

Assessing Answers: Action ascription in third position¹

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Assessing Answers: Action ascription in third position

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

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

1. Conversational Structure

Assessments have featured centrally in conversation analytic research since the 1970s (Pomerantz, 1975, 1978, 1984; see Lindström & Mondada, 2009 for an overview). They take up such a central role in the study of interaction, because they are one of the primary means participants have of showing social engagement and social solidarity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Pomerantz, 1984). By taking up some evaluative stance towards an interlocutor's prior turn, speakers can demonstrate that they have understood the import of an interlocutor's talk, and thus that they have been attentive recipients, but also that they share their interlocutor's point of view.

Most of the work on assessments has focused on their production in environments such as storytellings and news exchanges—i.e., reports of past events—and their sequential implications (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992; Lindström & Mondada, 2009; Maynard, 1997; Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers, 2008).

When speakers convey news or produce a story, they do not merely provide their recipient with information: they display a stance towards the reported event with which the recipient should subsequently agree (Maynard, 1997; Stivers, 2008). Assessments of another's talk therefore not only

have a social function, their production also has sequential implications. By providing an assessment speakers can show that they have finished describing some event, and similarly recipients can display their understanding that a telling has come to completion by providing an assessment (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Jefferson, 1978, 1993; Sacks, 1974; Stivers, 2008).

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

The first type of assessment is the one that is typically discussed in the literature. These are assessments with which speakers adopt an evaluative stance towards the answer, treating it as a telling of news or a story. I call these evaluative assessments. The second type of assessment has not previously been discussed. These assessments are used to adopt a deontic stance towards the answer.² The deontic authority of participants concerns their rights and obligations to determine their own and other's actions (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). In interaction, participants frequently orient to their respective authority. For example, in making a proposal for a future course of action, a speaker inherently encroaches on the recipient's authority to determine his/her own future actions. The degree to which the speaker has rights to make such an infringement is reflected not only in the design of the proposal, but also its

² In this paper *stance* is used not in parallel with *status* to refer to the verbal and embodied resources that speakers use to claim some measure of for example knowledgeability (Heritage, 2012a), but to indicate that a speaker takes a position: 'an assessment in third position articulates a *stance* taken up toward what the second pair part speaker had said or done in the prior turn' (Schegloff, 2007: 123-124, emphasis mine; see also Stivers, 2008).

uptake. With the deontic assessments discussed in this paper, a speaker treats the prior turn as a proposal and receipts it as an acceptable proposal.

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

Third, I show that the two types of assessments can be combined into a single turn at talk, suggesting that speakers treat them as doing different work. Speakers can take up a deontic stance, treating an

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

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

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

answer as an acceptable proposal, and subsequently take some evaluative stance towards the proposed course of action and the agreement.

The distinction between these assessment types raises questions about sequence organization. Work on action formation and ascription has historically focused on the adjacency pair: how sequence-initiating actions make conditionally relevant type-fitting responses, and how recipients in their response display an understanding of and ascribe an action to that sequence-initiating action (Levinson, 2013; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). This paper discusses how in third position speakers not only receipt a response in a move towards sequence closure, but actively ascribe an action to it. The three-part structures that arise in this way, however, are not set up by the speaker when s/he launched the sequence (cf. Kevoe-Feldman & Robinson, 2012; Jefferson & Schenkein, 1977; Tsui, 1989). They arise locally, as speakers deal with contingencies raised in the response.

The analysis in this paper is organized as follows. In section 3 I discuss ways in which participants do evaluative assessments, and I compare that in section 4 to a way in which speakers do deontic assessments, where I briefly show that the same practice is used in second position to accept proposals and offers. In section 5 I show that deontic and evaluative assessments can be produced in one turn at talk, providing additional evidence that they do different work. Finally in section 6 I discuss the sequential organization of the resulting structures.

2. Data & Method

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

allowing use of the data for research and publication purposes, and the transcripts have been anonymized.

