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## Responding in Early Overlap: Recognitional Onsets in Assertion Sequences

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### ABSTRACT

What are speakers doing when they overlap with the previous speaker and start their response at a recognition point well before the transition-relevance place? This article adds to the body of literature on overlapping talk initiated by Gail Jefferson and shows that speakers use these turn-onset points to show that they have their own reasons to agree with what the first speaker is saying. That gets on record an equal, independent commitment to the assertion that the previous speaker is making. The overlapping speaker strives for a more balanced, symmetrical relationship with the current speaker with regard to time, speakership, and agency. The data are in Finnish and Estonian with English translation.

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The turn-taking rules suggested by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) state that patterned and legitimate turn transfer is organized exclusively around transition relevance places (TRPs), i.e., at places where a turn constructional unit (TCU) is possibly complete. The rules also set a preference for the earliest possible start by next speakers (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 706 ff.)—albeit within TRPs and their immediate surroundings. Additionally, the authors note that the vast majority of turn transitions are accomplished with no gap and no overlap or with only a short gap or short overlap (p. 708). Yet looking at almost any instance of naturally occurring interaction, we see that there are still numerous turn transitions where incoming speakers start up their turns in overlap at points where the ongoing turn is not yet (possibly) complete(d) and indeed is sometimes not even near being transition ready. Both Jefferson (2004) and Schegloff (2000) have shown the systematic ways in which participants manage these overlap situations and regain the state of one party at a time—focusing on overlap as an event that needs to be repaired. The current study adds yet one further systematicity to the phenomenon of overlapping talk (see also Vatanen, 2014). I will argue that even certain overlapping turns whose onset is at a non-TRP follow a systematic functional pattern of their own and are not oriented to as repairables or as interruptions.

Let us take an initial look at an illustrative example from Finnish conversation: Susa is telling her friends Miia and Anu about an article on solaria that she has read in a magazine; the magazine is referred to in line 1 with *siinä* (“there”) and similarly in line 4 with *siin* (“there”). Miia responds to Susa’s talk in overlap in line 8.

(1) Solarium (Finnish, Sg 151, 17:18)

01 Susa: ja siinähä ↑suasiteltii viä ku yhes  
and they even recommended ((it)) there you know since at one

02 vaiheessaha viäl oli että @solarium<sup>1</sup> on  
point it still was like the solarium is

03 vain pahaksi pahaksi pahaksi älkää käykö  
just damaging damaging damaging don't go

04 solariumissa?@ .h mut siin sanottii näi  
to the solarium .h but there they said like this

05 että, (.) se on et jos niinku täältä  
COMP DEM3 be.3SG COMP if PRT DEM1LOC:ABL  
that (.) it is that if like from here

06 just esime'ks talven keskeltä  
right example:TRA winter:GEN middle:ABL  
right in the middle of winter for example

07 [ku ihminen on täysin, ]  
when/as human.being be.3SG completely  
[when one is totally ]

=> 08 Miia: [tottakai sehä o iha luonnollis]ta;=  
of.course DEM3:CLI be.3SG just natural:PAR  
[of course it is pretty natural you know ]

09 Susa: =nii; .h ku tääl ei oo mitää [sillon]  
yeah, .h because here at that time the[re's no ]

10 Miia: [mm:? ]

11 Susa: i- ihol pigmenttiä eikä muuta; .h  
pigment on the s- skin or anything else .h

Susa is still in the middle of recounting why the magazine article recommended going to the solarium when Miia comes in with an overlapping response (line 8). The onset point of Miia's turn occurs well before Susa has reached a TRP in her turn; yet Miia anticipates the content of the rest of the turn. Miia's response is in agreement with Susa's initiating turn: It aligns with its assessing argument. However, Miia's turn also embodies elements that indicate that she is not merely going along with the action of Susa's turn. First, the initiating element *totta kai* ("of course") shows that Miia sees Susa's argument as somehow self-evident (on the English *of course*, see Stivers, 2011). Second, the latter part of her turn features an assessment of Susa's talk, *sehä on iha luonnollista* ("it is pretty natural you know"), where especially the clitic *-hä(n)* points to some shared knowledge between the participants concerning the issue discussed (see Hakulinen, 2001a). In other words, Miia indicates that she has an epistemically independent position on the matter that Susa is telling her about (i.e., that she knows about the matter independently; she knew about it before hearing Susa's report), yet she is in agreement with what Susa says.

This example raises at least three issues that will be crucial for the argument of this article: overlap onset point, agreeing second assessments, and epistemic independence. In the following, we review

1 The @ symbol refers to a change in voice quality other than to creaky or smiley voice.

selected conversation analytic studies on these topics and examine cases of each phenomenon from this literature.

### Background: Overlap onset point, agreeing second assessments, and epistemic independence

One major approach to overlapping talk in the conversation analytic literature involves the classification of overlap onset points. Jefferson (1983, 1986) groups overlapping turns according to where they are initiated with regard to the overlapped turn—transitional, recognitional, and progressional—both with reference to the structural features of the overlapped turn and to its fluency. Transitional overlap (with its various subtypes) occurs at or very near a TRP; whereas a turn with a progressional overlap onset may begin at any grammatical point in the overlapped turn but only if there has been some breakdown in the progressivity or fluency of that turn, as indicated through, e.g., silence or stuttering. Finally, recognitional overlaps are those where the incoming speaker acts upon an adequate recognition of what is being said in the ongoing turn. Jefferson (1983) divides this phenomenon into two types: “item’-targetted onset” (pp. 18–19), and “thrust’-projective onset” (pp. 19–21). In cases with an “item’-targetted onset,” the overlapping speaker recognizes and targets a specific item or word in the ongoing turn, such as “happy New Year” in the following fragment:

(2) (Jefferson, 1983, p. 18)

Steven: Ri:ght Heathih' [n  
Heath: [Alright Steven,  
(.)  
Steven: → A very ha[ppy New Ye]ar.] (t'the-)]  
Heath: → [Thank yoh:] e ]n a halppy ( ).

In cases of “thrust’-projective onset,” on the other hand, the overlapping speaker is orienting above all to the adequacy of the overlapped utterance: At the point of overlap, “an understanding of at least the general thrust of the utterance can have been achieved” (p. 20), as in the following:

(3) (Jefferson, 1983, pp. 19–20)

Emma: Yea:h w'l I let ih ring about ten times uh thuh well now  
→ maybe ye[r'n th'BA:]THtu↓:b.  
Gladys: → [N o n o : , ]  
Gladys: .h No:[uh wih] th't)elevision o:n yih]know ...

This type of recognition is also what happened in the previous Finnish case: Susa’s turn in (1) is far from being complete when Miia begins her overlapping response, but the point of Susa’s turn can already be projected.

