Emma to tell more. In fact, this is precisely what Emma proceeds to do (lines 13-14). She does not break off in order to provide a repair, as she does in line 06 subsequent to Nancy's *oh* in line 05.

Consider now the falling-intonation *oh* produced earlier by Nancy in response to a different piece of news volunteered by Emma earlier in the same fragment:

(4) "Riverside" (excerpt from (1))

```
-> 1 Emm: .hhhhh [Bud just left]to play go:lf he's gotta go to Riverside=
   2 Nan:        [ °Y e  a h° ]
=> 3 Nan: =[↓O h : .    ]
   4 Emm: =[on a compan]y dea:l so, .t.h[hhhhh
   5 Nan:                               [Oh::?
   6 Emm: ↑GOD [it's be-]
```

In response to Emma's announcement that Bud has just left to play golf in Riverside (line 01), Nancy also produces a slightly lengthened *oh*. This news receipt, however, sounds quite different from the one in line 12 and stands in a different relation to the informing it is responsive to. For one, compared to the timing of Emma's turn in line 01, Nancy's *oh* in line 03 comes in *before* the next beat:

(4´) Rhythm of Nancy's incoming in line 03 of (4)

```
   1 Emm:          /'Bud just left to play  /
                   /'golf he's gotta go to  /
                   /'Riverside==on a        /
   3 Nan:  /'oh:                                              (early)
   4 Emm:          /'company deal so
```

Here Nancy is orienting to a possible TRP at the end of line 01: Emma produces some final lengthening on *Riverside*, which also carries the main accent in the unit *he's gotta go to Riverside*. But rather than wait for the next rhythmic beat, Nancy comes in beforehand with her *oh*. In the event it ends up overlapping Emma's *on a company deal so* (line 04), which is produced as an increment to the possibly complete unit at the end of line 01.

Moreover, compared to the volume and pitch of Emma's prior turn, Nancy's *oh* is audibly softer as well as lower, and flatter: see the side-by-side Praat picture (Figure 2). As Figure 2 shows, this *oh* by Nancy begins lower than any of the pitch accents in the prior turn by Emma and its range is more compressed in comparison to that of Emma's informing.[9] We might then say that Nancy's *oh* in line 03 has a pitch *downgrade* vis à vis Emma's volunteered informing.

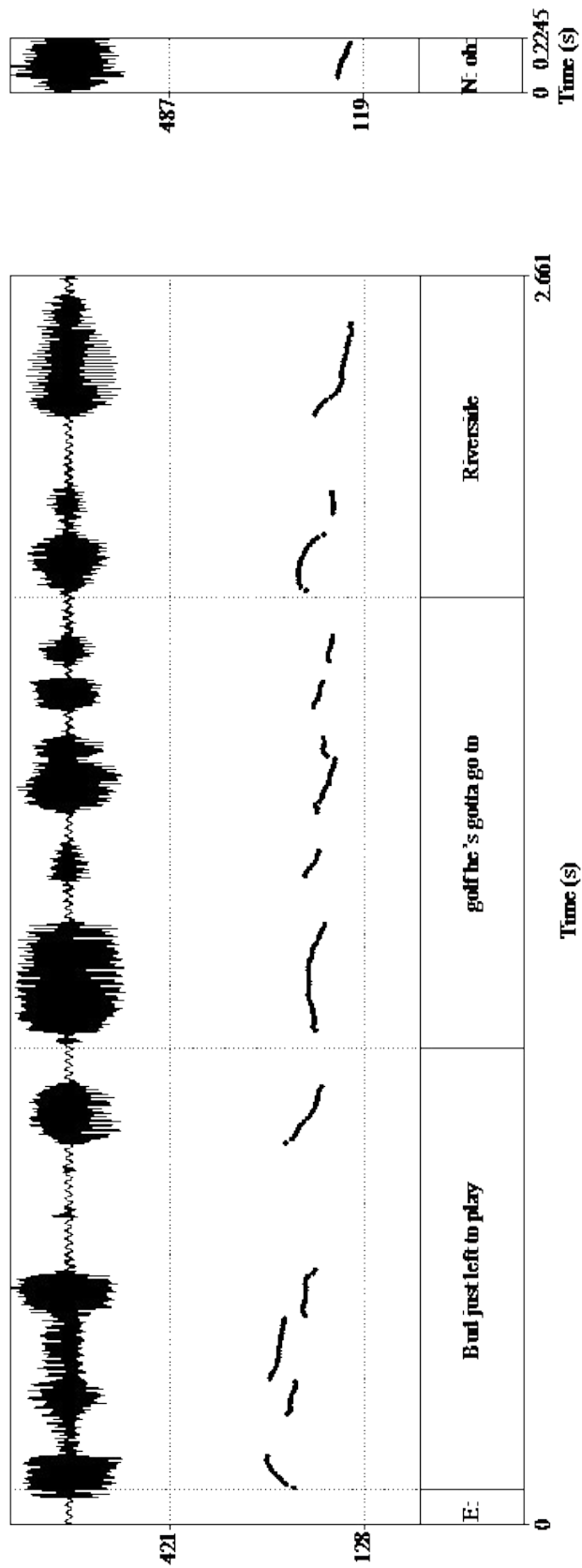[9]   Nancy's pitch span here is 1.7 semitones, compared to Emma's, which is 8.9 semitones.

Figure 2: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 1 and 3 in (4)

In sum, this news receipt has early timing in relation to the prior informing and its pitch and volume are downgraded. These features, we would argue, are just as 'marked' as are those we saw on the upgraded *oh* in line 12 of (1): they do not happen incidentally nor are they neutral in effect. Instead, they are *achieved* through calibration with the prosody of the prior turn and are indexically interpretable in the context created by this turn. To appreciate what this *oh* is doing with its dialogic prosody, we must appeal once again to its sequential location. Emma's turn in line 01 is delivered at so-called 'anchor position' in this conversation (Schegloff 1986), i.e. at a point after the exchange of greetings and how-are-you's where a caller's first topic, the reason for the call, can be expected. Emma's turn in line 01 is thus doing 'bringing up to date'. But at the same time it delivers information that is framed as having potential negative consequences for Emma: in her words, *he left* and *he's gotta go*. This suggests that Bud's going to play golf in Riverside is an incipient complainable. Nancy's *oh* is well-fitted to such a reading: with its soft volume and pitch downgrade, it is hearable not as a display of interest (as in (3)), but rather as a display of something akin to sympathy or empathy (see also Reber 2012). That Emma is indeed intent on doing complaining at this point will be seen from the way she continues: in overlap with Nancy's *oh* she trails off [10] (line 04) and, now in speakership mode, moves into what is arguably a further complaint with ↗*God it's be* (line 06). The complaint character of this (aborted) turn can be seen by comparing Emma's resumption of the topic once the insert sequence, occasioned by Nancy's other-repair initiation in lines 5 and 7, has been completed: *gosh this has really been a wee:k ha:sn't it?,* said in a lamenting tone of voice (line 17).

What we have seen so far then is that dialogic prosodic features can create a cognitive-affective lamination on news-receipt *oh* that becomes interpretable in the particular sequential context of the informing. The point has been that in addition to effects such as, e.g., a rise-fall pitch contour, syllable lengthening, and breathy or creaky voice, it is the relation of the *oh* response to the prior informing in terms of pitch height/range, volume, and timing that is relevant for conveying stances such as interest or surprise (with *upgrading*) vs. empathy or sympathy (with *downgrading*).

