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Making up one's mind in second position: Estonian *no*-preface in action plans

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Abstract

This chapter discusses preferred responses that are delayed by the initial particle *no* in Estonian. It demonstrates that the turn-initial time-space may be employed for a display of “making up one's mind”, either weighing matters outside the conversation or something already discussed in the talk. The paper argues that besides the dichotomous choice between the preferred and the dispreferred answer format, there are individual contingencies to consider in committing to future actions as made relevant in requests, proposals and suggestions. The particle *no* prefaces preferred second actions that are associated with high contingency for the concerned parties, or are framed as such. Examples of high contingency include receiving a guest, attending a potentially unpleasant meeting, and faking a signature. The *no*-prefacing pattern is valid across response types, from partial to full repeats and independently formatted responses which reflect other social dimensions of talk-in-interaction, such as independent agency, commitment, and degree of assent/confirmation. By marking a transition from prior resistance to current compliance with a *no*-preface, the speaker makes salient that she is currently considering whether to proceed to a complying or non-complying answer, as well as indexes a more global transition between these two standpoints. The resulting turn gives an appearance of a carefully considered and therefore socially cohesive response.

Keywords: interactional linguistics, emergent grammar, temporality, turn-prefacing, complying, agreeing, second pair part, preference, particle *no*, Estonian

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses one function of the untranslatable particle *no* in Estonian, focussing on complying and agreeing answers to the family of future-oriented first actions: requests, proposals, suggestions, and offers. While providing preferred responses to these actions, the speakers may indicate that they are just overcoming prior indecision or, occasionally, serious doubts. It is possible to mark in turn-initial position that the emerging answer is not a downright rejection (such as turning down an offer) but an entirely or partly complying answer that nevertheless takes some effort to arrive at. Turn-initial time-space may be employed for a display of “making up one’s mind”, either weighing matters outside the conversation or something already dealt with in the talk. Whether the answer will be an unconditionally complying one is not clear at this point, as after the particle *no* the speaker may also go on to express indecision. Even in case the answer ends up being wholeheartedly complying, the action-specific calculation may be reflected in the formatting of turn-initiation.

Attention to the individual contingencies for the recipient has been shown to play an important role in the formatting of first actions, in particular requests (Curl and Drew 2008). This paper shows orientation to contingency at the initiation of second actions. This means that answers that are basically “preferred” can display features that have been considered as belonging to “dispreferred” formats, such as initial particles. One of the basic findings in research on sequence organization is that preferred responses are simple and produced without initial delays (Pomerantz 1984, Heritage 1984: 265–280, Schegloff 2007: 58–73). This chapter discusses preferred second pair parts that are delayed by an initial particle, thus

formatted as if they were dispreferred. It argues that besides the dichotomous choice between the preferred and the dispreferred answer, there are individual contingencies to consider in committing to actions, such as made relevant in requests, proposals and suggestions. These first actions share a family resemblance as they concern the addressees or both speakers' future commitments and all make relevant a (non-)compliance. *No* in particular appears to display “transition from resistance to compliance” in responses to future-oriented directives. It is argued that the speaker can make salient that she is currently considering whether to proceed to a complying or non-complying answer, as well as index a more global transition between these two standpoints.

Previous studies on second pair parts have shown that a variety of turn-initial elements can break the contiguity between first and second pair parts. This is routinely done “for cause” (Heritage 2013, Kim and Kuroshima 2013). For example, it has been shown how a turn-initial *oh* in response to questions can mark the question as inapposite and in response to assessments claim independent or primary access (Heritage 1998, 2002). Turn-initial address terms can be deployed to index a motivation for the response that is independent of its first pair part (Clayman, 2013), *well*-prefacing of an answer can index that is not straightforward (Schegloff and Lerner 2009), and initial *I don't know* can function as an epistemic hedge (Keevallik 2011, Weatherall 2011). Along similar lines, the current paper starts from the basic tenet that if contiguity between the first and the second pair part is broken by e.g. a particle, this is done for cause. In the case of *no*-prefaces, the preference for contiguity seems to be overridden by a concern to index the contingencies associated with the commitment to be made in the second pair part.

Among second pair parts, responses to questions and assessments can be designed for achieving specific social aims, such as conveying independent epistemic access to the subject matter (Stivers 2005, Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009, Sorjonen and Hakulinen 2009, Heritage and Raymond 2012) or indicating a difference in perspective (Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2011). Producing a phrasal or a full sentence answer as a response to *wh*-question marks a difference in accepting the terms of the question (Fox and Thompson 2010). By choosing between a particle and a bare verb repeat answer in Estonian speakers can display their understanding of the function and status of the question in an action sequence (Keevallik 2010). The current analysis builds on this research tradition and adds yet another action-specific aspect to the modification of “preferred” answers. It argues that while complying with the request, proposal, suggestion or offer, the speakers can nevertheless indicate that they have been resisting, that they are just coming to terms with the resistance. Perhaps paradoxically, instead of making the answer dispreferred, the preface actually strengthens its status as socially cohesive, as the decision is shown to be based on careful consideration. In fact, the particle *no* could also be seen as possessing some modal connotations in this position, expressing a strong epistemic and deontic stance (this meaning is usually referred to as “emphasis” or “showing attitude” in the dictionaries, e.g. EKSS).