Evaluative assessments are produced relatively frequently and were therefore gathered from a subset of the corpus: 3.5h of conversation, or 34 dyads. This resulted in a collection of 48 third-position assessments, 32 of which are treated as proposals for sequence closure (Schegloff, 2007). Deontic assessments are relatively rare, especially in third position. From the entire corpus, which consists of 235 dyads, only 21 cases were collected.

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

3. Evaluative Assessments

This section discusses a few of the ways in which participants use assessments to take up an evaluative stance towards an answer. These assessments are frequently implemented with either a full clause, consisting of a demonstrative, a copula, and an assessment term; or just an assessment term (see Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, p. 162). These evaluative assessments often address answers in which the recipient either tells a story or gives an answer to a request for information, in other words types of answers that are done, at least in part, to inform. The recipient of the answer often prefaces the assessment with an interjection that registers that answer as informative (Heritage, 1984a).

Consider the following extract from a conversation between two sisters, Fleur and Loes. Loes is planning a trip to Barcelona with her mother and in line 1 Fleur asks how much time they will spend there. After Loes has provided an answer in line 3, Fleur receipts that answer with an *oh*-prefaced assessment.

(1) BE1 – 02:27.8-02:31.7

01 Fle hoe lang >gaan jullie nou:<?

how long go you.PL PRT

how long >are you going<?

02 (0.4)

03 Loe e::h zeven dagen,

seven days

e::h seven days,

04 (0.8)

05 Fle -> oh das la:ng.

oh that's long

oh that's lo:ng.

06 (0.4)

07 Loe ja lang hè,

yeah long TAG

yeah long right,

08 (1.1)

09 Loe °([])°

10 Fle [°(ga ik)°

go I

[°(am I)°

11 (1.1)

12 wat ga ik dan doe:n?=
what go I then do

then what am I going to do:?=

By assessing seven days as long in line 5, Fleur characterizes the time Loes and her mother will spend in Barcelona as longer than what she would consider normal for such a trip. Although Loes subsequently endorses Fleur's assessment in line 7, she did not provide an evaluation in her answer. In other words, Loes did not project an assessment with her answer. Fleur provides an assessment from her own perspective, recognizably so by using *lang* in both her inquiry and her assessment. Loes in her subsequent agreement also displays her understanding that Fleur conveys a stance of her own: she uses turn-final *hè*, a tag that is normally used in first position to solicit agreement with some assessment (Enfield, Brown, & de Ruiter, 2012). With this particle, Loes implies that her assessment is independent of Fleur's; that is, Loes and Fleur agree that seven days is *lang* ('long'), but they came to that assessment independently of each other (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006). By conveying her own perspective, Fleur treats Loes' response not as a telling that displays a stance to be agreed with, but as an answer to an information request.

The *oh*-preface provides further evidence that Fleur takes an evaluative stance. It is used to receipt the answer as informative, treating its informative content as its primary focus (Heritage, 1984a, 2017). The assessment is thereby construed as dealing with an informative response, as evaluating a telling of news. That is, the assessment is designed to be understood as evaluating news.

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

(2) BR1 – 00:47.8-01:16.6

01 Eli hoe was ↑jouw weekend.
how was your.SG weekend
how was ↑your weekend.

02 (0.3)

03 Mel ja. (.) was echt heel lek↓ker.
yeah was really very nice
yeah. (.) was really very nice.

<6 lines omitted>

10 enne:h ja je kent het wel: winkelen (.) uitgaa:n:
and yeah you.SG know it ADV shopping clubbing

11 (.) uit ete:n, (0.3) .h leuke dingen doen: >en zo:<?
out dinner fun things do and such
ande:h yeah you know what it's like: shopping (.)
clubbing: (.) out to dinner, (0.3) .h doing fun things
>and such:<?

12 (0.8)

13 Eli -> o::h lekker ma[:n:?
oh nice man
o::h nice ma[:n:?]

14 Mel [ja::] echt ↑super leu:k.
yeah really super fun
[yea::] really ↑super fu:n.

Melanie's story is moving to completion in lines 10-11 where she provides a list of things Eline should be able to recognize – *je kent het wel* ('you know what it's like'). She moves from the specifics of her weekend to a more general description of activities one does when visiting a city. Eline also orients to this list as a point of possible completion by providing an *oh*-prefaced assessment.