Similar prosodic details are relevant for the work that news-receipt *oh* responses to *question-elicited* informings do. However, the sequential environment of question elicitation affords a slightly different set of interpretive parameters for the informing and its response. This is because questions and question-like turns reveal speakers' epistemic stance and their assumptions and expectations concerning what the answer will be (Pomerantz 1988, Stivers and Hayashi 2010, Heritage/ Raymond 2012). The informing provided as an answer to an eliciting question can meet these expectations and confirm these assumptions, or not. When it does not, the way the informing is receipted can have various kinds of affective lamination ranging from revelation or revised understanding (Koivisto forthc.) to mild disappointment (Couper-Kuhlen 2009a).

Consider, for instance, the *oh* produced by Lottie in fragment (2) in response to the information that Emma was not down at the beach on Memorial Day because

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[10]   For more on trail-off 'conjunctionals' see Local/ Kelly (1986).

Bud had to work that day. This information is elicited by Lottie's my-side telling that Emma was not there on Friday when she (Lottie) came by (lines 5-6).

(5) "Bud had to work Friday" (excerpt from (2))

```
     2 Lot: Well WHERE'VE YOU BEE:N.
->   3 Emm: .hhhh OH I'VE BEEN DOW:N HE:RE,
     4      (0.2)
     5 Lot: I was down there over:: Memorial Day'n you weren't
     6      the:re.
->   7 Emm: Oh I wasn't here Memorial: no buh- Bud had to WORK
     8      Fri:day.
     9      (0.4)
=> 10 Lot: .k Oh::::[:::. ]
```

The news-receipt *oh* in line 10 that Lottie produces in response to Emma's inform-ing that Bud had to work Friday is significantly lengthened and, compared to the pacing of Emma's informing, noticeably delayed:

(5´) Rhythm of Lottie's incoming in line 10 of (2)

```
     8 Emm:   /'no buh-          /
              /'Bud had to       /
              /'work Friday
    10 Lot:   (0.4)  /'Oh:::::         (late)
```

In this context such a rhythmic delay can display cognitive processing: Lottie may be signaling that she needs some time to process the implications of Emma's in-forming, thereby underlining that it goes against her expectations.

In addition, Lottie's *oh* here is upgraded in terms of its pitch and loudness by comparison with Emma's prior turn-unit (see Figure 3).[11] The work that Lottie's delayed and prosodically upgraded *oh* is accomplishing here must be seen in the context of its occurrence. Lottie's initial question *well where've you been?* in line 2, delivered in a loud voice, is strikingly misplaced, coming as it does immediate-ly after Emma's *(good) morning,* i.e. at a point where a return of Emma's greeting would be expectable next. With this delivery and positioning, Lottie's question implies that Emma has not been where Lottie expected her to be, namely at the beach (lines 5-6). Emma's reply that she was not there over Memorial Day be-cause Bud had to work on Friday thus reveals news to Lottie that runs counter to expectation and causes her to revise her understanding of the events. In the con-text of Lottie's expectation that Emma would be at the beach on Friday and her possible concern about Emma's well-being upon finding that she was not there, the delayed and upgraded *oh* is thus hearable as indexing revelation: 'NOW I un-derstand'. Moreover, it is a display of revelation associated with some emotive in-volvement, in context possibly relief that there is a harmless explanation for Em-ma's absence. The extent of Lottie's emotive reaction can be seen in what happens next. In overlap with Emma's continued telling, Lottie comes back, with an exple-tive, to the mistaken assumption that led to her riding her bicycle over to Emma's

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[11]   In this case the prosodic upgrading of Lottie's *oh* is noticeable in particular through its in-creased volume and raised pitch ceiling (371 Hz, or 22.7 semitones above 100 Hz) compared to that of Emma's informing (337 Hz, or 21.1 semitones).
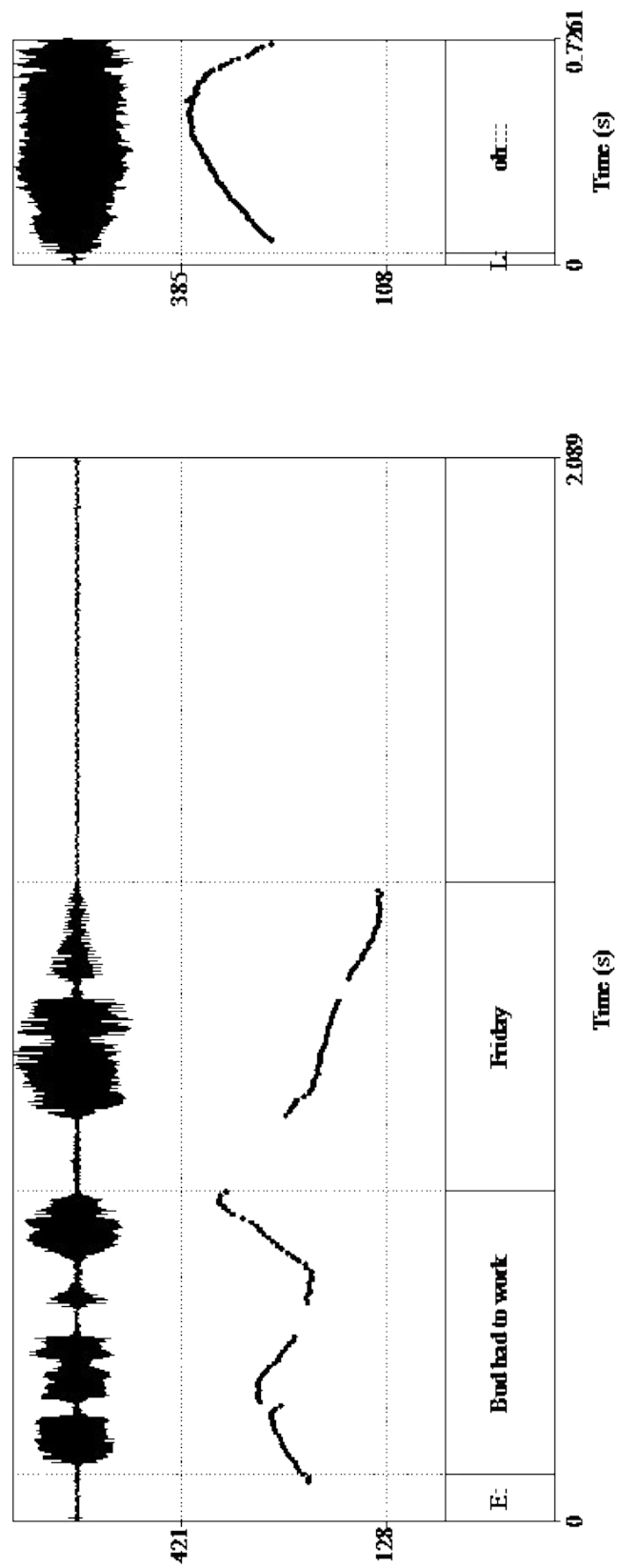
Figure 3: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 8 and 10 in (5)

place on Friday (lines 12-13), prompting Emma to reiterate that she only arrived Friday night (lines 15-16). With question-elicited informings, prosodically upgraded *oh*-responses displaying revised understanding or revelation are not infrequent when participants are disabused of assumptions they have made in prior talk. But informings which 'correct' prior assumptions and expectations do not invariably trigger prosodic upgrading. This can be seen from examining Lottie's second *oh* in receipt of elicited information (line 22) in fragment (2):

(6) "Play golf Thursday" (excerpt from (2))

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   12 Lot:                  Go:d] I went] do:wn there=
   13      =I think it w-Yeah it was Fri:day.h
   14      (0.2)
   15 Emm: .hh Well I was here Sa:turday: uh: (0.5) uh let's see oh
   16      I came down: uh Friday ni:ght,
   17      (0.3)
   18 Lot: Yah:ah.
-> 19 Emm: Well Bud had to play go:lf uh Thursday.
   20      (.)
   21 Emm: So he [didn't take] Sa-uh f-] Friday o:ff s[o
=> 22 Lot:       [O h : : :] :_: : :.  ]              [Yeh rode down
   23      muh my bi:cycle th[ere en:nu:h h]uh=
   24 Emm:                   [O h : : :_:? ]
   25 Lot: =was nobody wa(h)s the↑::re.
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The lengthened *oh::::::* that Lottie produces in line 22 in response to Emma's information that Bud had to play golf on Thursday (elicited through Lottie's reiterated my-side telling in lines 12-13) is produced after a slight delay:

(6´) Rhythm of Lottie's incoming in line 22 of (6)

```
   19 Emm:   well /'Bud had to play  /
             /'golf uh          /
             /'Thursday. (.)      /
   21 Emm:        /So he [didn't take Sa-uh
   22 Lot:          /['Oh:::::              (late)
```

In other words, although there is an opportunity for Lottie to come in after the TRP of Emma's turn *well Bud had to play golf uh Thursday* (see line 20), she does not do so. Instead Lottie's news receipt does not come until Emma has continued her turn, spelling out the implications of her informing. Lottie's news-receipt *oh* in line 22 is thus noticeably delayed vis à vis the informing and, like her *oh* in line 10, may be displaying some cognitive processing.

Yet in contrast to the *oh* in line 10, Lottie's *oh* in line 22 is overall lower in pitch, reduced in range and impressionistically softer in volume compared to Emma's informing (see Figure 4).[12] That is, although its delay indexes some cognitive processing and thus a form of revised understanding or revelation 'NOW I understand', this downgraded news-receipt *oh* appears to lack strong emotive involvement. This may be related to the fact that Emma's second piece of information is ancillary to the first: it is an account for why Bud had to work on

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12   Lottie's pitch span here is 8.4 semitones, as compared to Emma's, which is 20.1 semitones.
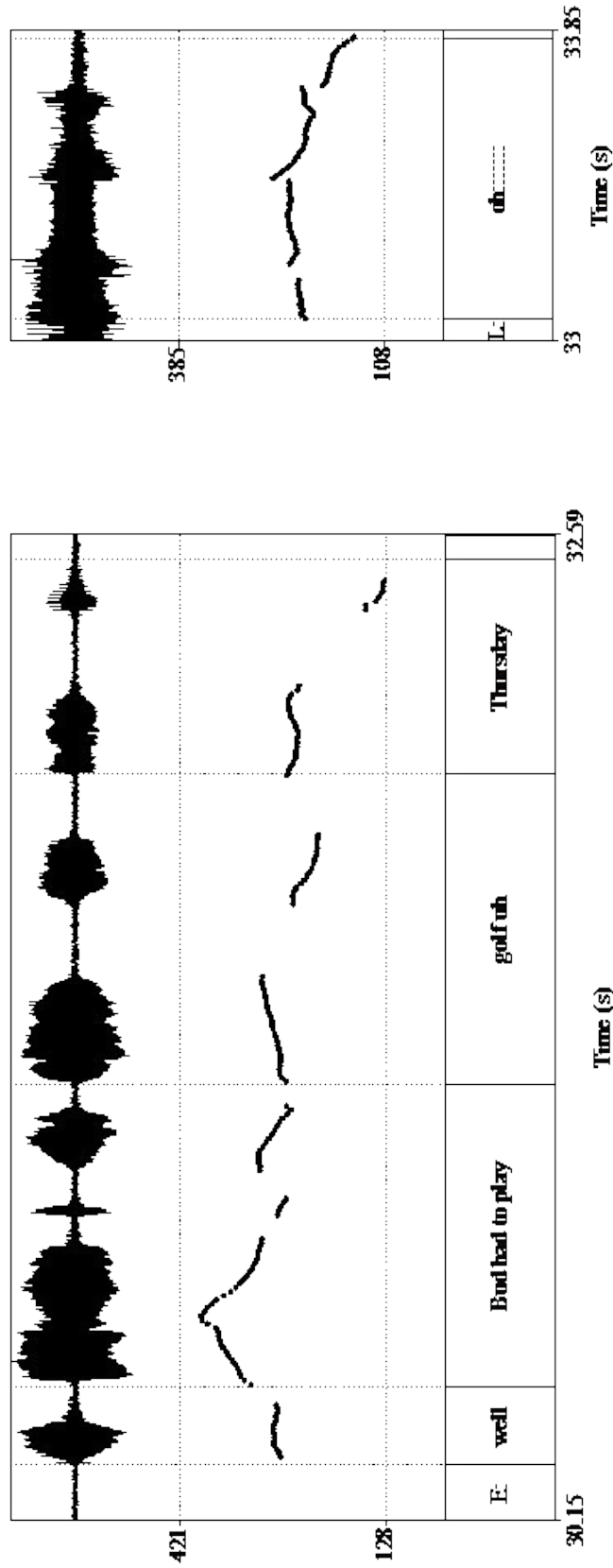
Figure 4: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 19 and 22 in (6)

Friday, not for why she was not where Lottie expected her to be on Friday. In other words, its relation to Lottie's misconceived assumption is at best indirect. The reduced pitch and volume on Lottie's revelatory *oh* is thus commensurate with the ancillary role the informing plays in her revised understanding.

To summarize: we have reviewed a representative selection of news-receipt *oh* responses to informings, both volunteered and question-elicited. Our argument has been that the dialogic prosodic-phonetic details of delivery, in particular the relation of *oh* to the prior informing in terms of pitch, loudness, and timing, contribute to a cognitive-affective coloring of the response particle that takes on specific context-sensitive interpretations in its particular sequential environment. *Oh* is rather unique among English particle responses in having this much prosodic-phonetic potential, a property that may be attributable to its extremely minimal form. In fact, the more lexical substance a particle response to an informing has, the less varied its prosodic-phonetic shape appears to be by comparison with, e.g., *oh really* or *no kidding* (Thompson et al. forthc.).

3. Particle responses to requests for action

Dialogic prosodic formatting is also relevant for the work that another set of response particles does in a different type of sequential environment. These are the particles *okay, alright* and *sure*, all of which can be used in American English to mark compliance with a prior request for action (Thompson et al. forthc.). The survey carried out by Thompson et al. (forthc.) did not detect any significant differences between these particles when used as complying responses to a request.

The term "request for action" refers to a class of turns, typically non-instructional in nature, in which the speaker either *asks* a recipient to perform some future action or *tells* a recipient to do so. In both cases it is understood to be the requester who will benefit in one way or another from this 'service'. The request-for-action category thus includes what have been called "directives" (Craven/ Potter 2010), "pleads" (Wootton 1981), as well as "prohibitives" (Thompson et al. forthc.).

Requests for action can be implemented with a variety of morpho-syntactic forms, including (in English) imperatives (*Do X!),* polar interrogatives (*Would you do X?),* and declaratives (*I need X*). As Curl and Drew (2008) have shown, the morpho-syntactic format of a request can display varying degrees of *entitlement*, the understanding that one has the right to impose on another, and/or *contingency*, the understanding that there may be factors involved making the request difficult for the requestee to grant.

The particle responses that are used most frequently in American English conversation to comply with a request for action are *alright, okay* and *sure*. These particles tend to occur as freestanding responses when requestees are complying with requests that are done with a display of strong entitlement and low contingency (Thompson et al forthc.). That is, these particles are used to comply with requests when requesters are treating them as routine and easy to comply with, when they are not making a 'big deal' out of them. Example (7) shows such a case, where Mom makes a routine request of her son, who then responds with the complying particle *alright*:

(7) "Blessing" (Virginia, 5.15-12.7)
(Mom has just sat down to dinner with her family. Wesley is her grown son.]

```
-> 1 Mom: (c'n) we have the blessi-ih-buh-
-> 2      Wesley would you ask the blessi[ng please,
=> 3 Wes:                                [alright.
   4      (0.2)
   5 Wes: heavenly father give us thankful hearts (for) these and all
   6      thy blessings °amen.
   7      (.)
   8 Vir: >°amen.<
   9      (2.0)
```

As *mater familias* Mom displays high entitlement in requesting her son to ask the blessing; she also does not show any doubt about his ability to grant this request. Wesley's minimal token *alright* is thus fully sufficient as a signal of compliance for this kind of routine request.