To start with a case in point, *no* is regularly used after segments of convincing, as shown in example (1). Grown-up daughter L has called her mother E because she needs some books from her place. E has said that she has a bad cold, and in lines (1–2) she invites L to come by the next day. After the daughter’s extended account for why she needs the books on the very same day, the mother agrees to the visit with a *no*-prefaced answer in line (9). The particle as well as the repeated lexical items from the first action are boldfaced.

(1)¹

- 1 E: neid sa saad, aga tule siis
these-PAR you get-2SG but come.IMP.2SG then
'You can have them but come tomorrow,'
- 2 näiteks homme.
example-TRA tomorrow
'for example.'
- 3 L: jah, .hh ma lihsalt mõtlen nüüd seda et,
yeah I simply think-1SG now this-PAR that
'Yeah, .hh I am simply thinking that'
- 4 mai tea et, mul on vaja kolmapävaks
I-NEG know that I-ADS be.3SG necessary Wednesday-TRA
'I dunno, I have to be ready with the blueprints'
- 5 valmis teha need kava[ndid.] ma pean
ready make.INF these blueprint-PL I must-1SG
'by Wednesday. I have to'
- 6 E: [aa .hh]
'Oh'
- 7 L: nende järgi tegema, et äkki ma tulen
these.GEN after do-SUP that maybe I come-1SG
'use them ((the books)) as samples. May I come'
- 8 täna õhtu.

¹ Transcription conventions can be found at the end of the chapter.

today evening

'tonight.'

9 E: no t:ule täna õhtul, ma i- panen
PRT come.IMP.2SG today evening-ADS I put-1SG
'No come tonight, I'll put'

10 maski ette.
mask.GEN on
'a mask on.' ((to prevent contamination))

This example shows the transformation of E's position from postponing the visit to the next day (lines 1–2) to agreeing to the visit the very same day (lines 9–10) as a response to L's proposal (lines 7–8). The turn-initial *no* in this context indexes the mother's revised position: acquiescence to her daughter's needs. She complies by repeating word-by-word the entire clause that was first produced by her persistent daughter: *no + tule täna õhtul* 'no + come tonight'. In fact, skipping the preface would have resulted in an ungrammatical answer in this sequential position after negotiation. For native speakers, this is the correct language pattern that is fitted to this particular function of complying after resistance. A counterpart in English in this particular case would be 'alright then'.

By juxtaposing cases with and without the turn-initial particle *no* in responses to future-oriented directives in Estonian, the current analysis aims to show that the particle is deployed to indicate transition from indecision, resistance or doubt because of high cost in terms of time, money, risk, or moral reputation. Since it has been demonstrated that the general format of the response carries relevant social-interactional meaning, such as marking an independent stance (Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009), revealing responsibilities, or sequential matters of

profiling actions (Keevallik 2010), the current analysis will focus on comparisons between turns that are structurally similar, with and without the preface. It will look separately at the answers that repeat the prior or not, and that are either phrasal or clausal. We will start by looking at responsive turns that repeat material from the prior turn, then move to cases where no material is reused, and finally we will consider non-complying answers that are never prefaced with *no*. In the core analysis the paper will thus target the following structures, moving from more to less repeated materials in the response:

- full repeat compliances (as illustrated in 1)
- verb-repeat compliances
- modified repeat compliances
- independently formulated compliances

These four answer formats are central structures in complying, agreeing, and endorsing in Estonian. The speaker can either export all of its materials from the first action or not, she can modify the materials by e.g. switching modality, or she can build the answer with new materials. In addition, the answer can be built by repeating the verb from the first action, a typological feature of Estonian and the related Finnish language (Hakulinen 2001, Keevallik 2009a, 2010).

Before moving to the analysis, let us briefly consider the various forms and functions of the focus item. The particle *no* and its occasional variants *noo* and *noh* have been notoriously difficult to analyze because they occur in such a multitude of positions and functions (e.g. EKSS, Hennoste 2000: 1802–1803, 2001: 189–190, Keevallik, 2013, in press). Each of the variants has its own home position but is occasionally replaceable by other variants (e.g. turn-

initial *no* can occasionally be lengthened into *noo* that is the stand-alone variant). When it comes to turn-initial use, *no* has been claimed to preface disagreeing, hesitant and denying turns, i.e. dispreferred responses; but also to occur in agreeing turns indicating that the prior was self-evident (Hennoste 2000: 1802–1803). This reflects the understudied modal features of the particle. In a recent overview it was argued that in second assessments, answers to questions, and compliances, the preface accomplishes a marked transition in a sequence-sensitive manner (Keevallik, in press). The current analysis considers one of those specific sequential action positions and thereby hopefully begins to elucidate, one sequential position at a time, how the particle relates to local contingencies. As there is often no adequate counterpart in English – ‘alright then’ and ‘well’ fit occasionally – the particle will not be translated in the excerpts.