Throughout her telling it is clear that Melanie is taking up a positive evaluative stance. She uses assessment terms such as *lekker* ('nice'), *top* ('great'), and *leuk* ('fun'), thereby projecting how her story should be taken up by Eline, who in line 13 provides an affiliating response. By using the same adjective as Melanie did in her initial assessment, *lekker*, Eline's assessment is fitted to that answer: she adopts Melanie's stance, treating her response as a telling that carries some valence to be adopted.

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

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

(3) BR1 – 01:38.6-01:54.0

01 Mel en as je- (.) bij best heb je dan ook e:h
and if you.SG at Best have you.SG then also

02 (0.5) alleen eten >maar hier had je dan ook
only food but here had you.SG then also

03 nog <onbeperkt drank #derbij:#, =dus 'twas echt
yet unlimited drinks with.it so it.was really

04 super #chill:#. *super chill*

*and if you- (.) at best you then have e:h (0.5) just
food >but here you then also had< unlimited drinks
#with it#,,=so it was really super #chill:#.*

05 (1.0)

06 Eli hoe- hoe duur was dat bij mekaa:r?
*how how expensive was that with together
how- how expensive was that all together?*

07 (.)

08 Mel tweeëntwintig euro:
*twenty.two euro
twenty two euro:*

09 (1.0)

10 Eli -> >WOW DAS< (0.4) echt niet duu[r:?
*wow that.is really not expensive
>WOW THAT'S< (0.4) really not expensi[ve?*

11 Mel [(das) echt
(that.is) really

12 goedkoo:p jonge:,
cheap man

[(that's)

really chea:p man:,

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

The structure of the sequence in (3) is the same as in (1). Eline launches the sequence by requesting information, and after Melanie has provided the answer, Eline gives an assessment. Although Eline's

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

While the evaluative assessments in (1) and (2) were *oh*-prefaced, Eline prefaces her assessment with *wow*. In combination with the preceding silence, which can be glossed as doing being at a loss for words, it indexes surprise or even astonishment (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006), which means that Eline treats the answer as noteworthy and thus the prior turn as informative. Like *oh*, *wow* thus indicates that the prefaced assessment addresses some new and in this case surprising information, and displays an evaluative stance.

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

(4) BO1 – 00:49.4-00:53.9

01 Kee wel e:h ik ben nu steeds meer zelfstandig bezig,=
PRT I am now ever more independent busy
well e:h I am working ever more independently,=
02 =dus ik e:h n- (.) ('k) neem nu ook zelf telefoontjes
so I I answer now also self phone.calls

03 aa:n, ↓en e:h
on and
=so I e:h a- (.) (I) answer the phone now also on my own,
and e:h

04 (0.7)

05 Lis ↑oh das wel [↑leuk.]
oh that.is ADV nice
↑oh that's [↑nice.]

06 Kee [()] vragen (.) aan de balie:,
questions at the desk
[()] questions (.) at the desk,

07 (0.5)

08 Lis dus steeds meer verant[woord]elijkheden.
so ever more responsibilities
so ever more responsib[iliti]es.

09 Kee [()]

10 (0.8)

11 Kee ja:h,
yeah
yea:h,

12 (.)

13 Lis -> leu[k
nice
ni[ce

14 Kee [inderdaa:d °(maar)°
indeed but
[indeed °(but)°

Lisa assesses Kees' telling at two points, first in line 5 and then in line 13. Her first assessment is designed in a way we have come to expect: it registers Kees' telling as news with a turn-initial *oh*, and it subsequently provides a positive evaluation of that news. Lisa's second assessment comes at a point where Kees' story has come to possible completion. Although his turn-final intonation in line 6 could suggest that he is not finished yet, Lisa's subsequent summary formulation (Heritage & Watson, 1979) treats the story as complete and this move is not resisted by Kees. He simply provides an affirming *ja*, after which Lisa gives her assessment, *leuk* ('nice').