The issue of (early) recognition is also essential in several of Jefferson’s transitional overlap onset types. The type “recognitional terminal overlap” (Jefferson, 1983, pp. 14–16) occurs when the recipient recognizes the word the speaker is in the process of producing and places his/her incoming talk at that point; judging from Jefferson’s examples, this means starting a few sounds before the end of an item that possibly completes the ongoing turn. The type “pre-completor onset” (pp. 16–18), on the other hand, occurs when the ongoing utterance is “all over but for the last word(s)”; the overlapping speaker projects the (class of the) word(s) that will bring the turn to completion and starts his/her contribution before the speaker has even begun to produce the word. Of the various

types of transitional onset, this one seems to be farthest away from turn completion and thus close to actual “recognitional onset” cases. Here is an example of a “pre-completor onset”:

(4) (Jefferson, 1983, p. 16)

Jessie: we go to ↓Wetherall’s ‘n they’re alwiz very chahr:ming en  
→ very [obli:]ging in ↓tha\*ah.  
Ann: → [Ye:s.]

Jefferson thus presents a wide array of turn-onset positions, occupying different points within a turn’s production, some being virtually at the ongoing turn’s (possible) completion point (the transitional/terminal onset), others being much farther away from it (the recognitional onset), and some coming in between on this continuum (the transitional/pre-completor onset).<sup>2</sup> Recognizing what the ongoing speaker is producing is essential in most of these overlap onset types, particularly in the cases that are farthest away from completion when the overlap is initiated—these are the ones that are actually called “recognitional.”

Another important line of research concerning overlapping talk takes conversational activity as a starting point and notes that there is regular overlapping of turns in certain sequential environments. One such is the agreeing assessment (Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992; Pomerantz, 1984). Pomerantz and Goodwin and Goodwin have demonstrated how after a first assessment an agreeing response often occurs early, even in overlap during the course of the first assessment, whereas disagreeing responses tend to come later, often after a gap. Here are some illustrative cases from their work.

(5) (Pomerantz, 1984, p. 66)

M: You must admit it was fun the night we  
we[nt down  
→ J: [It was great fun ...

Here the response is an agreeing second assessment, and it is positioned in overlap with the first-assessment turn. The responding speaker upgrades the evaluation terms in his/her assessment (*fun—great fun*). Pomerantz notes that such “strong or upgraded assessments are performed with a minimization of gap (in fact, frequently in slight overlap)” (1984, p.69). Similarly, Goodwin and Goodwin show how recipients of assessments produce their own assessments simultaneously with the initial assessment before it comes to completion:

(6) (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, p. 24)

Dianne: **Jeff** made en asparagus pie  
it wz s::so[: goo:d.  
Clacia: → [I love it.

This type of response timing, according to Goodwin and Goodwin (1987, pp. 22–26), shows that the response-speaker tracks in fine detail both the emerging structure and the activity of the ongoing utterance, projecting elements that have not yet occurred. They argue that the overlap is not treated as requiring remedy but instead is a systematic achievement by the participants. In such cases the

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<sup>2</sup> Jefferson (1986) discusses the same overlap onset types for the most part but uses slightly different terminology: Turns whose onset comes “in the middle of” the ongoing turn, for instance, are referred to as “interjacent.”

response-speakers may not have access to (i.e., direct knowledge of) the assessed items, but they base their similar and thus strongly agreeing evaluations on independent appraisals of the phenomenon (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, pp. 22–30).

In addition to agreeing second assessments, also cotelling and turn-sharing tend to attract overlap (e.g., Lerner, 1992, 1996, 2002, 2004). This phenomenon occurs when two or more people tell a story or produce some other talk together to a third party. Here is a case where a couple is talking about their common past:

(7) (Lerner, 1992, p. 263)

1 Nadine: You remember Father Denelland that mar- Well yeah we were  
2 married three times. Y[ou knew that story.  
3 Anita: [I didn't know ever hear that.  
4 :  
5 Nadine: When we- When we were youngsters we elo:ped,  
6 and were marr[ied in Maryland,  
7 → Jim: [Went to Elkton  
8 Nadine: to Elkton Maryland, [.hh  
9 Jim: [Then we got married in Jamaica,

In lines 5–6 Nadine characterizes her marriage to Jim as an elopement, and in line 7 Jim specifies the destination of the elopement in overlap (Lerner, 1992, p. 263). The overlapping incoming is possible due to the participants' shared knowledge.

Not only the shared telling of events experienced together but also other occasions may involve participants aiming to produce talk together (Lerner, 2002, 2004). A case in point is the “collaborative turn sequence,” which, as Lerner demonstrates, regularly involves overlap (2004, p. 241). Collaborative turn sequences occur especially when the TCU-in-progress is a so-called “compound TCU” (for the same phenomenon in Finnish, see Helasvuo, 2004):

(8) (Lerner, 2004, p. 230)

A: if you start watering, it [will get gree-  
B: [it will come back  
A: y- yes uh huh

In this extract, speaker B comes in with a completion to speaker A's turn-in-progress and does this in overlap. In these cotelling or turn-sharing environments, epistemic access is important: The incoming overlapping speaker must have some knowledge of the issue to be able to produce his/her contribution.<sup>3</sup>

Taking the examples from Pomerantz, Goodwin and Goodwin, and Lerner together, we notice that in all of them, participants' epistemic positions—i.e., what the participants know and how they know it relative to one another—are central. Pomerantz actually discusses this in a footnote to her paper (Pomerantz, 1984, p. 62; p. 96 fn. 3): She argues that speakers of “strong” second assessments claim independent access to the referent. Goodwin and Goodwin also point to the same phenomenon (see the previous). More recently, Heritage (e.g., 2012) has demonstrated that

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<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the cases discussed in the current study, however, the examples Lerner analyzes are not designed to be responses to the overlapped turns.

participants' relative epistemic statuses—what they know—and their epistemic stances—how they express their knowledge—are in many ways essential in interaction. For instance, he shows in his work on *oh*-prefaced agreements (Heritage, 2002) that they are used for claiming epistemic independence in English:

(9) (Heritage, 2002, pp. 205, 210)

1 Jon: We saw Midnight Cowboy yesterday -or[suh- Friday.  
2 Eve: [Oh?  
3 Lyn: Didju s- you saw that, [it's really good.  
4 Eve: [No I haven't seen it  
5 Rae [sed it 'n' she said she f- depressed her  
6 (): [( )  
7 Eve: ter[ribly  
8 Jon: → [Oh it's [terribly depressing.  
9 Lyn: → [Oh it's depressing.  
10 Eve: Ve[ry

According to Heritage's analysis, the particle *oh* (here in lines 8 and 9) conveys each speaker's independent epistemic access to the movie being evaluated as compared to that of the coparticipant Eve, although they all agree on the matter. As we can see from this extract, the onset of the first *oh*-response (line 8) is positioned in (terminal) overlap with the initial assessment it responds to. *Oh*-prefacing is, however, not the only way to index epistemic authority—one's (claimed) right to be more knowledgeable about something—in English. Heritage and Raymond (2005) demonstrate numerous ways in which participants manage their relative epistemic authority in conversation. Using, for instance, negative interrogative syntax, a responding speaker may upgrade her assessment "by usurping the 'firstness' of a previous assessment" (p. 28), thereby indexing her epistemic authority on the topic in question.