What stances does the prosody of a compliant response convey? Interestingly, it is first and foremost the timing of a compliant particle response to a request that is relevant for the interactive work it does. In (7) Wesley's *alright*, for instance, occurs off-beat with respect to the rhythm of Mom's request. The result is an early incoming that overlaps the end of Mom's turn with its appended *please*:

(7´) Rhythm of Wesley's incoming in line 3 of (7)

```
2 Mom: but   /'Wesley would  /
             /'you ask the    /
             /'blessing       /
3 Wes: /'alright                                    (early)
  Mom:       /please
```
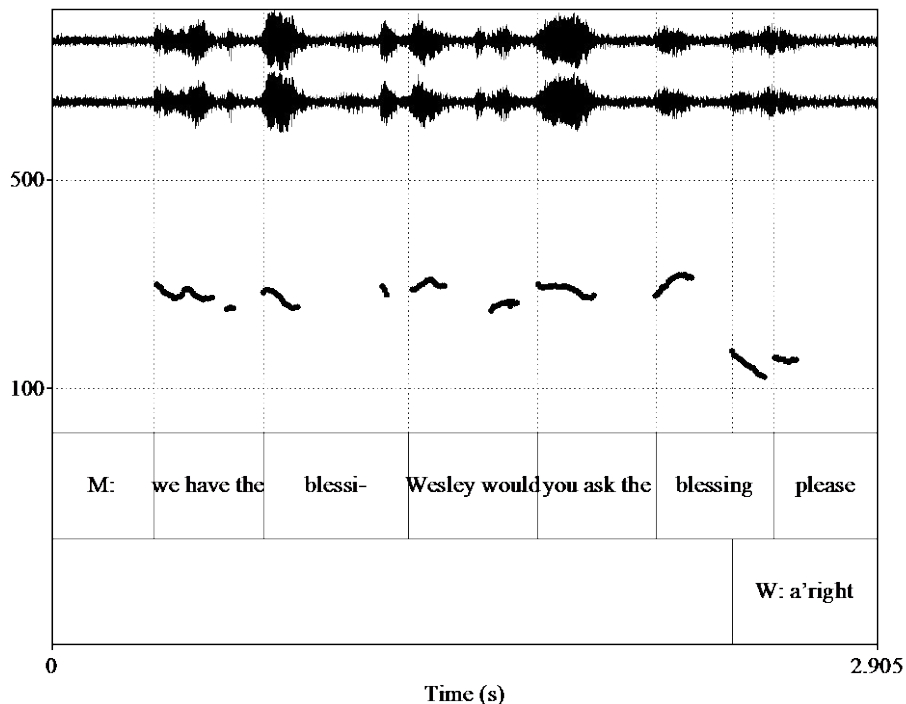

Figure 5: Early onset of line 3 in Extract (7)

The overlap in Wesley's response is not a turn-taking violation. On the contrary, it comes at a point in time when Wesley can recognize what the gist of Mom's turn will be: not only is saying the blessing a routine activity before beginning to eat but Mom has nominated him by name. Wesley's response therefore is delivered in what Jefferson has called 'recognitional overlap' (Jefferson 1984).
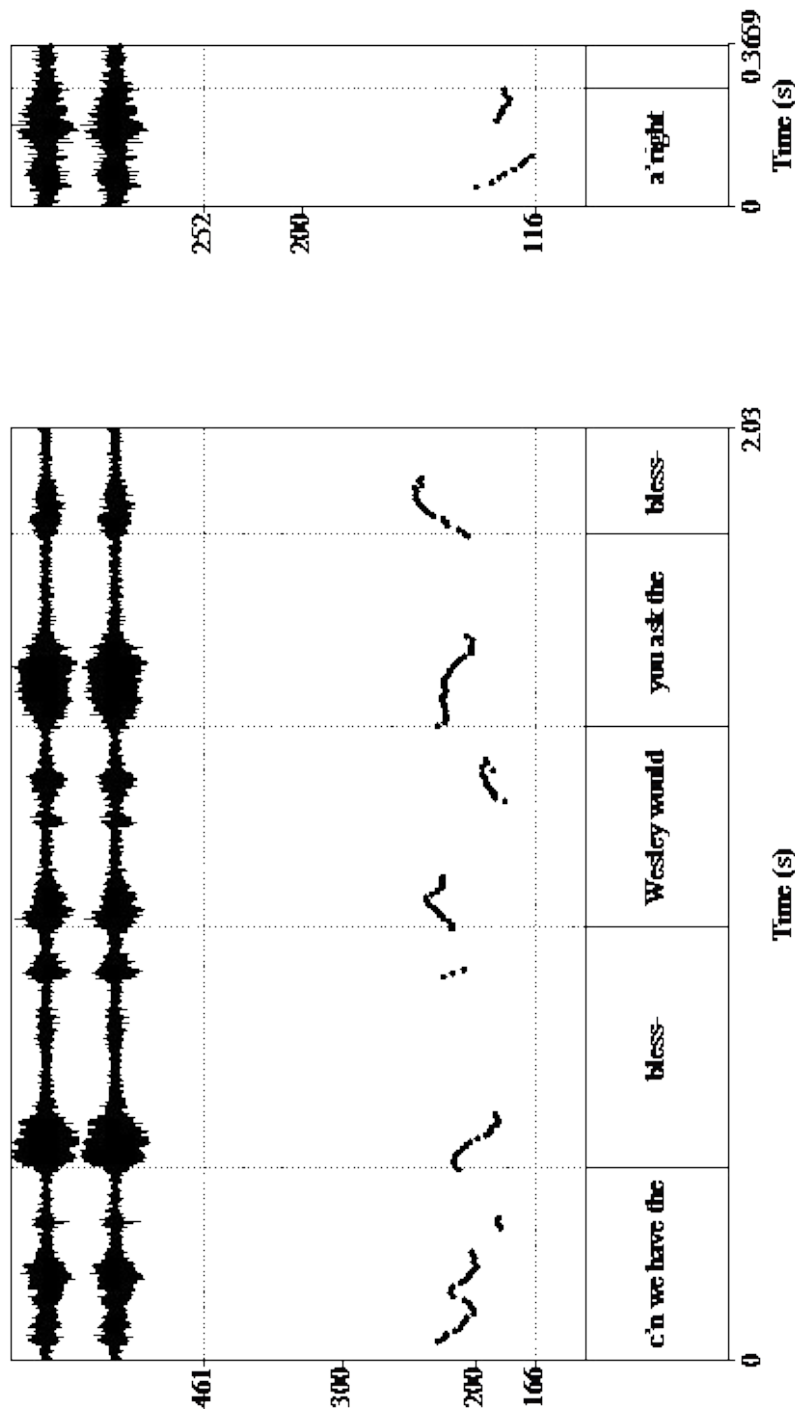

Figure 6: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 1-3 in (7)

In terms of pitch and loudness, Wesley's *alright* is produced with low pitch and volume, essentially matching the relatively low pitch and volume of Mom's request: see Figure 6. Wesley's *alright*, with its matching pitch and volume and especially with its overlapped recognitional onset, is interpretable as conveying full willingness to comply with Mom's request. Evidence for Wesley's willingness will be seen in the promptness with which he now begins to fulfill Mom's request and ask the blessing.