By providing a summary formulation Lisa she conveys her understanding that Kees is getting more responsibilities (see Heritage, 2009, 2012a; Raymond, 2010). His response in line 11 thus merely affirms what she has come to expect and there is no contingency with which *oh* would deal. The positive development of Kees making progress in his job has, however, not yet been evaluated. By formulating Kees' story without also assessing it, Lisa launches a sequence in which her subsequent assessment will be understood as an evaluative assessment, even though a confirming answer no longer conveys news.⁶

The evaluative assessments in the data shown are all 'proposals for sequence closure' (Schegloff, 2007). But as they are assessments, and not just response particles like *oh*, they have the potential to be taken up as first pair parts (Pomerantz, 1984). In fact, a large number of evaluative assessments—21 out of 48—receive an acknowledging or (dis)agreeing response. Consider for example excerpt (1) where after Loes' agreeing uptake—*lang hè* ('long right')—the sequence is closed. Of course, the recipient of the assessment can also resist closure, as Kees does in excerpt (4), where Lisa with her summary formulation was clearly moving to sequence closure.

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

Evaluative assessments possibly receive uptake so frequently because the speaker evaluates recipient-oriented news (Heritage & Raymond 2005, Raymond & Heritage 2006). These evaluative assessments are proposals for sequence closure, but in addition to simply moving on with a next sequence, an interlocutor can go along with such a proposal by providing an acknowledgment or second assessment.

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

4. Deontic assessments

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

I first briefly discuss these deontic assessments in cases where the co-interactant has made acceptance conditionally relevant to show that these assessments implement acceptance of a proposal.

Subsequently I show that they are used to the same effect in third position.

4.1. Deontic assessments in second position

When speakers produce proposals, they make relevant acceptance or rejection (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Houtkoop-Steenstra (1985) discussed a few of the ways in which speakers in Dutch can implement acceptance, such as formulating the future course of action, articulating that complying is not a problem, or evaluating the agreement. Providing a deontic assessment is thus but one way speakers of Dutch have of implementing acceptance. I briefly discuss two cases where a deontic assessment is used in second position to treat a future course of action involving both participants as an acceptable proposal.⁷

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

(5) VK2 – 00:09.5-00:40.7

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

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

yeah is fine?

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

When dealing with remote proposals, such as in (5), some form of explicit commitment is conditionally relevant (Lindström, 2017; for a similar analysis of remote requests, see Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1985). That is, confirmation is not enough. A case of pursuit can be seen extract (6). In line 1 Amelie proposes to her sister that she make sushi for dinner. Fabienne initially responds with just *oké*, but this is not treated as adequate by Amelie. Just when Fabienne provides a commitment with *ja is goed*, Amelie almost simultaneously pursues that commitment with *ja* in line 4, thereby showing that *oké* was not enough.

(6) VB1 – 00:59.2-01:17.5

01 Ame ja; h (0.2) maar: zal ik anders °sushi(s)° ma↑ken?
yeah but shall I otherwise sushis make
yeah; h (0.2) but shall I make sushi(s) otherwise?

02 (0.6)

03 Fab -> o↓ké::? (0.3) >ja [is goed<.
okay yeah is fine
o↓kay::? (0.3) >yeah [is fine<.

04 Ame [ja?
[yeah?

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

4.2. Deontic assessments in third position

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

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

(7) VO1 – 01:12.4-01:24.6

01 Mon maar e:h ↑kan je anders volgende week
 but can you.SG otherwise next week

02 even wat doen: dan. (.)
 just something do then
 but e:h ↑can you otherwise just do something

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

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

next week then. (.)

03 [doen we volgende week even e[ten.
do we next week just eat
 [we'll go for dinner next we[ek.

04 Esm [.hh ja () [volgende wee:k. h
yeah next week
 [.hh yeah () [next wee:k .h

05 ja: gewoon in het begi:- in het begin,=ja ik
yeah simply at the star- at the start yeah I

06 moet nou voorlopig >gewoon iedere< donderdagavond
have.to now for.now just every Thursday.evening

07 terug >maar de rest< van de week eh .HH >ben ik<
back but the rest of the week am I

08 #all your:s#.
yea:h simply at the star:- at the start,=yeah I
have to go back >simply every< thursday evening for
now >but the rest< of the week eh .HH I'm
 #all your:s#.