Drawing on the aforementioned referenced research and on observable features in the data it analyzes, the current study explores a possible relation between participants' relative epistemic positions and transition timing. This will be done by examining sequences where a response is positioned in early overlap in Finnish and Estonian everyday interactions (for more detail, see the following). I will show that there is a great deal of systematicity in these sequences and suggest an underlying motivation for the early overlap. The analytical focus will be on sequence types that are similar to the ones shown in the previous examples. These sequences have in common that epistemicity, i.e., the participants' knowledge, is (potentially) relevant in them, as is affiliation (or emotional reciprocity); deonticity (the right to determine actions in interaction), on the contrary, is not. These sequence types also stand in contrast to sequences built around questions and answers, where the epistemic positions between participants are principally asymmetrical (one is knowledgeable and the other is not; Heritage, 2012).

In the sequence types studied here, the initiating turn asserts something about the world, typically also evaluating it. Recall the first Finnish example examined previously, where the participants discussed going to the solarium: The first (to-be-overlapped) speaker Susa asserted that it is wise to go there, contrasting her own view with the view that solariums are just "damaging." Such turns share some features with both (first-) assessments and tellings (or informings), including the fact that their speakers (appear to) design themselves as at least somewhat more knowledgeable than the recipient. Thus, the turns are somewhat informative (mainly due to their declarative syntax), yet most often they are at least slightly evaluative as well. These turns invite the coparticipant to express her/his own view on the matter, to indicate whether they (personally) share the first speaker's view or not,

i.e., whether they also think the way the first speaker does.<sup>4</sup> I will call these initiating turns *assertions* (a more precise analysis of this social action is left for another occasion; see, however, Vatanen, 2014).

The aim of the current study is to examine such sequences from the point of view of social action, the focus being on the responding turn (see also Vatanen, 2014). In the following, I will demonstrate that when recipients position the onset of their overlapping response early, at a recognition point, i.e., at a moment where the turn's action and its speaker's "point" are already projectable for the recipient, their turn addresses a specific interactional task, or implements a specific social action; what this means will be explained in the remainder of this article. I will show that positioning an overlapping response at an early recognition point is a systematic practice in everyday talk, one that is deployed in the service of epistemic positioning. Before going into the analysis, I will introduce the method and the data used in this study.

## Method and data

This study adopts the framework of conversation analysis (e.g., Sidnell & Stivers, 2013), supplemented by interactional linguistics (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2001). The research results have been gained through a detailed, data-driven, moment-by-moment sequential analysis of interaction. The study draws on naturally occurring, mostly videotaped data; all participants have given their informed consent, including permission to present anonymized data extracts in research publications. The Finnish data have been acquired from the conversation data archive at the Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Helsinki. A subset of the Estonian data, gathered from the Corpus of Spoken Estonian at the University of Tartu, is audiotaped only. The data acquired from both Helsinki and Tartu archives were collected following the ethical principles of each university. The videotaped Estonian data are from my own field trip to Estonia; all its participants have given their informed consent to present the data in research publications.

The collection consists of overlapping talk from seven hours of monolingual everyday face-to-face conversation in Finnish and Estonian (divided approximately equally between the two languages), the number of participants in each conversation varying between two and four. Both languages are Baltic Finnic, Finno-Ugric languages. Besides being genealogically close, these languages share most of their typological features including, e.g., agglutination. In neither language is word order regulated by grammatical rules. However, there are also differences between the grammars of the two languages, and many parts of the lexicon are dissimilar (Metslang, 2009).

Not all instances of overlapping talk that occur in the data are taken into consideration in this study. As already mentioned, only responsive turns were selected for qualitative analysis. This means that first pair-parts such as questions, whose onsets were positioned in overlap with another turn, were excluded. The collection thus includes only turns that are appropriate next turns subsequent to the initiating turns. They are second pair-parts that either directly respond to the overlapped turn (see example 10) or build on the overlapped turn to present the overlapping speaker's own view on the topic (see examples 11 and 12). The latter is also an appropriate next move after an assertion, being in a sense a response to it. Overlapping turns consisting of particles only were excluded from the collection because they may signal continued reciprocity and not function as responses at all. In

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<sup>4</sup> It is also possible that the recipient merely produces an acknowledgement token as a response. However, such responses will not be analyzed here.

addition, even when they are appropriate next turns, being minimal, they do not necessarily enter the other speaker's turn space.

In terms of timing, the focus is on turns that start up at a point that is not a transition relevance place; that is, the onset is in the "middle" of an ongoing turn, where not all projected elements have yet been produced. These turn-onsets turn out to be what Jefferson (1983) calls "recognitional." Interestingly, in my collection of recognitional overlaps, only "thrust"-projective onsets occur (i.e., there are no "item"-targeted onsets). In addition to "recognitional" onsets proper, I also take into account pre-completor (transitional) onsets; here, the issue of (relatively) early recognition is crucial as well. I do not, however, attempt to analyze any potential differences in the social actions accomplished by the different types of recognitional onset.

Furthermore, the collection to be analyzed here includes only cases where the initiating turn is an assertion-type turn (see previous). There are very few recognitional overlapping responses to other types of initiating turns in my data. One of these is a redone rejection of a redone suggestion, and two are responses to requests for information in which either the initiating turn was not the first attempt, or the issue in question had already been discussed earlier in some other way. The current analysis focuses on agreeing or agreeing-like responses only. The data also include overlapping disagreeing responses, but they are fewer in number compared to the agreeing ones and will not be dealt with here. The motivation and explanation for the early timing of disagreeing responses seems to be somewhat similar to that suggested for agreement-like responses in the present article in the sense that it is also related to the participants' relative knowledge on the topic. However, in disagreements, the question is more about how things should be thought of in the first place rather than about whose (similar) knowledge is primary: The overlapping, disagreeing speaker attempts to put the record straight on a debatable issue from the prior turn.

The final collection includes 91 instances of early-onset overlapping responses; the aforementioned restrictions make the collection more similar to cases in the literature reviewed earlier. Additionally, I analyzed a comparative corpus of approximately 50 instances where the sequences were similar to the ones with recognitional overlapping responses, but the response had a different temporal positioning.

