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"You like that" – A conversation analytic investigation of epistemics in knowledge requesting sequences in the verbal grammar of sexual intercourse
Kristina Duun
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Redaktionel kommentar

I dette nummer af *Skrifter om Samtalegrammatik* undersøger Kristina Duun interaktion i en hidtil uudforsket kontekst, nemlig mellem par, der har samleje. De fleste undersøgelser af den verbale kommunikation mellem seksualpartnere bunder i genfortællinger af egne oplevelser. Men Kristina Duun tilbyder i denne artikel et sjældent indblik i den interaktion, som foregår i naturlige optagelser af par, som har sex. Til trods for at konversationsanalytikere igennem tiden har forsøgt at definere de interaktionelle normer, som gælder på tværs af alle mulige kontekster, mennesket befinder sig i i sin hverdag, har ingen før stillet skarpt på den verbale interaktion, som kan forekomme under sex. Kristina Duun tager med denne artikel de første spæde skridt mod en forståelse af de interaktionelle normer, som gælder i netop denne kontekst.

Med udgangspunkt i tre sexoptagelser identificerer forfatteren en handling, som tilsyneladende afviger fra de normer, vi kender fra 'almindelig' hverdagsinteraktion; spørgsmålet. Dét, der ligner anmodninger om information, og som vi typisk forbinder med en uvidende spørger og en mere vidende modtager, har nemlig vist sig at involvere særprægede vidensforhold (*epistemics*) i denne kontekst.

Foruden klassiske spørgsmål-svar-sekvenser beskriver forfatteren spørgsmål, som tilsyneladende ikke er designet til at højne spørgers vidensadgang, idet spørger allerede kender svarene. Dette viser Kristina Duun igennem næranalyser af dataeksempler. Denne indsigt skaber nye perspektiver på kendt-svar-spørgsmål (*known-answer questions*), som vi kender fra andre kontekster, såsom lærer-elev-interaktion og forælder-barn-interaktion. Forfatteren kommer endda med forslag til, hvilken funktion disse kendt-svar-spørgsmål tjener i en seksuel kontekst.

Artiklen er oprindeligt skrevet som et bachelorprojekt, og den bliver nu tilgængelig for et større publikum. Udgivelsen peger desuden på nødvendigheden af flere konversationsanalytiske undersøgelser i seksuelle kontekster, idet særprægede interaktionelle normer har vist sig at være på spil her.

Denne redaktionelle kommentar er skrevet af Christina Emborg.

Abstract

Samlejet som kommunikationssituation er et underudforsket emne, og denne opgave skal derfor ses som et deskriptivt bidrag til indblik i, hvordan samtale under samleje kan foregå.

Undersøgelsen er foretaget med en konversationsanalytisk tilgang, hvor empiri i form af video- og audiomateriale af naturligt forekommende samtale under samleje danner fundament for analyse. Den metodiske tilgang er valgt, fordi denne muliggør indsigt i menneskelig ageren på et mere eller mindre naturligt grundlag, hvor fokus ligger på faktiske, påviselige handlingsmønstre.

Opgaven indeholder en kollektionsbaseret analyse af sekvenser indledt af vidensanmodninger og undersøger samtaledeltagernes orienteringer mod vidensforhold (*epistemics*) i udformning og behandling af vidensanmodende handlinger under samleje. Datamaterialet er transskriberet og analyseret, således at samtaledeltagernes eksplicitte orienteringer danner udgangspunkt for det valgte fokus, idet der i data fandtes orienteringer mod *epistemics*, der afviger fra hverdagens samtalegrammatik.

Analysen tager udgangspunkt i syv udvalgte vidensanmodningssekvenser, hvoraf tre udgør eksempler på klassisk vidensudveksling grundet ulighed i adgangen til viden. De resterende fire sekvenser afviger fra normen, idet de tager form som informationsanmodninger, men ikke umiddelbart udspringer af uligevægtig adgang til viden. Data indikerer, at spørgende turdesign orienteres mod på klassisk vis af modtageren, selvom vidensforholdene for den diskursive praksis afviger, idet spørgeren kender svaret.

Analyserne fører til en diskussion af andre konteksters normative brug af såkaldte kendt-svar spørgsmål og konkluderer, at brugen inden for seksuel kontekst adskiller sig herfra ved hovedsageligt at anmode om dispræfererede handlinger og/eller viden inden for en seksuel-kropslig semantisk kategori, hvilket normalvis opfattes socialt udfordrende.

Det foreslås at foretage undersøgelsen baseret på en større kollektion, idet repræsentativiteten skal højnes for at validere fænomenerne som potentielle kontekstuelle normer.

"You like that" – A conversation analytic investigation of epistemics in knowledge requesting sequences in the verbal grammar of sexual intercourse

by Kristina Duun

1 Introduction

Regarding sexual intercourse, it is a rather common view that verbal speech is perceived as subordinate communication and that body language has the starring role in successfully executing the psycho-biological act of having sex (e.g. Henriksen 2012).

Currently, minimal linguistic research has been done investigating verbal language and its role during sexual intercourse, which is noteworthy considering our examination of and knowledge on classical everyday talk-in-interaction (ETI). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to contribute to knowledge about the verbal grammar of sexual intercourse by exploring and describing how people use verbal language during that specific, collaborative action.

Human beings are dialogical creatures. By studying conversation, common communicative strategies and patterns can be found, providing a valuable insight into how we practice, reproduce and thereby maintain social norms, cf. Harvey Sacks' notion of doing 'being ordinary' (Sacks 1984), that is, how we go about being beings by orienting towards maintenance of ordinariness. Studying naturally occurring interaction is a way of gaining a realistic, dynamic and versatile impression of how people interact. One could argue that an essential part of mundane human life lacks a clinical description; a description of how we go about communicating during sexual intercourse.

