From Text to Talk

Answers and their uptake
in standardised survey interviews
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Van Tekst naar Gesprek

Antwoorden en hun ontvangst
in gestandaardiseerde survey interviews

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1  Opening statement

Interaction in survey interviews is supposed to be standardised, predictable, and unvaried. Interviewers are trained to read out the questions exactly as worded and to treat each response the same. After all, the aim of standardisation is to make sure that each respondent answers the same questions, formulated in the same way, and asked in the same way. This book will show that that may be the theory of standardised interviewing, but that reality is often different.

Anyone who has ever participated in a standardised interview will probably remember it simply as a string of questions and answers, as interaction that follows a rigid script. Why study that kind of interaction at all? Previous studies have shown that interviewers and respondents do more than just asking and answering questions. Both participants initiate repair (Moore & Maynard 2002), receipt each other’s talk (Marlaire & Maynard 1990), and do extra interactional work to make the interview run off smoothly (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000).

My research continues this line of research, started in the early nineteen-nineties, in which standardised interactions were analysed using the methodology developed for the analysis of everyday conversations. Marlaire and Maynard (1990) studied standardised tests aimed at establishing the development of children’s intelligence. They found confirmation of “previous investigations which suggested that test scores are “collaborative productions”” (1990: 83). Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996) investigated the interaction between interviewers and respondents in question-answer sequences with field-coded answer categories. She found that the categories used in the questionnaire do not always match the everyday categories respondents use. And in 2002 a collection of studies concerned with tacit knowledge in survey interviews was published (edited by Maynard, Houtkoop-Steenstra, Schaeffer & van der Zouwen).

While survey researchers and their clients are interested in the content of the answers given in survey interviews and how they translate into statistics, the cited studies focus on how these answers emerge from the interaction. Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996) describes the question-answer process as the interviewer generating a recordable answer. In this field of research, as well as in others, survey interviews are no longer considered a ‘neutral conduit’ through which
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Data can be collected like flowers waiting to be picked. The ways in which interviewer and respondent collaborate in order to collect the data they are looking for is the focus of my research.

The aim of this research tradition, including ethnographic research into other institutional situations, is to find out what participants do with the restrictions that standardisation puts on them. We can begin to understand what happens when the prescriptions to participants are put into use in the real world. And we can learn what people, who are used to interact in a non-standardised manner in their everyday lives, do when confronted with a scripted, standardised type of interaction.

In this introduction I will outline the fields of research that play an important part in this study. I describe the history of survey research (§1.2) and the theoretical assumptions ruling survey methodology (§1.3). I discuss some of the consequences of standardisation for the live interaction it occasions (§1.4), and the greater theoretical discussion behind the standardised and the interactional approach: monologism and dialogism (§1.5). In this introduction I also describe the worlds of written and spoken language, and how they merge in settings such as the standardised survey interview (§1.6). In the final section (§1.7), I will give a short account of the research that the rest of this book reports on.

1.2 Survey research

Survey interviews are used as a method to gather data about a certain population. They can, for example, be used to find out shopping or eating habits of people between twenty and thirty years old in a particular city, or to find out what a representative sample of citizens plan to vote in the next elections. This is done by asking questions of people in such a population rather than, for example, observing their behaviour or subjecting them to an experiment.

The origins of survey research go further back than one might expect. Though a sub-discipline such as systematic opinion polling only began as recently as the early twentieth century, a much older example of a survey is the Domesday Book. In 1086, William the Conqueror sent out surveyors to take stock of the land that he had invaded twenty years earlier. These surveyors travelled around the country in order to collect the same type of information about the whole of England. In order to do this, the different surveyors needed to ask the same questions to everyone who had interest in land.
As Babbie (1995) reminds us, even older examples are the Roman censuses at the beginning of our era. Around 8 BC the data of all inhabitants of the empire were to be collected, and everyone was to travel to the town from which their ancestors originated. Among those travellers were Joseph and Mary, pregnant with Jesus, on their way to Joseph's ancestral hometown Bethlehem (Luke 2: 1-3).

There are two important differences between these ancient examples and modern survey research. First, in both cases the researchers did not use any form of sampling. Instead of checking a representative sample, every single item was checked. Quite apart from the fact that sampling theory was not developed until the twentieth century, these early survey researchers would not have had the necessary data upon which to base such a representative sample.

The second difference with modern survey research is its aim: while nowadays the aim of surveys is finding out how a certain group of people think or feel or act, the Roman census and Domesday survey aimed to refine taxes, and perhaps to keep tabs on population growth.

Nonetheless, the procedures did not change all that much. I mentioned that the Domesday surveyors “asked the same questions to everyone”, focusing specifically on the ownership and usage of land and property. Though the surveyors and the ‘respondents’ may have discussed all sorts of other matters, the data that was collected and processed had a high level of standardisation, leading to comparability of one community of respondents to the next.

The same holds for the Roman census that played such an important role in the bible. With hindsight we know that Joseph and Mary were an interesting couple who had just gone through some life-changing events. However, we do not find a trace of their experiences in the census data, as these surveys focus on certain standardised characteristics, excluding angelic visits and immaculate conception. Instead, they probably answered the same questions as everyone else and became part of anonymous statistics.

Today, survey research is employed in order to find out how certain characteristics are distributed over a certain population. For example, the preference for a presidential candidate among voters. Or whether consumers with a higher-than-average income read a certain newspaper. Because census data can now be considered a given, survey researchers can draw a sample from the total population that is representative for that population.

The two best-known fields of modern survey research are marketing research and political polling. The history of political polling is easy to trace, as publication of the polls was their primary
goal. Political historians agree that the first political opinion polls were conducted in the USA as early as 1824. In that year, a presidential election was held, and for several reasons it was more difficult to predict the outcomes than in previous years (for those reasons, see Smith 1990).

The opinion polls of 1824 were taken at meetings that were not held specifically for that purpose. People were polled at militia musters, grand juries, tax gatherings and Fourth of July celebrations, but also at meetings held especially to assess the public’s preferences. As a third polling method, people could write their preference in “poll books” in public places (Smith 1990: 25-26). Smith attributes the emergence of these ‘straw polls’ to the curiosity of the electorate. “Conditions in 1824 combined high interest in the election with great uncertainty over the outcome. This triggered numerous speculations and the adoption of innovative ways to test popular sentiments, from counting toasts to the straw polls” (1990: 32).

Nearly a century later, polling had developed into a much more systematic line of research. The Literary Digest, a popular news magazine in the USA, sent out postcards to a sub-section of its subscribers, asking them who they planned to vote for in the next presidential election. In 1920, 1924, 1928 and 1932 the Literary Digest polls correctly predicted the winner of the American presidential elections (Babbie 1995: 188-9).

The Literary Digest’s best-known poll, however, is that of 1936. Its readers gave Republican candidate Alf Landon a 57 to 43 percent win, only to be confronted with a landslide victory for Franklin Roosevelt two weeks later (Babbie 1995: 189). The main flaw of this poll was its sampling method. The sub-section of subscribers that was polled, was based on ownership of cars and telephones. “Such a sampling design selected a disproportionately wealthy sample, especially coming on the tail end of the worst economic depression in the nation’s history. The sample effectively excluded poor people, and the poor people predominantly voted for Roosevelt’s New Deal recovery programme” (ibid: 189; see also Burnham, Gilland, Grant & Layton-Henry 2004: 83-84).

Interestingly, the history of market research took off in the 1890s with questioning the readers of magazines as well. In order to sell advertising space in their magazines, publishers started marketing their readers as an “audience of consumers” (Arvidsson 2003: 460). After relying on non-scientific data such as letters to the editor, publishers began setting up research departments that surveyed
readers for data from which the marketing position of the magazine could be inferred (ibid).

By the 1930s it had become common “for mass circulating magazines (and for radio companies like CBS) to maintain readers’ panels. (...) Panellists were selected to represent different ages, occupations and income levels among the journal’s readers, and they were asked to answer a survey on matters like family size, husband’s occupation, type and size of home, furniture, equipment, gardens, domestic help, laundry methods, car ownership, income levels, interests and hobbies” (ibid). This way, a profile of the magazine’s audience was developed. These data were then used to persuade companies that an advertisement in a particular medium would reach the appropriate audience for the company’s products.

So far, survey research was conducted face to face or using written questionnaires that respondents needed to fill out and return to the researcher. Babbie (1995: 269) explains that until quite recently telephone surveys had a bad reputation. They tended to produce biased data, since they excluded poor people from the survey, as they often did not have a telephone. This is no longer the case, however, and telephone surveys are now widespread.

There are several indications, however, that survey-interview data do not always represent the object of research correctly, even when the sampling methods are appropriate. Dutka & Frankel (1997: 39) write that “response error is an inherent, critical part of all surveys, be they censuses or sample surveys”. They show, for example, how two separate surveys of the number of fish caught on party boats operating in Southern California yield vastly different estimates. One survey asked sports fishermen about the past year’s catch of different types of fish, and where they were caught (pier, private boat, party boat, etc.). The other data came from a census of party boat captains, who had to submit daily reports. These captains often did not make actual counts but gave estimates, which were unavoidably influenced by legal restrictions on size of catch (Dutka & Frankel 1997: 36). The sports fishermen’s estimates added up to over 11.5 million fish caught from party boats, while the captains’ reports only reached 3.8 million.

Another, better-known case where the numbers simply did not match, is the one where men claim to have had more sexual partners than women. Or rather, as became apparent in 2003: women claim to have had fewer sexual partners than men. In a 2003 experiment, researchers set out to find the cause of these different self-reportings by men and women. Respondents were asked to complete a
questionnaire in one of three conditions: anonymously, under threat of exposure, and attached to a fake polygraph. The discrepancy between men’s and women’s self-reportings was especially large when asked in an exposure threat condition in which the experimenter could potentially view participants’ responses. In this condition the women reported having had fewer sexual partners than the men. When respondents believed they were attached to a lie detector, the discrepancies between women’s and men’s answers all but disappeared, levelling out to the men’s reports (Alexander & Fisher 2003).