Analyses of the current collection reveal a wealth of resources that overlappers draw upon to be able to respond appropriately, even though they come in before the TRP. While the overlapped turn is not yet (possibly) complete, the prosody and especially the grammar of the structure-so-far enable at least an approximate understanding of what it will take to complete the ongoing turn/TCU (on resources for projecting TCU end points, see, e.g., Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 1996; Ford & Thompson, 1996). Moreover, there are additional features in the larger context—e.g., the course of the ongoing sequence, the social action implemented by the turn, and the speakers' stance toward the issue at hand—that contribute opportunities for the recipient to recognize ahead of time what the current utterance is going to be, before its actual completion (see also Vatanen, 2014). The sequences in focus here share these features, all enabling an early response-onset by the would-be next speaker. It can thus be argued that instead of orienting to possible TCU/turn completion, the overlapping response-speakers actually orient to recognition of the action-in-progress, as these overlap onset points exhibit enhanced projectability (see Auer, 2005, on projection).

Comparing my collection of recognitional onsets to that of Jefferson's (1983), it becomes clear that some of the turns that are positioned in "thrust'-projective" overlap in Jefferson's paper differ from the turns in my collection because, for instance, they are not actual responses to the overlapped turn, or if responding, they are answers to questions or laughter. The overlapped turns in Jefferson's



paper are also different from the ones in my collection: They are either questions or proper reportings of events. Jefferson, however, shows only five examples, and the analyses are quite limited, so it is difficult to know what general tendencies there are in her collection. In her later overlap paper (1986), she does not deal with this issue at any length. Furthermore, contrary to Jefferson's sequences with recognitional onsets, the overlappers in the current data very rarely orient to their turns as being "interruptive."<sup>5</sup> Their turns are also very rarely produced with high pitch and loud volume (i.e., "competitive" prosody; see French & Local, 1983, 1986).<sup>6</sup> What the current work most crucially adds to Jefferson's research on overlap is its attention to social actions and the underlying implications of turn-onset timing. Let us now look at cases with an early overlapping response to see the social and interactional grounds for what is seemingly a violation of the turn-taking rules.

## Overlapping early-onset responses at recognition points: Agreement and independence

In the current data, the overlapping early-onset responses are rather uniform in terms of the social actions they implement: Apart from being in agreement with the overlapped turn, they all exhibit an element of epistemic independence. In the following I will analyze the social actions in these turns together with their contexts of occurrence and sequential trajectories. The analysis is divided into two sections. In the first section, the overlapping speakers merely claim to have an independent epistemic access to the issue discussed, whereas in the second section, they demonstrate it (on claiming vs. demonstrating, see Sacks, 1992).<sup>7</sup>

### *Claiming agreement on independent grounds*

One action type that occurs in overlapping early-onset recognitional responses is claiming to agree with the overlapped turn based on independent grounds. In these responses, specific linguistic resources and turn formats are exploited to accomplish both indicating agreement and marking an independent stance (on this type of turn, see, e.g., Barnes, 2012; Heritage, 2002; Sidnell & Enfield, 2012; Sorjonen & Hakulinen, 2009; Stivers, 2005). These sequences are thus epistemically incongruent (see Hayano, 2011): The initiating speaker implies that s/he knows more than the coparticipant, who nevertheless resists this implication and claims to be more knowledgeable than supposed. In other words, the participants' epistemic stances are not compatible. For reasons of space, only one case from my collection will be presented in the following.

In the following Estonian case, there is a specific linguistic element indexing epistemic independence in the overlapping, agreeing response. The speakers in this fragment are friends and university students in Estonia, and it has come out that they think that (Estonian) students are generally passive. Prior to this fragment, Mari has wondered how to activate the students in a course that she is about to give at the university, and she receives a suggestion from Eve, to which she responds rather positively. Our fragment begins with Eve offering a reason for her suggestion:

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<sup>5</sup> On occasion, the overlappers or the overlapped speakers do seem to treat the overlap as "interruptive" because, e.g., they recycle parts of their turn or discontinue the projected turn (see, e.g., ex. 1). However, this is rare in my data. For other types of overlapping, noninterruptive speech, see Lerner (2002) on choral coproduction and the studies by Pomerantz and Goodwin and Goodwin referenced previously.

<sup>6</sup> According to French and Local (1983, 1986), speakers compete for the floor by designing their incoming turns with high pitch and loud volume. However, French and Local do not include an analysis of the social actions that the overlapping turns are implementing, which is the aim of the current study. My collection of early-onset turns involves patterns that are both prosodically competitive and noncompetitive (in the sense of French and Local, 1983). The prosodically competitive turns are in the minority.

<sup>7</sup> Whether these should be thought of as two separate social actions or as variants of the same social action would require a separate study and will not be dealt with further here.

(10) Põhiprobleem/Basic problem (Estonian, TÄ2, 15:15)

01 Eve: sest s[ee a<sub>↑</sub>re]ndab täie<sub>g</sub>[a.  
because [it really ] improv[es ((the students))

02 Mari: [ ° (-- ) ° ] [jaa. on küll.  
[yeah. that's right.

03 Mari: seevastu eestis on põhiprobleem on  
instead NAME:INE be.3SG basic.problem be.3SG  
instead in Estonia is the basic problem is

M | TURNS HEAD&GAZE FROM EVE TO MID-DISTANCE AND HOLDS THEM STILL  
04 see-;=ɛkõ[ik >lihtsalt< is]tuvad ja midagi ei  
DEM1 all simply sit:3PL and anything NEG  
that ever[yone simply sits and does

=> 05 Eve: [see ongi. ]  
DEM1 be.3SG:CLI  
[indeed / that's right]

M | RELEASES STILL HEAD POSITION  
06 Mari: tee; ja: ...  
do and  
nothing and...

In line 1, Eve offers a reason for the suggestion she has made to Mari: She asserts that it “really improves” the students. Mari concurs with this claim in line 2 (“yeah. that’s right”) and then presents an assertion that receives an overlapping agreeing response from Eve. Mari’s assertion turn, beginning with *seevastu* (“instead”) in line 3, changes the line of talk from Eve’s suggestion based on what was done in the course she attended in Finland to the characteristics of students in Estonia. The participants had mentioned this topic a short while earlier, but the particular aspect Mari introduces here was not raised—namely, how the students actually behave in class and how this presents a problem. Mari asserts that “instead in Estonia the basic problem is that everyone simply sits and does nothing” (lines 3–4, 6). Eve initiates her response after Mari has produced the demonstrative *see*, which, orienting forward here, projects further talk. In terms of prosody, also the slight truncation of *see* contributes to hearing it as incomplete. Furthermore, Mari’s embodied behavior strongly suggests that she is going to continue from that point: When she utters *see*, she shifts her gaze away from Eve and also turns her head to empty middistance, holding it still until she has completed the clause “everyone simply sits and does nothing,” specifying the “basic problem.” Thus, at the overlap onset point the turn is not yet completed nor transition-ready; the onset is recognitional and “thrust”-projective (Jefferson, 1983). However, there are cues that help Eve recognize the action-in-progress in Mari’s turn.