By applying Conversation Analysis (CA), this paper examines the verbal grammar of sexual intercourse by studying the subject field in action. The complete data material for analysis consists of two video recordings and one audio recording of couples having sex. In total, one hour and 52 minutes of sexual intercourse constitute the foundation for the current study: A collection-based analysis of requesting and providing knowledge during intercourse focusing on how the participants orient to epistemics. The focus is chosen from an unmotivated looking into the material where it was revealed that some sequences

construed as information requests are particularly marked, in that the participants orient to them in ways differing from what classical ETI suggests as normal.

First, the methodological approach is introduced, stating why CA is the chosen method. Here, the data collection process is presented, followed by a brief overview of existing relevant CA findings, e.g. literature on sequential organization and the role of epistemics in conversation. Based on this theoretical background, analyses of seven selected knowledge requesting/providing sequences are made, providing a characterization of the different ways in which the interlocutors orient to epistemics. Based on this, a discussion of different contextual norms concerning epistemic displays in information requests is provided, followed by a presentation of possibly contradictory pragmatic norms.

2 Methodology

CA is an interdisciplinary, qualitative method that originates from and is inspired by Erving Goffman's (1967) theory on face-to-face interaction and its importance for understanding sociological patterns. The method further draws on Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology that studies the methods people draw on when executing given practices. Investigating people's practices enables insight into how social norms are conventionally constituted (Garfinkel 1967 in Maynard 2013: 14-5).

CA draws on qualities from both of the above-mentioned sociological perspectives and has both human practical reasoning and interaction as fields of interest. The method was founded by Harvey Sacks, an American sociologist, together with his associates, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, in the late 1960s and 70s (e.g. Sacks et al. 1974; Schegloff et al. 1977). What CA specifically does is to elucidate the practices, including the non-verbal and paralinguistic, interlocutors perform by studying naturally occurring talk-in-interaction (Pomerantz & Fehr 1997: 64). What is fundamental for CA is that language is viewed as a vehicle for social life and as an important factor in understanding large-scale sociological phenomena (Stivers & Sidnell 2013: 3). The method enhances and specifies the perspective on mainte-

nance of ordinariness among human beings by viewing linguistic features as a structural part of entire interactional settings (Pomerantz & Fehr 1997: 70).

A baseline for CA is that it views conversation as sequentially organized (Schegloff 2007), that is, conversation can be divided into sequences of action. A further inspection of sequence organization is provided in section 3.1. CA views turn-taking as essential for interaction, as it reveals a basic system of communicative interplay, which means that interlocutors orient to turn-taking when allocating who and when to speak (Sacks et al. 1974). Turns-at-talk are built up on turn constructional units (TCUs). These are linguistic units that, depending on circumstances, can be perceived as constituting a complete turn in interaction. Sacks et al. (1974) have stated some generalizations concerning turn-taking, including the following: overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time, but overlapping talk occurs briefly and repair mechanisms exist for dealing with errors in turn-taking (Sacks et al. 1974: 10). The norms are also perceived as such, as it appears that interlocutors often do repair (Schegloff et al. 1977) if norms are violated. Repair can either be self-initiated or other-initiated, meaning that speakers seek to correct their own or their interlocutor's errors in order to keep the conversation going and maintain or re-establish intersubjectivity (Schegloff 2007: xiv). It is worth emphasizing that repair does not only concern turn-taking errors but that the use of repair mechanisms reflects an orientation towards a general preference system (e.g. Schegloff et al. 1977; Sacks 1987) for conversation. Preference deals with how a conversation and its implemented actions should proceed in order to interact successfully in accordance with norms, but it does not cover the interlocutors' psychological preferences, i.e., desires or motives.

According to CA, language is by virtue of the interlocutor's interpretation and reaction to what is being said, that is, the value of the spoken is created through interaction (Maynard 2013: 15). This aspect is referred to as next-turn proof procedure (Sacks et al. 1974: 28), meaning that the following turns-at-talk are considered relevant for identifying the function of given linguistic phenomena.

CA is based on inductive reasoning, meaning that generalizations are made from individual cases or observations leading to an investigation of whether a specific observation might constitute an interac-

tional phenomenon (Stivers & Sidnell 2013: 2). In order to do so, researchers look thoroughly through recorded and transcribed material to see if the phenomenon reoccurs and if so, how participants orient to it, i.e. how it is perceived and (re)acted upon. The inductive approach in the current paper lies in that a single-case observation of a specific question-answer sequence led to investigation of similar instances from which a collection was made in order to theorize upon observation, not vice versa.

2.1 Methodological reflections
By applying CA as method for investigation, one can gain insight into how things actually work out, as this approach studies communication in action. In comparison, one could have applied other qualitative methods, e.g. interviews, asking people if and how they communicate verbally during intercourse. Although, when asking people to account for their habits/practices, a pitfall is that respondents reflect on or modify their answers. Thus, making it likely that results are affected by the retrospective aspect and reveal what respondents think they do rather than what they actually do (Groom & Littlemore 2011: 105). Furthermore, CA investigates language in great detail, e.g. by transcribing both words and paralinguistic features, including prosody, gestures, intonation, pauses, etc.

A main argument for applying CA in the current study is that sexual intercourse is partly perceived as a conversation in itself, as prior linguistic literature has stated that the act is mainly wordless, i.e., conversation is redundant in that physical (re)actions 'speak' sufficiently (Henriksen 2012: 63). The current study challenges this premise by asking what function the yet occurring verbal language has, given that body language and paralinguistic features are communicatively sufficient. By meticulously analyzing the conversation, we gain insight into the somewhat extraordinary function of speech.

