



# THE LINGUISTIC *NEG + POS* PATTERN AND TWO ACTION COMBINATIONS AS RESOURCES FOR INTERVIEWEE STANCE TAKING IN NEWS INTERVIEWS<sup>1</sup>

**Pentti Haddington**  
University of Oulu

In this paper I examine two similar and recurrent action combinations in American and British news interviews. The first denies a presumption / presupposition or the adequacy of the interviewer's question and then provides an account. The second action combination claims insufficient knowledge and after that explains the reason for not knowing or what is known. These action combinations are primarily produced in turn-initial position. I concentrate on describing the linguistic practices by which these action combinations are produced by the interviewees. One such recurrent practice is called the *neg + pos* pattern, in which the interviewees use epistemic stance markers and recycle a linguistic unit, phrase or structure from the interviewer's questioning turn. Previous research on news interviews has considered these types of interviewee answers evasive or otherwise violative of the projected trajectory of talk. However, the data show that denials and claims of insufficient knowledge engage strongly with the question. Therefore, they reflect the intersubjective relationship between the question and the answer and should not just be considered expressions of interviewee evasiveness. These frequent action combinations play a central and important role in organizing the interviewees' stance taking in British and American news interviews.

**Keywords:** denial, knowledge, account, news interviews, stance taking, dialogic syntax

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Prior social psychological and conversation analytic research on news interviews has concentrated on the “violative” or “dubious” aspects of

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interviewee (henceforth IE) answers, such as evasive answers (Bull 1994; Bull & Mayer 1993; Clayman 2001; Harris 1991), agenda-shifts (Greatbatch 1986) and question reformulations (Clayman 1993). However, it has given little attention to such issues as how the interviewer's (henceforth IR) question sets up a difficult position for the IE or how the apparently evasive answers in fact manage to engage with and answer, and are thus connected to, the IR's questions. This paper discusses two action combinations: *denial* + *account* and *claim for insufficient knowledge* + *explanation*. It considers their role as responsive actions to the intersubjective pressures posed by the IR's question and how they are used in news interviews to locally manage and design the IE's answer. As is shown in this paper, these action combinations are routinely produced with the help of a linguistic pattern called NEG + POS pattern. This pattern is not only used for expressing the interviewee's stance about a particular issue but it also engages with the interviewer's question and the stance therein, and thus is used for designing the answer as a relevant answer to the IR's question. Therefore, the use of this pattern as a resource for producing the above actions combinations can be seen to rise from the intersubjective pressures of the interview situation and to be a good example of the interconnectedness of grammar, actions and stance taking. Essentially, this linguistic practice is used in an interactional situation in which a stance becomes an organizing or overriding factor. It is also noteworthy that this linguistic practice is basically absent in everyday talk.

The following analysis draws on two approaches to the study of talk-in-interaction: conversation analysis and interactional linguistics. Conversation analysis aims to describe the interactional and sequential organization of human behavior in real interactional situations. It looks at the practices interlocutors use in order to produce particular meaningful actions. In the following I consider the practices that the IEs rely on in order to produce the denial action or the claim for insufficient knowledge. In addition to this, I consider the sequential environment of these actions, i.e. what follows them. Interactional linguistics,<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, combines the discourse-functional approach in linguistics<sup>3</sup> with conversation analysis and linguistic anthropology. It studies how various linguistic structures (phonetic, morphosyntactic, lexical and semantic structures) are used in spoken interaction and what regular patterns they form in their interactional settings in naturally occurring talk-in-interaction. It uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The primary focus of interactional linguistics is to examine

how certain syntactic and other structures can be attributed to, and motivated by, the accomplishment of interactional tasks in the situated use of language (Keevallik 2003: 23).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Couper-Kuhlen and Selting (2001), Ford, Fox and Thompson (2003), Keevallik (2003), and Wu (2004).

<sup>3</sup> See Cumming and Ono (1997: 113-114) and Du Bois (2001a).

Thus, for interactional linguistics, language and the way in which it is used in talk-in-interaction are intertwined, and this connection can be examined from two vantage points. First, one can study how language use is shaped by interaction (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2001: 3-5). Second, one can investigate how language is used as a resource for accomplishing particular interactional actions and activities (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2001: 3, 5-7). This paper represents the latter vantage point in that it shows how the NEG + POS pattern is frequently used as a resource for producing the above-mentioned two action combinations.

The roles that the above-mentioned action combinations play in news interviews in particular have received little attention in the literature. There are only occasional mentions of denials in news interviews and no references to how these action combinations are produced in news interviews or what functions they may serve in them.<sup>4</sup> Ford (2002), however, has examined the practices by which the *denial* + *account* action combination is produced in everyday talk. She suggests that in everyday talk denials set up a trajectory for the talk to follow. They strongly project and indeed are frequently followed by actions that give an account or correct the denied issue in the prior turn. In other words, denials recur in combination with accounts. Additional evidence for this is that co-participants tend to treat a missing account or correction to a denial as problematic, and pursue a resolution in case it is missing. Thus, this action combination forms a coherent discourse structure that exceeds turn constructional units (TCUs). In everyday talk, the action combination is not always produced by a single speaker, but can be produced collaboratively by two interlocutors. In addition to this, denials also usually, but not always, contain negations. One place where negation does not occur in the denial component is when there is already a negation in the utterance to which the denial responds.