Prior to this fragment, the participants were already in agreement that (Estonian) students are generally passive during lectures. Just before this fragment, Eve has spoken about what has been done in Finland to make the students more active. Now, when Mari begins her assertion with *seevastu eestis* (“instead in Estonia”), it is projectable that her assertion is going to be about students in Estonia and that it will be a contrast to the just prior stretch of talk. So, when the situation in Estonia is contrasted with the one in Finland, Eve can already project at least the gist of the unfolding utterance—Estonians will be claimed to be different, i.e., more passive—and this is where she places the onset of her agreeing response.

Mari's turn does not explicitly attribute any epistemic authority to Eve, and the recording reveals that when it comes to teaching and related matters, Mari is the more experienced of the two. By responding at this point to this assertion with *see ongi*, Eve nevertheless indicates that she has at-least-equal access and rights as Mari to make this assertion. *See ongi* consists of the demonstrative pronoun *see* and the finite verb *on* ("is") and in addition, the clitic *-gi*. Keevallik (2011) has demonstrated that by using this clitic in a responsive turn, the speaker indicates that she knows the issue at least as well as her recipient and that her epistemic access is better than previously assumed. Thus, in her response, Eve agrees by confirming Mari's assertion and concurrently claims to be an authority. She claims that her opinion on the matter is based on knowledge that is independent of Mari's and is better than assumed. However, she does not provide any evidence that would demonstrate her independent epistemic stance.

In addition to cases similar to the previous one, where the responding speaker merely claims agreement on independent grounds, overlapping recognitional responses may also contain elements that not only claim but in fact demonstrate the responding speaker's agreement and epistemic independence, relative to the overlapped turn. Such cases will be in focus in the following section.

### *Demonstrating agreement and understanding*

A more frequent action type in recognitional early-onset overlapping responses is the demonstration of understanding (75% of all instances): The speaker not only claims to agree with the overlapped coparticipant but actually demonstrates his/her agreement with and understanding of the overlapped talk, and at the same time the independent epistemic grounds for his/her stance. There are several ways this can happen. In the following example, the demonstration of understanding is a second assertion that is compatible with, yet more specific than, the first one. Here two women are discussing home movies shown on television. After talking about Finnish home movies, A tells B how "awful" Russian home movies are. This is where the fragment begins. The pronominal *noissa* ("those") (line 4) refers to movies on a Finnish television program; these had been discussed earlier and are also the object of evaluation here.

(11) Sattuu oikeesti/It really hurts (Finnish, Sg 377, 32:20)

01 A: *i*[han semm'sii niinku järkyttäv-  
re[ally such like shockin-

02 B: [oo koo.  
[okay

03 A: >semm'sii niinku< .hhh ku mun mielest  
*DEM3.ADJ:PL:PAR PRT because 1SG:GEN mind:ELA*  
such like, .hhh since in my opinion

A: | QUICKLY GLANCES TO A DVD ON THEIR RIGHT  
04 *noissaki on siis sill#ei aina välillä*  
*DEM2.PL:INE:CLI be.3SG PRT DEM3.MAN always sometimes*  
those also have every now and then such

05 et ei oikein [hyvään, .h varaudu?# ]  
*COMP NEG.3SG really good:ILL prepare.oneself*  
that (one) really does not [prepare (one)self for good]

- => 06 B:                   [kyl välillä on vä]hän  
                               PRT sometimes be.3SG a.bit  
                               [indeed at times it's a li]ttle
- 07       silleen niinku et näyttää siltä et ku  
           DEM3.MAN PRT COMP seem:3SG DEM3:ABL COMP as  
           like it seems like that as if
- 08       siel               on jotain [niinku et  
           DEM3.LOC:ADE be.3SG something PRT COMP  
           there is something               [like when
- 09 A:   [nii:;  
   [yeah
- 10 B: joku kaatuu pyörällä et se on vähän silleen  
        someone falls from (his/her) bike so it's a little like
- 11       sattuu oikee[sti (.) silleen kiva;                ]  
        it really hur[ts, (.) like nice                        ]
- 12 A:                   [joo ne on kauheint kattoo ku]...  
                           [yeah those are the most awful ((things)) to see when]...

In line 3, speaker A shifts the focus from Russian to Finnish movies by using the pronominal *noissaki*, (“[also in] those”), accompanied by a glance toward a DVD containing them (line 4), and with the stance marker *mun mielest* (“in my opinion”), she starts to explicitly assess them (Rauniomaa, 2007). This is followed by an evaluating assertion regarding the home movies that are aired on Finnish television: “Those also have every now and then such (things) that (one) really does not [prepare (one)self for good.” Being a first assessment/assertion, the turn invites the recipient to join in the evaluating activity (Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers, 2005). The recipient’s joining in is also facilitated and even invited by the use of the zero person (*Ø ei varaudu* [“Ø does not prepare Ø-self”]), which opens a place for joint experience and offers an opportunity for the recipient to identify with the speaker (Laitinen, 1995).

This is exactly what speaker B does in her responding turn, which occurs early, in a “thrust”-projective recognitional position in line 6. At this point the ongoing clause in A’s turn still lacks a predicate (*varaudu* [“prepare oneself”]), projected by the negative auxiliary *ei*, and one of the predicate’s arguments (*hyvään* [“for good”]). B’s turn is a second (assessing) assertion that conveys a similar opinion on the home movie program. Her turn, however, does not merely agree; it also has independent content expressing the grounds for the assessment and making the latter more concrete and detailed, albeit in a somewhat circumlocutory fashion (lines 6–11). The adverb of time in the overlapped turn, *aina välillä* (“every now and then”) is modified to a prosodically more stressed version of *välillä* (“at times”); the evaluating element “not really good” in the prior turn becomes an ironic “nice” (that is, not nice); and grounds for the evaluation are offered as well: “someone falls from his/her bike - - it really hurts.” In addition, the initial particle *kyl* (“indeed/really”) is used to reassure the coparticipant that the response-speaker shares the expressed view (see Hakulinen, 2001b). The new material in B’s turn demonstrates the speaker’s independent access to the matter, and the whole turn demonstrates the fact that the speaker understands the prior talk and also shows how she understands it.

Several features in this sequence indicate that the participants treat the overlapping response as legitimate. For example, speaker A does not interrupt her overlapped turn but pursues it to its projected completion (during the overlap there is one dysfluency marker: a brief inhalation in line 5), and she also acknowledges the overlapping turn with the particle *nii* in line 9. Furthermore, when taking a turn again, the overlapped speaker does not repeat the overlapped part of her turn but proceeds to develop the sequence further (line 12). In short, there are no indications in this example that the participants view the overlapping positioning of the response as illegitimate.