2. The data

The data come from phone calls as well as face-to-face settings. The telephone call corpus consists of 364 calls of two types: telemarketing calls from a daily newspaper and everyday calls between family members, friends, and colleagues. The corpus includes more than eleven hours of conversation and more than 110,000 words. This is the primary database of the study. Additionally, examples have been used from video recordings of dinner preparations (4 hours), and from the Tartu corpus of Spoken Estonian (<http://www.cl.ut.ee/>), which includes shorter excerpts of talk from a wide variety of situations. Besides everyday phone calls and events it includes calls to a travel agent, auto repair shop and an information line. The Tartu corpus is constantly growing and the version used for this study includes about 300,000 words and thirty hours of talk. Approximately one third of the data come from institutional settings.

The data collection has followed the ethical guidelines, including informed consent, and the transcripts have been anonymized.

3. No-preface in full repeat compliances

As was already shown in example (1), *no*-preface can be used to initiate answers that repeat a major part of the prior turn, the directive first action, and merely switch person deixis. The speaker thereby accomplishes a response that is syntactically an independent claim, expressing a high degree of commitment to the future action. In example (1) the mother produced a complying turn that could almost function as an independent invitation, if it was not for the preface that indicated her change-of-mind. In contrast, in (2) the full repeat complying turn is formatted without the preface. The topic of the talk in this excerpt is attending a church choir. E has called to inform the conductor R that she cannot attend the rehearsals for a while. In lines (1,3) she asks R to inform another person about that.

(2)

1 E: ahah, (0.3) [ütle Askole] ka. et ma=
right tell.IMP.2SG NAME-ALL too that I
'Right. (0.3) Tell Asko too that I'

2 R: [no tore et sa (üldse-)]
 PRT great that you at.all
 'No it's great that you-'

3 E: =ei saand. nii[modi.]
 NEG can-PPT like.this
 'couldn't (do) like this.'

4 R: [ma üt]len - (0.4)
 I tell-1SG
 'I('ll) tell -' (0.4)

5 ma ütlen Askole ka.
 I tell-1SG NAME-ALL too
 'I('ll) tell Asko too.'

6 E: muidu ta arvab h <@ mai tea mis. @> heh=
 otherwise he think-3SG I-NEG know what
 'Otherwise he thinks I dunno what.'

All the words in the complying turn (lines 4–5) have been reused from the request, in the first as well as the second instantiation of the compliance. (The repetition seems to be done due to overlap.) R does not add any content to the compliance or modify it. The full clause in the repeated version expresses independent agency and volition and thereby a high degree of deontic commitment in the future. In contrast to (1), however, there is no *no*-preface in the complying turn here.

It is of course hard to find examples in real life that would be comparable to the very last detail in regard to mutual rights of the participants, personal contingencies, type of action, and the like. It may be the case that R is for some reason more obliged to report to Asko than the mother in (1) is obliged to let her daughter come by her house and potentially catch an infection. Thus, there may be a higher degree of entitlement that is reflected in the *no*-prefaced answer. Furthermore, it takes less of an effort to tell something to somebody than to let a person come and visit at one's home, so the personal contingencies are different. The fact

that the response in (2) is formatted without *no* may indicate that in this case the imposition is of a lesser degree. In terms of action, example (2) presents a request as the first action while (1) borders on self-invitation. Nevertheless, both consider favors in the future that are to be accomplished by the addressees. For whatever reason, the lack of the preface in the complying answer contributes to the sense that there is no contingencies to consider when it comes to the speaker's commitment to the future action in (2), as opposed to (1) where a number of contingencies apply. Most importantly, the *no*-compliance was preceded by a longer back-and-forth negotiation on the very same issue, which is reflected in the “now complying” flavor of the *no*-prefaced response.

4. No-preface in verb-repeat compliances

Let us now consider somewhat less elaborate answers. In many languages of the world, among them Estonian, a second pair part can be accomplished with a verb repeat² instead of a particle (Sadock and Zwicky 1985: 189–191, Jones 1999: 22–36, König and Siemund 2007: 320–321, Sorjonen 1996, 2001a, Hakulinen 2001, Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009, 2011, Keevallik 2010). In case the language offers a choice between a verb repeat and a particle answer, there tends to be some division of labor between the two. More generally, phrasal and clausal repeat responses have been shown to imply epistemic and deontic independence in contrast with particles in at least English, Swedish and Japanese (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1987, Heritage and Raymond 2012, Hayano 2013, Linström (frth.)). For Estonian, as well as the closely related Finnish language, it has been shown that particles and verb repeats accomplish somewhat differing social and interactional aims. While an Estonian particle (such as *mhmh*

² These typologically specified responses consist of a mere verb with relevant person, mood, and tense suffixes.