Beach and Metzger (1997) and Tsui (1991) have examined the different deployments of the utterance 'I don't know' for claiming or declaring insufficient knowledge in talk-in-interaction. They also note that 'I don't knows' can further be used to manage a range of different interactional actions. Only some of these occur in news interviews: claims for not knowing that frame the subsequent stance as uncertain or disagreeing (cf. Tsui 1991: 611) and claims that attempt to disattend a topic introduced by the IR's question (cf. Beach & Metzger 1997: 562). In addition to these, in my news interview data these actions can also deny a presumption or a presupposition in the IR's question. Beach and Metzger (1997: 566) also note that the 'I don't knows' are not free-standing but are frequently followed by elaborations that explain and warrant such claims. These types of claims are thus "situated in more complex utterances and activities involving 'explaining' one's

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<sup>4</sup> Clayman and Heritage (2002: 265) claim in passing that 'I don't know', which is generally a claim for insufficient knowledge, is usually followed by an explanation why the IE does not possess the relevant knowledge.

orientation or ‘warranting a declination’”(Beach & Metzger 1997: 566).<sup>5</sup> This is likely to be due to the participants’ orientation to a claim of insufficient knowledge as troublesome and disruptive of what was projected by the previous action. By explaining one’s stance, the participant who claims insufficient knowledge produces more talk that attempts to circumvent any problematic consequences that claim could invoke (Beach & Metzger 1997: 578). *Claims for insufficient knowledge* are usually followed by explanations of why something is not known or less regularly by suggestions for alternative actions by which more knowledge could be acquired. In news interviews, these action combinations frequently play an important role in the way in which the IE organizes her answering turn and the stance therein.

It is also interesting that in the above-mentioned research on IE evasiveness in news interviews, many of the examples actually contain these action combinations. However, considering them as downright evasive or “violative” of the sequential trajectory may not be the best way to describe them. This does not mean that evasive answers, agenda-shifts or reformulations do not occur, but rather that some of these actions could be better described as acknowledging the question’s agenda and its interactional trajectory, but at the same time addressing a problem in the question and the way it has been formulated and what it asks. Consequently, the action combinations described in this paper are good examples of stance taking as an intersubjective phenomenon (Du Bois 2004; Haddington 2004; to appear). In other words, interlocutors do not just express their subjective standpoints and attitudes but rather carefully design and express their stances based on stances taken in prior talk and by linguistically engaging with prior talk.

My aim is to supplement the above social psychological and conversation analytic work on IE answers and explore whether the above action combinations are closely connected to the IR’s question. IEs produce these action combinations in order to deny some aspect of the question as irrelevant or wrong, or in order to claim insufficient knowledge about the topical matter. The IEs thus use them as resources to answer and deal with a problematic question and to organize their stance taking. As Haddington (2004; under review) shows, in American and British news interviews the IR uses various linguistic and interactional practices for setting up a position in the question for the IE. One function of these positions is to put the IEs in a situation in which answering the question is potentially harmful for them for example from a political perspective. IEs display careful orientation to these positions and often produce the action combinations in order to side-step the position and subsequently to exert some control over their answer. The answers examined in this paper differ from downright evasive answers in

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<sup>5</sup> Also Schegloff (1996: 61-62) suggests that the production of ‘I don’t know’s’ often project more talk to come (see also Kärkkäinen (2003: 144)). Schegloff (1997: 579) also notes that the projective quality of this phrase is usually managed prosodically. For this, see also section 2.2 in this paper.

that they acknowledge the question, engage with it and provide an answer to it, although not the answer that the question projects. In this paper, however, I concentrate only on the production of the action combination in the immediate turn-transfer area and do not consider how the construction of the IR's turn as a whole sets up a position for the IE.<sup>6</sup> In the following, I aim to examine the various ways the action combinations are embedded in the turn design of the answer, their functions as a practice for responding to a question and their sequential position in the IE's turn.

## *2 DENIAL + ACCOUNT AND CLAIM FOR INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE + EXPLANATION ACTION COMBINATIONS IN NEWS INTERVIEWS*

There are similarities between the ways in which the *denial + account* and the *claim for insufficient knowledge + explanation* action combinations are produced in everyday talk and news interviews. This is especially true regarding the projective quality of the first parts of the action combinations, i.e. that the person who produces the first part is expected to provide an account or a resolution why she has produced the denial or the claim for insufficient knowledge. In addition to this, as Beach and Metzger (1997), Tsui (1991) and Ford (2002) show these action combinations tend to be produced after a question, although not exclusively. In my news interview data the claims for insufficient knowledge, as well as denials, are produced after an IR question and therefore occur in second positions in an adjacency pair.

Berg (2003: 172) claims that in Finnish televised interviews denials and rebuttals are preceded by accusations. She (ibid.) further notes that this sequential order also provides for the possibility to add a continuation or an explanation after the denial. However, in this paper, the two action combinations, *denial + account* and *claim for insufficient knowledge + explanation*, do not occur exclusively after accusations. Rather, as we can see in example (1) below, they tend to be produced after a question that is somehow problematic for the IE and to which a direct answer is not possible or desirable.

- (1) CNN, *Larry King Live*, Sep 12, 2001: What did he die from  
IR: Larry King, IE: Jesse Blumenthal (001 / 2 / 0:21)

- 1           ... (1.1)  
2 IR:    (TSK) (H) And 'what did he <MRC>die from<MRC>.  
3           ... (1.7)  
4 IE:    Well,

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<sup>6</sup> For 'positioning' in news interviews, see Haddington (under review).

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5      'no I did not take care of him=,
6      u=hd,
7      .. at ^this time,
8      (0)I said I have taken care of him in the ^pa=st.