In the next example, there are two early overlapping incomings at recognition points, both of the demonstration of understanding type. The overlapping turns here provide a consequence and an elaboration of the overlapped assertions. At the beginning of this fragment, Margit initiates a new topic by telling Katrin about a text message that she is currently writing to a special friend of hers she is going to meet soon:

(12) *Ööbime koos*/We'll spend the night together (Estonian, AN2, 10:42)

- 01 M: *saadan praegu siukse=sõnumi et ee, (.) et*  
I'm now sending a message that uhm (.) that
- 02 *et, (.) et noh, ma seda=ööbimist veel ei*  
that, (.) that um, I don't know yet about spending the night
- 03 *tea aga. et lissalt=saaks kokku.*  
but. that we'd simply meet.
- 04 (1.3)
- 05 M: *muidu on nagu liiga=siuke- nagu: õõ*  
otherwise (it) is too such like, um
- 06 *pingestatud et, (.) @ahah?@ (0.2)*  
tense that, (.) okay? (0.2)
- 07 *kindlasti saame kokku:, (.) ja: ?*  
we'll definitely meet, (.) and
- 08 *ööbime koos.*  
spend the night together.
- K |WITHDRAWS GAZE, TOUCHES HER FACE
- 09 K: *njaa=jaa=[jaa. ]*  
*nyeahyeah [yeah ]*
- 10 M: *[parem on kui ta] lahti jääb.*  
*[it's better when it ] remains open.*
- 11 *et noh vaatame kuidas °tundub*  
*PRT/COMP PRT see:1PL how feel:3SG*  
so uhm we'll see how (it) feels
- 12 *[see suhe on.°]*  
*DEM1 relationship be.3SG*  
*[the relationship is.]*

- => 13 K: [siis ju: saad] ikka tunde  
*then PRT get:2SG anyway feeling:GEN*  
 [then you can ] (act) following the
- 14 järgi [mitte see] et on kokku=lepitud  
*according NEG DEM1 COMP be.3SG agree.on:PPPC*  
 feeling [not that it']s been agreed on
- 15 M: [ähäh, ]  
 [uhhuh, ]
- 16 K: tegelikult ei tahagi ei olegi mingit  
*actually NEG want:CLI NEG be:CLI some:PAR*  
 actually (one) doesn't want (there) is no
- 17 siukest .hhhh [<mee:leolu,> ]  
*DEM.ADJ:PAR mood:PAR*  
 such .hhhh [mood ]
- => 18 M: [võibola tekib siuke tunne] et  
*maybe appear:3SG DEM.ADJ feeling COMP*  
 [(it) may be that a feeling appears ] that
- 19 nagu ei: tahagi [enam. ]  
*PRT NEG want:CLI anymore*  
 like (one) doesn't want [anymore.]

This fragment begins with Margit announcing the content of the text message she is currently writing (lines 1–3). A pause follows (line 4), and when she does not get any uptake from her recipient Katrin, Margit proceeds to explain her feelings on the issue. She uses the expression *pingestatud* (“tense”) (line 6) to describe the feelings she would have if they (she and her friend) were to decide in advance to spend the night together. During this turn, she presents her reasons for deciding about the preplanned course of the upcoming meeting with her friend: The predecided part includes only their meeting, not spending the night together. At this stage, when her stance is expressed explicitly and her talk even more clearly calls for uptake, Katrin responds with the aligning and basically supportive but nevertheless slightly ambiguous particle-chain *njaajaajaa* (“nyeahyeahyeah”) (line 9). At the same time, Katrin disengages bodily: She withdraws her gaze and starts to touch her face, which may indicate that the situation or the topic is somewhat awkward for her. Overlapping with the last of Katrin’s particles, Margit explicates even more clearly the conclusion behind her decision (lines 10–12): “it’s better when it remains open. so uhm we’ll see how (it) feels the relationship is.” In overlap with the latter utterance in this stretch of talk, at a point that constitutes a possible syntactic completion point (“we’ll see how it feels”) but, based on its nonfinal intonation, is not yet complete, Katrin comes in with her response (line 13). As Margit’s latter clause is similar in content to the prior talk and only somewhat modifies it, Katrin is able to recognize where the turn is heading.

Katrin’s overlapping turn (line 13 onwards) is stance-congruent with Margit’s prior talk. She provides a consequence of the position Margit is outlining: “then you can (act) following the feeling not that it’s been agreed on - -.” With this contribution and its content, which is independent of the coparticipant’s prior talk, Katrin demonstrates that she understands what Margit is saying (Margit’s situation and her stance toward it), and in fact, she understands it so well that she is able to add something to the line of argumentation. Her turn demonstrates that she has (or is aware of) similar experiences and stances and is able to match them to Margit’s current situation.

Overlapping Katrin's response, Margit continues the reasoning herself (line 18) at a noncompletion point (in a pre-completor onset position) in Katrin's turn (here the syntactic structure is possibly complete with the demonstrative *siukest* ("such"), but judging from its nonfinal intonation and the ensuing forward-projecting audible inhalation, the utterance is still not yet complete). The latter parts of Katrin's overlapped turn rephrase the points she has already expressed, as she states in a concrete way the feeling one can harbor in this type of situation: "actually (one) doesn't want (there) is no such mood."<sup>8</sup> Margit's overlapping incoming brings a temporal aspect into the discussion of the future event: how one's feeling may change over time (see lines 18–19). The turn demonstrates her independent (and actually privileged) access to the event; she is, after all, the one whose situation in life is being discussed, even though her coparticipant manifests possession of knowledge of similar situations as well.

The whole extract is an illustration of how the participants agree with each other and jointly argue for an opinion they share, manifesting their social solidarity and togetherness. The early onsets of their turns amplify all this, demonstrating that they already know in advance what the other is about to say and that they affiliate with this, while also demonstrating their independent access to the matter by introducing new material. At the same time, the participants constantly negotiate ownership and primacy of the knowledge they are basing their talk on.

These two extracts and the three examples in them include overlapping turns that I call demonstrations of understanding. They are overlapping responses in which the responding speaker overtly demonstrates her/his understanding of—and agreement with—the prior speaker's turn, both its point and the stance it adopts. The two turns are compatible in their evaluative stance, and the speakers are in agreement. The speakers' epistemic stances, however, are not (totally) compatible with one another. In the responsive turns here, the independence of the responding speaker's epistemic access is explicitly demonstrated: There is overtly new, independent content in the turn through which the demonstration is done. These demonstrations of understanding embody a means for displaying support for the overlapped assertion turn while at the same time challenging certain epistemic implications in it: They indicate that the overlapped speaker did not sufficiently take into account what the coparticipant knows (or at least s/he did not make this explicit). This analysis and discussion thus advances the notion of demonstrating understanding (see Sacks, 1992), presenting previously undescribed ways of doing this; see Vatanen (2014) for more examples.