These findings indicate that respondents may, for a variety of reasons, give answers that are actually incorrect. Like the sports fishermen, they might have trouble recalling exact numbers. Or perhaps respondents want to hide illegal behaviour, such as over-fishing by party boat captains. Or, in the case of the women asked about their sexual behaviour, they may be worried about the impression they make on the interviewer.

In order to solve these problems, survey researchers can use additional methods of research. In the examples I just gave, two sets of survey data were used, one to check the validity of the other. Other methods use more objective data where possible. Arvidsson, for example, reports that the CBS radio channel conducted ‘pantry checks’ in the 1930s, where “an interviewer visited the homes of housewives on the panel over a period of several weeks to observe which brand names had appeared and disappeared” (2003: 460).

That kind of research can add valuable information to the data gathered through survey interviews. Observation without asking questions yields factual information “of actual behaviour rather than reports of intended or preferred behaviour” (Malhotra & Birks 2003: 248). Or, as Babbie (1995: 274) formulates it: “Surveys cannot measure social action; they can only collect self-reports of recalled past action or of prospective or hypothetical action”.

This type of unmediated information can also be obtained through the use of customer cards and loyalty programmes, hidden cameras, and ‘mystery clients’. With the latter method, a researcher may pose as a client, doing the things a normal client might do, thus gathering data on actual behaviour of employees of the organisation under analysis, rather than reportings of their own behaviour.

Direct observation and the data it yields make up for a weakness of survey interviews. Survey interview data will always be a report of the respondent’s behaviour or opinions, a report constructed in interaction with an interviewer. The observational methods are
designed to circumvent the situation in which the researcher is dependent on what the respondent is willing and able to report. Moreover, they can be a way to check to what extent answers were given because they are socially desirable or preferred more locally in the interaction of the interview.

Observation is also a good way to find out about information that is difficult to report. Unconscious behaviour, for example, such as the way a customer might browse the shelves in a store. Or things that a respondent can not remember, such as the price of tomato ketchup. Or things that he would rather not discuss or would even tell a lie about (Pelsmacker & van Kenhove 1996: 160-161).

Another way to get around respondents misrepresenting their own behaviour, feelings, convictions, etc. is by discussing them in a focus group. By actually increasing the interactional environment, respondents can be forced to defend or justify the opinions they claim to have (Wilkinson, in press). The truth of their claimed opinion or behaviour can be challenged by other participants, participants that might know each other, or who share enough characteristics that they might know, from their own experience, that the claim is unlikely to be a ‘true’ value.

In contrast to respondents in survey interviews, participants in a focus group discussion are encouraged to elaborate on the topic under discussion. This can yield valuable data that may well be overlooked in the restricted format of the standardised survey interview. Wilkinson (in press: 131) cites an example:

Fragment 1 (data and transcript: Wilkinson):

1 Moderator: Have you ever experienced racism or prejudice at your workplace?
2 Respondent: No, not in the workplace. I have experienced it elsewhere though.
3 Moderator: Where else? Where at?

In a survey-interview format, the respondent’s response may simply have been recorded as a “no”. Or, if the story that the respondent announces here does get told, it would probably not get much uptake. After all, the next question in the survey interview has been pre-formulated as well. In this focus group discussion, however, the story the respondent gets to tell “touches off a series of ‘second stories’ (...) providing a powerful, consensual display of the ‘racism or prejudice’ (...) they have experienced” (Wilkinson, in press: 135-136).

Both unobtrusive observation methods and focus groups supply information that could be overlooked or become biased in survey
Researchers can use these alternatives in order to circumvent the pitfalls of one-to-one survey interviews. Malhotra and Birks (2003: 332-334) cite several pitfalls, three of which are labelled as potential causes of the respondent’s inability to answer.

The first is the matter of whether the respondent is informed on the topic they are asked about. In other words, does the respondent know enough about the subject to offer a description or formulate an attitude about it? Malhotra and Birks write: “As a general rule, a ‘don’t know’ option appears to reduce uninformed responses” (2003: 332). This suggests that respondents do, at times, give these uninformed responses, especially if they are not offered such a ‘don’t know’ option. Indeed, Schuman and Presser (1981) show that up to thirty percent of respondents answers questions about issues on which they are not informed when they are not given the ‘don’t know’ option explicitly.

Second, survey researchers should take into account that a respondent may not remember their behaviour correctly or at all. “Evidence indicates that consumers are particularly poor at remembering quantities of products consumed. In situations where factual data were available for comparison, it was found that consumer reports of product usage exceeded actual usage by 100% or more” (Malhotra & Birks 2003: 332). They write that “the inability to remember leads to errors of omission, telescoping and creation”, where telescoping means that respondents remember an occasion as happening more recently than it actually did, and creation means that a respondent ‘remembers’ something that didn’t actually happen.

The third of these pitfalls of inability, is the respondent’s inability to articulate. He may have trouble coming up with an answer all by himself, while being perfectly able to pick the appropriate option from several answer categories. This third pitfall is overtly related to communication, but the previous two can easily be linked to interactional phenomena as well. ‘Uninformed answers’, and ‘recalling’ things that did not actually take place when prompted by an interviewer, are highly interactional phenomena. They happen in response to something else, and would probably never have happened if that particular prompt had not taken place.

These flaws, and the strategies survey researchers have found to make up for them, are a clear indication that interaction in survey interviews matters. If responses in survey interviews do not represent the real world correctly, it is important to determine how these responses are elicited and negotiated. This is not so much a matter of looking at what individual interviewers do to influence the
The respondent’s answers, but rather a matter of researching how the format of the survey interview itself influences respondent behaviour.

1.3 The theory of survey research

Standardized survey interviewing is a data-collection method so widespread in academic as well as in commercial and governmental research, that study books in social, marketing, and political research methodology cannot but include a section on the topic. Survey interviewing is a sub-discipline of survey research, “the administration of questionnaires to a sample of respondents selected from some population” (Babbie 1995: 276). Respondents can also complete such a questionnaire by themselves, in which case there need not be a researcher present.

In either case, a lot of attention needs to be given to questionnaire design. Malhotra and Birks (2003: 338) write that “deciding on question wording is perhaps the most critical and difficult task in developing a questionnaire.” Incorrect question design can lead to response error or even refusal to answer a question. The question should be designed in such a way that it means the same thing to all respondents, whatever their individual characteristics. In one particular paragraph, Malhotra and Birks show clearly how a typical survey question comes into being.

“A question should clearly define the issue being addressed. Consider the following question:

Which brand of shampoo do you use?

On the surface, this may seem to be a well-defined question, but we may reach a different conclusion when we examine it in terms of ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘where’. ‘Who’ in this question refers to the respondent. It is not clear, though, whether the researcher is referring to the brand the respondent uses personally or the brand used by the household. ‘What’ is the brand of shampoo. But what if more than one brand of shampoo is being used? Should the respondent mention the most preferred brand, the brand used most often, the brand used most recently, or the brand that comes to mind first? ‘When’ is not clear; does the researcher mean last time, last week, last month, last year, or ever? As for ‘where’, it is implied that the shampoo is used at home, but this is not stated clearly. A better wording for this question would be:
Which brand or brands of shampoo have you personally used at home during the last month? In the case of more than one brand, please list all the brands that apply.”
(Malhotra & Birks 2003: 338)

What becomes clear from this example is that, when designing a question for a standardised questionnaire, one needs to take into account all circumstances that might apply to the individual respondents that make up the population under survey. These circumstances must then be provided for in the question itself, so that the interviewer does not need to do anything apart from reading out the question. A poorly defined question, such as the one Malhotra and Birks use as a starting point, could “stimulate interaction between the respondent and interviewer, which in turn provides the interviewer with an opportunity to be inconsistent” (Fowler & Mangione 1990: 86).

While the first version of the question used as an example by Malhotra & Birks could easily occur in everyday interaction, the second version looks like a typical survey question. Compared to the first version, the second has a much more complex structure. In Chafe’s terms (1982), several pieces of information have been integrated into one sentence.

Because we can see the first, non-integrated version of the question next to the integrated version, it is easy to see what pieces of information have been added to the sentence, and how questionnaire designers do this. In the accompanying text the writers explain that the question needs to set clear boundaries for what kind of shampoo use is being asked about. In their example, they want respondents to limit their answer to shampoo used by them personally at home in the last month. These three pieces of extra information are integrated into the original question, instead of giving them a separate, independent sentence (or “idea unit”, Chafe 1982).

Two of these pieces of information are integrated through the use of prepositional phrases. Chafe (1982) lists the prepositional phrase as one of the features of written language, because they occur far more often in writing than they do in spoken interaction. They work to get more information into one sentence, instead of giving each piece of information a sentence of its own. In the quoted example, “at home” and “during the last month” are integrated into the question in this way.

The improved question thus takes into account difficulties the respondent might have when answering this question. Shampoo used in the gym or in a hotel room do not need to be listed, and neither do
shampoo brands used longer than one month ago. However, the question assumes that the respondent uses shampoo, and that he has a home. These may be safe assumptions for certain populations, but it could lead to problems when researching the behaviour of, say, homeless persons, or of a population on such a tight budget that they use soap or dishwashing liquid to wash their hair. For topics where researchers expect such problems to occur, they can include a screening question. For example, before asking a respondent which brand of cigarettes he smokes, they are asked whether they smoke cigarettes at all.

The questionnaire should also make clear what kind of answer the respondent is supposed to give. In the Malhotra and Birks (2003) example, the second version of the question specifies that the respondent should list all brands of shampoo used at home during the last month, an improvement of the first version which was unclear on that point. Still, respondents might not know what constitutes a brand. They may report using three kinds of Sanex shampoo, when perhaps just “Sanex” would do, or the other way around. Questionnaire designers need to anticipate all such potential sources of confusion, possibly leading to measurement error.