09 Mon -> ↑oké, is goed.
okay is fine
 ↑okay, that's fine.

10 .h nou dan e:h contacten we daar anders nog even over:.
well then contact.PL we there else yet just about
 .h well then e:h we'll talk just about that.

Moniek's turn reaches possible completion at the end of line 2, at which point she can be seen to simply inquire whether Esmee is available the next week. Although in line 3 Moniek transforms her action into an actual proposal by suggesting dinner, Esmee already begins addressing the query in overlap,

confirming that she is available. She subsequently explains in lines 6-8 that she has to go back home (presumably to her parents) every Thursday in order to work on Friday, but that during the rest of the week she is at Moniek's beck and call (lines 7-8). This answer is taken up by Moniek in line 9, first with *oké* and subsequently with the assessment *is goed*. With this assessment she closes the part of the sequence that deals with availability, and she suggests in line 10 that they'll talk specifics later. By providing a positive assessment *is goed*, Moniek shows that Esmee's answer here-and-now constitutes an acceptable proposal; the specifics can be filled in later.

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

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

(6') VB1 – 00:59.2-01:17.5

01 Ame ja; h (0.2) maar: zal ik anders °sushi(s)° ma↑ken?
 yeah but shall I otherwise sushis make

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

Fabienne accepts the offer after a slight pause with a type-conforming *ja* and the deontic assessment *is goed*. She goes on to suggest in lines 3 and 5 that they make the sushi together, as that will be fun. This suggestion is accepted as a modified proposal by Amelie in line 7 with *oké is goed*.

The contingency that Amelie deals with in line 7 was not projected in her sequence-initiating action. That is, she was not soliciting a proposal. But Fabienne does not just accept her offer: she modifies it. By suggesting that they make sushi together, she transforms the plan into a collaborative project; Amelie will no longer be doing something *for* her, but *with* her. Fabienne thereby encroaches upon Amelie's deontic rights, who sees an altruistic offer changed into a proposal. By responding to Fabienne's answer with *is goed*, Amelie treats Fabienne's response as implementing a modified proposal with which she subsequently has to agree or disagree. She claims the right to approve the revised course of action formulated by Fabienne.

Note that she does not treat Fabienne’s proposal as launching a new sequence. In second position recipients preface their deontic assessments with a type-conforming *ja*, like Fabienne does in line 3 (see also excerpt 5), but Amelie uses *oké*. So while the sequence develops very different from the one in excerpt (7), Amelie similarly moves towards sequence-closure by using a deontic assessment to deal with a contingency that is raised in the response.

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

Excerpt (8) is from a conversation between Kyra and her mother, Marie. Kyra has called her mother to congratulate her on her birthday. Marie moves to sequence closure by thanking her daughter, and subsequently produces an itemized news enquiry (Button & Casey, 1985), asking what plans Kyra has for the day.

(8) DV1 – 00:23.4-00:38.5

01 Mar ↑nou ↓dankjewel,<wa' ga je doen vandaa:g?
 PRT thank.you what go you.SG do today
 ↑well ↓thank you,<wha' are you going to do toda:y?

02 (0.7)

03 Kyr nou (.) 'k ga zometeen trainen,
 PRT I go in.a.moment exercising,
 well (.) I'm going exercising in a moment,

04 (0.7)

05 Mar j:a:, h=
 yeah
 y:ea:h, h=

06 Kyr =en dA:n: gaan we mis↑schien heel even nog (0.2)
 and then go.PL we maybe very briefly still

07 e:hm (0.2) rondlopen door de stAd?<en dan kom ik wel
 walk through the city and then come.SG I ADV

08 een keertje: richting ↑huis.
 a time direction home
 =and then we'll may↑be very briefly go (0.2) e:hm (.) for a walk
 through the city?<and then I'll come home at some ↑point.