‘uhuh’ or *jaa/jah* ‘yeah’) completely assents to the conditions and terms of the first pair part, a verb repeat response slightly shifts the epistemic and deontic balance between the parties. It can furthermore convey an understanding that the action at hand is central in the evolving sequence (Keevallik 2010). In Finnish a verb repeat response can indicate independent access to, and opinion of, the assessed object (Sorjonen and Hakulinen 2009), independent epistemic stance (Sorjonen 1996), or treat the polar interrogative as having sought an affirmative rather than confirming answer (Sorjonen 2001b ch.4). By expressing an independent proposition, a verb repeat also implies stronger agency (Keevallik 2009a), which is highly significant when it comes to complying. By repeating the verb the speaker makes explicit his/her own agency and volition, as opposed to a mere *mhmh* ‘uhuh’ or *jaa/jah* ‘yeah’ which do not. In comparison with full clause repetitions shown in (1,2) above, however, the deontic force of verb repeat answers is slightly weaker, as the details of the future action remain unexpressed, elliptically relying on the prior speaker in that regard. At the same time, verb repeats constitute fully complying answers. Extracts (3) and (4) provide cases in point with and without the *no*-preface respectively.

(3)

- 1 E: [no aga] vaataks seda asja s
PRT but look-COND this-PAR thing.PAR then
‘No but let’s take a look at this stuff all together’
- 2 laupäeval kõike koos ma siis e .h
Saturday-ADS all.PAR together I then
‘on Saturday then, I -’
- 3 C: no v:aatame,
PRT look-1PL

'No let's take a look/we look.'

4 E: vaatame. (.) teeme niimodi.
look-1PL do-1PL like.that
'Let's take a look/we look. (.) We'll do that/okay then.'

(4)

1 P: [noh,] tervita empsu.
PRT greet.IMP.2SG mom.PAR
'Noh send my regards to mom'

2 S: tervitan.
greet-1SG
'I will.'

3 P: noh, (.) tšau.
'Noh (.) bye'

The speakers in (3,4) have a choice either to use the *no*-preface or not in the answers. Both cases are taken from closing parts of the phone calls but feature different concerns: in (3) a chairman agrees to a controversial meeting and in (4) a sister agrees to pass on the regards to her mother. Even though both answers concern future actions, there is a clear difference between examples (3) and (4). While the request in (4) concerns an action with low contingency for S, the one in (3) is considerably more demanding. C has to show up on Saturday and look at the central heating system of the apartment block. Actually, as the chair of the house committee, he is obliged to do that. But more importantly for the answer format, the conversation thus far has been rather confrontational. E has called the chairman to

complain about the temperature in the building. She has also suggested another person who could take on the responsibility of regulating the temperature, while C has argued that it cannot be improved. He has been defending his actions and the efforts of the construction workers who are currently working on the heating system. Thus, E's suggestion in lines (1–2) in example (3) is definitely sensitive: regardless of the chairman's objections that nothing can be done about the indoor climate, E proposes a meeting with him and another person. The chairman complies but also displays his transition from resistance to compliance with the *no*-preface. Indeed, his commitment to show up on Saturday still does not imply that he now believes that any improvement is possible or necessary. He merely agrees to meet and by using the verb repeat establishes himself as an independent agent who takes deontic control over his future. E's line (4) further aims at consolidating the chairman's commitment to come, orienting towards the transitional nature of his *no*-prefaced response (as well as moving to the closure of the call where this kind of repetition of an achieved deal is common).

As to the action and sequence types, the contrast is again quite clear. In (4) the request concerns a small conventional favor that does not even have to be carried out. This can also be a routine matter dealt with at the end of any phone call. In contrast, in (3) the future action is a major one, involving a physical meeting at a set time, which is furthermore potentially face-threatening to the complying speaker whose capability as the chair may be called into question. The preface thus seems to be used in responses that have high contingency for the current speakers, a pattern that holds for the entire dataset. There may have been a negotiation of the issue before and resistance to solutions offered. It therefore starts to become clear that *no* has a flavor of “acquiescence” in these ultimately preferred answers. In summary, the *no*-preface signals a transition from resistance and the verb repeat expresses deontic commitment to the future action, i.e. independent compliance. This complex answer furthermore constitutes

the only grammatical way of accomplishing a preferred action in the sequential context after explicit resistance.

When it comes to repeat answers more generally, it has been argued that repetition after questions “confirms” rather than simply “affirms” the proposition raised by the questioner, and by doing so, it asserts the respondent’s epistemic and social entitlement (Schegloff 1996, Raymond 2003, Stivers 2005, Heritage and Raymond 2012). These studies, however, are based on clausal repeats while in Estonian the subject pronoun is often not repeated, which may lead to a different distribution of functions across the responsive formats, or even a difference in the social dimensions attended to when choosing between the alternatives. Estonian displays a more fine-grained range of answer choices, from assenting particles such as *mhmh* ‘uhuh’ and *jaa/jah* ‘yeah’ to verb repeats (where the agent can be expressed in the person suffix) to full clause repeats. A verb repeat answer seems to indicate independent agency and commitment but assents unconditionally like the particles, while full clause repeats indicate independence as well as more strongly confirm the actions. They nevertheless all accept the terms in which the future action has been proposed in choosing to repeat shorter or longer segments of the exact formulation. We will now move on to cases where the speaker of the second turn instead re-formulates the terms of the first action.