While this strategy of designing a question for every possible respondent can make questions longwinded and difficult to understand, other recommendations work to promote understandability. Malhotra and Birks (2003: 338-339) recommend using ordinary and unambiguous words, taking into account the meaning those words might have to the respondents. Brinkman (1994: 51-52) as well as Babbie (1995: 145) recommend avoiding negatively formulated items. And Babbie (1995: 145-146) as well as Malhotra and Birks (2003: 339-340) instruct the questionnaire designer to avoid biased terms and leading questions.

The prevalent question format in survey interviews is the closed-ended or structured form. There are two important reasons for this. First, having the respondent choose from pre-formulated answer categories facilitates processing these answers for quantitative analysis. It guarantees a limited number of different answers, and these answers do not need to be coded before they can be quantified. Second, structured questions take the burden of taking notes from the interviewer. With multiple-choice, dichotomous, and scaled answer categories, interviewers can simply tick the appropriate box.

From a standardisation perspective, the latter feature of structured questions is particularly of importance. With open-ended questions,
interviewers need to be able to judge the relevance of responses, as well as record them correctly. This means that it is almost inevitable that these interviewers will select which aspects of the respondent’s answer to write down, automatically leaving out other aspects. Also, it may come to depend on the interviewer’s probing behaviour how many answers a respondent provides to an open-ended question.

Open-ended items in survey questionnaire can thus lead to interviewer error. Interviewers need to be instructed about what kinds of answers are acceptable, whether more than one answer is acceptable, in what way to probe for an answer, and how to record the answers properly. Non-standardised interviewer behaviour can lead to unreliable data.

This brings us to the role of the interviewer, because even when questions are closed-ended, the interviewer is still the intermediary between questionnaire and respondent. First, they relay the question from the written script to the respondent and, second, they relay the respondent’s answer back to the written format of the questionnaire. Using an interviewer instead of letting respondents fill out a questionnaire by themselves has certain advantages. They yield higher response rates and lower ‘don’t know’-type answers. They can notice when a respondent clearly misinterprets a question or part of it, and correct it if necessary. And they can notice other characteristics of respondents, such as their gender, race (if face-to-face), if they speak with a foreign accent, and the way in which they react to the study (Babbie 1995: 264).

However, interviewers should not influence the outcome of the interview. The way they ask questions or present answer categories should not influence the answers that respondents subsequently select. If the same respondent were interviewed by different interviewers, he should ideally give exactly the same answers in each interview. “The interviewer, then, should be a neutral medium through which questions and answers are transmitted” (Babbie 1995: 264).

In order to accomplish this neutrality, interviewers in face-to-face settings are advised to dress according to the norms of “middle-class neatness” (Babbie 1995: 266). Of course, even over the telephone respondents can easily observe such characteristics as sex, race, and even age. However, Fowler and Mangione (1990: 98) explain that, in spite of a large effort of finding associations between such demographic characteristics and interviewer error, “there are comparatively few instances when such associations have been found.”
Interviewers need to behave in a neutral manner, in order to promote the standardisation of the measurement process.

"In all sciences, meaningful measurement occurs by applying the same procedure across a set of situations so that differences in the readings that result can be compared and interpreted as indicating real differences in what is being measured. (...) The goal of standardisation is that each respondent be exposed to the same question experience, and that the recording of answers be the same, too, so that any differences in the answer can be correctly interpreted as reflecting differences between respondents rather than differences in the process that produced the answer" (Fowler & Mangione 1990: 14).

This kind of standardisation requires interviewers to read questions exactly as worded. Questionnaires are designed with a lot of care for detail, and changing the wording slightly may have consequences for the validity (and reliability) of the respondent’s answer. In order to achieve this Babbie (1995: 266) writes that interviewers should be familiar with the questionnaire to the same extent as “the actor reading lines in a play or motion picture. The lines must be read as naturally as though they constituted a natural conversation, but that conversation must follow exactly the language set down in the questionnaire”. Interviewers should also record responses exactly, and probe in an appropriate way (Babbie 1995: 266-267).

Both questionnaire design and the standardisation of interviewer behaviour are based on stimulus-response theory. As long as the stimulus is administered to all subjects in the same way, the differences in responses given can only be attributed to differences in characteristics of those subjects. “It must be assumed that a questionnaire item will mean the same thing to every respondent, and every given response must mean the same when given by different respondents” (Babbie 1995: 264).

Survey researchers thus need to adopt a pipeline or conduit view of how in interviews the stimulus is applied to respondents. In this view of communication, a speaker sends a message to a hearer. This message is encoded into words and needs to be decoded by the hearer in order to recover the message as originally intended by the speaker. When the encoding of the message is kept constant, each hearer will be able to recover the message as it was intended by the sender (Shannon & Weaver 1962, Reddy 1979).
Survey researchers are only interested in specific characteristics of their respondents. I wrote earlier that obviously Mary and Joseph were a fascinating couple, but that the survey researcher who may have interviewed them will not have been interested in any of that. Survey research aims to turn living respondents into statistical graphs, and thus necessarily focuses on a limited number of features of those respondents.

“The individual respondents are of interest only because they are members of the population to be described. Typically, they are part of a representative sample of that population. Regardless of how they were chosen, the answers of individuals are of interest because they will help the researcher describe the population from which they were drawn, not because there is any intrinsic interest in the answers of these individuals per se” (Fowler & Mangione 1990: 12).

Returning to the example given earlier, survey researchers may be interested in which brand of shampoo a respondent uses. They take into account that respondents may have lifestyles that force them to wash their hair away from home, use more than one brand, or switch brands over time. However, they are only interested in that one specific aspect of the respondent’s behaviour: which brand of shampoo, and not in the underlying reasons.

1.4 The written form of questions
Surveys aim to find out how certain characteristics are distributed over a particular population. In order to find this out, interviewers ask respondents from that particular population about these characteristics. All these respondents need to be asked the same questions. This means that interviewers ask specific respondents pre-formulated questions instead of designing their talk for each respondent individually. The questionnaire is designed in advance with a ‘universal’ rather than a ‘specific’ respondent in mind. This universal respondent could have any features, and the most salient of these need to be taken into account in the design of the questions.

This means that survey questions are designed to apply to all possible respondents. However, their pre-formulated nature means that survey questions cannot easily be adjusted to individual respondents and their characteristics. I will illustrate this with an example.

The following is the fourth question in an interview about adult education. The interviewer has asked whether the respondent has
taken part in any courses or education in the past five years, and she has answered that she has not. The next question, transcribed here, asks about her reasons for not taking any courses. In line 5 the respondent indicates that she is “too old now” for this, and she supplies her age as evidence (line 7).

Fragment 2:

1 IR: in the past five years you have not taken part in a course or education=
2 IE: =n o ]
3 IR: [can] you say why not
4 
5 IE: → yes because I- wu:h I (.) I am too old now
6 (1.0)
7 IE: → I am seventy-one
8 
9 IR: -e yes
10 (0.7) ((tik tik))
11 IR: you (0.3) you say that (.) am too old (0.4) °>seventy-one<

Knowing the age of one’s interlocutor can have important consequences for the interaction. One may decide to use the polite form of address, for example. But one may also build certain assumptions on this kind of knowledge. For example, seventy-one-year-olds in the Netherlands are usually retired from work and do not have young children. However, the questionnaire in this interview contains questions related to both these topics, and they need to be asked and answered.

One of the subsequent questions the interviewer asks, is whether it is important to the respondent if a course offers childcare. For a
seventy-one-year-old this matter is not likely to be applicable. However, the script dictates that this question is asked, irrespective of the respondent's age. In the following transcript we can see this part of the interview.

Fragment 3:

1 IR: is it important that there's childcare at the course
2 (0.5) ((tik))
3 IE: oh no not at all
4 we don't have any children anymore

1 IR: 't belangrijk dat er kinderopvang is bij de cursus
2 (0.5) ((tik))
3 IE: oh nee helemaal niet
4 we hebben geen kinderen meer

In this example the interviewer does not orient to the question as inappropriate, apart from perhaps the hesitation halfway through the question. In fragment 4, however, the display is much more overt. Here, the interviewer gives the respondent a list of reasons one might have to follow a course. After every reason, the respondent needs to state whether that is very important, important, or not so important a reason to sign up for a course. One of the reasons offered is the chance of advancement in the workplace. Just like with childcare, this matter is not likely to be applicable to this seventy-one-year-old. This time, however, the interviewer acknowledges the inappropriateness of the question (line 2): “well, you’re seventy one”. After this acknowledgement he still probes for an answer by listing all the answer categories (lines 4-6).

Fragment 4:

1 IR: to have more security or chance of promotion in my present job well you are seventy-one
2 IE: yea
3 IR: is it very important important or not so important a reason for you to take part in courses or education or is that reason not applicable to you
4 (0.4) ((tik))
5 IE: no that is not applicable
Both these examples show that the written form of the survey interview can be the cause of somewhat inappropriate question-answer sequences. In fragment 4 we see that the interviewer displayed sensitivity to the inappropriateness of the question but, perhaps according to instructions, he nevertheless did ask the question.

From these two examples it becomes clear that even though questions are designed to be understood in the same way by all respondents, they may still be problematic to some. This contrasts with recipient design in types of interaction that are not as pre-structured as survey interviews. Speakers take into account what they know about their co-participants and their background. Moreover, they take into account what they assume their co-participants to know.

Sacks (1992: Lectures Vol II, Fall 1971: 438) formulates the norm speakers and recipients orient to as follows: “A speaker should, on producing the talk he does, orient to his recipient.” Recipient design dictates, among other things, that one should not tell a recipient something they already know. That implies that you should not ask questions to which you already know the answer, because it will lead to someone telling you something you already know. Though survey researchers try to avoid this kind of situation, for example by letting interviewers simply observe the gender of the respondent rather than having them ask for it, interviewers nonetheless end up in situations where they ask questions to which they can know the answer already.

1.5 Monologic / dialogic approach of language

Language researchers traditionally approach language from one of two perspectives. One approach is to view language as a system about which it is interesting to know how individual utterances are built up and how they could be understood. The other approach views language as discourse, where each utterance is analysed for how it works with the previous utterance and with the next, and how it is
built to work within that context. The first approach has been called ‘monologism’, the second ‘dialogism’ (for a comprehensive overview, see Linell 1998).