09 (0.5)

10 Mar -> >'s ↑goed<?
 is fine
 >'s ↑fine<?

Marie's news enquiry does not show an orientation to some future course of action in which she will also be involved: its design suggests that it is done solely to inquire about Kyra's plans for the day.¹⁰ Kyra also addresses the news enquiry as such, articulating in chronological order what her plans are: first go for a workout (line 3), then maybe for a walk in the city with her boyfriend (lines 6-7), and then come home to her mother (lines 7-8). Kyra's answer thus does involve Marie, albeit as a passive *visitee*, and Marie receipts it not as an answer to a news enquiry, i.e., a story with some valence, but as a proposal: *is goed* is not used to convey that Kyra has good plans, but that those plans are acceptable to Marie. The

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

contingency Marie deals with was not projected by her initial inquiry, but arises in the answer, and the sequence thus requires expansion before it can be closed.

In this section I demonstrated how participants in Dutch talk-in-interaction make use of a specific practice when evaluating an answer as an acceptable proposal: *is goed* ('ø is fine'). This practice is not just used when the sequence-initiating inquiry is oriented to arrangement making as in (6) and (7), but also when it seems a request for information as in (8). The contingency that *is goed* deals with arises in the answer: whether an answer is or is not a proposal, speakers use *is goed* to treat it as one. Since the answer is not treated as relevant for its informative nature but as a proposal, *is goed* is, at least in my data, never prefaced by *oh*, but instead frequently by *oké* ('okay'), a particle that is often used to propose closure of sequences in which actions other than informing feature centrally (Beach, 1993; Schegloff, 2007).

5. Mixed assessments

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

(8) DV1 – 00:23.4-00:38.5

01 Mar ↑nou ↓dankjewel,<wa' ga je doen vandaa:g?
 PRT *thank.you what go you.SG do today*
 well thank you,<wha' are you going to do today?
02 (0.7)

03 Kyr nou (.) 'k ga zometeen trainen,
PRT I go in.a.moment exercising,
well (.) I'm going exercising in a moment,

04 (0.7)

05 Mar j:a:, h=
yeah
y:ea:h, h=

06 Kyr =en dA:n: gaan we mis↑schien heel even nog (0.2)
and then go.PL we maybe very briefly still

07 e:hm (0.2) rondlopen door de stAd?<en dan kom ik wel
walk through the city and then come.SG I ADV

08 een keertje: richting ↑huis.
a time direction home
=and then we'll maybe very briefly go (0.2) e:hm (.) for a walk
through the city?<and then I'll come home at some point.

09 (0.5)

10 Mar -> >'s ↑goed<? gezellig?
is fine nice
>'s fine<? ni[ce?

11 Kyr [°denk ik°
think I
 [°I think°

12 (1.0)

13 Mar 'k zie 't ↑wel;;
I see it ADV
I'll see what happens;;

Marie's deontic and evaluative assessment in line 10 are recognizably distinct: Marie uses a specific practice to take a deontic stance towards Kyra's answer, whereas the assessment term *gezellig* is fitted

to the specific state of affairs being evaluated: Kyra's coming over for Marie's birthday. In other words, this example confirms that deontic assessments are done to be recognizably different from evaluative assessments.

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

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

(9) BM1 – 09:26.5-09:36.8

01 Loe dan kom je ↑dus nadat je met de jongens bent geweest.

then come you thus after you with the guys have been

then you'll come after you've been out with the guys

02 (0.7)

03 Kar ↓j:a.

↓y:eah.

04 (0.2)

05 Loe -> o:ké gezellig.=
okay lovely
 o:kay lovely.=

06 =.h geef ik ↑dat [ook effe] door aan me ouders;
pass I that also just along to my parents
 =.h I'll pass that [just also] along to my parents;

After Karel has re-affirmed their arrangement in line 3, Loes moves to sequence closure with *oké gezellig*, acknowledging Karel's answer and giving a positive evaluation of their arrangement. She then reveals why she asked again: she needs to inform her parents of their arrangement. *Oké* thus has a dual character, both accepting the answer, while preparing the ground for next-positioned matters (Beach, 1993).