As the verbal communication in the current study is possibly affected by the activity in which it takes place, a task-based approach could have been somewhat obvious to apply. However, this approach normally investigates the more practical dimension of how language supports the execution of given tasks and promotes physical actions (e.g. Seedhouse & Almutairi 2009). In contrast, the current paper seeks insight into the interactants' general orientations towards pragmatics

in the context of sexual intercourse and does not view language as purely instrumental.

A counterargument for applying CA is that it has some limitations, in that it does not account for people's mental states or implicit motivations for actions. Nor does it consider the psycho-social needs and desires that might cause the studied behavior. CA investigates what goes on rather than why, keeping a clinical focus on what can be proven by reference to the organizational structure of the interaction.

When studying human interaction, one risk is almost inevitable: that the people being observed or recorded are affected by it and therefore likely to adjust their behavior. Labov (1972) refers to this as the observer's paradox; we strive to study human beings in their natural habitat, although this is absurd given that researchers/outside people have the power to affect the target by their presence (Labov 1972: 209). Recording people's natural everyday doings without consent is illegal, which leaves it a basic condition that the results are possibly affected by the method. The current study is no exception, especially considering the private nature of the subject field which is rarely an object of scientific research and observation.

2.2 Data collection
In the recruitment of participants, a message was formulated and distributed on different social media fora, briefly stating the overall aim of the research: to investigate conversation during sexual intercourse. The message stated no requirements regarding sexual orientation/preferences or gender identities, as those factors are perceived irrelevant. The only requirement was that participants should be 18 years or older and have had sex with each other before.

The couples interested in participating received a declaration of consent to sign before sending any material. In the declaration it was clearly stated that I would store and treat the sensitive personal information in accordance to the GDPR-legislations. Moreover, the participants were informed that no one but me would get access to the material, and that the transcriptions would not reveal any possible identification markers, e.g. people's names, place names etc., as these are replaced by pseudonyms.

The participants were to record the material themselves at their leisure, and no specific guidelines on how to record (e.g. duration limit, camera angles) were provided. The only practical requirement was

that both parties should be visible and/or hearable, of course to a realistic extent given the circumstances. For the recordings to live up to the CA-premise of naturally occurring interaction, the participants were given no immediate time frame for submission, so they could record at a point where they might would have initiated intercourse independently of the task. In the declaration it was further articulated that the participants should do whatever they find normal. They were told to turn on the camera when the mood of intercourse was on, leaving it up to them to decide what they perceive as sex. This in order to limit any possible research bias.

Besides assuring ethical and legal data treatment, the declaration explains why the research is interested in both audio and video material, clarifying why both aspects are important for CA. No exact focus is stated in the declaration, as it was not determined beforehand what should be investigated in greater detail. This supports both the inductive approach of the method and the natural aspect of the interaction. Finally, the declaration states that no prescriptive views will be taken, but that the material is treated on a neutral basis not focusing on rights or wrongs, but purely investigating what goes on when they have sex in a way normal to them, i.e., when they do being sex partners.

3 Background

In the following sections, CA-findings on sequence organization and the role of epistemics in conversation are presented. Section 3.1 covers some fundamental patterns concerning sequence organization, as this background serves as a foundation for understanding how actions are organized and performed by interlocutors. Section 3.2 covers epistemics and general norms concerning interlocutors' orientation to knowledge domains and how this aspect is normally implemented and valued in conversation.

3.1 Sequence organization

Sequences are passages of action implemented in talk, and interlocutors create specific actions through specific ways of expression (Schegloff 2007: 3). If an utterance is a question, the question is said to form the first pair part (FPP) of an adjacency pair, which then calls for a certain response, an answer, as second pair part (SPP) (Schegloff 2007: 13). The adjacency pair constitutes the sequence to which the

interlocutors orient in order to execute the implemented actions. Actions often belong together in adjacency pairs such as question-answer, greeting-greeting, offer-acceptance etc. Actions appear unfinished if the FPP provided in an initial turn is not followed by a type-specific SPP, i.e. a SPP is noticeably absent if not provided in the following turns-at-talk (Schegloff 2007: 20). When initiating actions, speakers hold each other accountable for fulfilling them. By asking a question, for instance, the selected next speaker is held accountable for complementing the initiated action by providing a response in the next turn relative to the prior, thus orienting to nextness and conditional relevance (Schegloff 2007: 15).

Speakers can expand sequences, so that they not only consist of FPP and SPP but contains pre-, insert- or post-expansions supporting the overall action, formally as well as socially, in relation to preference organization (Schegloff 2007: 58, 180; Sacks 1987).

What a turn performs is by and large determined through interaction, meaning that the intention behind a given turn only serves as such if the recipient deals with it in a corresponding manner. Different ways of construing turns create different perceptions of the act implied in the turn. Here, the role of epistemics in conversation becomes relevant, in that knowledge between people to a large extent determines how we design turns to one another in order to share and establish common grounds and to equalize possible knowledge gaps.

3.2 Epistemic relations
Action formation is by and large based on orientation to epistemics, hence figuring out what I know relative to what you know in order to establish or maintain intersubjectivity or to understand each other's reasoning (Heritage 2012a; Stivers et al. 2011). Language and linguistic features are, as previously mentioned, the vehicle for social interaction, and a large part of human social life is to share, report and receive knowledge to and from our surroundings. This should be done in a pro-social manner, i.e., in ways that support sociality and relations, e.g. by providing valid information to a questioner (Stivers et al. 2011: 24). Aside from providing valid information, speakers also orient to epistemic congruence (Stivers et al. 2011: 16; Heritage 2013: 379), that is, whether there is congruency between the respective perceptions of who knows what and why in relation to the topic.