Monologism sees language as a system that is deployed by its users to communicate meaning. Hence, as Linell (1998: 26) describes, language comes before communication, it exists before and without communication, and its structure can be described without referring to communication. Linguistic approaches within this tradition will often analyse single sentences without any context.

Communication, then, is seen as the use of this abstract entity by speakers. Speakers use the building blocks of language and put them together according to the rules of that language in order to communicate messages to listeners. Because the contextual information of such acts of communication is not considered, this approach treats speakers and hearers as individuals, rather than as two participants involved in a joint action, like an ensemble (Clark 1996: 3).

More importantly, monologism approaches language as a stable entity. Language allows for endless combinations of its parts into new structures that carry new meaning, but the meaning of one of those structures is considered to be stable.

“Each linguistic expression (unless it is structurally or lexically ambiguous) is assumed to have one single semantic representation (just like codes are based on expressions with singular meanings), and this semantic representation is always activated, used and made relevant whenever its expression occurs in discourse, even if additional interpretations (“indirect” meanings, utterance meanings) are often computed in situ.” (Linell 1998: 27-28).

As context is not taken into account when analysing language from this perspective, it is also not considered of influence when analysing discourse.

This assumption is precisely what the theory of standardised survey research is based on. By keeping the wording of questions constant across respondents, their meaning is assumed to remain constant as well. In the shampoo example cited in §1.3, we saw how survey researchers attempt to strip questions of their ambiguities by clarifying ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘when’, and ‘where’ the question is targeting. In that example we saw how survey researchers attempt to predict what kind of understandings of the question are possible, and how they try to pre-empt the occurrence of ‘wrong’ understandings.
While most of the ambiguities solved in the second version of the shampoo question were only implicit in the original question, it did indeed contain one lexical ambiguity. 'You' is both the second person singular as the second person plural personal pronoun and could thus refer to the respondent as an individual or to the respondent as part of a larger group of people, such as a family. In this case 'you and your family' is the wrong understanding that the writers try to avoid by reformulating 'you' to 'you personally'.

From this idea we can extrapolate that, as long as we avoid lexical ambiguity, our recipients will understand our utterances the way we intend them. In following next extract of an everyday telephone conversation, however, we will see that matters are not that simple. The object of discussion in this conversation is the word 'yes'. 'Yes' is an unambiguous lexical object, but in this particular environment the object leads to problems in understanding.

Fragment 5 (Data and transcript: H. Mazeland):

1 Bart: well e:::e:h (it's still) quite busy.
2 (0.6)
3 Ans: hm.
4 (0.5)
5 Ans: i can hear it y↓es
6 (0.5)
7 Bart: yeah.
8 (1.2)
9 "one two threeh⁶ (0.6) well three (are just **) and two three four
10 (sit) five six: are still sitting there.
11 (2.5)
12 so e:h that's not bad "at all tonight
13 (.)
14 Ans: → thH y↓E:s, hh
15 (0.4)
16 Bart: wh↓y
17 (0.7)
18 Ans: ah we:ll e:hh
19 (1.2)
20 Cat: ((miauwn))
21 (2.3)
22 ((miauwn))
23 (6.2)
24 Bart: wh↑gt
25 (6.2)
26 Ans: E:H I DON'T KNOW ((BAT↑:RT))
Bart: what don't you know.

Ans: → YEs, e:h i say yEs,

→ yes WHAT yEs

Bart: 'yes,

Ans: → Je:us! i have to- every word ↓↓↓↓ i have to account for. i have

to explain four times H

Bart: nou e::e:h ('t is nog) lekker druk.

Ans: hm.

Ans: 'k hoor 't j↓ah

Bart: jah.

° een twee drieh° (0.6) nou drié (gaan net **) en twee drie vijf

° zitt'n vijf zes: zitt'n 'r nog.

(dus e:h dat valt vanavond °reuze mee

°)

Ans:→ thH J↓A↓h, hh

Bart: wat d↓an

°)

Ans: nou ja:h e:hh

Kat: ((omiauw))

°)

Bart: wat at

°)

Ans: E:H IK WEET 't NIET ((tRA↓:RT))

Bart: wat weet je njet.

Ans: → JAh, e:h ik zeg jaAh,

ja WAT ja↓ah
At the start of this fragment Bart changes the topic after a problematic opening sequence. He switches to a positive topic, telling Ans that tonight is a busy night at the restaurant or bar where he is at work while he is making this phone call. In lines 9-10 he describes the situation, but this does not get any uptake from Ans during the 2.5 seconds of silence in line 11. After this, Bart provides an assessment of his own story: “so eh that’s not bad at all tonight” (line 12). This gets a response from Ans: “·thhh YE:s hhh” (line 14).

We can see that Bart treats Ans’s response as problematic. In line 16, he challenges her response with “wat dan?” which translates as ‘why?’ or ‘what do you mean?’ With this, he displays that something about the response was problematic, that “yes” was perhaps not the required response, or that the way it was produced by Ans made it problematic. After a long delay this issue is taken up by Ans in line 26, culminating in her complaint that she has to account for every word she says, that she has to explain it four times (line 36-37).

This example shows clearly that the meaning of unambiguous lexical objects can become ambiguous depending on the environment they occur in. In this environment the meaning of Ans’s yes-response to Bart’s story is ambiguous, not just for the analyst, but overtly for the participants. The environment this ‘yes’ occurs in is not only following Bart’s story and his subsequent assessment, but also after a short delay (line 13) and an extended inbreath by Ans, delaying her response further. Mazeland (2002) shows that the ‘yes’ takes the place of a second assessment. Because Ans does not respond to Bart’s first assessment with an agreeing second assessment, she can be heard to be in disagreement with Bart (Mazeland 2002).

There is another feature of the ‘yes’ that exposes its antagonistic nature. The token is shaped purely as an acknowledgement of the preceding talk, rather than as an enthusiastic receipt or as a topicaliser. Its intonation falls and then rises to mid, it is breathy, and it is followed by an outbreath, giving the turn the character of a sigh. These prosodic features, combined with its lateness, make the utterance hearable as hesitant, annoyed. Moreover, the fact that Ans says nothing more than “ja” means that she does the bare minimum to acknowledge Bart’s ‘news’. That fact only becomes clear when
looking at what happens after “ja”: Ans breathes out hearably for 0.4 seconds and then falls silent, after which Bart takes the floor to initiate repair.

The features of placement and production make this unambiguous lexical item into a problematic utterance in this particular context. One can imagine that an adjacently placed, upbeat version of “ja” would receive a different uptake by its recipient, as it would express a different stance of the speaker to the prior talk. So, while ‘yes’ can be used without problem and unambiguously as a response turn in many environments, this is not a guaranteed feature of the lexical item itself.

I used this example to illustrate the dialogic approach. Dialogism “regards every cognitive and/or communicative act as an “answer”, as responsive to something (often only implicit) in the context” (Linell 1998: 35-36). Which understandings are opened up by such an act is dependent on the context in which it occurs. The lexical object ‘yes’ has a different meaning after a yes/no-question than after an availability check (A: “Bart?” B: “yes?”), just as it has a different meaning halfway through a story than at the end of a story.

Monologism considers communication successful “if the message arrives at the destination, in the listener’s mind, in the same form as the intended message had in the speaker’s mind, i.e. it has not, on its way from source to destination, been distorted by any kind of ‘noise’ (such as sloppy expression on the speakers part, actual noise in the channel, listener’s inattention, lack of knowledge or inability to decode the speaker’s speech, etc.)” (Linell 1998: p.23).

The dialogic perspective on communication, on the other hand, stresses reciprocity rather than one-way understanding. “The listener has to try to take the speaker’s perspective, and the speaker must monitor his utterances on the premises of the listener, and somehow anticipate the latter’s perspectivized reactions and attune his own perspective to that which he (implicitly or explicitly) assumes the listener to entertain” (Rommetveit in Linell 1998: 42). Communication can be considered successful only after three steps have been performed. An utterance by A communicating a meaning to B, a response by B to the utterance displaying B’s understanding of the utterance, and a reaction to B’s turn, confirming if B’s understanding of the first utterance was correct (Meade in Linell 1998: 45). Without the third step, A can of course know if B understood his utterance correctly, but B has no way of knowing the same, “hence, no mutual ground and shared knowledge have been established” (ibid.).
If we take these two approaches back to the data extract, we can see how strongly the resulting analyses contrast. From the monologic point of view, we can describe Ans’s ‘yes’-turn as successful. It is an everyday item in Bart’s own language, it was articulated very clearly, the line was clear, and we can hear no interfering background noises. He responds to the turn, displaying that he heard it. Thus, Ans’s message (“yes”) was most probably communicated successfully to Bart. From the dialogic point of view, however, communication was not successful. The action Ans performs with the problematic turn does not become clear to her recipient. This is evident from the way Bart treats her utterance: the delayed change of speakership and of course the fact that Bart initiates repair on Ans’s turn.

Interestingly, Ans takes the monologic perspective. She does not respond to Bart by explaining that she was sighing and saying “yes” in a bored way because she is annoyed and does not want to talk about little nothings while they are in the middle of a crisis. She does not say explicitly what action her utterance performed: doing being an uncooperative recipient to a story. She could have made this action explicit by saying something like “I just don’t feel like listening to your nonsense at the moment”. Instead, she treats the meaning of her utterance as self-evident by repeating it four times (lines 30-32, repeated here):

\[
\begin{align*}
30 \text{ Ans: } & \rightarrow \text{ YEs, e:h i say yEs, } \\
31 \text{ (.) } & \\
32 \text{ yes WHAT yE↓s }
\end{align*}
\]

In lines 36-37 (repeated here) Ans makes her stance towards communication even more explicit:

\[
\begin{align*}
36 \text{ Ans: } & \rightarrow \text{ JE:sus! i have to- every word ↓i sgy↓ i have to account for. i have } \\
37 \text{ to explain four times H }
\end{align*}
\]

Just like many linguists (and many language users) she treats her words as carrying inherent meaning. This meaning is supposedly activated when a particular word is used, and the recipient can know the meaning if he knows the word. Reddy (1979) calls this view of communication the conduit metaphor, and shows how deeply this view is ingrained in our minds. In §1.3 of this chapter I have referred to this view of communication as the grounds for standardisation in survey research. In that view recipients of talk are just hearers,
passively receiving utterances and interpreting them within their own heads.