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In the above example, the IE is a medical doctor who is asked in line 2 to explain the cause of death of a chaplain in the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001. In other words, the IR presupposes that the IE has treated the priest after the attacks. However, the IE denies this presupposition in lines 5-7 and then gives an account in line 8.

Although the use of denials in news interviews signal opposition to something in the IR's question, denials should not be considered to be disagreements. Disagreement is here considered to be an action that expresses a difference of opinion regarding a statement or a stance made public in the question. However, a denial is a response to an assumption, a presupposition or a proposition in the question. In fact, IE disagreements with IRs are relatively rare in news interviews. This is quite likely due to the 'neutralistic stance' that the IRs are expected to express in the course of interviewing (Clayman 1988; 1992; Clayman & Heritage 2002). 'Neutralism' does not mean that the questions are neutral, but that the IR is considered, both by the IR and the IE, not to be expressing her own opinions but merely engaging in asking questions on behalf of the viewing audience (Heritage 1985). So even though IR questions are sometimes hostile and adversarial (Heritage 2002; 2003), the IEs do not generally consider them to display the IR's own opinion. In cases in which the IEs display disagreement with the IR, the IRs are quick to disclaim that they have expressed a personal opinion. Disagreements can nevertheless also be produced in relation to a statement made in the question and these sometimes occur in the data. Yet, the borderline between denials and disagreements is very thin and occasionally the IE's denial turns into a disagreement if the IR presses the IE with the question.

I have examined 15 different news interview programs<sup>7</sup> in the Oulu Corpus of American and British News Interviews, which totals approximately 5.5 hours of interview talk with politicians. The 5.5 hours of data that I have contain 39 examples of these action combinations. 29 of these are IE denials to an IR question.<sup>8</sup> In these examples the IEs deny an issue that is assumed as a "given" or a more covert presupposition in

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<sup>7</sup> The data come from the following programs: *Newsnight* (BBC2), *HardTalk* (BBCWorld), *Late Edition* (CNN), *Crossfire* (CNN), *Larry King Live* (CNN), *Newshour with Jim Lehrer* (PBS). The corpus contains approximately 20 hours of news interviews collected between October 1999 and March 2004.

<sup>8</sup> The statistical relationship between denials or claims for insufficient knowledge and answers that affirm the question's agenda have not been calculated.

the question, that the IE is supposed to agree with.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the data contains 10 examples of claims for insufficient knowledge.

In the following I concentrate on two aspects of the production of these action combinations in news interviews. First, in section 2.1, I consider what actions or activities occasion and make relevant the production of a denial or a claim for insufficient knowledge and how they are positioned sequentially and within the IE turn. Next, in section 2.2, I consider the prevalent syntactic and prosodic resources by which these action combinations are produced. I claim that the act of producing a denial or a claim for insufficient knowledge is particularly useful for IEs, because since the act of displaying disagreements is problematic, they can use these actions either for impugning a proposition or an assumption in the question or for simply claiming that they do not know, and subsequently construct a divergent stance.

## 2.1 THE ACTION COMBINATIONS AS ANSWERS TO POSITIONING QUESTIONS

When IEs produce a *denial* or a *claim for insufficient knowledge*, it is usually followed by an *account*, either immediately after or shortly after, which gives an explanation for or warrants the immediately previous action and the stance therein. In news interviews these action combinations always occur in the second pair part, i.e. in the IE's responding turn to the IR's question, and they are thus contingent next actions to the question. The fact that the IE produces a denial or a claim for insufficient knowledge displays that for the IE, the IR has either asked "a wrong question", "asked it in the wrong way" or formulated it in a way that sets up a difficult position for the IE (Haddington under review). A denial or a claim for insufficient knowledge is thus an essential part of how the IE displays her stance and aligns<sup>10</sup> with a potentially difficult question.

These action combinations overwhelmingly occur at turn-beginning (34 examples out of 39). The turn-initial position is a strategically important position regarding the construction of the IE's remaining turn (cf. Schegloff 1987: 71; Schegloff 1996: 61). Other sequential positions of these action combinations within an IE turn are relatively rare (3

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<sup>9</sup> Other types of denials also occur in my database. In especially heated news interviews that have more than one IE, the IEs can produce denying actions toward their co-IEs. These types of denials often lack the resolution part. IEs can also deny the relevance of a point made by a co-IE earlier in the interview. In addition to this, denials are frequent in panel interviews in which the turn-taking is often less constrained than in news interviews. IEs can also deny a statement made by a third party earlier, before the interview. These denials thus have an intertextual reference. However, none of the above types of denials are discussed in this paper.

<sup>10</sup> The notion of 'alignment' begs some explanation here. It refers to the range of possible types of convergent and divergent stances interlocutors can take relative to each other. 'Alignment' is thus a linguistic process in which interlocutors use and *recycle* morphosyntactic, lexical, phrasal and prosodic resources from their co-participants' utterances to construct their stance relative to their co-participants' stances. In other words, it does not mean 'agreement'. Nor does it refer to the CA understanding of the notion, in which an 'aligning' action is the appropriate and preferred next action which fulfills the expectations raised by the previous action.

examples of turn-medial position and 2 after an answer to the question). Example (3) below shows a prototypical turn-initial IE denial to a presumption in the IR's question (see Appendix for transcription conventions).