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

While we see that *oké* on occasion prefaces an evaluative assessment, this does not contradict the analysis made in the prior sections. These assessments deal not with the answer, but with the arrangement that the participants have made. Loes in (8) does not treat the sequence as implementing a proposal, because the arrangement has already been made and is just re-affirmed.

6. Implications for sequence organization

The findings in the previous sections raise some questions about sequence organization. The distinction between these two types of assessments suggest that speakers treat not just the answer differently, but

possibly the inquiry with which they had launched the sequence. By taking an evaluative stance towards a response, a speaker treats the inquiry as adequately answered when some state of affairs like news or a telling has been provided. In contrast, taking a deontic stance treats the inquiry as adequately answered when a future course of action involving both participants has been proposed. The third position is used to reflexively characterize and reveal the agenda of the inquiry (Heritage, 1984b; Pomerantz, 2017).

Prior research has argued that specific types of actions actually set up three-part structures (Kevoe-Feldman & Robinson, 2012; see also Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1985; Jefferson & Schenkein, 1977; Kevoe-Feldman, 2015; Mehan, 1979; Tsui, 1989). For example, a student who gives an answer does not know if that answer is correct unless the teacher provides some form of evaluation, and so a sequence-closing third is necessary after a teacher's question (Mehan, 1979). While these three-part structures have been attested in institutional interaction, Kevoe-Feldman and Robinson (2012) suggest that some actions in ordinary conversation might work in the same way. They argue that in environments of arrangement making for example, a solicitation of a time/date in first position sets in motion a three-part structure, where the solicitor has to accept or reject the proposal that is provided in second position in order to guarantee intersubjectivity.

But just because some stance is taken up in third position, that does not mean the inquiry was projecting a three-part structure. Speakers who receipt an answer display first and foremost how they understood that answer. In other words, they deal with the contingencies raised in the answer, or at least treat the contingencies as having been raised in the answer, irrespective of the type of answer that was solicited by the inquiry.

Consider extract (10), which takes place in the closing environment of a conversation between Antoinette and her daughter, Charlotte. Antoinette asks in line 1 when Charlotte will be home the next day to make sure that she is home in time for dinner (line 9).

(10) FR1 – 10:48.7-11:04.0

01 Ant en dan e:h zie'k je #morgen#.=want hoe lAAat ben
and then see.I you.SG tomorrow because how late are

02 je dan morgen ↑thuis denk je?=
you.SG then tomorrow home think you
and then e:h I'll see you #tomorrow#.=because at what
time will you be home do you think?=-

03 Cha =.pt ja ik denk rond v:ier vijf uur zoiets_ =maar
yeah I think around four five o'clock something but

04 dat laat ik nog wel #we:ten#.
that let I yet ADV know
=.pt yeah I think around f:our five o'clock or something_=
but I'll still let you #know#.

05 (0.2)

06 Ant want tot hoe lAAat moet je naar ↓school_
because until how late have.to you.SG to school
because until what time do you have to go to ↓school_

07 Cha .pt tot drie uur:.
until three o'clock
.pt until three o'clock:.

08 (0.6)

09 Ant -> ↑o:#ké#. (0.3) maar wel voor 't #eten# dan ↑hè?=
okay but ADV before the dinner then TAG
↑o:#kay#. (0.3) but before #dinner# then ↑right?=-

10 Cha =↑JA: >ja #ja#<.
 yeah yeah yeah
 = ↑YEA:H >yeah #yeah#<.

11 (0.8)

12 Ant -> #nah#. (.) dan ↑zie'k je ↓morgen.
PRT then see.I you tomorrow
#well#. (.) then I'll see you tomorrow.

Charlotte's response is ripe for acceptance: she only gives a tentative answer in lines 3-4, saying that she will provide a specific time at a later point. Yet Antoinette never treats the answer as a proposal. She merely accepts it with *oké* in line 9 and moves towards conversational closure in line 12 (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). There is also no evidence that acceptance was ever projected. In fact, with her multiple saying in line 10, Charlotte implies that she did not need her mother to remind her (Stivers, 2004), that she understood the inquiry in lines 1-2 as looking for confirmation that she will be home for dinner.