However, sense making is a much more interactive activity. Dialogism recognises that recipients have an effect on the design of the talk. In order to get the same meaning across to two different recipients, I may have to design my talk in two different ways. I might, for example, use different descriptions of places and people depending on how familiar my recipient is with these places and people. In that way, my recipient shapes my talk.

Respondents in survey interviews do not have this shaping influence on the interviewers’ utterances. Speakers in non-standardised interaction not only have the freedom, but also the obligation to adjust their utterances to their audience, but this compelling rule of recipient design is necessarily loosened in survey interviews. Each question is exactly formulated in advance and is put down in writing. Apart from the fact that the written format makes it nearly impossible for interviewers to adjust their questions to individual respondents (see for example fragments 3 and 4 in §1.4), it also influences the style of the questions. I will discuss the consequences of this in the next section.

1.6 Written sentences, to be spoken

I have mentioned the standardisation in survey interviews, and some of the consequences of this standardisation for the interaction survey interviews give rise to. What I have not yet discussed however, are the consequences of the way in which interviews are standardised, namely in a written form. Written and spoken language have been studied by linguists for differences. Some of these differences are significant for my research, because in survey interviews written language is used in a spoken, interactional setting. One might expect that mixing the two has consequences for the interaction.

Researchers of spoken and written language treat them as inhabiting two different worlds. Writing is typically used to convey messages to recipients who are not present in the same physical space or in the same temporal space. Because recipients are not co-present, writers can edit and re-edit their utterances before the recipient gets to read them. This editing and re-editing means that writing takes longer than speaking: people write fewer words per minute than they speak. It also results in greater syntactic complexity compared to the construction of spoken language.
Speaking is typically used to convey messages to recipients who are co-present in physical as well as temporal space, or just in temporal space when we use a telephone. Recipients receive the utterances as soon as they are spoken, which means that the speaker needs to get it right immediately or can only edit the utterance after it has already been delivered, for example by self-repair. This means that each piece of information is usually expressed in a unit of its own, leading to a style that Chafe (1982) has called “fragmentation”.

The co-presence of speaker and recipient also means that speakers can monitor their recipients to see how their utterance is being treated, and if necessary adjust their talk accordingly. Utterances are produced and responded to in real time, which gives the participants the opportunity to secure intersubjectivity (Schegloff 1992). Rather than that recipients get to respond after, say, five minutes of talk, or that they can cut in at any given time during an ongoing turn-constructional unit, they instead have the opportunity to do a turn at talk after each turn constructional unit (TCU). This turn at talk is understood to be responsive to the immediately prior talk, and will thus reflect an understanding of that prior.

Goodwin (1979) even showed that, in face-to-face interaction, speakers monitor their recipients during the delivery of a TCU. It turns out that speakers can adjust a TCU that is already under way in response to the behaviour of its intended recipient. Schegloff (1995) showed similar strategies by speakers in telephone conversations. With writing, this is typically impossible: the whole written text gets delivered to its recipient at once and it can not be changed while the recipient is reading it. This means that the writer needs to take into account how his text may be understood by its possible recipients, anticipate potential problems in understanding, and solve those problems before the text reaches its recipients.

So far, writing and speaking are two clearly different activities in which both the producer of the text as its recipient have very different tasks. Modern technology, however, provides many crossover areas in which the worlds of spoken and written language touch and the boundaries between them blur. In chatting on the net, a form of computer-mediated communication (CMC), for example, information is transferred through writing. But it shares with spoken interaction that utterances are produced and received (almost) simultaneously. This feature leads to short reaction windows, meaning that utterances need to be produced quickly, leaving little time for the revision typical of written language.
Though the technology leads to all sorts of interactive difficulties, like the lack of simultaneous feedback and disrupted adjacency (Herring 1999), it also leads to language use that is wildly different from typical ‘written language’. Significantly, most research approaches this type of written interaction as derived from spoken interaction, rather than as rooted in traditional writing. Hancock and Dunham, for example, analyse real-time CMC data as “impooverished” face-to-face (i.e. spoken) interaction, and do not refer to the connection with traditional writing at all (2001: 94-95).

On the continuum from spoken to written language, email lies somewhat closer to the written extreme than the real-time CMC discussed above. But still, research suggests that email can be viewed as “speech by other means”, because of the characteristics it shares with spoken interaction (Baron 1998). Users treat email as ephemeral, response should often be quick, and writers tend not to edit their texts (Baron 1998: 151-2). The language used in emails is also analysed as spokenlike on several dimensions (Collot & Belmore in Baron 1998: 153-4).

Baron describes the language of emails as a “creolization” of spoken and written language. The linguistic features of emails do not strictly follow either the spoken or the written language as described by various writers (of which Baron gives a nice summary in that same article). Moreover, he writes that certain emails warrant a more spokenlike style of writing than others, which means that it is difficult to describe emails as a genre (see also Gains 1999).

With these forms of computer-mediated communication at least one thing is still clear: the texts are written by a sender and received in that same form by the intended recipient. There is no intermediary between sender and recipient, someone to change the format into speech. So, even though Baron (1998: 140, 164-166) disputes this up to a point, we are still dealing with writing, if not with written language.

In other crossover areas, this distinction is not so clear anymore. Take human-computer interaction (HCI), an area of research where the aim is to get computers to interact with people. Though the computer’s utterances have the form of speaking, they have been produced well before the interaction in which they are used, actually takes place. In other words, the recipient is not co-present when the utterance is authored, but only hears the computer’s reproduction. This means that not just any interaction can take place, but only those kinds of interaction in which the utterances prepared by the computer make sense.
Wooffitt and MacDermid explain how this type of interaction puts a strain on the human interlocutor. “Telephone home-banking services often rely on inflexible menu-led systems; here the complex problems of word recognition are avoided by ensuring that a menu of turn options guides the user through a series of pre-recorded or “canned” questions that require no more than elementary answers” (1995: 127). In cases like this, speech has so many features of writing that perhaps it would be better not to consider it speech at all.

Another area in which written and spoken language touch and influence each other is, of course, in standardised survey interviews. Like in human-computer interaction, the utterances of one party in the interaction have been formulated in advance, though in survey interviews it is a human interviewer who reproduces the text instead of a computer. And, just like in human-computer interaction, the standardisation of the utterances of the interviewer also limits the respondent’s options.

In §1.4 I illustrated how the pre-formulated character of survey questions can put interviewers in the position of having to ask the respondent irrelevant questions. I showed the example of the 71-year-old woman who had to answer questions about childcare and her job, while in the Netherlands it is extraordinary for people that age to have a job or be responsible for young children. In a non-standardised setting, one would perhaps frame such a question negatively (‘you don’t need childcare, right?’) or not ask it at all.

Standardisation also means that questions are designed to get a particular range of answers. Sometimes the question that the interviewer needs to ask next is contingent on which answer category the respondent has selected. However, the survey interview can only take into account those answers that are part of the script. In the case cited in §1.2 as an example for interaction in a focus group, we saw something happening that would not be possible in a standardised survey interview:

Fragment 1 repeated:

1 Moderator: Have you ever experienced racism or prejudice at your workplace?
2 Respondent: No, not in the workplace. I have experienced it elsewhere though.
3 Moderator: Where else? Where at?

The pre-formulated answer categories would force an interviewer in a similar situation to select “no” as the answer to the question.
Moreover, the next question would be contingent on that answer: the interviewer would not ask for details about the racism or prejudice, like this moderator does. He would simply have to ask the next question on the script, and prejudice at the workplace has become a dead end.

In the following fragment we can see how the answer categories influence the run-off of the interview, in spite of what the respondent has actually said. This survey asks readers of a particular magazine about their opinion of that magazine. The interviewer asks the respondent whether she has read the latest edition yet, or if she has only leafed through it quickly. The respondent answers that she has only leafed through it quickly and indicates, in answer to the next question, that that is because she receives many magazines that she reads when it is convenient, and that she has not done that yet. From this answer in particular it is clear that this respondent has not read the magazine at all, apart from perhaps the captions.

Fragment 6:

1 IR: =≈kay .HH have you read or skimmed the Large magazine or have
2 you only leafed through it quickly
3 IE: [on top line] leafed through it quickly
4 ... (6 lines omitted)
5 IR: .hh can you indicate why you have not read ((title)) number two
6 ... (0.2)
7 IE: h heheh .hH hh
8 IR: so why you only leafed through it quickly
9 IE: e-e- E:: hh
10 because I e-h, .h >let’s see< yes y- n- well receive quite a few eh
11 me I read it but that -i didn’t get around
12 lo that yet .hh
13 IR: =≈kee .HH heeft u ’t GRote magazine al gelezen of ingezien of heeft
14 u ’t alleen nog maar even vluchtlig doorgebladerd
15 IE: al het en nog maar
16 IE: vluchtlig doorgebladerd
17 ... (6 lines omitted)
After this question, the interviewer needs to ask a series of questions about the individual items in that particular edition of the magazine. For each item, the interviewer wants to know if the respondent has already read it or is planning to read it in the future. The answer categories for this question are:

- Has read.................................1,
- Is planning to read.......................2,
- Not read, not planning to read...........3,

For each item, the interviewer has to repeat all three answer categories, in order not to influence the respondent in her answering process. In other words, the interviewer should not assume that the first answer category does not apply for this respondent, based on what the respondent said in fragment 5. So, even though the interviewer has the knowledge available that the respondent most probably did not read any of the items in the magazine, standardisation does not allow her to make that assumption. This leads to awkward interactions. The respondent has the magazine in front of her, and she looks through it on the instructions of the interviewer. For every item in the magazine, the respondent has to indicate whether she has read it, is planning to read it, or is not interested in reading it.