When people request knowledge, i.e., express what they know and want to know in relation to an interlocutor's knowledge, the main purpose is to establish and develop their epistemic status. A questioner and a recipient usually have different epistemic domains depending on the topic of talk. The interlocutors' epistemic statuses can be placed on a gradient ranging from a low position as unknowing (K-) to a higher position as knowing (K+) (Heritage 2012b: 32). Normally, speakers take an epistemic stance that reflects their status, i.e., speakers are usually honest about their epistemic status. However, sometimes speakers take a lower epistemic stance to a proposition, making it relevant for the more eligible K+ interlocutor to elaborate or confirm as next action. Another way of requesting is by declaring a given proposition in order to have it (dis)confirmed by the recipient, who is assumed higher on the gradient, cf. Labov and Fanshel's (1977) notion of A statements about B events (Labov & Fanshel 1977 in Heritage 2012a: 4). When requesting through declaring, speakers often use other response-mobilizing features such as rising intonation contour or eye gaze, but ultimately, the epistemic relations are essential for perceiving the statement as requesting (Stivers & Rossano 2010; Heritage 2012a: 24).

Regarding epistemic statuses in conversation, an important notion is the one of knowables (Pomerantz 1980; Sacks 1975), separating types of knowledge into two major categories, type 1 and type 2 knowables, respectively covering what a person is obliged to know and has rights to claim, and what one knows from or about others. Type 1 knowables include feelings, thoughts, experiences and knowledge on possessions, whereas inferred or hearsay knowledge on other people's lives are type 2 knowables, thus information one cannot claim rights over (Pomerantz 1980). Speakers are normally to a larger extent held accountable for type 1 than type 2 knowables, although it is found that recipients being asked about type 2 knowables still treat themselves as accountable for providing the requested information (Stivers et al. 2011: 18). When requesting and providing knowledge, interlocutors should consider recipient design, meaning to design their turns-at-talk in ways that are interpretable and accessible for the interlocutor. For instance, one should not request information to which one has access, nor request information that is not within the recipient's epistemic domain (epistemic responsibility cf. Stivers et al. 2011: 17).

Concerning the current paper, epistemic relations, i.e. the speakers' respective domains of knowledge and the primacy and responsibility, are somewhat indistinct, in that the participants are both physically and emotionally intertwined in a way that makes distinctions between epistemic domains harder to draw.

4 Analysis

In the following sections, analyses of different sequences regarding requesting and providing knowledge are presented, looking into the different types of actions they display. The analyzed sequences are chosen because they seem to have different purposes where the practice of the actions appears to have different communicative effects. The acts of requesting assessment and confirmation are treated on the same basis as information requests, in that they also emerge from knowledge gaps whereby the acts of complying make up a sort of information exchange.

There are instances in which the sequence is initiated due to epistemic asymmetry, meaning that the initiator requests knowledge in order to gain insight into the interlocutor's feelings or attitude about their activity, e.g. by requesting verbal assessment or confirmation. However, the data also consist of information requests in situations where the questioner is perceived to already know the answer, either given the physical circumstances, the prior turns-at-talk or from requesting information over which the questioner is the epistemic authority. Analyses of classical instances with epistemic asymmetry are first provided, followed by analyses of instances where the relations are somewhat symmetric or otherwise atypical.

In the analyses, moans are transcribed to see if variance in the quality of them was oriented to in ways depending on their form. Though, all moans are seen in the view of response cries (Goffman 1968), meaning that they are paralinguistic features that have gained status on level with content words, because they have conventionally come to denote the feeling of given physical stimuli. In the analyses, the moans are perceived as linguistic units, hence TCU's.

The recordings are transcribed in accordance to the Jeffersonian transcription conventions, cf. Hepburn and Bolden (2013). Creaky

voice is marked by surrounding asterisks, whispering is marked by surrounding double degree signs and smiley voice is marked by surrounding smileys.

4.1 Asymmetric epistemic relations: K-/K+
In excerpt (1) Tom is providing Zoe oral sex. The activity is ongoing throughout the conversation.

(1) Recording 1 | 4.21-4.28 | "how does it feel"

```
01  TOM:    how does it feel,
02          (0.4)
03  ZOE:    a:h yea:h,
04          (.)
05  TOM:    m[h→ ]
06  ZOE:     [·HH]HH
07          (.)
08  ZOE:    a::hrh [hh yea:h absolu]tely
09  TOM:           [   mh-hm,      ]
```

Given that Tom is physically stimulating Zoe, it is recognizable that the evaluation of the stimuli is within Zoe's epistemic domain. This leaves Tom as K-, Zoe as K+ and the questioned in line 01 a type 1 knowable within Zoe's domain. Tom's turn in line 01 thus constitutes a request for assessment. After a rather short gap, Zoe replies in line 03 with a moan involving a yes-like token which is non-conforming, in that the request is a content question, leaving it relevant for the recipient to elaborate on the information she possesses. When perceiving moans as response cries denoting stimuli (in this case pleasure), Tom's acceptance of what appears as a yes-like token could be found in valuing the entire turn as a response cry with a somewhat abstract, yet positive, meaning. In line 08, Zoe elaborates and adds the affirming token 'absolutely' to the assessment which Toms seems to accept, cf. the acknowledging, sequence closing particle *mh-hm* in line 09.

Later in the same recording, a similar instance occurs, as Zoe initiates a request for assessment of Tom's view on the activity. Prior to line 01, Tom just finished providing Zoe oral sex and starts to move away from the vaginal area in order to initiate another activity. He is still positioned between Zoe's legs, though looking at her face.