5. No-preface in modified repeat compliances

While repeating segments of the first pair part, as is common in responses, the speaker can also modify its wording by adding details, omitting or replacing them. The independent volition of the responder is thereby underlined and the compliance ends up being more of an independent statement. A modified repeat diminishes the asymmetry established in the first

action by the requester/proposer/suggester/instructor who can impose conditions, as opposed to the respondent who is expected to go along with them. In extract (5) M has just informed her sister E that she will visit their father on some important occasion, most likely his birthday. She has also mentioned that a person called Heinike has to be called in connection to the visit. E has reacted to this with scepticism. After talking about the possible participation of other sisters in the visit, M returns to the topic of calling Heinike (in line 1). E first agrees minimally (line 5) but then provides a full-clause endorsement prefaced by *no* (in line 8).

(5)

- 1 M: aga: m (.) aga Heinikesele ma elistan ikkagi.
 but but NAME-ALL I call-1SG anyway
 'But (.) but I (will) call Heinike anyway'
- 2 sest et e:t noh, (0.3) .h tema teab kindlasti
 because PRT she know-3SG sure
 'because (0.3) .h she knows for sure whether dad'
- 3 kas isa tuleb. sest isa ju kutsuks
 QUES dad come-3SG because dad PRT invite-COND
 'is coming (to town) because in that case he would'
- 4 ta s enda asemele.
 her himself.GEN instead
 'invite her to replace him.'
- 5 E: mhmh
 'mm'
- 6 (0.8)

7 M: vot,
'Yeah/right'

8 E: no elista igaks juks. sa oled tööl
PRT call.IMP.2SG every-TRA case-TRA you be-1SG work-ADS
'**No** call just in case. You're at work'

9
präegu (ilmselt onju).
now likely right
'at the moment, right.'

10 M: jaa.
'Yeah,'

11 E: (ahah)
'Okay.'

12 M: a et võtaks siis kindlalt plaani vä.
PRT take-COND then for.sure plan.ILL or
'So (shall) we have (it) as a plan?'

13 E: no võtame siis plaani.
PRT take-1PL then plan.ILL
'**No** let's have (it) as a plan.'

14 M: jah.
'Yeah'

In her endorsement of the call, E adds the *igaks juks* ‘just in case’ which shows scepticism towards the necessity of calling and asking Heinike. She also prefaces her turn with *no*, which reflects her change-of-mind, her just beginning to accept her sister’s plan. Furthermore, the endorsement comes very late in the sequence, after a considerable pause in line (6) and a re-completion with *vot*, approx. ‘see that/there’ (Keevallik 2009b: 43–48). All of this reinforces the hearing of E’s endorsement as emerging from resistance.

Importantly, the personal contingencies for E cannot be too high in this case, as she does not have to do anything apart from eventually joining in the visit (unless there is some additional family matter that is not accessible to us). So the preface is indeed applied for marking the transition from resistance and does not attend to other contingencies, such as future personal effort. In the ensuing sequence, when M asks for final commitment to the entire visit plan in line (12), E again prefaces her compliance with *no* (line 13). In both of her answers in lines (8) and (13) E provides a preferred answer but shows that she is at the same time making a transition from earlier resistance. The compliance in (13) is similarly modified, as E omits the *kindlalt* ‘for sure’ and that omission in fact weakens the strength of her commitment in relation to the one M asked for.³ She thereby subtly displays her continued reservations in regard to the plan. As it happens, two different future actions are concerned here. Going along with a call to someone related to the father is not the same as going along with the entire plan of visiting the father. Prefacing compliances with *no* is a subtle way of showing all the way that the speaker is just making a transition to accepting future plans suggested by the other.

³ Since *no* does not weaken the commitment and only marks the transition to a decision, an adverb marking epistemic certainty could easily co-occur with the *no*-preface.

In contrast, in extract (6) a modified compliance is carried out without any preface. The speakers are here discussing an improvement of H's computer. V offers to come by with some cables in line (1). Without responding, H counters with an alternative proposal to 'fix it over the internet'. V complies with the proposal in line (5) by reproducing the whole clause as well as adding a couple of modifications. He formats his response by stating that this will be merely an initial attempt (*kõigepealt* 'to start with') and that it is still just an option (*võib* 'could'). By these adjustments he claims authority over the decision and independent agency, formulating himself as the one who decides. At the same time, the answer does not display any attention to personal contingencies or change-of-mind. In case the answer had been formatted with a *no*-preface, these would have been the connotations.