- (2) BBCWorld, *HardTalk*, Aug 25, 2003: Nuclear disarmament  
IR: Tim Sebastian, IE: Dan Plesch (031 / 3 / 7:38)

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1 IR: The world is <MRC>coming to terms,  
2 (H)with .. the new (H) architecture</MRC> of  
<HI>disarmament,  
3 isn't it</HI>?  
4 IE: (0) Well,  
5 → (H) I ^don't think it's an architecture of  
'disarmament,  
6 → It's an architecture of a,  
7 → (H) %uh ^frankly of nuclear ^anarchy in the world,
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The IR formulates the question in lines 1-3 so that it assumes that the IE shares the presumption made in the question that there is 'a new architecture of nuclear disarmament'. By formulating the question in this way, the IR simultaneously sets up a position for the IE, since he knows (based on the fact that the IE is an opponent of nuclear armament) that the IE will not agree with the proposition *the world is <MRC> coming to terms, (H) with .. the new (H) architecture </MRC> of <HI> disarmament*, in the IR's questioning turn (lines 1-2). Usually IE denials of presumptions follow yes-no questions, tag questions or wh-questions. In example (2) above, although the IR's tag question makes relevant either an affirmative or a declining answer, it strongly favors a confirmation of the statement part of the question (Clayman & Heritage 2002, 210). However, the IE does not agree with how the question has been phrased and denies right at the beginning of his turn (in line 5) the IR's presumption that one can talk about an architecture of 'disarmament' in the first place. After this the IE produces the next relevant element of the action combination, the account (in lines 6-7), and provides an alternative interpretation of international nuclear armament.

In example (3) below, the IE in response to a difficult question denies that "now is the right time to answer the question" (lines 15-19).

- (3) NBC, *Meet the Press*, Mar 7, 2004: Gay marriage  
IE: Rudy Giuliani, IR: Tim Russell (038 / 2 / 3:10)

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1 IR: (H) %Uh,  
2 ... ^One of the 'reasons,
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3       that people ^cite,  
 4       .. obviously are=,  
 5       <A>disagreeing with the war in Iraq</A>,  
 6       (H) .. The p- --  
 7       The ^deficit,  
 8       (H) But ^also the 'constitutional amendment,  
 9       .. the 'President i[nvo]ked to ^ba=n,  
 10 IE:                               [(SNIFF)]  
 11 IR:   (H) gay marriage,  
 12 →   (H) (GLOTTAL) .. <HI>^You</HI> .. 'disagree with the  
 President on that,  
 13       'don't you.  
 14 →IE: (H) <A>Well I don't think</A>,  
 15 →   I do- --  
 16 →   I don't think we ar- --  
 17 →   it's a --  
 18 →   .. it's ^ripe for 'decision at this point,  
 19 →   I think this should 'play itself out in ^more  
 'states,  
 20       ... I ^certainly would not support it at,  
 21       at 'this time,

In the above example the IR sets up a difficult position for the IE. Prior to the US presidential elections in 2004, the IE, ex-Mayor of New York, supported the Republican candidate and President George W. Bush. When the IR asks him the tag question regarding an issue in which he and the President disagree, namely the constitutional amendment about banning gay marriage (lines 9-12), he is obviously put between a rock and a hard place; whether to stick to his previously and publicly announced stance or whether to continue showing support to the current President. The IE deals with this issue by denying the question's relevance at present time (lines 14-19) and then provides a reason why it is not relevant in line 19: *I think this should 'play itself out in ^more 'states.* After the account, the IE then produces an utterance (lines 20-21) which actually, but in a highly hedged manner, answers the question and thereby goes on record that he does not support the constitutional amendment. However, he leaves some leeway by modifying the answer with *at 'this time.* This leaves the IE the possibility to change and modify his stance later. This is an excellent example of how IEs do not just dodge and weave the IR questions, but actually 'align' with them. Here the IE aligns with the question by organizing his answering turn sequentially into elements that enable him to construct a stance that carefully takes into account all the issues that the IR has set up in the question.

The *denial + account* action combination is exceedingly functional and useful in news interviews, because by producing a denial after a question, IEs are able to claim some control over what they consider an appropriate topical agenda. In approximately half of the denials, the IEs

falter, stumble or produce hesitation markers and truncated words or intonation units (see example (3)). This seems to suggest that the *denial* + *account* combination reflects the difficulty of the question and is a dispreferred action combination. This is because they disrupt the trajectory of what the IR's question projects. On the other hand, it can also provide IEs with time to ponder the design of their answering turn. In this sense, the action combination is an almost unfailing resource for denying something in the question. However, there are six cases in my data in which the IR notices the denial and produces a challenging action by intervening in the action combination.<sup>11</sup> Consider the following example.

(4) BBC2, *Newsnight*, Jan 21, 2004: speaking for the universities  
IR: Jeremy Paxman, IE: Tim Yeo (037 / 1 / 7:37)

1 IR: You keep on claiming to speak for the universities,  
2 How many of the Vice Chancellor[s] support  
[2you2].  
3 IE: [ (GLOTTAL) ]  
4→ [2<HI>I2] don't<(HI> claim to speak ^for the  
universities,  
5 but [I ^do claim] -  
6→IR: [You've been doing no]thing [2^but2] the entire  
[3ev3]en[4ing4].  
7 IE: [2Uh2],  
8 [3%3] [4I4] ^do claim to be concerned about their  
future,  
9 (H) An[d],

Prior to this question the IE has failed to answer the IR's previous question that was in effect asking the same question about the number of Vice Chancellors that support the IE. The IR's question is hostile (Heritage 2002; 2003) and puts the IE in a difficult spot.<sup>12</sup> The IE makes an attempt to deny the presupposition in the question (in line 4) and to exert some control over what he is going to answer. However, the IR, who has the primary right to control the topical development of the interview (cf. Greatbatch 1986: 442), intervenes and challenges the IE in line 6. Thus, the denial, and the stance that the IE displays in and through the denial, affects the turn-taking organization.