That is not to say that Antoinette could not have treated her daughter's response as a proposal, but that is precisely the point. Receipting a response with *is goed* treats that response as a proposal, even if it was not done as one. These inquiries thus do not set up a three-part structure, they are treated as part of a three-part structure reflexively.

Excerpt (11) provides further evidence that contingencies that are dealt with in third position may have arisen in the answer. Naomi and Romy are sisters. Their parents are away for the weekend and left Naomi in charge. Naomi is home at the time of the call, sometime in the evening after 9:15, while Romy is at a friend's place.

(11) BM2 – 02:37.9-02:50.0

01 Nao maare::hm: (1.1) ((slikt)) .pt.h
but

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

Naomi's inquiry in line 3 is similar to Amelie's in excerpt (6) and Antoinette's in excerpt (10). From Naomi's uptake in line 7, however, it is clear that an agreement was not the anticipated outcome. She first treats her sister's answer as news with *oh*, suggesting that she was expecting her home earlier—an expectation Romy might have been aware of, seeing as she waits 2.3s before answering. She then accepts the time Romy will be home with *oké*. By subsequently approving with *is goed*,¹¹ Naomi treats

¹¹ The order in which the various sequence-closing practices are produced suggests that there is a slot for each action. The data consistently show that *oh* comes before *oké*, which comes before any deontic assessment, which comes before any evaluative assessment. While there are no cases where all four are

her sister's answer as a proposal and claims the right to approve. Through the design of her turn she shows that she treats Romy's answer as a proposal, because it was not the answer she had anticipated. In this way she reflexively characterizes her inquiry not as just any request for information, but one asked by the big sister who is making sure that her little sister is home on time. Approval is doubly required, as Naomi now has to get Romy to lock the house.

Speakers thus use third position primarily assess what their interlocutor did in second position. By treating the response as implementing a certain action, they attribute contingencies to it, irrespective of what the recipient did with that response. Whether or not the resulting three-part structure was anticipated and projected in the first-part action is not made clear: speakers reflexively characterize the sequence as accomplishing some activity.

7. Discussion & Conclusion

This paper has argued that participants in Dutch talk-in-interaction distinguish between two types of assessments, taking up either an evaluative stance or a deontic stance. This claim was supported in two ways. First it was shown that these types of assessments differ in their turn design. When taking an evaluative stance, speakers select an assessment fitted to the local sequential context from a broad range of possible assessment terms. These assessments are also frequently prefaced by interjections such as *oh* that treat the response as informative (Heritage, 1984a; see also Goffman, 1978; Wilkinson &

combined, this structuring of responses shows that participants deal with actions in an ordered way.

This offers evidence that syntax is at least partly a linear process (Hakulinen, 1993), emergent and arising enchronically (Enfield, 2013; Hopper, 1987), based not on formal linguistic features, but on action constraints and contingencies.

Kitzinger, 2006), showing that the assessments deal with turns that are done to inform. When assessing a proposal on the other hand speakers make use of a specific practice: *is goed* ('ø is fine'). These are often prefaced by *oké*, acknowledging the action in the prior turn instead of focusing on its informative content (Beach, 1993; Schegloff, 2007). Second, these two types of assessments can be produced as one turn-at-talk, suggesting that each does different work. In these cases the evaluative assessment positively evaluates the agreement.

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

Whether the recipient provided a response to convey news or implement a (counter)proposal, or possibly even another action, its action status is ascribed to it by the by the speaker in third position. By providing these forms of uptake, speakers thus not only display their understanding of the response, but they build and maintain the architecture of intersubjectivity (Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992; Sidnell, 2014). Action formation and ascription is thus shown to be a collaborative accomplishment (Levinson, 2013; Sidnell & Enfield, 2014). While these after-next actions do not *prove* what some sequence-initiating action was designed to do, they can provide *evidence* to a recipient that s/he has provided an adequate response. In that way, they can also reveal to analysts what type of response is adequate for the particular sequence-initiating action. Understandings are displayed in each next action (Sacks et al., 1974: 728), and so each move forward re-confirms that the revealed understandings are the right understandings.

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