In conclusion, the current data suggest that overlapping early-onset responses that set in at a recognition point—at a point of enhanced projectability—exhibit systematicity in the social action types they implement. While the overlapping response-speakers affiliate and align in agreement with the overlapped initiating action, they convey an aspect of independence in epistemic access. In these sequences, the initiating speaker presents an assertion on some issue from a more knowing position and implicates that the recipient knows less: This stems not only from the declarative syntax of the turns (see Enfield, 2013; Heritage & Raymond, 2005) but also from the lack of specific indications of shared knowledge. However, the responding speaker, while agreeing on the matter with the coparticipant, introduces something new and independent in his/her turn, either by claiming it or by demonstrating it. As a result, both participants display themselves as epistemic authorities on the issue at hand. Hence, even though the participants are in (strong) agreement, some resistance arises in the response because it is epistemically incongruent with the prior turn.

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<sup>8</sup> The speaker reformulates the structure of her utterance here on the fly: The second verb form *olegi* (be.c.u) replaces the first verb form *tahagi* (want.c.u).

Nevertheless, the participants do not, for the most part, orient to the overlapping response as interruptive.

Let us now compare the recognitional early-onset overlaps to other turn-onset positions in similar sequence types to show that while they embody certain similarities with the sequences examined previously, the most important difference is revealing: These responding speakers do not resist the epistemic implications of the prior turn.

### Early-onset recognitional overlap versus responses with terminal overlap or no overlap

The overwhelming majority of recognitional overlapping responses occur in sequences with assertion-type turns, where the speakers assert something about the world, typically also evaluating it. To grasp the specific nature of early response-onsets in these sequences, I compare them here to sequences that are in other respects similar but in which the response—whatever type it may be—has a different temporal positioning.

In the first example to be examined, the response overlaps the prior turn only slightly, or “terminally”/“transitionally” (see Jefferson, 1983). The participants in this fragment are talking about wedding gifts. Sanna has asked Kerttu, who has recently married, what gifts she and her husband received. Kerttu mentions the dishes they were given, reporting that they did not receive many plates, if any at all. In lines 6–7, Kerttu presents an initial assertion (or an assessment), to which Eeva responds in terminal overlap in line 8. Niina, referred to in line 2, has not been mentioned during the recording but seems to be known to all participants.

#### (13) Lautasia/Plates (Finnish, Sg 346, 48:46)

- 01 Kerttu: mutta, (0.5)  
but (0.5)
- 02 ku [↑Niina just sa]no että, (0.5)  
as [Niina just sa]id that (0.5)
- 03 Sanna: [(keittiö?) ]  
[(kitchen?) ]
- 04 Kerttu: niil oli ihan sama juttu?  
they had exactly the same thing
- 05 (.)
- 06 Kerttu: et l- ↑ei ↑lautasii; (.) se on niin ↑tylsää  
*COMP NEG plate:PL:PAR DEM3 be.3SG so boring:PAR*  
that pl- no plates, it is so boring
- 07 os<taa [lauta[sia]?  
*buy plate:PL:PAR*  
to buy [ plat[es.
- => 08 Eeva: [mm; [nii on.  
*PRT PRT be.3SG*  
[mm, [it is.



09 Kerttu: [ne o nii paljo tylsem[pii.  
[they are so much more bor[ing.

10 Sanna: [nii; [nii;  
[yeah [yeah

After recounting the actual events, Kerttu shifts to a more general level concerning the topic. Her assessment, “it is so boring to buy plates” (line 6), receives a plain agreement from Eeva in line 8. First there is a minimal, ambiguous listener’s particle *mm* that occurs in transitional overlap but relatively early (in a pre-completor onset position; Jefferson, 1983) and then a clausal agreeing response *nii on* (“it is”) in transitional/terminal overlap. When compared to the other types of verb repeat responses to assessments in Finnish, *nii(n) on* has been analyzed as indicating unmodified, strong agreement (Sorjonen & Hakulinen, 2009). The responding speaker does not hint at having any epistemic superiority with this type of response; s/he simply agrees with the assessment. The *nii on* is positioned in terminal overlap in this fragment (in my collection of early-onset responses, there are no instances of *nii on*). By contrast, the agreeing early-overlap responses examined previously always convey an aspect of independence. Eeva’s response in the previous fragment indicates that she shares the knowledge that is required for making the assessment, but she does not imply a greater degree of independence regarding the assessment; she simply goes along with it.

The next example shows a responding turn (lines 11–12) that first acknowledges the prior assertion and then goes on with a somewhat disagreeing response to it. Here friends A and B are discussing possible holiday destinations for A and her husband:

(14) Pietari/St. Petersburg (Finnish, Sg 377, 24:15)

01 B: mut siis ↑Pietariha o ihana.  
but (as you know) St. Petersburg is lovely.

02 (1.0)

03 B: ja se on [silleen lähellä mut sit: se voi olla  
and it is like close by but then it can be

04 A: [mm.

05 B: ku sinne tarvii ne viisumit ja;  
because there one needs the visas and

06 (1.0)

07 A: mä en tiä miks mua #ei oikeen;#  
I don’t know why for me it doesn’t really

08 (1.0)

09 B: .mth mut ↑Pietari on tosi< (.) tosi viehko  
.mth but St. Petersburg is really (.) really a charming

10 kaupunki ky[llä?  
city ind[eed

=> 11 A: [mm.

=> 12 A: (mut) se Krakova tai Varsova on #kuitenki enemmän#.
(but) that Cracow or Warsaw is still more.

13 B: nii siis sinne, (0.5) sinne suuntaan
yeah I mean there, (0.5) in that direction

14 saattaa kyl saada noit halpoi lentoja...
one might get those cheap flights...

Speaker B’s assessment of St. Petersburg (line 1) can be heard as a destination suggestion for speaker A. The clitic -han (Pietariha) indicates that B assumes that her coparticipant has some knowledge as well (see Hakulinen, 2001a). Receiving no uptake, she goes on to present some reservations about St. Petersburg as a destination (lines 3, 5). That A is not interested in that particular city becomes evident from her response (line 7), after which B still offers a highly positive evaluative assertion about the city under discussion, this time without any sign of assuming (common) knowledge or a common stance from the coparticipant: “but St. Petersburg is really, really a charming city indeed,” as if trying to convince speaker A (see especially the particle kyllä in the turn end; Hakulinen, 2001b). A, then, first acknowledges B’s turn with the ambiguous discourse particle mm (line 11), positioned in terminal overlap, not taking an explicit stance on the topic (but not denying the coparticipant’s view either). Then, in the clear, she presents her differing take on what cities she would rather think of in the current context, beginning with the contrastive conjunction mut (“but”) (line 12): either one of the Polish cities they discussed a while earlier. She thus does not resist the coparticipant’s implication of her having no (shared) knowledge on the issue; actually she is not even in total agreement with what was asserted.