(6)

- 1 V: ma võin mõlemad ka võtta.
 I can-1SG both-PL too take.INF
 'I can take both.'
- 2 (0.5)
- 3 H: mt või proovime üle võrgu.
 or try-1PL over internet.GEN
 'mt Or shall we try over the internet.'
- 4 (0.5)
- 5 V: võib üle võrgu kõigepealt proovida.
 can-3SG over net.GEN to.start.with try-INF
 '(We) can try over the net to start with.'

6 H: mhmh
 'Mm'

What the above two examples (5) and (6) show is that even in modified compliances that express a higher degree of independent judgement, the *no* can display a transition from resistance to compliance. Schematically this can be represented as follows:

A: (renewed) future-oriented first action

B: *no* (displaying (re-)consideration) + compliance/agreement/endorsement

By reusing at least some formulations from the first pair part the respondents formally tie their responses to prior actions. We will now look at how this very same *no*-prefacing pattern emerges in more independently formulated answers.

6. No-prefacing in independently formulated second pair parts

Compliances that are formulated without reusing the lexical materials from the first pair parts are still responsive actions but are at the same time similar to initiating ones, and they certainly do not entirely subscribe to the terms of the first action. In extract (7) the subject of discussion is E's faking of A's signature on a joint Christmas card because E and A will not necessarily be meeting each other in the near future. Signing a card is of course an individual obligation, and faking someone's signature has moral implications. In line 1 E expresses doubts that she would be able to imitate A's 'heavy handwriting', after which A suggests that she write in capital letters. After laughter E utters the non-committing *ma vaatan* 'I'll see (what I can do)', prefaced by *no*. In her turn in line (5) she is formally assenting, or at least

showing that she will not continue to argue against the plan. In the next line A initiates a new topic of grooming a dog, referred to as 'the guy'.

(7)

1 E: [ku]da ma s teen seda sinu rasket kä:tt.=
how I do-1SG this-PAR your heavy-PAR hand.PAR
'How can I do your heavy handwriting.'

2 A: =no aga pane:: trükitähtedega.
PRT but put.IMP.2SG capital.letters-KOM
'No use capital letters.'

3 E: assoo, heheheheheh h
'Right'

4 A: (X) seda ka teha.
this-PAR too do.INF
'(You could) do that.'

5 E: .h n(h)o .h no ma v:- vaa[tan] -
PRT PRT I see-1SG
'**.h No .h No** I'll see - '

6 A: [poiss] tahab lihtsalt ku-
guy need-3SG simply
'The guy simply needs'

7 niisugust noh k- korrastamist.
such-PAR PRT brushing-PAR
'some *noh* brushing up.'

The independent response format in line (5) clearly establishes the speaker as an agent with her own volition. The compliance is furthermore not clear and leaves an option for further discussion. Nevertheless, as with previous answer formats, we see a regularity here: a partial compliance after prior resistance is prefaced by *no*. The example also reveals a further affordance of turn-initial *no*: since it can be repeated, it can be used to delay the turn. But once the speaker has initiated with *no*, it is clear that the proposal will not be bluntly rejected. Instead, it gives the flavor of the speaker considering it.

In fact, a number of *no*-prefaced answers in the current data leave the compliance itself somewhat open. The phrase *ma vaatan* ‘I’ll see (what I can do)’ in example (7) is not fully complying (cf. verb or clausal repeats above). Among other things, the statement *mai tea* ‘I don’t know’ can be used for ostensibly claiming no knowledge but actually disaligning with the prior action, such as a request (as demonstrated in Keevallik 2011: 201–205). Example (8) shows a case of a proposal that receives a *mai tea*-response. It is taken from a lengthy sequence where H has been trying to get V to borrow his father’s car and give H and his girlfriend a lift to a nearby town. During the earlier parts of the call V has asked questions about the details. In line (1) H repeats his request.

(8)

- 1 H: /---/ aga no läheks käiks Sakus korra.
 but PRT go-COND go-COND NAME-INS once.GEN
 ‘But *no* let(’s) drive to Saku and back.’
- 2 V: no mai tea nüüd kohe.
 PRT I-NEG know now at.once
 ‘**No** I don’t know right now /I’m not sure.’

3 H: no aga äkki: äkki ma elistan sulle siis
PRT but maybe maybe I call-1SG you-ALL then
'No but maybe I ('ll) call you back'

4 natukse aja pärast tagasi kui: õde
little.GEN time.GEN after back when sister
'in a short while when (your) sister'

5 on ära toodud.
be.3SG PRT bring-IMS.PPT
'has been brought home.'

V's response in line (2) is neither directly complying nor non-complying. Even though *mai tea*-responses often function as dispreferred ones (Keevallik 2011), H chooses to treat it as leaving open the possibility of compliance, as he pushes on with his idea in lines (3–5), threatening to renew the request in the near future. Again, the *no*-preface indicates prior resistance, even though in this case the entire turn can be heard as still partly resisting (mostly because of the exact phrasing, 'I'm not sure') while at the same time suggesting the possibility of making a transition to compliance. The speaker defines himself as being in the process of making up his mind and in the end, V actually gives H a lift. In general, when a response is formulated independently of the first action, the range of actions accomplished is much broader than in repeat responses, and every case has to be examined for its precise lexical content.