(2) Recording 1 | 4.34-4.47 | "was it nice for you"

```
01  ZOE:    °was it nice for you,°
02          (0.6)
03  ZOE:    ·h[hh  ]
04  TOM:      [huh?]
05          (0.3)
06  ZOE:    °was it nice for you,°
07          (0.2)
08  TOM:    ↓m↑mh
09          (2.1) ((Tom changes position))
10  ZOE:    *um::h* hh
11  TOM:    mmh,
12          (.)
13  TOM:    you taste good_
```

Zoe's request for an evaluative assessment in line 01 fits with the prior physical activity, in that Toms view of the act is ultimately within his epistemic domain. After Zoe's request, there is a lapse and Zoe self-selects and initiates another turn in line 03 by explicitly inhaling. Tom's overlap in line 04 can be viewed as orienting to norm violence, thus, explaining his initiation of repair. By 'huh' Tom indicates trouble in understanding what Zoe said, which makes Zoe repeat. The question has interrogative syntax and is a polar question leaving it relevant to reply with a yes/no. Tom's response in line 08 is a preferred, type-conforming affiliative yes-like token. While Tom changes his physical position, Zoe initiates another turn by moaning, whereafter Tom makes an explanatory assessment in line 13, clarifying his previous response, which indicates that he perceived Zoe's request as one of evaluative assessment, hence fulfilling the adjacency pair and closing the sequence.

In excerpt (3) another way of displaying inequality in the epistemic relations appears. Lines 01-04 show an exchange of moans where both parties explicate their physical states verbally, cf. response cries.

(3) Recording 2 | 7.22-7.31 | "you like that"

```
01  LIS:    *↑aa:r*
02          (1.0)
03  ROY:    ah[h-↓rhe:]hh h
04  LIS:      [ru:huhh]
05          (0.7)
06  ROY:    ·hh ↑you like (h)th(h)a:t,
07          (.)
08  LIS:    ↑mh-↓hha::
```

In line 06 Roy states in a declarative syntactic manner that Lis likes what he is doing to her. Lis' prior moaning might have indicated her attitude towards the action whereby Roy has some basis for explicating Lis' experience, hence positioning himself as K+. Though, Lis is the epistemic authority, cf. bodily experiences as type 1 knowables, which leaves it an A statement about B events – something the speaker in first position indicates to be knowing about, but still needs the recipients' confirmation on. Lis' turn in line 08 supports the epistemic asymmetry, as she confirms Roy's statement with an affiliative yes-like token. Although the sentence is analyzed as declarative, one could also argue that it is an elliptic interrogative, cf. 'do you like that'. However, the declarative is chosen, as the sentence is formally construed in that manner.

Regarding excerpts (1) and (2), both parties orient towards the general ETI-norms for respectively requesting and providing assessments within their respective epistemic domains through content- and polar questions, thus keeping each other accountable for designing their turns in order to successfully execute the initiated actions. The same applies for excerpt (3), both when analyzed as declarative and interrogative, in that the epistemic relations in both cases make the affirming response relevant. The excerpts thus indicate that knowledge requests are construed and normatively oriented to when equalizing knowledge gaps concerning assessment/evaluation of activities.

4.2 Symmetric epistemic relations: K+/K+
The prior excerpts have shown that requesting and complying actions are done during sexual intercourse when the epistemic relations are asymmetric and there is an evident, possibly contextually determined, need for exchanging knowledge.

In the following excerpts, it appears that the interlocutors use information request-like constructions for exchanging information even though prior turns-at-talk have established their respective positions on the knowing gradient, leaving both parties in a contemporary K+ position. The turns are described as information request-like constructions, as they appear as classical information requests, although the content reveals that they deviate somewhat from the classical norms regarding orientation to epistemics.

In excerpt (4) Roy announces in line 01 that he thinks he should come inside Lis. The statement contains an epistemic downgrade, cf. *I think*, which indicates an orientation to Lis as important factor in deciding whether it should actually happen, hence calling for her to confirm in next position. Almost without gap, Lis responds with a yes-like affiliative token and further orders him to *come inside* her in line 05. Furthermore, the repetition of elements of Roy's prior turn is an aligning and affiliative, thus pro-social, way of confirming the proposition (Lee 2013: 426).

(4) Recording 2 | 11.43-11.57 | "you want me to"

```
01  ROY:   hh °I think I should ↑come insi:de you,°
02         (.)
03  LIS:   h yea:hh
04         (.)
05  LIS:   come *inside me (    )*
06         (0.2)
07  ROY:   yo(h)u w(h)ant me t(h)o,
08  LIS:   O:HH I want °you°
09  ROY:   ·hh how ba:d,
10         (0.2)
11  LIS:   h s(h)o ba::[:d      ]
12  ROY:               [where d]o y(h)ou w(h)ant it,
13         (0.3)
14  LIS:   *in my p(h)u[ssy:↑* ]
15  ROY:               [·hh whe]re in your pussy,
16         (.)
17  LIS:   *DEE::P*
18         (2.0)
19  ROY:   ↑deep in your pus[ sy? ]
20  LIS:                     [↑ya:e]hh
```

After settling the matter, Roy makes a statement (or elliptic interrogative, cf. excerpt (3)) in line 07 that can also be treated as requesting confirmation, cf. Lis' epistemic rights. The second request could be defined somewhat redundant considering the prior turn. However, Lis confirms again in line 08 with an affiliative response not indicating any trouble or orientation to norm violence.

The following turns concern exchange in information revolving around the immediately practical dimension of Roy coming inside of Lis. Roy's question design varies and both polar and content questions appear to be answered type-conformingly. Common for the turns is that Roy as questioner does not indicate acceptance or 'change of

state' (cf. Heritage 1984), i.e., verbally acknowledges that Lis' responses have changed his epistemic status. This could support that the form, both the consecutiveness and the chosen question words, rather than the content drives the conversation.