Particle responses that mark full willingness to comply with a prior request are typically produced at recognizable TRPs, or even, as in (7), in recognitional overlap: in other words, they set in on the next beat or even before the next beat established by the pacing of the request (see also Thompson et al forthc.). With this timing, such particles do not require any pitch or loudness upgrading to be interpretable as fully compliant. However, if they *do* have some form of prosodic upgrading, then there is likely to be an affective lamination, which becomes interpretable in context. This is what we see happening in the following excerpt:

(8) "Condense it down" (Cutie Pie, CSAE)
(Jill is out of town visiting her friend Jen and is talking to her boyfriend Jeff long-distance. Jeff now asks Jill to tell him what she and Jen have been saying about him.)

```
    1 Jef: .ts .h well,
    2      (0.3)
    3      give me the highlights.
    4      (0.3)
    5 Jil: the highlights?
    5 Jef: yeah,
    7      (0.3)
    8 Jil: of what we: talk about you?
    9      (0.2)
   10 Jef: yeah.
   11      (0.3)
   12 Jil: .ts u::hm_
   13      (0.3)
   14      #let me think#,
   15      #let me think of some: good ones.#
-> 16 Jef: condense it down to (.) a minute.
=> 17 Jil: £↑OKAY↑£
   18      WE: said something s:o funny today.
   19      .hh and I thought when (0.2) Jen said it#,
   20      #it captured you so well?=
```

In this request sequence, Jill's *okay* is timed to set in *early* with respect to Jeff's request:

(8´) Rhythm of Jill's incoming in line 17 of (8)

```
   16 Jef: condense it
                   /'down to (.) a/
                   /'minute       /
   17 Jil: /'okay                              (early)
```

With this timing Jill's response displays full willingness to comply. However, her *okay* is also higher and louder than Jeff's request, as we can see from the combination Praat picture in Figure 7.
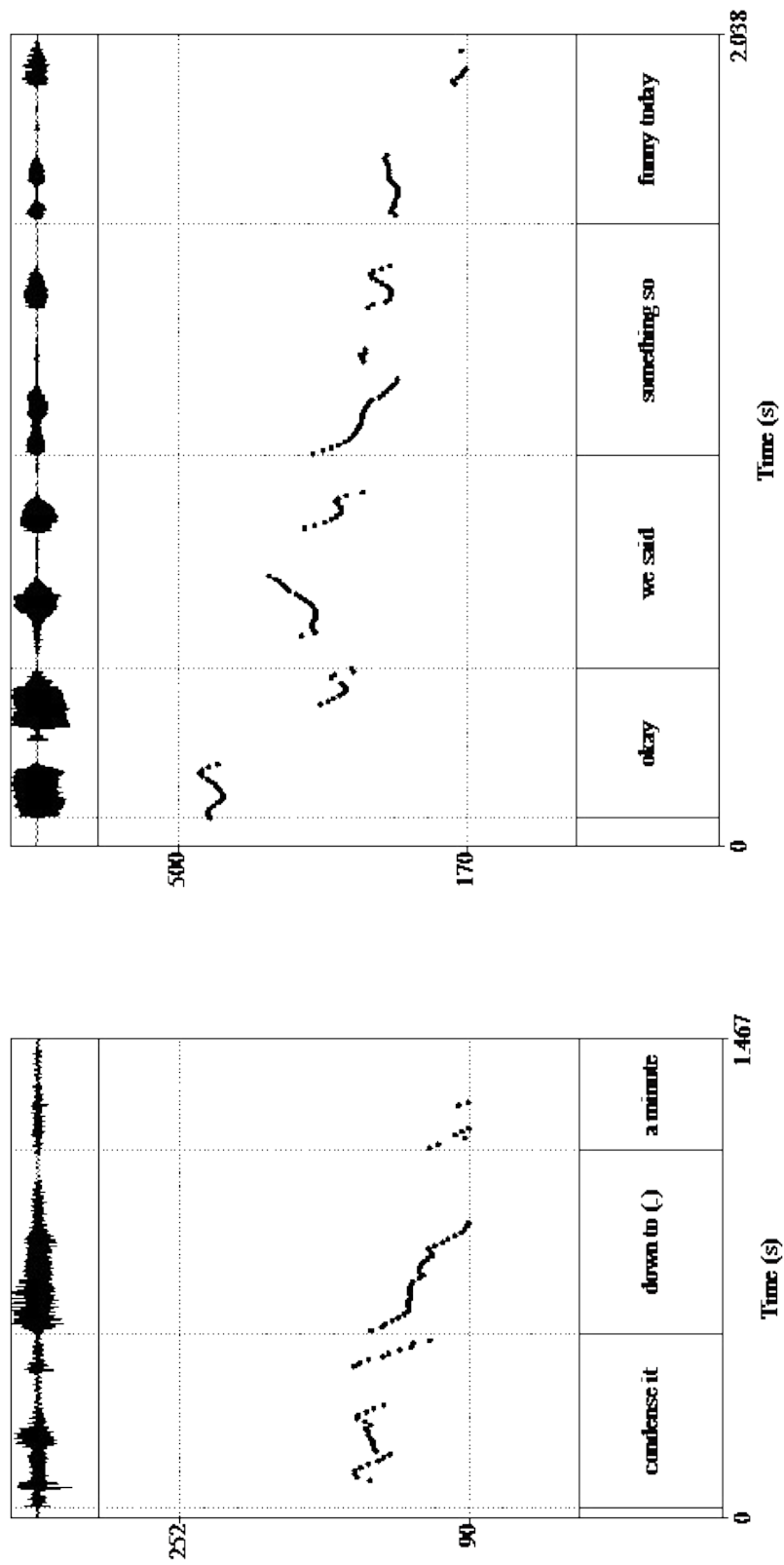
Figure 7: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 16 and 17 in (8)

As shown in Figure 7, the pitch of Jill's *okay we said something so funny today* starts much higher and covers a much wider pitch span than does Jeff's request *condense it down to (.) a minute*.[13] The volume of Jill's onset is also significantly greater than at the end of Jeff's turn. With this prosody and in this context, Jill's response is thus interpretable as displaying not only full willingness, but also a certain amount of pleasure (it is overlaid with smile voice) and enthusiasm in complying with what Jeff has asked. Evidence for this will be seen in the fact that she rushes immediately into a funny story that she and Jen have told about Jeff.

In contrast, when complying particles are produced with *delayed* timing in relation to that of a prior request turn, these responses are open to the interpretation that recipients, although they are acquiescing, are hesitant or reluctant to do so. Here is a case where the recipient of a request indicates some reluctance in complying:

(9) "Tortilla chips" (Kamunsky 2, p. 3)
(Alan has called his friend Shawn to invite him to a surprise birthday party for a mutual friend. Shawn has responded evasively, whereupon it emerges that he is 'grounded'.)

```
      1 ALA: [Oh en if you can make it
      2       bring oh I don('t know) a bag of
      3       potato chips or tortilla chips or something.
      4       ˙hh cuz Karen's bringing the chips'n the potato chips (_)
      5       ˙hh eh the uh dip en the potato chips
->    6       so if[you wanna bring]=
      7 SHA:      [°(W  o  :  w )]=
->    8 ALA: =some tortilla chips would be fi:ne,
=>    9 SHA: ˙hh Oka[y,
     10 ALA:        [Okay
```

Shawn's *okay* in line 09, delivered with a stylized (sing-song) pitch configuration, is slightly delayed in relation to the timing of Alan's request to bring some tortilla chips (lines 06 + 08, Fig. 8):

(9´) Rhythm of Shawn's incoming in line 09 of (9)

```
   6 ALA: so if you wanna bring some tor-
   8      /'tilla chips would be   /
          /'fine                   /
   9 SHA:    /'okay                              (late)
```