Extract (9) shows a case where a complying response to a high-contingency request amounts to an independently formulated promise. Characteristically, there is no *no*-preface in the turn. The talk is about customs documentation concerning the import of a computer. This seems to

be of equal interest for the representative of the importing company A and the client E. The request by A in line (1) to submit the paperwork implies considerable trouble for the client who has to make the trip to A's office. The conditional format of the request *kui on nüd võimalik...* 'if it would be possible...' orients to this high level of contingency, and possibly low entitlement by the official himself. E's compliance is placed relatively early in relation to the upcoming transition relevance place and also formatted as an independent promise. E takes the responsibility for physically bringing the papers, which the request did not suggest. Furthermore, it offers to bring *kõik* 'everything' at the soonest possible moment (*hommepäev* 'tomorrow'), and the emphatic 'everything' is positioned first in the clause. There are thus several components in this turn that suggest eagerness beyond what was asked.

(9)

- 1 A: mmhmh mts .h no aga: (0.3) tähendab kui: on
uhuh PRT but PRT if be:3SG
'Uhuh, no but (0.3) I mean if (it) would'
- 2 nüd võimalik ka need paberid ütleme meieni
PRT possible also these paper-PL PRT we-TER
'nüd be possible to make available the papers'
- 3 toime[tada (mis tei-)]
arrange-INF that
'for us that-'
- 4 E: [u kõik] võin tuua hommepäev.
um everything can-1SG bring-INF tomorrow.day
'Um I can bring everything tomorrow.'

5 A: oleks küll väga kena. sest et noh,
 be-COND PRT very nice because PRT
 ' (That) would be very nice indeed. because *noh*,

In short, even in the case of responses in (7–9) that do not repeat any segment of the first pair part, the answers with and without *no*-preface are functionally dissimilar: while the one without *no* amounts to an eager compliance at the earliest possible moment, the ones with *no* are used after negotiation and continue into evasive answers. It is, however, important to note that the *no*-prefaced answers do not inevitably lead to an ultimate non-compliance, i.e. they are not regular delay segments in constructing dispreferred answers. They may accomplish a spate of time between the first action and the final decision, creating a timeslot for making up one's mind. While the *no*-preface is a minimal way of indicating this process, the more extensive evasive formats can considerably prolong the entire persuasion sequence.

7. Non-compliances and the lack of no-preface

When there has been no prior discussion of and resistance to the action mentioned in the first pair part, the *no*-preface cannot be used even in non-complying answers. Even though *no* has been described in earlier sources as a mitigator of dispreferred answers in Estonian (Hennoste 2000: 1802) as well as in the closely related Finnish language (Raevaara 1989), the current data do not support these claims for Estonian. Non-complying answers to offers, requests and proposals in the current data are formatted as classical dispreferred answers and without *no*. Two cases follow. In example (10) L proposes that her friend can come and watch TV at her place. P turns down the proposal with a reduplicated turn-initial negation word. There is no *no*-preface and the turn is completed by an account, which is a typical feature of a dispreferred answer format (Heritage 1984: 269–273). In (11) the topic of the talk is an

amateur Christmas play directed by the caller E, who in this excerpt asks T for a favor of taking a role in the play the very next day. The non-compliance in (11) displays several features of a dispreferred answer format: a delay (line 6), repair initiation (line 7), an account (lines 9,11), but there is no *no*-preface.

(10)

1 L: et kui sa tahad vaadata sis noh- (.) sa
PRT if you.2SG want-2SG watch-INF then PRT you
'If you want to see (it) then *noh* (.) you can'

2 võid tegelikult minu juures ka [(olla).]
can-2SG actually I.GEN at too be-INF
'actually be at my place.'

3 P: [ei: ei,] kamoona.
no no come.on
'No no, come on.'

4 ma olen nii väsin.
I be-1SG so tired
'I am so tired.'

5 L <@ aa, hh @>
'Oh'

6 P: aga aitäh ikkagi.
'But thanks anyway.'

(11)

1 E: .hh igastahes ee v .h mul juhtus selline::
 anyway I-ADS happen-PST.3SG such
 '.hh Anyway .h the strange thing that happened'

2 imelik lugu, et mul ei ole homme prohvetit.
 strange thing that I-ADS NEG be tomorrow prophet-PAR
 'is that I don't have a prophet tomorrow.'

3 (0.9)

4 E: et juhul kui sa: saaksid tulla näiteks
 PRT case-ADS if you can-COND-2SG come.INF example-TRA
 'So for example if you could come tomorrow and'

5 homme olla prohvet.
 tomorrow be.INF prophet
 'be a prophet.'

6 (1.1)

7 T: omme.
 'Tomorrow.'

8 E: jah,
 'Yeah,'

9 T: ma tõesti ei saa.
 I really NEG can
 'I really can't.'

10 E: aa.=

'oh'

11 T: =sest mul on kibe: (.) kibe e asjaajamine.
 because I-ADS be.3SG urgent urgent business
 'because I have very (.) very urgent business.'