Due to the possibility of IR intervention, the IEs tend to produce the action combination prosodically so that the first part of the combination is almost latched onto the second part. This is discussed further in section 2.2.

<sup>11</sup> For interventions in news interviews see Piirainen-Marsh (2003).

<sup>12</sup> A more detailed analysis of this example is given in Haddington (under review).

IEs can also claim that they have insufficient knowledge about the issue at hand. Consider example (5) below:

- (5) CNN, *Crossfire*, Sep 12, 2001: State-supported terrorism  
IR: Bill Press, IE: Chuck Hagel (007 / 2 / 0:00)

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1  IR:  ^Former,
2      ... uh%,
3      .. <A>CIA Director Jim Woolsey</A>,
4      ... has ^said,
5      that ^he 'thinks,
6      <MRC>%there is a state ... supporting</MRC>,
7      .. 'this terrorism,
8      ... which struck us,
9      .. on Tuesday?
10     .. (H) And ^he 'sa=id,
11     .. % a ^suspect,
12     (GLOTTAL) a good suspect,
13     ... is Iraq.
14     ... (1.0) <A>Senator Hagel,
15     do you think that that</A>,
16     that ^Iraq may be involved in this?
17  IE:  %U=h,
18  →    %I %^I ^don't know,
19  →    but I 'think,
20      uh,
21  →    we need to take what uh,
22  →    Mr. Woolsey says very ^seriously.
23      (0) It ^seems to me,
24      that ^we must u=h,
25      (H) 'include %,
26      ^all 'possibilities,
27      u=h,
28      in this a,
29      (H) ^net,
30      as we ^examine the 'facts,
31      and ^get the 'facts,
32      so that we can .. 'react ^with facts,
33      %Uh,
34  →    <A>%I ^I don't know if Iraq was involved or
        'not</A>,
35  →    (H) but they ^certainly should be examined pretty
        closely.
```

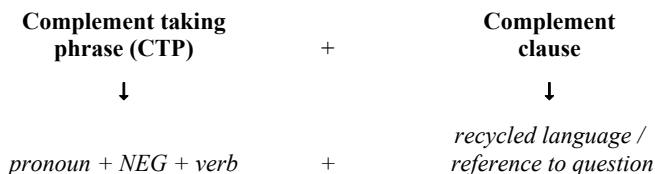
The IR asks the IE in lines 15-16 whether he thinks that Iraq may be involved in the terrorist attacks to New York and Washington in September 2001. In the question he refers to a stance attributed to a third-party (in lines 3-13). The IE claims that he does not have knowledge about the issue raised in the question in two places. In the example, the

first claim for insufficient knowledge is produced at turn-beginning in line 18. After this, in the second part of this action combination, the IE says that the claim made by the third-party should nevertheless be closely examined. The second action combination occurs in lines 34-35, in which the IE again claims insufficient knowledge but admits that Iraq's involvement should be examined closely. These two instances of the action combination in the above example show that when IEs claim insufficient knowledge, that action is followed by an account, which elaborates or provides a resolution for why the claim has been made. This is a particularly relevant action for the IEs in news interviews, because they are invited to the news interviews especially because of their expert status. Therefore, the IEs' claim that they do not have sufficient knowledge could be problematic for them, and further explanation and a display of what they do know or think is relevant. By using this action combination as a resource for designing their stance they can also avoid directly answering the question, but at the same time align rather than bluntly deny or disagree with it. Consequently, on a continuum of affiliation the *claim for insufficient knowledge* + *account* is less disaffiliative than the *denial* + *account* action combination. This is also supported by the fact that IEs falter much less when producing a *claim for insufficient knowledge* (only in 1 example the database), which in turn may be indicative of its status as a less dispreferred type of action than denials.

## 2.2 THE *NEG* + *POS* PATTERN AS A ROUTINIZED LINGUISTIC PRACTICE FOR PRODUCING ACTION COMBINATIONS IN NEWS INTERVIEWS

As we saw above, both of the action combinations described in this paper are composed of two parts. These two parts are frequently produced with the help of a recurring linguistic pattern that is here called the *NEG* + *POS* pattern. It is worth noting that, on the basis of the examples in Ford (2002) and of a preliminary analysis of the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (Du Bois, et al. 2000; 2003; Du Bois & Englebretson 2004), this pattern in these action combinations is very rare in everyday talk. The likely reason for this is that in everyday talk speakers tend to design their questions, or modify them if trouble is perceived, so that the answerers can easily agree with them (Sacks 1987 [1973]). This is of course not true in news interviews, in which IRs frequently and deliberately design difficult questions. By using either one of the action combinations, the IEs can minimize the problems in the question and display a divergent stance that does not appear completely out of tune with the question.

The first part of the action combination (i.e. *denial* or *claim for insufficient knowledge*) is composed of the following linguistic elements:

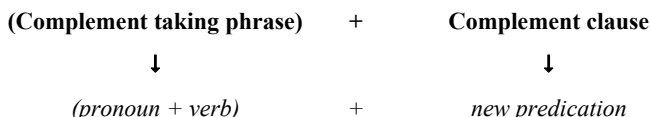


Thompson (2002) argues that utterances like *I don't think it's an architecture of disarmament* are not best understood to be composed of a main clause and a finite indicative subordinate clause, but of a CTP that conveys the interlocutor's epistemic, evidential or evaluative (e/e/e) stance towards the clauses it occurs with. Consequently, Thompson (2002) claims that CTPs are better understood as schemas that consist of a e/e/e fragment and a clause.<sup>13</sup> This clausal structure is a central element of the NEG + POS pattern. In my data, the CTP is primarily composed of the following elements. Similarly to Thompson's (2002) data, there is a pronoun which is usually the first person pronoun "I," although in some rare cases it can also be the plural "we" or some other pronoun like "this" or "it." Second, all the denials in my examples contain either an epistemic/evidential verb such as 'think', 'know', 'guess', 'accept', etc. (Thompson & Hopper 2001: 38), which can also be called cognitive verbs (Biber, et al. 1999), or a communication verb ('argue', 'claim', etc.) and a negative marker.