---

[13]   Jill's pitch range here has a span of 17.8 semitones; Jeff's, a span of 7.8 semitones.
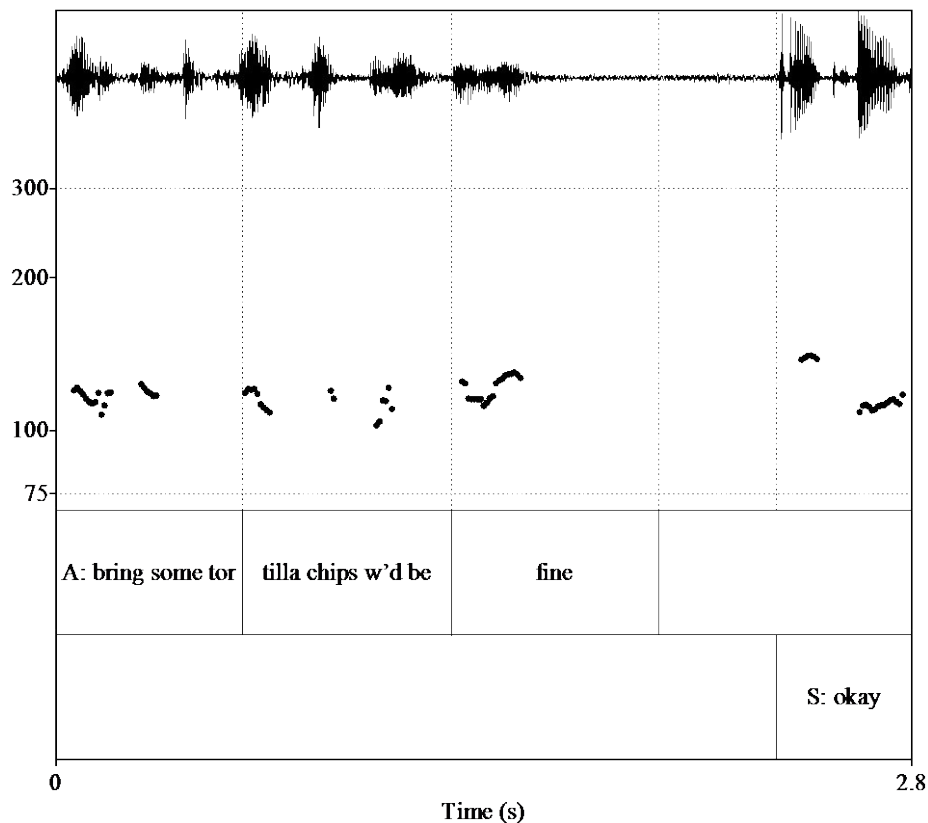
Figure 8: Late incoming of line 09 in (9)

Like Wesley's acquiescing *alright* in Ex. (7), Shawn's pitch and loudness levels on *okay* in Ex. (9) lack any noticeable upgrading or downgrading in relation to the prior request: see Figure 9. The interactional import of this prosody on Shawn's verbally compliant response must be seen in the context of what has transpired so far in this telephone conversation: Alan has invited Shawn to a surprise birthday party for a mutual friend. Although Shawn remains non-committal about being able to come, Alan nevertheless proceeds to announce when the party will start and, as seen in (9), to ask Shawn to bring tortilla chips along if he can come. Shawn's ambivalence is palpable: On the one hand, he displays interest in Alan's invitation by asking what their friend wants for his birthday (not shown here) but on the other hand, he avoids any explicit acceptance of the invitation. The hesitancy with which Shawn accedes to Alan's request to bring tortilla chips if he can come displays the same ambivalence: at once willingness to commit, via the lexical choice of *okay*, but reluctance in terms of accountability, via its delivery with delayed timing.
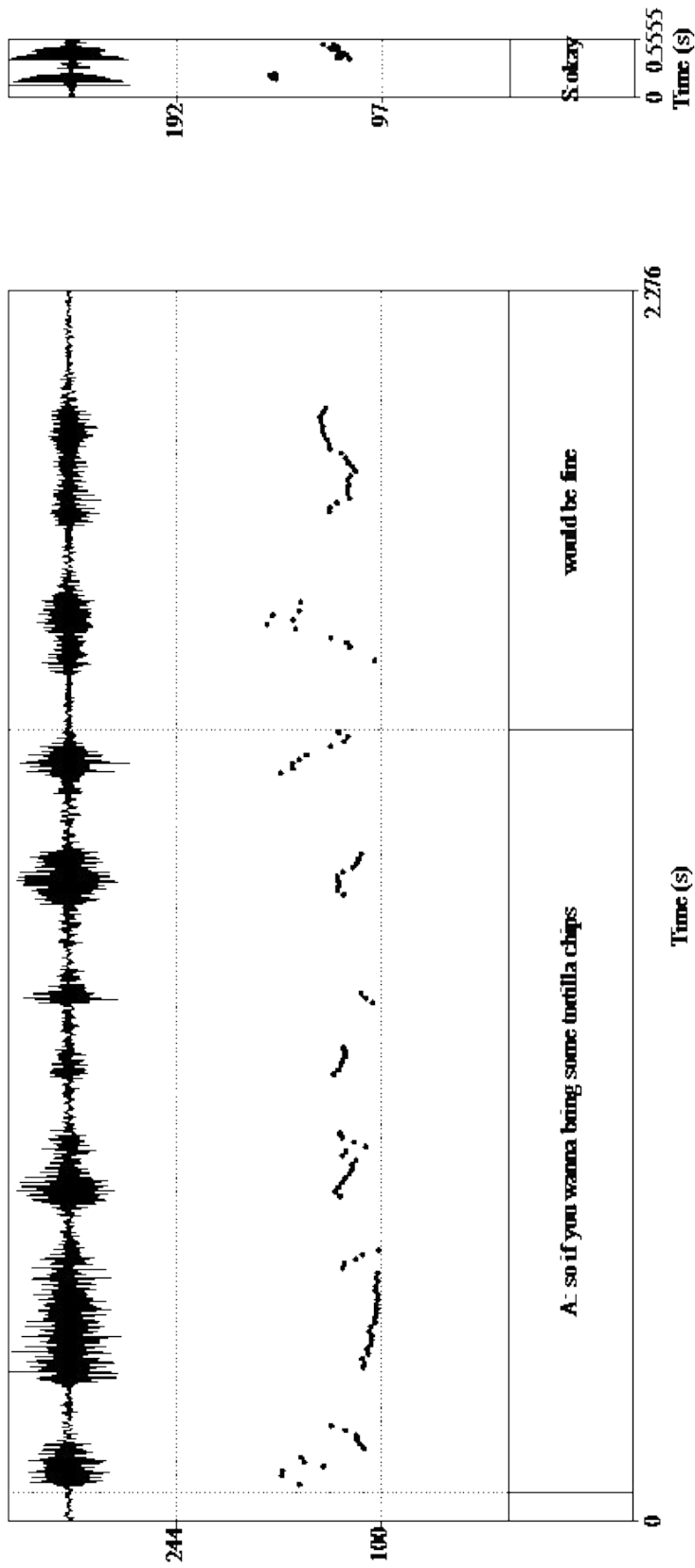
Figure 9: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 6/8 and 9 in (9)

In the proper circumstances, a delay in timing on a lexically acquiescing particle such as *okay, alright* or *sure* can amount to a subtle form of resistance to the request. This is what happens in the following case, where the requestee's resistance is unmasked by the requester:

(10) "Is that okay" (Happy Hour)[14]
(Molly is trying to recruit her friends Susie and Oliver, who are a couple, to do some videotaping for her.)

```
   1   MOL:   can i record YOU guys?
   2          (0.5)
   3   SUS:   [dee and DEE:::][15]
   4   MOL:   [do you ha:ve- ]
   5          NO::;
   6          YOU guys.
   7   MOL:   do you have DIN:ner together:?
   8          (0.2)
   9   MOL:   do you just SIT?: and watch tee vee and TALK?
  10          (0.8)
  11   SUS:   mHM,
-> 12  MOL:   can i just- give you the CAMera and you can
              set it UP for a week?
  13          (0.2)
-> 14  SUS:   d'you CARE?

((16 lines omitted))

  31   SUS:   .hhhh
  32          [uhm:;
  33   OLI:   [mm
-> 34  SUS:   is that oKAY:?
  35          (2.0)
         ((Oliver swallowing a French fry and running left hand through
           hair))
=> 36  OLI:   S::URE::.
  37   MOL:   thAt was a: (.) hOney we'll tAlk about it LATer?
  38          and i'm gonna say NO!
  39          (1.3)
  40   SUS:   is it oKAY?
  41          (0.3)
  42   OLI:   well it's not: NOT oKAY::,
  43          BUT - you KNOW:,
  44          (0.7)
  45   SUS:   yEs or NO:::;
  46          (0.2)
  47   OLI:   S[URE:.     ]
  48   SUS:    [rIght NOW;]
  49          oKAY;
  50          (0.2)
  51   OLI:   (it'll) TAKE forever,
  52          (0.9)
  53   SUS:   i KNOW; but it's ALL right;
  54          (0.5)
```

Molly's request that her friends tape themselves for a week at home (line 12) is redirected by Susie to Oliver, whose 'caring' she appears to anticipate. However, Oliver's response is not immediately forthcoming, which leads to some jocular

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[14]   This excerpt uses the GAT 2 transcription system (Selting et al. 2009).
[15]   A reference to 'Dungeons and Dragons', a popular computer game at the time.

teasing by his friends (not shown here). After this, Susie pursues a response from Oliver, on behalf of her friend Molly, with *is that okay?* (line 34). Oliver now responds with the complying particle *sure* (line 26), thereby formally acceding to Molly's request.

However, the embodied and prosodic delivery of Oliver's token suggests that he is anything but "sure" about fully committing to Molly's request. He first finishes chewing the French fry in his mouth and swallows it, while simultaneously running his hand through his hair. His production of *sure* is thus delayed by two seconds, and when it comes, it is hyperarticulated. The initial fricative of *sure* is lengthened, and the /r/ is strongly retroflexed. Prosodically, the token *sure* has a strong rise-fall contour; moreover, as the combined Praat picture makes clear, it is also upgraded in terms of pitch and loudness by comparison with Susie's prior turn (see Figure 10).

Oliver's pitch span is wider here than Susie's and he reaches a higher pitch peak in his range than she does in hers.[16] In other circumstances, this kind of prosodic upgrading might index heightened commitment; however, with Oliver's extremely delayed timing and his phonetic hyperarticulation, the upgrading here conveys just the opposite: an ironic reading of *okay* conveying reluctance to comply, if not resistance to Molly's request. This reading of Oliver's turn is supported by his post-completion stance marker in the form of a smile, which because of its delayed production becomes a commentary on the just-completed delivery. Thus, conflicting prosodic and phonetic cues on the acquiescing response particle lead to the interpretation that Oliver is being ironic. And indeed, this is the way Molly interprets his response (lines 37-38).

To summarize: this section has presented a representative sampling of particle responses that signal compliance with a prior request. The argument has been that here too, dialogic prosodic features are relevant for the interactional import of the response: in the case of requesting, whether the recipient is displaying full willingness to comply, or instead some reluctance, if not resistance. In contrast to particle responses to informings, where it is pitch and loudness upgrading or downgrading that is relevant for stance-related shades of meaning, here it is primarily the feature of timing: early or on-time responses signaling full willingness, delayed responses signaling hesitation and/or reluctance. In the case of particle responses to requests, pitch and loudness upgrading has only an added effect, that of marking enthusiasm over and above full willingness, or of marking ironic 'enthusiasm' in addition to reluctance and/or resistance.[17] These findings have interesting implications for dialogic prosody: they suggest that although dialogic features are always somehow relevant for stance-marking in (preferred) responses, the precise ways in which they are relevant differs from sequence to sequence. We return to this point below.

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[16] Oliver's pitch range is 15.6 semitones, while Susie's is 6.9 semitones.
[17] There were no cases of well-timed but prosodically downgraded complying responses with particles in the database for this study.
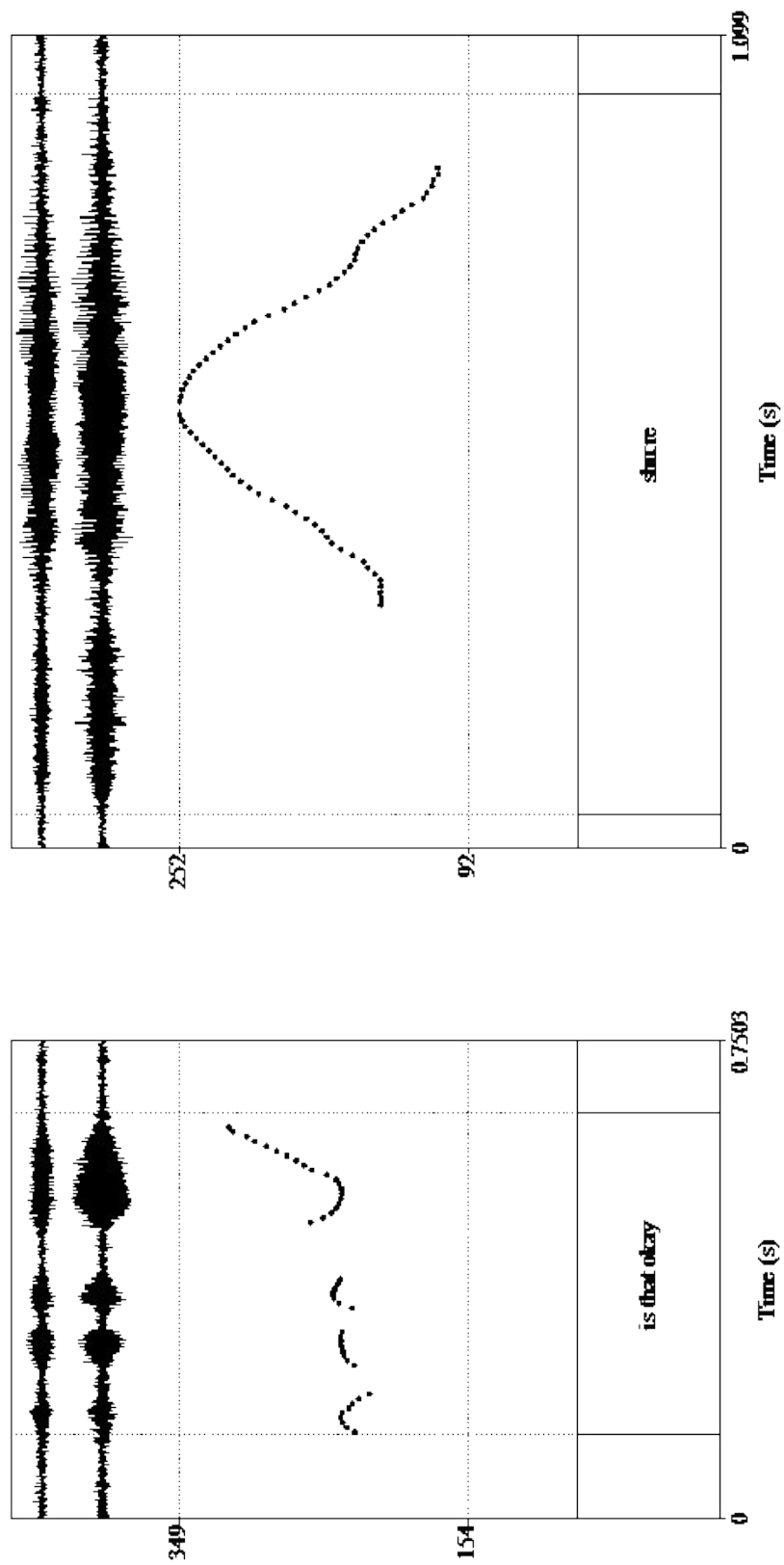
Figure 10: Individually scaled pitch contours for lines 34 and 36 in (10)

4. Methodological challenges and analytic pay-offs

The above discussion has made a (renewed) plea for an approach to prosody that treats it dialogically: in responsive actions, this means examining not just what the prosody is like with respect to the individual's voice, but how the prosody of the response relates to the prosody of the prior turn. Does it have the same parameters or different ones? Are these parameters more or less strong, more or less extensive than those of the prior turn? Or, with respect to timing, does the timing of the response 'match' the pacing of the prior turn, or not?