12 E: aa no siis muidugi.
 oh PRT then of.course
 'Oh, *no* of course.'

The clear non-compliances are never prefaced with *no* in the data, neither in case of polite proposals that are turned down (10), nor in refusals to help out (11). There is no display of a consideration period and transition (“change-of-mind”) in these answers. One conclusion of the above analysis is thus that the function of *no* is not to preface dispreferred answers in their most canonical form: not granting requests and turning down proposals and suggestions. Instead, through the various response formats discussed above, *no*-prefaces seem to index current transition from resistance to compliance, and consideration of the personal contingencies for the speaker.

8. Conclusion

This paper argued that the particle *no* prefaced preferred second actions that are associated with high contingency for the concerned parties, or are framed as such. Examples of high contingency include receiving a guest, attending a potentially unpleasant meeting, and faking a signature. The *no*-prefacing pattern is valid across response types, from partial to full repeats and independently formatted responses which reflect other social dimensions of talk-in-interaction, such as independent agency, commitment, and degree of assent/confirmation.

One of the main conclusions was that *no* is not used as a preface to straightforward complying or dispreferred answers, where speakers do not indicate a change-of-mind. Instead, *no* is a device of showing that the speaker is currently making a transition to compliance after resistance, often after explicit negotiations. In addition to earlier research on the social significance of entitlement and contingency (Lindström 2005, Curl and Drew 2008), the current paper proposes another dimension that affects the linguistic format of second actions – making a transfer from resistance to compliance, a change-of-mind. This is an action-specific function of the *no*-preface, as resistance is characteristic of responses to proposals, suggestions and requests, all of which concern actions to be carried out in the future. As a result of this interactional practice, the preface actually strengthens the second action, since it is formatted as a result of a careful thought process and consideration. This “emphasizing” connotation of *no* that is also registered in the dictionaries (e.g. EKSS) seems to arise from the interaction trajectories of persuasion and resistance, resulting in the strong modal stance in some of the emerging actions with the format *no* + compliance/agreement/endorsement.

The results of this study constitute yet another demonstration of how a linguistic pattern is adapted to a specific social action. The continuation in the *no*-prefaced turn conveys whether the compliance is unproblematic or conditional, as well as the deontic aspects of this action. The particle itself merely indicates a personal albeit interactionally triggered transition from the state of indecision, resistance, or competing options to possible compliance, thereby ultimately constituting integrity of the speaker across time. At the moment when *no* is uttered, the recipient is alerted to the fact that the current speaker is reconsidering the contingencies for his/her own life, and possibly also the lives of other involved parties (such as the daughter’s risk of becoming contaminated). The transition may merely be marked by the

particle itself or be extended by other evasive strategies, such as pauses or phrases (e.g. ‘I’m not sure’). The particle thus organizes actions across longer segments of conversation and thereby interactional time. It indexes the fact that the current speaker, even though fully complying now, is coming from a history of resistance and considering contingencies for the future.

We have observed regularities in *no*-prefaced answers as compared to similarly formatted answers without the preface. As to the particle *no* itself, it is an extremely frequent word in Estonian and occurs in many sequential and turn-positions. By delimiting the sequential position and action context of *no* in the current study, we have been able to see a regularity in its deployment, which appears to be in the social-interactional rather than the grammatical domain. *No* does not participate in syntax as a regular conjunction or adverb. Even though it is too early to try to carve out the overall function of *no*, *no*-preface can apparently be used to display that the speaker in some sense assents to another. It can specifically be used after periods of negotiation and resistance. The Estonian *no*-preface shows that the speaker is currently transforming her standpoint of prior resistance, reconsidering the contingencies of the proposed action and making up her mind to align with the other. It thus functions as a core mechanism of sociality.

Transcription conventions

<u>underlining</u>	– emphasis
-	– truncation

[]	– overlaps; timing of embodied action
=	– latching of turns
(0.5)	– pause length in tenths of a second
(.)	– micropause
:	– lengthening of a sound
<@>	– laughing quality
.h	– breathing in
(m)h	– breathing out
◦	– low volume
boldface	– the focused particle and repeated materials in the excerpt
.	– pitch fall at the end of an intonation unit
?	– pitch rise at the end of an intonation unit
,	– level pitch at the end of an intonation unit
-	– unfinished intonation unit
↑	– sharp rise in tone
(not in Estonian)	– the part is not expressed in the Estonian version
(X)	– unhearable syllable

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	– person
ADS	– adessive
ALL	– allative

COND	– conditional
GEN	– genitive
ILL	– illative
IMP	– imperative
IMS	– impersonal
INF	– infinitive
INS	– inessive
KOM	– komitative
NAME	– name
NEG	– negation
PAR	– partitive
PL	– plural
PPT	– past participle
PRT	– particle
PST	– past
QUES	– question particle
SG	– singular
SUP	– supinum
TER	– teminative
TRA	– translative

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