In conclusion, in the cases where the response is positioned with no gap and no overlap or is only terminally overlapping, the responding speaker’s actions differ from those in early-onset recognitional overlaps. In epistemic terms, sequences similar to those analyzed previously are not like the ones with an early recognitional response-onset, where the first turn attributes a less-knowing position to the recipient and the recipient resists this implication in her/his response. I argue that this social-interactive phenomenon is what is behind the “violation” of the turn-taking rules. Let us now further explore the possible motivation for turn-onset positioning in the early recognitional overlaps.

### The interactional motivation for overlapping: Symmetry in agency and enchrony

In this section, I will suggest an underlying interactional motivation for positioning a response to an assertion-type turn in early recognitional overlap: The aim is to even out the asymmetries between the participants both with regard to turn onset positioning (speakership) and commitment to the claim being made (agency). In early overlapping responses, the speaker either claims or demonstrates that s/he already has the same or similar knowledge (and stance) as the first-assertion speaker. Furthermore, in the agreeing response, there is an element of independence. Early-onset responding speakers thus manipulate the sequential position of their turns by designing them as highly agentive. The independent design of these turns overrides their positional and sequential interpretation. One crucial factor that enters in here is enchrony (Enfield, 2013): Interaction proceeds in real time, and participants must act within this frame. Another background assumption is that first assessments—and as is suggested here, also assertion-turns—imply that the speaker has primary rights concerning the statement being made (e.g., Heritage & Raymond, 2005). This is at least partly due to the declarative form of the turn. One additional explanatory factor is that a first

speaker of such a turn is also implied to be the only one who is committed to the assertion s/he is making.

These factors create a serious asymmetry between the participants in the assertion sequence, both with respect to time (enchrony) as well as with respect to their presumed rights and commitment to the assertion—in a word, their agency. By positioning an agreeing, independent response to a first assertion in early recognitional overlap, second speakers reduce both types of asymmetry between the participants: speakership/enchrony and agency. The early positioning of a(n agreeing) response is a practice to even out these asymmetries and to attain a more balanced relationship between the participants. The interactional motivation for this turn-onset type lies in the speaker's expression of equal commitment to the assertion being made. The recipient strives for a more balanced, symmetrical relationship between the participants with regard to both time (turn-onset point) and agency (rights to make the assertion), and this happens when there is a warrantable recognition point due to enhanced projectability. The examples analyzed previously show that this phenomenon is not restricted to assessments only but also extends to other, less evaluative telling-type turns—turns that I have called assertions. Concerning the practices with which participants manage their relative epistemic rights to assess and evaluate states-of-affairs, Heritage and Raymond (2005) discuss mainly turn design and sequential positioning. This article (see also Vatanen, 2014) adds yet another practice that participants exploit in these sequences: the temporal positioning of the responsive-turn onset relative to the initiating turn.

## Concluding discussion and implications of the study

### *Early response-onset, agreement/affiliation, and epistemics*

The current empirical study has theoretical implications for interpreting the relationship between social action and turn-onset timing. As is widely attested in the conversation analytic literature, agreeing second assessments may come early during the course of a prior turn: This is said to be related to their preferred nature (e.g., Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984). The overlapping early-onset recognitional turns investigated here are basically in agreement with the prior turn. However, the crucial explanation for their early timing does not lie in their agreeing or preferred nature. All of them also share an additional feature that appears to be more important in explaining the early turn-onset, and that is the element of epistemic independence (see also the examples from the literature discussed in the Background section). The responding speaker asserts agreement on independent grounds and therefore marks a measure of competition in epistemic terms over the assertion being made. Yet the turns are not treated as dispreferred. The overlapping responses involve rather explicit new content when compared to the turns they respond to—in most cases, demonstrating the speakers' independent access but sometimes merely claiming it. This means that the responding speakers exhibit more agency in their assertions, which amounts to (an expression of) greater solidarity between the participants: They display that they share not only the same stance toward the matter talked about but also the grounds for it, the independent access needed to achieve it. Timing a responsive turn in early recognitional overlap enhances and bolsters its action as well as the implications expressed through other means such as lexical choice. However, similar to Oh-prefacing in agreements, as discussed by Heritage (2002, p. 204), the early overlapping positioning of an independently agreeing response is an optional means of indicating the speaker's equal commitment and independent agency: It is used when the ongoing turn offers enhanced projectability and early recognition.

The current work suggests that the early (overlapping) positioning of agreeing (assertion) turns is not due to the agreement itself but to its epistemic dimensions, to *how* the speakers agree with one another. This interactional phenomenon is neither limited to nor characteristic of assessments only; it also applies to (other) assertion-type turns. It is suggested that producing an agreeing yet epistemically incongruent response can be seen as ultimately more pro-social and as an expression of stronger affiliation than compared to other, “weaker” types of agreeing responses because the turn shows that the participants share not only an evaluative stance but also the grounds for it.

### *Early response-onset and turn-taking organization: The aim for no-gap-no-overlap*

This study demonstrates that the use of a recognition point (at a non-TRP) as a response-onset position is patterned, and this finding has some implications for the organization of turn-taking. The article by Sacks et al. (1974) is explicit in stating that the turn-taking rule-set organizes turn transfer exclusively around transition relevance places and that the turn-taking rules aim to minimize gaps and overlaps. The current study suggests, however, that social action and other such factors can affect turn taking: Transition relevance and the timing of a turn can be mobilized and utilized for interactional needs and social purposes. Speakers do not invariably or solely aim for no gap and no overlap according to a mechanical set of rules: A speaker may begin a turn in early overlap to achieve a certain purpose or to index or reinforce a certain message, such as to establish independence and strong understanding (and agreement), as is shown here. Turn-onset positioning is thus a participants’ device for interactional meaning-making.

This study demonstrates, as did, for instance, the work by Jefferson and Lerner, that the transition relevance place is not the sole locus of legitimate and patterned turn transition and next-turn onset. Recipient-participants use the not-yet-completeness of the prior turn, an early recognition point, for the interactional practices attested previously. Instead of the (possible) completion of the prior turn unit, recipient-participants orient to the projectability and recognizability of these turns and the social actions they implement and use these very places to position their next turn-at-talk. Respondents thus rely on early recognition points (with enhanced projectability) in the prior/ongoing turns in order for their responses to be understood as doing what they do. In other words, respondents use these turn-onset points to signal “I know as much about this as you do” and “I strongly agree with you on this.” However, because the organization of early-onset overlap is not random but rather the opposite, very orderly, the general principle of no-gap-no-overlap in turn taking is confirmed: The current study suggests that positioning a response in early recognitional overlap is done for a reason. The motivation for early turn-onset lies in the speaker’s expression of equal commitment to the assertion being made: The overlapping speaker strives for a more balanced, symmetrical relationship with the current speaker in regard to time, speakership, and agency.

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