The requests in line 07 and 19 are the only ones where the prior turns ensure that both parties are K+, though the remaining information requests concern exchange of content that could be said to be within both of their epistemic domains. For instance, the request for elaboration in line 09 appears redundant given Lis' strongly explicated affiliation in line 08. Concerning the question of *where in your pussy,* in line 15, one could argue that independently of Lis' answer Roy would not be able to determine a specifically corresponding place of ejaculation, which supports that the question design is valued, rather than the need for knowledge. Though, when dealing with the semantic content of the turns, one could also argue that the detailed revolving around the 'pussy' topic is viewed communicatively promoting, cf. 'pussy' as semantically loaded taboo word (Jay 1999). This aspect is further dealt with in section 5.

Excerpt (4) supports that the parties orient to the general norms concerning the formalities on requesting and providing information in socially normative ways. The recipient does not express orientation to norm violence, in spite of the questioner's obvious epistemic access to the questioned.

A similar phenomenon is recognized in excerpt (5) where Ann during penetrative sex orders Joe to *fuck* her. Joe responds immediately after with an affiliation token with a rising intonation contour in line 02, indicating a request for confirmation.

(5) Recording 3, 1/3 | 17.14-17.27 | "you want what"

```
01  ANN:    hh fuck me: hh
02  JOE:    ah yea?
03  ANN:    f(h)uck m(h)e:
04          (.)
05  JOE:    >would you like me[ to,  ]<
06  ANN:                      [y(h):e]s=
07  ANN:    =·hh
08  JOE:    yo-would like wha:t,
09  ANN:    *fuck me::*
10  JOE:    you what?
11          (0.6)
12  ANN:    *to fuck me*=
13  ANN:    =*I want you to fuck me*
```

```
14  JOE:   you want ↑what?
15         (.)
16  ANN:   I want >your to:y<
17  JOE:   hhh
18  ANN:   I want you to fuck me:=
19  ANN:   =yes ple:ase_
```

Ann confirms Joe's request through repetition of the content in her prior turn. Although Ann has expressed in her two prior turns what she desires him to do, Joe initiates a repair-looking sequence in line 05, requesting information on whether Ann *would like* him to. Ann projects the remaining TCU and overlaps with a preferred, aligning and affiliative confirmation token in line 06, even though Joe has the knowledge, cf. Ann's prior turns. In line 08, Joe requests information in a new question design, using the question word *what*, which makes Ann's response in line 09 non-conforming. Joe's repetition in line 10 could be due to him pursuing a certain answer corresponding to the specific *what*. Ann provides information in the following turn; first stating 'to fuck me' in line 12 which is quickly self-repaired into a full sentence TCU in line 13. In line 14 Joe asks again with a rising intonation contour, and Ann then delivers a type-conforming answer in the following turn containing the new element *toy*, which could constitute the requested specification given that Joe stops asking.

As with excerpt (4), none of the parties in (5) seem to orient towards norm violence, and the recipient provides several candidate answers, hence possible SPP's, to complement the initiated actions. It appears, as with excerpt (4), that the responses to the consecutive questions are not explicitly accepted by the questioner, as normally suggested in classical ETI (Heritage 1984: 304-5).

Excerpt (6) differs somewhat from the previous, in that the physical circumstances in which the sequence is initiated make up direct evidence that both speakers are K+ regarding the requested information. Therefore, they have equal epistemic access and rights, even though one party requests information from the interlocutor.

Prior to line 01, Joe and Ann have just initiated anal sex. The act appears smoothly executed with no notable disruptions before or during the conversation.

(6) Recording 3, 3/3 | 2.28-2.34 | "what's happening"

```
01   ANN:    o::h >my god yes<
02           (1.1)
03   ANN:    o:h fu(h)ck
04           0.9 ((Joe places his mouth close to Ann's ear))
05   JOE:    ·hh °°what's happening°°
06           (0.6)
07   ANN:    ah [  ha:ha     ·h    ]hh
08   JOE:       [wha:t's happening]
09           (.)
10   ANN:    ☺*hneh[hh*   ]☺
11   JOE:          [w(h)h]at's h(h)appen_
12           (0.3)
13   ANN:    *ha-hm*
14           (0.5)
15   ANN:    °you're in my° ass_
```

Joe's question in line 05 calls for Ann to provide information that is within both of their epistemic domains given the joint activity. After the information request, there is a 0.6 second gap, which is dispreferred and indicates something problematic. Further, Ann starts laughing, and Joe overlaps, asking once again the same question in line 08 to which Ann does not answer. In line 11, the question is repeated for the third time, whereafter Ann makes a laugh-like sound followed by a depiction of what is actually happening in line 15; a depiction that both parties presumably were aware of independently of the explication. Both the immediate retaining of an answer and the laughing could be due to Ann's orientation towards Joe's request for information that he has access to himself, i.e., expressing problems in being held accountable for answering. Although Ann might be orienting towards violence of norms concerning Joe's design of action, she eventually provides the information and fulfills the adjacency pair.

In the excerpts analyzed so far, it appears that interlocutors request and provide knowledge when the epistemic relations are asymmetric, hence corresponding to the classical norms. Furthermore, we have seen that information exchange occurs when the epistemic relations are, to a large extent, symmetric which deviates from classical ETI. The following section concerns a sequence in which the information request-like constructions are performed, although the epistemic relations are normatively converse.

4.3 Asymmetric epistemic relations: K+/K-

In the following excerpt (7), the questioner appears to be K+ and the recipient K-. Joe initiates a sequence requesting information that is a type 1 knowable relative to himself, something over which he has epistemic primacy and responsibility. The only aspect supporting Ann's possible status as K+ (although lower on the gradient) is their intimate relationship where exchange of such knowledge is common, thus allowing her to report on a type 2 knowable.