This is not to deny that there are methodological challenges in analyzing prosody across speakers. Since individuals have different vocal apparatuses and different natural rhythms, analysts inevitably find themselves asking questions like: What counts as 'the same', what counts as 'different'? For instance:

With respect to *pitch*: What may seem like a high pitch for a male voice may actually be lower, on an absolute scale, than the lowest pitch of a female voice. Prosodists have always known that pitch must be analyzed relatively, i.e. relative to the individual's habitual pitch range. An individual-based calibration, however, makes it difficult to compare across speakers unless the relative pitch peaks and valleys (=pitch span) of one individual's voice are put in relation to those of another. This is what the combined Praat pictures shown above have attempted to do, namely to show the relative pitch height and span on *oh* as produced by one voice in relation to the relative pitch height and span of a turn in the interlocutor's voice.

With respect to *loudness*: The situation is even more complex here, since individual speakers not only have their own habitual volume levels but can also be at different distances from the recording device. Ideally, however, one would want to put what is loud for one speaker in relation to what is loud for another. Many of the same issues that are relevant for pitch apply to loudness as well, although our methods for representing relative loudness across speakers are less well developed.

With respect to *syllable duration* and *speech rate*: Here the issue is not how fast or slow one segment of a speaker's turn is compared to another segment of that same turn, but rather how fast or slow one speaker's turn is compared to that of a prior speaker. What remains to be established is how to factor out differing habitual rates of speech.

With respect to the *timing* of turns: The status of a well-timed, early or late incoming must be determined in relation to the pacing of the prior turn. For English, a rhythmic metric has proved appropriate for capturing these distinctions (see, e.g., Auer et al 1999). But whether, and if so how, such a rhythmic metric might apply to other languages remains an open question.

With respect to *voice quality*: Factoring out different habitual voice qualities, the challenge here is to determine if and how the overlaid voice quality of one turn relates to the voice-quality overlay, if there is one, of a prior turn.

Despite these challenges, there are clear analytic payoffs in approaching prosody dialogically. Some of these will have become evident in the discussion above. For one, with dialogically calibrated features we have a handle on how participants 'inter-act' prosodically when a particular type of response format (here, a

particle format) is held constant across different sequence types. The results are revealing:

- (i) As intimated above, dialogic prosodic parameters are always relevant for particle responses, but differentially so in different sequence types. This will be seen from Table 1, which presents an overview of the particle responses and their prosodic design as discussed in the examples above.

Particle response	Upgraded			Downgraded			Timing	Stance
	Pitch peaks	*Pitch range*	*Loud-ness*	*Pitch peaks*	*Pitch range*	*Loud-ness*		
To informings								
(3) oh	√	√					On time	+ ☺[18]
(4) oh				√	√	√	Early	+ ☹[19]
(5) oh	√		√				Delayed	+ ☺
(6) oh				√	√	√	Delayed	+ ⊖[20]
To requests								
(7) alright							Early	+ ☺[21]
(8) okay	√	√	√				Early	+ ☺
(9) okay							Delayed	+ ☹[22]
(10) sure	√	√	√				Delayed	+ ☹

Table 1: Prosodic design of particle responses in Informing and Request sequences[23]

From this table it becomes clear that for Informing sequences it is primarily pitch and loudness upgrading or downgrading that is relevant for the stance a particle response is conveying, whereas for Requests it is timing that is relevant for the stance of a particle response:

In Informing sequences, pitch and loudness *upgrading vs. downgrading* are systematically involved in ☺ vs. ☹/ ⊖ stances, these symbols being emblematic for interest/ surprise/ emotively involved revelation vs. empathy/ sympathy/ emotively uninvolved revelation. But some ☺ stances are conveyed by on-time, others by delayed responses; some ☹/ ⊖ stances are conveyed by early, others by delayed responses. That is, the timing of a particle response is of secondary importance in Informing sequences. It accomplishes in the main a display of cognitive processing, which is interactionally relevant for the distinction between responses to elicited vs. volunteered informings.

In Request sequences, by contrast, it is the *timing* of a particle response that is systematically relevant for the stance being conveyed: ☺ stances (= full willingness ± enthusiasm) are signaled by early or on-time incomings, ☹ stances (= hesitation/ reluctance/ resistance) are signaled by delayed incomings. The presence of pitch and loudness upgrading on a particle response conveys additional lamina-

---

[18] ☺ = interest/surprise/emotively involved revelation
[19] ☹ = empathy/sympathy
[20] ⊖ = emotively uninvolved
[21] ☺ = full willingness ± enthusiasm
[22] ☹ = hesitation/reluctance/resistance
[23] Preferred ("+" action) responses only. Dialogic prosodic dimensions only.

tions optionally: for instance, it can bring in an added component of enthusiasm, which enriches the basic stance of full willingness or ironizes a stance of reluctance.

- (ii) The cognitive-affective interpretations that dialogic prosody makes relevant are also sequence-specific. Although all of the particles considered here are implementing 'preferred', or "+" action, responses, their prosodic design hints at more subtle stances being taken by their speakers over and above the simple preferred next action. For instance, in volunteered informing sequences, what is at stake are things like 'Am I interested in this or not?', 'Does this news have positive repercussions for me/you, or negative ones?' But in elicited informing sequences, what is at stake is 'Is this informing what I expected or not?', 'Does it cause me to revise my prior understanding?', 'Is it ancillary to my assumptions or not?', 'Does the revision of understanding have positive implications for you/me, or not?'

By contrast, in request sequences, what is at stake is not interest, sympathy or revelation. Instead it is degrees of willingness to comply with what is being requested. Willingness can be full or 'over the top' – shading off into enthusiasm – or it can be less than full, being variously interpretable as hesitation, reluctance or resistance. For different sequence types there is then a specific 'menu' of cognitive-affective choices, which are intimately tied up with the type of action involved. This constrains the ascription of cognitive-affective meaning to prosodic formattings and renders them more readily interpretable for interactants.

In addition to these specific insights, here with respect to the workings of prosodic design and response particle, viewing prosody dialogically has the more general advantage that, like e.g. Szczepek Reed's (2006, 2012) and Ogden's (2006) work, it puts the study of prosody on a par with the study of social action. In action analysis it is not a question of what individual action a particular turn is implementing, but rather of how that action relates to a prior action, or of what kind of subsequent action it makes relevant. We would be foolhardy to try to determine, for instance, what action some particular turn is implementing in a context-free fashion. And so it is with prosody: both its form and meaning potential must be seen in relation to what has preceded and what is expected to follow. If we can manage to take this perspective, we will have completed the dialogic 'turn' in the study of prosody as well.

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