<sup>14</sup> The complement clause, on the other hand, frequently recycles some linguistic structure or a phrase or a word from the question. This has also been noticed by Clayman and Heritage (2002: 275), who claim that in news interviews IEs often use word repeats, which preserve "some of the exact wording of the question in the initial response," in order to produce an evasive maneuver in the answer. Alternatively, but less frequently, the complement clause includes some other reference to the question, for example a pronoun ("it," "that" as in 'I don't claim that'), an adverbial ("so," as in 'I don't think so') referring to a statement in the question, a noun (proper name or other noun), or 'zero' as in the case of 'I don't know'. Thus, the function of the complement clause in this action combination is to display engagement with the question and to show that the IE is orienting to the question. In sum, the negative epistemic/ evidential/ evaluative fragment and the recycling of a syntactic element has a clear interactional function: it

<sup>13</sup> See also Thompson and Hopper (2001: 38-39).

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that in this context the communication verbs can be perceived as intersubjective, because they explicitly refer to an element in the IR's question, cf. 'I don't claim that...' or 'I don't accept that...'. However, the cognitive verbs do not refer to the IR's turn in the same way as communication verbs, but the relationship with the question is achieved through the recycled linguistic unit.

connects to a stance in the interviewer's question and denies it, or some element in it. The *account* usually has the following pattern



in which the CTP is optional, but when it occurs it is always in the positive (cf. the first action in which it is always negative). However, the new predication information has to and always occurs in this context. In the diagram of example (2) below this pattern can clearly be seen as it occurs in real data.<sup>15</sup> The diagrams depict the moments in which the IE produces the action combination, and foregrounds the regularized linguistic elements that are used for producing this action combination.

#### Diagram of example (2): Nuclear disarmament

2 IR:	with	the new architecture of	disarmament
5 IE: I don't think	it's an	architecture of	disarmament
6 IE:	It's an	architecture of a	

In the above diagram we can see that the CTP in the denial is produced as *I don't think* and the complement recycles the phrase *architecture of disarmament*. Then the account is produced without a CTP, but it recycles an element from the previous turn (*architecture of*) and uses it as a resource for producing a new but divergent stance relative to the presumption in the IR's question, namely that *It's an architecture of a, (H) %uh ^frankly of nuclear ^anarchy in the world*, (lines 6-7 in example (2) above).

In example (3) we saw that the IE stumbled with his answer. This can be seen in following diagram below as repetition of stance markers in lines 15-17.

<sup>15</sup> In the following I use diagrams to display the recycled linguistic structures across different intonation units. Diagrams are a tool used in dialogic syntax (Du Bois 2001b). They are used for depicting and clarifying relations (for presentational purposes) between utterances within or across speaker turns. With the help of diagrams it is possible to show how speakers use each other's linguistic structures to construct their own talk. In a diagram those linguistic structures which are recycled or parallel, and which resonate or engage with prior language, are aligned with each other.

### Diagram of example (3): gay marriage

12 IR:           You disagree       with the President on that,  
 14 IR:           {you}don't  
 15 IE: Well I     don't think  
 16 IE:           I     do-  
 17 IE:           I     don't think we     are  
 18 IE:                               it's       a  
 19 IE:                               it's     ripe for decision  
   at this point  
 20 IE:           I               think this   should play itself out  
   in more states

In spite of the problems, the IE produces the denial with the help of the pattern in which the first CTP is produced as *I don't think*, and the 'it' pronoun in the complement refers to the 'constitutional amendment about banning gay marriage' in the question. After the denial, the account is produced with the stance marker *I think*, which is followed by new predication information that explains why the present relevance of the question is denied. A similar pattern can also be perceived in the diagram below.

### Diagram of example (4): Speaking for the universities

1     IR:           You           keep on claiming to speak for the  
   universities  
 4-5   IE:           I   don't               claim       to speak for the  
   universities  
 6     IE: But I   do               claim  
 9-11 IE:           I   do               claim       to be concerned about  
   their future

In example (4), the IE uses the stance marker *I don't claim* and the recycled phrase *to speak for the universities* in order to produce the denial. This is followed (in spite of the IR's intervention and challenge) by the account which also contains a CTP (*I do claim*) and the new predication *to be concerned about their future*.

Finally, the diagram of example (5) shows that the IE denies that he has knowledge first in line 18.

Diagraph of example (5): State-supported terrorism<sup>16</sup>

15 IR:       you {do }           think that  
16                                 that Iraq may be  
                                    involved in this

18 IE:       I I     do n't know  
19 IE: But I               think

21   we need to  
                                    take what uh

34 IE:       I       do n't know if Iraq was  
                                    involved or not

35 IE: But                               they should be  
                                    examined pretty closely