Prior to line 01, Joe is lying on top of Ann, and they are looking into each other's eyes. Joe makes a greeting in line 01 to which Ann responds non-conformingly by whispering Joe's name. After Ann finishes laughing, Joe requests information on why *he* loves her in line 08. That *he* is a reference to himself is supported by the prior turn where Ann mentioned his name, making it an anaphoric reference where person deixis marks the connection between the prior turn and the current. The use of a third-person pronoun could also reflect an orientation towards norm violence, cf. making an interlocutor accountable for knowledge within one's own domain. By designing the question in a manner making 'he' rather than 'I' the subject, the norm violence is somewhat accommodated.

(7) Recording 3, 1/3 | 16.19-16.40 | "why does he love you"

```
01  JOE:  hello_
02  VIS:  ((Ann opens her mouth without saying anything))
03  ANN:  °°Joe°°
04        (1.2)
05  ANN:  hhh:: ((wraps legs around Joe))
06  ANN:  hi hi hi ha-ha ha
07        (.)
08  JOE:  >why: does he love you,<
09        (0.4)
10  ANN:  °why does he love me,°
11        (.)
12  JOE:  why:: >does he love you,<
13        (0.2)
14  ANN:  >because he (excuse)< °me°
15        (0.6)
16  JOE:  why do[es he lo]ve you ((slaps Ann's cheek))
17  ANN:       [ O:UGH  ]
18  ANN:  ↑w(h)e:ll
19  ANN:  *because >he (excuse)[me<*]
20  JOE:                       [why:] does he love you,
21        (0.3)
22  ANN:  °cause i'm amazing°
23        (.)
```

```
24   JOE:    because what?
25           (0.7)
26   ANN:    °because i'm amazi[ng° ]
27   JOE:                      [beca]use what,
28           (0.8)
29   ANN:    ·hh because i'm amazing
30           (.)
31   JOE:    because you're aMAzing
32           (0.2)
33   JOE:    that's right
```

Ann's response in line 10 is dispreferred and dis-aligning, in that she mirrors the question only with a change in pronoun and in a lowered voice indicating it to be a trouble-source. Aside from the fact that Ann is not in epistemic position to answer, the trouble could also lie in an orientation to the preference for self-deprecation when complimented (Pomerantz 1978), cf. explicating why one is loved by another. As response to Ann's repair-looking response in line 10, Joe repeats his request, pursuing an adequate candidate, to which Ann then responds by suggesting that he loves her *because he (excuse) me* in line 14. Joe directly sanctions Ann for not answering correctly by slapping her cheek whilst repeating the question once again in the following turn. In lines 18-19 Ann's turn-initial particle 'well' indicates an orientation to her next action as dispreferred (Pomerantz 1984 in Schiffrin 1987: 102). After Joe's fourth exact repetition of the question, Ann suggests a new candidate *cause I'm amazing* in line 22 and Joe, although nothing indicates trouble in understanding, requests further elaboration in line 24. When Ann repeats the answer for the second time and in a normal voice in line 29, Joe accepts and affirms it with emphasis on 'amazing' followed by a direct confirmation in line 33. This manifests him as epistemic authority and suggests that he had a certain answer in mind.

That Ann fulfills the adjacency pair in spite of not having epistemic rights, supports her position as relatively high on the gradient in a proposition concerning Joe's emotional life and attitude towards her. In addition, Ann does not explicitly position herself as K-, for instance by taking a stance of 'I don't know'. This supports that she does have some knowledge but refrains from claiming it due to orientation towards norm violence, cf. claiming rights over type 2 knowables and self-praise.

The sequence suggests that even though the requested information is ultimately within the questioner's domain, the recipient is still perceived accountable for answering.

Together with excerpts (4), (5) and (6), excerpt (7) also suggests that a certain pattern relating to alternative orientation towards epistemic relations applies in the context. Apart from excerpt (1), (2) and (3) – the sequences where both form and content correspond to classical norms regarding knowledge requests – the construed requests seek information that is, for different reasons, dispreferred or socially challenging in classical ETI. The latter will be dealt with in the following sections. Even though the information request-like sequences differ from one another in both design and topic, some features are recurring, e.g. consecutive questions with no change of state-markers and design of pursuing content questions.

5 Discussion

From the analyzed experts it can be drawn that although information requesting actions are formed due to epistemic asymmetry as with classical ETI, information request-like sequences are also initiated when questioning appears unnecessary. Having suggested that other linguistic norms might apply within the context of sexual intercourse, the following section concerns the use of ETI-deviating epistemic displays in other contexts, relating it to the current. Following that, a suggestion of possibly contradictory norms concerning facework (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987) is provided, leading to suggestions for further research.

5.1 Contextual usage of known-answer questions

Previous CA-findings (e.g. Rusk et al. 2017) have shown that known-answer questions are normatively used in educational and pedagogical contexts where they function supportively for respectively learning and stimulating interaction (Rusk et al. 2017: 4). In these contexts, either a teacher or a caretaker displays an epistemic K- stance; the teacher in order to check on the students' epistemic access and the caretaker in order to initiate and/or maintain social interaction. In both contexts, known-answer questions are viewed normal and thereby constitute doing 'being ordinary', as recipients usually do not display orientation towards norm violence but follow the premise.

In a sexual context, the current data suggests that the use of known-answer questions function as a vehicle for highlighting tabooed topics, for instance by designing content questions pursuing explication of taboo words as in excerpt (5) and (6), or requesting elaboration on propositions concerning genitals as seen in excerpt (4). Thus, the established discourse identities, questioner/answerer, could function as a way for the interlocutors to support the activity by holding each other accountable for interacting in accordance to certain pragmatics during the activity.