In the next fragment we can see one of these questions. It is the fourth question in this series, and for each of them the interviewer has repeated all three answer categories. Here you can find them in lines 3 and 5. In line 4 the respondent says that she always reads this item.
This response leads to some trouble: after first accepting the answer, the interviewer initiates repair in line 10, double-checking if the respondent meant to say that she had already read it.

Fragment 7:

1 IR: then we get to: page -eight and ↓nine↑the instruments
2 IE: ↓y:ES↑
3 IR: ca↓lender:↓=have you read this, still planning↑
4 IE: → eh yes [I always read through] this yes
5 IR: ↓or do you skip it↓
6   (0.7)
7 IR: is (0.2) planning to read↑=
8   =.th on eh page nine there’s or-
9   (0.3)
10 IR: → what do you mean ↓that you’ve already read it↑=
11 IE: → =.h well NO I HAVE ONLY LOOKED
12 ↑THROUGH IT] ↓QUICKLY↑RIGHT↑=and I eh
13 IR: [↑okay↓] [yes-]
14 IE: ↑base m'y answers a bit on the [previous ]
15 IR: [okay↓] [(no then no then)] it’s clear to me
16 IE: Y:EA=
17 IR: ↓.h on page nine there’s the column “two men on a bike↓”=
18 =have you read this column↑ still planning to↑ or no intention↓
19   (0.4)
20 IE: c::h h yes I always read that↓
21   (0.7)
22 IR: ↓is planning to↑ .hh on page ten and eleven there’s the ↓bike shop↑

1 IR: dan komen we bij: bladzijde -acht en ↓negen↑de instrumenten
2 IE: ↓j:A↑
3 IR: ka↓lender:↓=heeft u dit gelezen, nog van plan↑
4 IE: → eh ja [dit lees ik altijd wel effe] door ja
5 IR: ↓of slaat u ‘t over↓
6   (0.7)
7 IR: wel van (0.2) plan om te lezen↑=
8   =.th op eh bladzijde negen staat of-
9   (0.3)
10 IR: → wat bedoelt u ↓dat u ’m al gelezen heeft↑=
11 IE: → =.h nou NEE IK IK HEB ‘M ALLEEN NOG MAAR
12 VLUCHTIG↑DOORGE↓NOMEN↑HE↑=en ik eh
13 IR: [↑okee↓] [ja-]
14 IE: [ga ‘n b]leetje uit van de ↓vorige:
The interviewer’s repair in line 10 gets a clear reaction from the respondent. In line 11 she first disconfirms the interviewer’s candidate answer, after which she repeats her response shown in fragment 6: she has only looked through it quickly. She uses nearly the same formulation as in her earlier answer, through which she indicates that she is repeating herself.

Fragment 6:

3 IE: leafed through it quickly

Fragment 7:

11 IE: \(\text{she?}\), translated with “right?”, which also displays that this is a repetition, that she is not supplying new information but says something that was available for the interviewer to know.

From this extract it becomes clear that the respondent orients to the rules of everyday interaction. Information that has been exchanged earlier in the interaction can be considered common ground and can be used as a basis for understanding new information. For example, if I say that I hate dogs because I think they are smelly and need too much attention, it would be odd to ask me if I own a dog. However, it is still possible that I own a dog; I just happen to hate it, or maybe my dog is not smelly and does not need any attention. In everyday interaction, we would work with the assumption that I do not own a dog. Me owning a dog would indeed be a surprise after my negative statement about dogs. Survey interviewers are not supposed to make such pragmatic deductions; I can say that I hate dogs, they still have to check whether I own a dog. Just like the elderly respondent in fragments 2, 3, and 4 said that she
was 71 years old still leaves the minute possibility that she wants advancement in her job or that she needs childcare.

The same happens here. The respondent has indicated that she has only leafed through the magazine quickly, but she may still have read one or two items. For the survey designers it is not possible to know what kind of understanding individual respondents might have of “leafing through quickly”. That is why, when respondents select that answer category, the answer categories for the subsequent questions are not adjusted in such a way as to assume that respondents have not read a single item in the magazine.

In all these examples, recipient design is lacking. The speaker does not take into account what he already knows about his recipient when formulating his next utterance. This is a consequence of the fact that survey interviews are designed in advance, for a universal instead of a specific recipient, and that standardisation requires interviewers to follow the script to the letter. In live interaction, this can lead to awkward moments and actual trouble in communication.

Another consequence of the fact that survey interviews are based on a written script, is that the questions are syntactically more complex than spoken language. Linguistic and psycholinguistic research has shown that spoken and written versions of a language have different features or contain certain features to different degrees. Chafe (1982, 1985, 1988 and with Danielewicz 1987) did important research to identify and explain these differences. Among other things, he did a detailed analysis of American English in four different contexts: conversations, lectures, letters, and academic papers. He found that written and spoken language differ in variety and level of vocabulary, as well as in clause and sentence construction.

Chafe and Danielewicz (1987) characterise written language as having a more varied vocabulary, containing fewer hedges, consisting of longer intonation units, and of sentences with more elaborate syntactical constructions. They attribute these differences to the fact that the linguistic features that characterise written language, require more processing effort than speakers can devote to their talk. This is caused by the fact that talk is produced rapidly and in real time, while written language is produced at a slower rate. Written language can be revised and rewritten before it is released to its audience, and thus has a higher level of complexity.

In their article, Chafe and Danielewicz focus on the production of language and identify psycholinguistic factors limiting or advancing the level or quality of the resulting language. In his 1982 article, Chafe
also looks at how the immediate presence or absence of a recipient influences the different varieties of language he has analysed. He observes that speaking is faster than writing and slower than reading (1982: 36). Listeners are necessarily bound to the speed of speakers, so speaking and listening occur at the same pace. Writing, however, is a much slower process, but readers take the written text in at a much faster rate than the pace at which it was produced. Chafe attributes the high degree of integration that characterises written language to the slow rate at which it is produced and the speed at which it is read. The fragmentation in spoken language, produced on the spot as it is, probably reflects how speakers’ thought processes are jerky (Chafe 1982).

Chafe (1982: 49-52) also makes an interesting connection with oral literature. He shows that oral literature has many of the same features of written language, while it is obviously spoken and even occurs in languages that have no written counterpart at all. The characteristics that oral literature shares with written language are integration and detachment. “Integration refers to the packing of more information into an idea unit than the rapid pace of spoken language would normally allow” (1982: 39) and detachment “is manifested in devices which serve to distance the language from specific concrete states and events” (1982: 45).

As with written texts, Chafe attributes the level of integration to the production process of oral literature. “The permanence, value, and polish of an oral text may lead to a more integrated, less fragmented kind of language than that found in spontaneous conversation” (1982: 52). The level of detachment, on the other hand, is attributed to the circumstances under which such oral literature is performed: “What he performs is a monologue, with minimal feedback and no verbal interaction. Thus the situation is one which fosters detachment rather than involvement, just as we saw to be the case with writing” (1982: 50).

While Chafe thus shows that not all spoken language is characterised by the two features typical of spoken language, i.e. fragmentation and involvement, Tannen (1982) shows that not all written language is necessarily characterised by integration and detachment. She found that written imaginative literature is still integrated, but much more ‘involved’ than the written texts Chafe used for his analyses. Also, using the terminology introduced by Ochs (1979, in Tannen 1982), Tannen describes how the genre of written imaginative literature comes off as ‘unplanned’, despite the increased planning time writers have at their disposal (1982: 13, 18).
Tannen shows things are slightly different for ‘written imaginative literature’ than for the kinds of written language studied by Chafe. Those kinds of written language are described as more autonomous than spoken language (Kay 1977 in Tannen 1982: 18). This means that written texts focus on the “content of communication, conventionally de-emphasizing the interpersonal involvement between communicator and audience. Ideally, the audience is expected to suspend emotional responses, processing the discourse analytically and objectively”. Spoken language, then, is non-autonomous and depends on the construction of meaning in interaction. Moreover, it “builds on interpersonal involvement and triggers emotional subjective responses”. Tannen found that the genre of ‘written imaginative literature’ should be placed nearer this non-autonomous side of the dimension, as it aims to trigger exactly those emotional, subjective responses ascribed to spoken interaction.

Survey questions need to balance the dimensions of involvement / detachment and integration / fragmentation. In order to be involved enough to address an individual recipient, questions contain deictic terms like ‘you’, ‘in the past week’, ‘I will list you several brands’. The meaning of these terms is dependent on who is involved in the interaction at what moment. ‘You’ is the specific respondent being interviewed, ‘in the past week’ refers to the seven days prior to the moment of interviewing, and the meaning of ‘I’ is dependent on which interviewer pronounces this word.

But the formulation of the questions needs to be detached enough to apply to all possible respondents. When we speak (or write) to a specific person, about whom we know certain things, we can refer to those things without ado. So we can ask about the plants in their garden, without including a phrase like ‘if you live in a house with a garden’. Or we can ask about their marriage, without including a screening question like ‘are you single, married, or divorced?’ Interviewers, but more importantly survey researchers, are unable to know such facts about the individual respondents, and need to build enough detachment into their questionnaires.

Integration and fragmentation need to be balanced as well. We saw in §1.3 how several ideas were integrated into one unit in order to correct the question about shampoo use. However, there is a limit to what survey designers will integrate into one question. This means that sometimes questions will get split up into two parts: a screening question and the topical question. An example from one of the surveys analysed in this research is this:
Do you ever watch TV?

On how many days a week do you usually watch TV?

It would be possible to integrate these two questions into one, where respondents could answer “not applicable” if they never watch TV. Survey designers tend to avoid these double-barrelled questions, though.

Just like we saw in §1.3, survey designers try to exclude unwanted inferences by specifying the parameters “who, what, when and where” (Malhotra & Birks 2003: 338). By adding extra information to the question about shampoo, the questionnaire designers managed to exclude unwanted inferences that recipients might make without these specifications. They then rely on the assumption formulated by Linell (1998: 27-28) that each linguistic expression has “one single semantic representation (…), and this semantic representation is always activated, used and made relevant whenever its expression occurs in discourse”.