In the above diagram, the linguistic pattern is manifest in the form of *I I don't know* and the account as *But I think we need to take what uh, Mr. Woolsey says very ^seriously.*, in lines 19-22. The IE suggests measures by which more knowledge could be obtained and uses the stance marker *I think* (line 19) to do this. The IE's second claim for insufficient knowledge occurs in line 34 in which he again disclaims knowledge in the CTP, but then also recycles an element from the question (*Iraq was involved*) in the interrogative if-complement clause. As we can see, the IE does not produce a complement clause in line 18. It seems that with claims of insufficient knowledge, the complement clause is optional, because in half of the cases the complement clause is not produced, whereas in the remaining cases the complement clause recycles an element from the question.

What is common to the majority of the examples in the data is that the first part of the action combination is produced with a subjective stance marker. Only in three instances out of 39, the first part of the action combination is produced as an impersonal or more generalized stance. There are at least two possible—and partly contradictory—reasons for this. First, it is possible that these subjective stance markers are indeed part of routinely used schemas by which the interviewees express their epistemic/ evidential/ evaluative stance and therefore that the degree of subjectivity that they express is low and they may be used only to project a dispreferred action to follow (Kärkkäinen 2003; Thompson 2002). However, second, since the above subjective stance markers occur after difficult questions that specifically request a stance by the IE, and in denials as responses to those difficult questions, it is also possible that their use is motivated by the fact that the questions request and make relevant a personalized stance. Further evidence for this is indeed provided by the fact that the question frequently (approx. 2 times out of 3) incorporates the second person pronoun “you” and

<sup>16</sup> The curly brackets indicate that the original transcription has been changed or something has been moved for presentational purposes. Here they stand for a removed intonation unit boundary.



thereby explicitly directs the question to the IE and makes her standpoint relative to the discussed issue highly relevant.

In the above diagrams (and in the diagram of example (6) below) the action combinations are produced through the following linguistic pattern:

Complement taking phrase				+	Complement clause	
↓					↓	
<i>I</i>	<i>don't</i>	+	<i>verb</i>	+	<i>recycled language / reference to question</i>	
<i>I</i>		+	<i>verb</i>	+	<i>new predication</i> <sup>17</sup>	

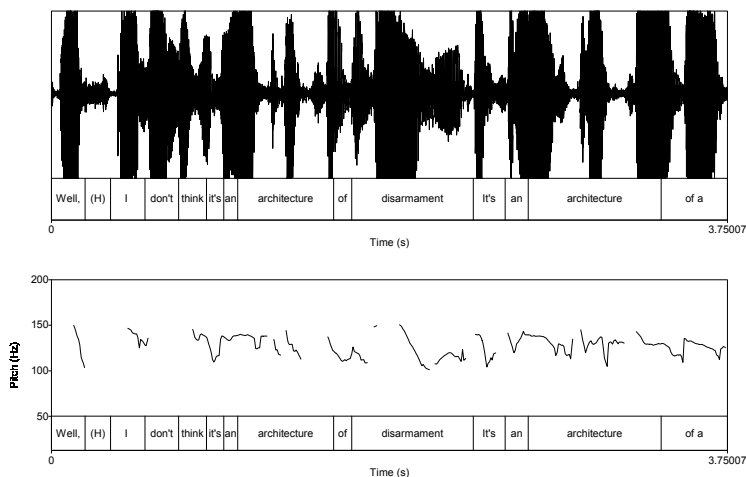
This pattern is in fact the most frequent embodiment of the above more generalized pattern. It provides a pragmatic and functional resource for producing the above action combinations in that it explicitly marks what is denied or claimed not to be known in the question and then provides an account or explanation for this. It also displays the IE's intersubjective engagement with the IR's question.

As was claimed above, the two actions within the action combinations are closely connected in that the first pragmatically projects the second (Beach & Metzger 1997; Ford 2002; cf. Tsui 1991). Further evidence on projection between the two parts of the action combinations is provided by the way in which they are produced prosodically (see also examples in Haddington under review). First of all, the first part of the action combination tends to end with rising intonation that projects more talk. Second, the latter part of the combination, the account, latches onto the first part. This is a signal for the IR that the current turn is going to continue beyond the next transition relevance place (TRP<sup>18</sup>) and aims to minimize the possibilities of the IR to intervene or make attempts to gain the floor. These prosodic features thus strengthen the sequential connection of the two parts as an action combination (see also Schegloff 1996: 61-62). As we can see below in graph 1 of example (2), there is no pause between the last word of the denial, and the first word of the account, and the noun 'disarmament', ends with a rising intonation which projects more talk. Nevertheless, as we saw in example (4), after noticing a denial, the IR still sometimes intervenes in the production of this action combination. In spite of this,

<sup>17</sup> This linguistic pattern is not exclusively used for producing the denial + account -action combination, but as my data show, can be used as resource for example for giving a no-answer to a yes-no question.

<sup>18</sup> TRPs refer to the ends of TCUs, i.e. that there is a possibility for transition between speakers at the end of a TCU (Sacks et al. 1974).

the IE continued and finished the action combination, which shows that it is a strong turn format.



**Graph 1. Nuclear disarmament – Example (1)**

There is also a tendency (although not as strong as the above prosodic detail) that the negative modal or auxiliary in the denial (e.g. ‘don’t’) receives primary emphasis. Furthermore, in the accounts, the cognitive or communication verb is often produced with either secondary or primary emphasis. All these prosodic tendencies suggest that the IE is taking a stance relative to a claim or an assumption in the questioning turn and thus aligning with it.

It is noteworthy that apart from one example, the original linguistic unit in the IR’s turn that is recycled by the IE is never negatively formulated. This seems to indicate that this routinized linguistic format is only used if the recycled unit does not come from a negatively formulated utterance. The reason for this is obviously that the stance marker in the denial already contains a negative marker and a “double negative” would be difficult to use and understand. Moreover, the one example in my data in which the recycled unit originates from a negatively formulated utterance is actually a deviant case which proves the above point. Consider the following example:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> A brief analysis of this example appears also in Haddington (under review).