In Sacks' view, a questioner is positioned in control of the conversation, solely by the discursive practice (Sacks 1995 in Hayano 2013: 396). This aspect seems reflected in the current data, where orientation towards maintenance of discourse identities appears, even though there is no evident need. That the discourse identities are oriented to by the interlocutors could thus suggest that some additional situational identities are oriented to as well, making the actions relevant for the interlocutors in that specific context. The situational identities validate the interlocutors' linguistic choices, as they apparently promote interaction and support sociality within in the context. Concerning the current data, it appears that specific designs of information requests cause tabooed topics to be brought up, leaving the questioners powerful in choosing what they seek verbalized from the interlocutor. Hence, suggesting that the powerful, interaction-stimulating turn design, i.e. requesting through questioning in a consecutive manner, is relevant within the context, alongside with challenging the epistemic relations.

However, question design is to some extent treated as problematic by the recipient, mainly when the questioners pursue a certain answer to which they have epistemic primacy and responsibility. Though, in all excerpts, the adjacency pairs are eventually fulfilled. For instance, in excerpts (6) and (7) the recipient orients to problematic aspects of the questioner's epistemic display as K- by laughing, not responding promptly or knowingly providing a wrong answer. In spite of orientation towards ETI-norm violence, the recipient fulfills the adjacency pair in both sequences, which also supports the proposition of prevailing situational identities, leaving it relevant for the interlocutors to request and provide information in spite of atypical epistemic relations. In a sexual context, the use of known-answer questions thus differs from the previously mentioned educational or pedagogical, in that

they are construed to make the recipients explicate words or propositions containing taboo elements or to make dispreferred acts relevant, e.g. self-praise.

5.2. Facework in a sexual context

Considering that known-answer questions are primarily designed when the answer they call for contains topics or specific words that are generally viewed as taboo, it is relevant to present the possibility of contradictory norms concerning facework in the current context. Under normal conditions, mentioning of taboo words would constitute what Brown and Levinson (1987) have described as a face-threatening act, in that tabooed topics can cause the interlocutor disgrace and/or embarrassment and thereby threaten sociality. However, as shown in the previous section, other pragmatic norms seem to apply during intercourse where it appears that verbalizing tabooed topics and praising oneself is the main outcome of the several information requests that are not caused by classical K-/K+ epistemics. This aspect is reinforced by the design of the knowledge requesting actions, in that actions displaying unequal epistemics are viewed as actions that crave certain SPP's, namely answers, e.g. confirmation, assessment etc. (Hayano 2013: 395). Thus, both the questioner and the answerer perform acts that within other settings would be viewed as face-threatening by respectively pursuing and providing linguistic taboo. This suggests a different orientation towards facework (Brown & Levinson 1987), i.e. other perceptions of what is face-saving and face-threatening might figurate in the sexual context, leaving the discursive orientations relevant and supporting.

The applied method can only indicate a tendency and not provide adequate results of whether the phenomenon is prevalent. This is especially due to the scale of the research which should be extended, as generalizations should be made from larger corpora to retrieve a more representative collection for analysis. A CA-approach can also not singlehandedly explain why the interlocutors interact as they do, as such analyses demand implication of other methods. CA views the interlocutors' endogenous, provable orientations towards maintenance of ordinariness in given contexts and does not state generalizations based on exogenous factors, such as culture, age, gender or other potentially influencing variables.

5.3 Further research
Further research is first and foremost suggested to investigate the observed phenomenon from a larger data corpus. In order to investigate the socially oriented aspect, e.g. semantics/pragmatics, further research could benefit from triangulation of other qualitative methods to investigate potential sociocultural motives behind the occurrence of certain linguistic patterns. This could be executed by interviewing sexually active people about their sexual-linguistic habits, perhaps with the targeted phenomenon, consecutively requesting known knowledge, as point of departure. In addition, one could investigate the informants' beliefs on why words and sentences belonging to certain semantic categories promote execution of sexual intercourse. Furthermore, future research could apply cognitive scientific approaches, e.g. fMRI-scanning, to map if there are neurological fluctuations when interlocutors make use of certain linguistic designs during intercourse, i.e., to investigate whether verbal language has a measurable, physically manifested impact on the activity.

6 Conclusions

Based on the analyses, it can be concluded that knowledge requests are designed during sexual intercourse when one party seeks knowledge from within the interlocutor's epistemic domain in order to equalize knowledge gaps, e.g. by requesting assessment or confirmation. Furthermore, information request-like constructions are designed even though both parties have epistemic access, whereby the requests deviate from classical ETI, in that they are not construed from a genuine need for knowledge transfer. In those cases, the design of the turns as questioning holds the recipient accountable for answering in next position. However, it appears that when an epistemic authority requests information, the recipient orients to this as problematic, though still provides the information and fulfills the adjacency pair. Thus, the current study suggests that maintenance of discourse identities rather than epistemics is of primary orientation during intercourse.

The analyses led to a discussion of the use of known-answer questions within the sexual context, and data suggests that the actions of requesting and providing information in spite of symmetrical or normatively converse epistemic relations might constitute a part of doing

being sex partners. This is supported by the interlocutors' orientation towards discourse identities, in that it might reflect an orientation towards situational identities, hence making acting upon norm deviation relevant. Further, the information request-like constructions appear to concern semantic categories that are normally perceived as taboo, hence face-threatening, which suggests that specific pragmatic norms apply within the sexual context in order to maintain the situational identities.

Further research is suggested to both improve representativeness and to complement the CA-findings to support the validity.

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