However, as I showed earlier, any term can turn out to be ambiguous. Just like the word ‘yes’ can cause misunderstanding and trouble in a telephone call, so can seemingly unambiguous terms in survey questions. Here is an example of a seemingly straightforward question that nonetheless leads to trouble of understanding:

Fragment 8:

1 IR: “and do you ever watch teevee
2 IE: (0.2)
3 IR: eye:s,
4 IR: >and on how many days< of the week is that usually
5 (.)
6 IE: e:::hm: w:e:ll (.) H .tlk YES it’s often on but I’m not always watching
7 IR: [y:es]
8 IE: [but that’s] mostly the problem right if you’re home alone then e:h
9 IR: [it’s not]
10 IE: (then you’re like)
11 IR: [but do you watch every] day for a little or,
12 IE: [.h Y,ES that I do >yes yes<

1 IR: “en” kijk u wel eens teevee
2 IE: (0.2)
To the question on how many days she watches television (in line 4),
the respondent does not immediately answer. Instead she offers a
description of her behaviour concerning the TV (lines 6, 8, 10). This
description displays, among other things, that she is unsure whether
having the TV on can be considered ‘watching TV’. For respondents it
can be unclear whether it is necessary to sit down and pay attention
to a programme for it to count as watching TV, or if having the TV on
while doing other things counts as well. This issue of definition needs
to be solved before the interviewer receives an acceptable answer to
her question.

Other examples of seemingly unambiguous questions leading to
problems in understanding are:

On how many days of the week do you usually listen to the radio?
Similar to the question about watching TV, some respondents
do not know if ‘listening to the radio’ only counts if it is their
main activity, or if having the radio on while working, shaving,
or driving also counts.

Are you the owner of the house you live in or is it a rented house?
Some respondents live in a place that they do not own, but
they do not pay rent either.

Do you personally sometimes visit a casino?
How many visits, with what kind of intervals, qualify as
‘sometimes visiting a casino’?

Is there anyone in your household of eighteen years or older?
Respondents sometimes do not understand that they should
include themselves when responding to questions about their
household.
It is interesting to see that especially expressions such as ‘watching TV’, ‘listening to the radio’, and ‘sometimes’ cause problems of understanding. We use those terms all the time and we decide from one context to the next what they mean, just like with a word like ‘yes’. If you drink a glass of wine *sometimes*, you probably do that more often than if you also play football *sometimes*.

Written questions can only take *part* of the interactional context in which they occur into account: the part that is initiated by the interviewer. So, survey designers can make sure that the questions occur in the right order, and that the next question fits the answers to previous questions. Initiatives of respondents, however, are much more difficult to predict, and so are local inferences by the recipient.

The design of survey questions cannot be responsive to the interaction in which they occur because they are written *before* the actual interaction, instead of being designed *during* the interaction itself. Like with other written texts, the recipient is unable to display his understanding of the text during its design. So, unlike in typical spoken interaction, respondents in survey interviews do not get to shape the interviewer’s utterances.

The third consequence of using written scripts in spoken survey interviews is that interviewers may shift footings in the interaction. When they are in their role of interviewer, their talk is not *authored by* themselves but scripted by a team of questionnaire designers. This is available to their recipients as well: interviewers can be heard to be reading aloud. This becomes clear when you compare how interviewers read out their ‘lines’ to the way actors do it. Actors make a real effort to sound *natural*, even though they are reading or reciting a text made by someone else. Survey interviewers, on the other hand, do not learn their questions by heart or try to make them their own: they are ‘doing being a standardised interviewer’.

In this context Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) refers to Goffman’s concept of footing. Goffman (1981: 144) describes three aspects of speakership: he distinguishes an *animator*, *author*, and *principal* of utterances. These three roles are sometimes united in a single person, but can also be distributed over two or three different persons or even organisations.

The person actually producing an utterance is the *animator* of that utterance. The person (or organisation) “who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded” is considered the *author* of the utterance. And, thirdly, a
principal is involved, “that is, someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say” (Goffman 1981: 144). These three roles may be distributed over three different persons (or organisations), but they can also be embodied by two persons or by a single speaker.

When a speaker shifts roles, e.g. when he changes from embodying all three roles to being just the animator of his utterances, he is said to have shifted footings (Clayman, 1992). By attributing an utterance to some other party, speakers can display that they are no longer responsible for the authorship of the utterance. This can still leave open for interpretation whether the speaker (or animator) is also the principal of the utterance, or whether that role is unloaded to the claimed author as well.

Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000: 46-50) describes how interviewers can shift footings from this default role of “relayer of questions” to roles in which they have more responsibility for their utterances. When the interviewer becomes author as well as animator of his talk, while the survey organisation remains the principal, he acts as a spokesperson for the organisation. This happens, for example, when interviewers formulate what they think the organisation means with a question (2000: 47). But the interviewer can also shift footings and embody all three roles, acting as the principal of his utterances. Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000: 49-50) shows fragments in which interviewers take part in the conversation on their own behalf, doing brief asides in which they express amazement at the respondent’s answer, or offering their condolences for the death of a family member.

In many other kinds of institutional interaction, other people’s texts are used and referred to. Sometimes this happens overtly, when speakers frame their talk as originating from someone else, or when they can be heard or seen to be reading aloud. An example of a setting in which other people’s text is referred to in order to pursue a certain interactional aim, is in news interviews. Clayman (1992: 168) describes how interviewers can achieve neutrality by overtly attributing opinionated remarks or statements to a third party. He shows that it is not just any opinion that gets this kind of treatment, but that it is “restricted to relatively controversial opinion statements” (1992: 169). These third-party attributions are used to create distance between the actual speaker, i.e. the interviewer, and the expressed opinion. This enables news interviewers to maintain neutrality where these opinions are concerned.
Clayman shows that news interviewers, when citing a third party’s opinion or viewpoint, shift footings by displaying that they themselves are not the author of the opinion or viewpoint. “In Goffman’s terms, “authorship” is overtly deflected. But in addition to this basic action, interviewers also systematically refrain from either endorsing or rejecting these views, so that the attributed party is nominated as the sole “principal” across the turn” (Clayman 1992: 173).

In conversations as well as in institutional interaction, this shifting of footing is an exception, not the rule. Normally, principle, author, and animator are one and the same person, and a shift in footing is marked by verbal, prosodic or non-verbal means. In survey interviews, however, this is the other way around. When interviewers read out from their questionnaire they are the animator, the questionnaire designer is the author, and the survey researcher is the principle of the text the respondent hears.

This is not always obvious. Questionnaires are designed in such a way that it may sound as if the interviewer is indeed the principal of the questions he articulates. The questionnaire contains phrases such as ‘I would now like to ask you’ and ‘can I please ask you’. When the interviewer reads these out it is as if he is expressing his own wishes though he only wants these things as an interviewer.

Sometimes the split between the interviewer and the person behind the interviewer shines through. At these moments it is made relevant that the interviewer is reading out a text he has not authored himself. The following fragment is a short example of this. The interviewer is listing topics that the respondent might like to read about in the magazine she is subscribed to, and asks for each topic how interested the respondent is in it.

Fragment 9:

1 IR:→ .h photography↑ >for example< t(h)en tips on taking pho(h)tos
2     in wi(h)me(h)↑
3     ()
4 IE: H Hah]
5 IR:  [ are] you at all inte[rested in reading ]-about [ this↑]
6 IE:  [ heh heh heh↑ H] [ heh ↑] heh
7 ↑ .H not really that’s not [ absolutely (in such)]
8 IR:→ [ shoot pretty win] ter pictures↑
9 IE: Y:EA ha ha ha .hhh
10 IR: [ not interested ] .h=


The question in lines 1-2 is specked with laughter after “for example”. With this laughter, the interviewer displays her stance towards the question, thus creating distance between herself, being the animator, and the questionnaire. She shows that she is not responsible for her text and treats the text as slightly ridiculous. She is still animating the text, but we could say that she is ‘acting out of character’.

In line 8 she goes one step further: she now comments on the text of the questionnaire in her own words. This utterance is not produced as an interviewer, but as an observer of the text of the questionnaire. The speaker is the animator, author, and principal of this utterance, which means that, unlike with the utterance in lines 1-2, she is responsible for the content and shape of this particular utterance. She has temporarily abandoned her role of neutral medium, conveying information from researcher to respondent and back. Instead she is now an individual with opinions and a sense of humour.

Interestingly, the interviewer shifts footing a second time in this short fragment. In lines 12-13 she finishes the respondent’s sentence and takes on her recipient’s perspective by using the first person singular: “I wouldn’t read it especially for eh ew that”. The interviewer is now both animator and author of this utterance, but she attributes the role of principal to the respondent. The respondent accepts that role by confirming the statement in line 14.
Clearly, the worlds of written and spoken language are not separate and they meet and blend in standardised survey interviews. The written script influences the spoken interaction in three important areas: recipient design, the construction of meaning, and the issue of footing. These issues are not hypothetical problems; they come alive in the interaction in survey interviews, as is clear from the examples in this section.

1.7 Finally

The interaction in survey interviews is not as standardised as one might imagine, nor is it as standardised as it is designed to be. Interviewers and respondents do more than just asking and answering questions, and it is worth investigating these aspects of their interaction. Answers to survey questions are given in an interactional setting and not in a vacuum.

In several real-life examples of question-answer sequences we saw that interviewers cannot or do not always simply read the text off the questionnaire. And for all these examples we can wonder: how does the interaction affect the data gathered in that question-answer sequence?

The theory of standardised survey research is based on a monological view of communication. In this view, the meaning of utterances can be compiled from the combination of the words in it. Standardisation in survey interviews stabilises the wording and order of questions. Add to this an effort to disambiguate the terms in the question, and the meaning of the questions is assumed to be constant to all respondents.