- (6) BBC2, *Newsnight*, Jan 19, 2004: Keep a promise  
IR: Jeremy Paxman, IE: Tony Blair (036 / 1 / 3:34)

1 IR: At 'what ^point,  
2 after ^writing that 'manifesto,  
3 in which <MRC>you requested our votes</MRC>,  
4 did you 'realise,  
5 → (H) that you couldn't keep the promise?  
6 IE: (TSK) (H) ... Well I,  
7 → <A>I ^don't 'accept that we have broken the promise.  
8 (0) as I said</A>,  
9 because the 'new system doesn't come into ^effect,  
10 .. until ^after the next general '%election.

As we can see in line 7, the IE uses the linguistic pattern as a resource for producing a denial in which he denies the presupposition in the question that he and his party have not 'kept a promise'. The stance marker + recycled language is realized as *I don't accept that we have broken the promise*. The recycled phrase originates from the TCU in line 5 in which the IR says *that you couldn't keep the promise*. Now consider the following diagram:

#### Diagram of example (6)

5 IR:	that you could n't	<b>keep</b>	the promise
7 IE:	I don't accept that we have	<b>broken</b>	the promise

As we can see in the diagram, the IE recycles the phrase *keep the promise* but modifies it into *broken the promise*. The meaning of the phrase is thus reversed, but the IE uses the way in which the IR formulated the question as a resource for constructing the stance in his answer, and moreover modifies it so that he can use the *denial* + *account* combination and the linguistic pattern therein. This change in the recycled phrase shows that the *denial* + *account* action combination is not only very useful for undermining a position set up in the question, but the linguistic pattern by which it is constructed is a magnificently reusable resource in which the stance marker (with a negative marker) is a "compulsory" element. Note that IE indeed does not say 'I think we have kept the promise.' This example proves the point that producing a denial and an account is an interactionally motivated action combination. To put it differently, after questions which set up a difficult position for the IE, she may "prefer" to deny the position in the question. In this sense, the question and the answer, and the ways in which they are designed are closely connected to each other, and the IE's turn indeed *engages with and answers the question* rather than just evades it.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have described the use and function of two similar and related action combinations in news interviews: the *denial + account* and *claim for insufficient knowledge + explanation* action combination. The IEs use the first for denying a presumption, a presupposition or other “given” issue, whereas the second is used for claiming that they do not possess sufficient knowledge for answering the question. These action combinations tend to be produced at turn beginnings. This enables the IEs to use them as a resource for constructing an answering turn in which they deny some aspect of the question or claim that they do not know the answer. This is important for the IEs’ stance taking, because it enables them to organize the answering turn so that it displays a connection and engages with the question, but at the same time provides them with a possibility to gain some control over how they construct the remaining part of the turn and how they respond to a potentially difficult position that the IR has set up in the question.

As we have also seen above, the action combinations are frequently produced with the help of a particular linguistic pattern called the NEG + POS pattern. In addition to the fact that this pattern tends to be structured in a particular way, it also contains recurrent prosodic features, such as rush-throughs and rising intonation at the ends of denials. It is significant that, rather than being produced for the IR, these action combinations and the deployed linguistic patterns are designed for the overhearing audience (cf. Heritage 1985). One indication of this is indeed that the action combinations recur at turn beginnings. This is not only sequentially the most appropriate position as a next relevant action after an IR’s positioning activity (cf. Haddington under review), but the turn-initial position also foregrounds the denial or the claim for insufficient knowledge and makes it easily available for the television audience. In addition to this, the first part of these action combinations contains a recycled element from or another reference to the question, which renders the first action explicit, and thus facilitates the viewing experience for the audience.

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## Appendix – Transcription conventions

The data have been transcribed by using the conventions of Discourse Transcription (DT) style in which one line represents one intonation unit (Du Bois, et al. 1993).

### UNITS

Intonation unit	{line break}
Truncated intonation unit	--
Truncated word	– (en dash)

### TRANSITIONAL CONTINUITY

Final	.
Continuing	,
Appeal (seeking a validating response from listener)	?

### SPEAKERS

Speech overlap	[ ]
(numbers inside brackets index overlaps)	[2two words2]
Name/identity/address is pseudo	~Jill
Name/identity/address is real	Jill

### ACCENT AND LENGTHENING

Primary accent (prominent pitch movement carrying intonational meaning)	^
Secondary accent	`
Unaccented	
Lengthening	=

### PAUSE

Long pause (0.7 seconds or longer)	...(N)
Medium pause (0.3 – 0.6 s)	...
Short (brief break in speech rhythm)(0.2 or less)	..
Latching	(0)

### VOCAL NOISES

Glottal stop	(GLOTTAL)
Inhalation	(H)

### QUALITY

Higher pitch level	<HI>	</HI>
Allegro: rapid speech	<A>	</A>
Marcato: each word distinct and emphasized	<MRC>	</MRC>
Creak	%	
Creak during speech	% (e.g. %two %words)	

### SPECIALIZED NOTATIONS

Restart	{Capital initial}
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