Review

Between turn and sequence: Turn-initial particles across languages (a review)

Original work by John Heritage and Marja-Leena Sorjonen (Eds.) published by John Benjamins 2018
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The last two decades have witnessed a remarkable growth of interest in what are variously termed discourse markers or discourse particles. The greatest area of growth has centred on particles that occur in sentence-initial or turn-initial position, and this interest intersects with a long-standing focus in Conversation Analysis on turn-taking and turn-construction. This volume brings together conversation analytic studies of turn-initial particles in interactions in fourteen languages geographically widely distributed (Europe, America, Asia and Australia).

The contributions show the significance of turn-initial particles in three key areas of turn and sequence organisation: (1) the management of departures from expected next actions, (2) the projection of the speaker's epistemic stance, and (3) the management of overall activities implemented across sequences.

Functional, pragmatic and syntactic peculiarities of various discourse markers occurring in turn-initial positions have been studied across different languages and from a range of linguistic perspectives. In *Nu-Prefaced Responses in Russian Conversation* (Chapter 2 of the book), Galina Bolden analyses the way one of the most common Russian particles *nu* is used in responding actions and suggests that its key pragmatic function is to indicate the recipient's intention to *'in some way depart from the constraints set up by the question'*. The extent of departure, according to Bolden, can never be objectively measured, which is why it is always up to the recipient to estimate how proximate the answer ultimately is to the question.

This brings *nu* closer to the English *well* described as a general or formal sort of alert signalling a departure from the immediately preceding talk. In *Two Types of Trouble with Questions: A*

Comparative Perspective on Turn-Initial Particles in Korean (Chapter 4), Stephanie Kim considers turn-initial particles *kulssey* and *kulenikka* both translated as *well* in target sequential position and signalling that *'there is some trouble with the question'*. The author uses the Korean Corpus of Telephone Speech as well as personal collections of audiotaped telephone calls and videotaped face-to-face interactions to show how the two particles are employed in Korean to indicate different types of problems with the question being put. Thus, according to Kim, *kulssey* most commonly acts as an indicator of uncertainty, in which case it *'straightforwardly marks not knowing the information asked about in the question and does not problematise the question design'*. *Kulenikka*, on the other hand, contravenes the presuppositions embedded in the question and signals the recipient's intention to reformulate these presuppositions in the forthcoming response. This is why *kulenikka* is most frequently found preceding extended turns, which makes the response much less straightforward.

The importance of considering particles' positioning within a turn is highlighted in John Heritage's *Turn-Initial Particles in English: The cases of 'oh' and 'well'* (Chapter 6). The author explores how the functions of *oh* and *well* vary depending on their sequential position and argues that in order to establish their semantics in different contexts one will need to differentiate between the

'core' and 'prototypical' meanings of the items under analysis. Yet, as Heritage concludes, even the semantic component of these turn-initial particles *'may be less important than their procedural significance in sequences of actions, especially … since much of the semantic content of these particles is specified in situ'*.

A study by Matylda Weidner, *Treating Something as Self-Evident: No-Prefaced Turns in Polish* (Chapter 8), explores sequential usage of the Polish turn-initial particle *no* in responsive actions and offers a layer-based description of its functioning in the Polish language. The author suggests that *no* operates on three levels – (1) signalling awareness of the information provided in the prior turn, (2) offering the recipient's 'my-side' perspective, and (3) suggesting topic and/or activity shift.

Analysing the same particle *no* in its turn-initial position in Estonian, Leelo Keevallik offers a different perspective by incorporating the time-space dimension to the discussion in *Making Up One's Mind in Second Position: Estonian No-Preface in Action Plans* (Chapter 11). The author acknowledges that *no* fulfils a function pretty much similar to extended evasive cues inasmuch as both operate as communicative 'fillers' that help stall the conversation, which is mostly helpful in cases where the recipient needs time to make up their mind. The key difference, however, is that

no-prefaces commonly carry additional semantics of 'showing that the speaker is currently making a transition to compliance, often after explicit negotiations'. These and numerous other valuable insights are discussed in the 15 chapters available in the edited book and cover the topic of no-prefaced turn-initial sequences across languages such as German, Danish, French, Swedish, Estonian, Mandarin, Finnish, Polish, Japanese, English, Garrwa, Korean, Spanish and Russian.

Taken together, the papers demonstrate the crucial importance of the positioning of particles within turns and sequences for the projection and management of social actions, and for relationships between speakers. The volume will be of interest to linguists engaged in comparative and corpus studies and should definitely be viewed as a critical contribution to discourse analysis in terms of both theoretical insight and practical implications for further research.