As long as each respondent receives the same stimulus, differences in answers are considered to be a reflection of differences in the respondents. But every respondent brings along a context of his own that cannot be controlled or stabilised by the survey designers. And every interaction creates a unique context that cannot be predicted either. One very simple example is a respondent’s age. Though in most surveys respondents are not asked for their age until the end of the interview, age is a relevant factor for respondents all through the interaction. Questions about childcare or about job opportunities can then become problematic.

Interviewers have to balance these interactional contingencies with the requirement that they should administer the instrument, the questionnaire, in a standardised manner. This research is concerned
with the kinds of contingencies that arise in survey interviews, and
the ways in which survey interviewers manage to balance the
demands of standardisation with those associated with
(unpredictable) interactional contingencies, as they arise.

The research reported in this dissertation demonstrates that there
is not a clean-cut answer to the question whether maximised
standardisation or a more conversational approach to contingencies
leads to data of better quality. Although researchers before me have
shown that standardisation may lead to data with questionable
validity, others have proven that certain types of *unstandardised*
behaviour may also affect the quality of survey data. I will discuss
those previous studies more thoroughly in the next chapter.

My own research supports arguments on either side of this issue.
The aim of standardising interaction in survey interviews is to achieve
a high level of reliability. The assumption behind standardisation is
that interviewers who behave in a standardised fashion will not
influence the data they are hired to collect or at least, all interviewers
will influence the data in the same way. By examining the actual
practice of standardised survey interviews, we will see that some
behaviour that is described as ‘standardised’ may not be so neutral
after all.

On the other hand, it has been argued that standardisation, while
promoting reliability, at the same time neglects the matter of validity.
So, when striving for valid data, survey researchers are urged to give
their interviewers more freedom to restore problems of understanding.
Again, however, we will see that some unstandardised behaviour does
not neutrally advance the answering process.

Standardisation also tends to count on respondents performing
their part in a standardised way. Interviewers are trained to behave as
a neutral conduit of their written script and respondents ideally
behave as a similar conduit, telling the interviewer about their
attitudes and behaviour by simply picking the most applicable answer
category. Again, the data analysed in this study make clear that the
issue is not that clear-cut. Respondents’ attitudes and behaviour may
not always fit one of the answer options exactly, leading to expansions
that the script cannot provide for. In addition to this, respondents
have their own agendas independent of the survey, at times choosing
to formulate their answers in ways that reflect that agenda.

From the practice of survey interviews an image starts to emerge in
which the script that should work to standardise the entire interview,
really functions as a starting point for interactional moves that are
impossible to predict. It provides the participants with a list of first
actions upon which the following actions are contingent. While respondents often receive instructions on how to answer questions, they certainly do not follow those instructions all the time. And when they do, the interviewer is still faced with the task of closing the current question-answer sequence and moving on to the next.

I will describe and analyse these contingencies. We will look at what survey interviewers do once their interactional role changes to become that of ‘answer recipient’ (chapter 3). The response token ‘ja’ appears to have a neutral meaning and a random sequential position. But on closer examination it becomes clear that interviewers employ different versions of this token in very specific positions, thus performing actions that cannot be labelled ‘neutral recipiency’.

I will also explore the second pair parts of question-answer sequences and describe how respondents design their answers. I will focus on expanded and non-conforming responses and analyse what actions these perform (chapter 4). By avoiding difficult terms in the question and by making the answer options strictly mutually exclusive, survey designers may prevent certain problems. But respondents may actually resist an over-simplification of their behaviour and attitudes by expanding their answer or by providing a response in a different format.

And thirdly, I will explore the interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses (chapter 5). Standardisation prescribes that interviewers are to repeat the question in its original form, in order not to influence the data. In practice, interviewers respond to non-conforming answer in a variety of manners, ranging from simply accepting the answer to repeating the question either partially or completely.

But first I will discuss previous research relevant for this study. Chapter 2 contains an overview of the literature about survey interviews and explores different approaches to their interactional nature. I will also describe the methods and data used in this study.
Chapter 2  Interaction in survey interviews researched

2.1 Introduction

Research on the quality of survey interviews has always had two focus points: reliability and validity. Reliability is increased by standardisation: if the measurement instrument is kept constant, different answers can be attributed to differences between respondents rather than to differences in the way they were interviewed. In order to achieve reliability interviewers use standardised questionnaires, ensuring that question order and question formulation are not dependent on the individual interviewer. In addition to this instrument, interviewers receive training as a way to ensure that the behaviour as the initiator of questions and recipient of answers is consistent across interviewers.

Survey researchers also aim for valid data. Validity is a matter of knowing what you measure, and this is not guaranteed by using standardised questionnaires. When respondents answer a question using one of the answer options, there is no way of knowing whether they actually understood the question and the answer options correctly. Misunderstandings may not come to the surface until later in the interview (see for example Moore & Maynard 2002), if they surface at all. In the introductory chapter we saw how data from surveys can be shown to be invalid when compared to data from other surveys or to factual data.

Since standardised survey interviews became a widespread method for collecting data on behaviour and attitudes, the method itself also became the topic of research. It has been approached from various angles, and many aspects of it have been studied and described. In this chapter I will discuss three of those approaches and the conclusions they have led to.

Survey researchers have studied the questionnaire extensively in order to establish how question order and formulation matter to the results of the survey (§2.2). Cognitive research has been directed at discovering the mental processes that go on in the respondent’s mind when answering survey questions (§2.3). And, finally, interaction analytical research has been performed in order to describe the practices interviewers and respondents engage in during the interview itself (§2.4).
The rest of this chapter will be devoted to the methods used in my research (§2.5), and I will also discuss the data on which my analyses and conclusions are based (§2.6).

2.2 The quantitative approach
Survey interviews are used as an instrument to measure the behaviour and attitudes of a particular population. However, they are also used as an instrument to research survey methodology itself. By administering different versions of a questionnaire on different samples of the same population one can establish the influence of the set-up of the questionnaire, of the wording of questions, and of the response options on the answers that respondents give. This type of research is geared at making the results of the survey as representative as possible for the population that is being surveyed. This means that possibly biasing factors need to be eliminated. In order to find out whether an aspect of a questionnaire has a biasing effect, researchers design different versions of the questionnaire, varying those aspects that they expect might bias the results.

Bias could, for example, be introduced by different response rates among sub-groups in the population. High response rates are important for the validity of survey research because respondents who refuse to participate in the survey may differ from those that do participate. This means that the results may not be generalised to the whole population if a significant portion of that population refuses to take part (Lin and Schaeffer 1995). In other words, a high level of refusals may lead to a bias in the data resulting from the survey.

Respondents are recruited in the very first phase of the interview, so it is important to design the introduction in such a way that respondents are most likely to cooperate. Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den Bergh (2000) did a quantitative study on what kind of introduction yields the highest response rates. They used the experimental design described above, using different formulations on comparable samples of the same population, and measured the difference in response.

Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den Bergh (2000: 282) give an interesting summary of the studies that have been done in this area. Some of these studies focus on the response effects caused by information about the content and purpose of the interview provided in the introduction. Others have researched the effect of assurance of confidentiality or stressing the social significance of the interview at the beginning of the conversation. Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den
Bergh cite a third approach, in which the strategies of more successful interviewers were standardised for use by all interviewers. They report that none of these manipulations of the introduction resulted in more than marginally higher response rates.

Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den Bergh conducted a study of their own into this topic. Their findings confirmed that manipulating the information content of the introduction did not result in significantly different response rates. Making the introduction more *loosely* standardised, however, did. Interviewers based their introduction not on a written-out script but on an agenda stating the points that needed to be covered in whatever order. This ‘conversational’ approach worked to recruit more respondents than the standardised introductions. The explanation that Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den Bergh put forward for this success is that the conversational approach “provides the interviewers with the possibilities for tailoring their behavior, which may cause them to be perceived as more attractive to talk to” (2000: 294).

Another example of a biasing factor in survey results is the order in which questions appear in the questionnaire. When related issues are dealt with in different questions in the questionnaire, their order may influence the attitudes and even facts reported by respondents. Schuman and Presser (1981) describe how the order of two questions influences the answers to each. Repeating an experiment from 1948, they asked respondents whether journalists from communist countries should be allowed into America to report on events there, and vice versa. “Respondents are more likely to allow Communist reporters into the United States after having answered a question about allowing American reporters into Communist countries” (Schuman & Presser 1981: 28). The explanation suggested by Schuman and Presser (1981) is that respondents aim to appear consistent, applying the same norm to the second question as they did to the first.

A related phenomenon Schuman and Presser (1981: 44-45) report on is the “salience effect”. They describe a study in which respondents were asked about victimisation of crime in the preceding twelve months. When this question came after a series of attitude questions about crime, reportings of victimisation *increased* compared to when that series of attitude questions was not included in the questionnaire. “The most plausible interpretation is that the attitude questions stimulated memory for and willingness to report more experiences” (Schuman & Presser 1981: 45).
Responses to individual questions may also be influenced by the order in which the answer options are offered to the respondent. Schuman and Presser (1981: 56-74) report on previous studies in which three kinds of response-order effects were found. Recency effects were found in some cases, meaning that respondents chose the last option they were offered. But the writers explain that the data does not enable them “to offer a fully adequate way of distinguishing questions that show order effects from questions that do not”. Primacy effects, on the other hand, can be found in two environments: in the case of long lists of response options, and in the case of verbal rating scales (Schuman & Presser 1981: 72-74).

It is thus clear that respondents do not always answer the same question in the same way. Their answer may be influenced by what preceded the item, or by the presentation of the response options. Such influences bias the results away from the ‘true’ values that survey researchers aim to measure.

Another factor influencing responses to a question is its formulation. Survey researchers are not only worried about individual interviewers changing the wording and thus influencing the results in an uncontrolled way. The wording of the questions on the questionnaire itself can influence the results. Schuman and Presser (1981) tested several pairs of questions for such a bias, and found some of them to indeed be of influence on the results while others were not.

Questions formulated with the equivalent terms ‘forbid’ and ‘not allow’ show great differences in results, at least when combined with “abstract issues like free speech or communism” (Schuman & Presser 1981: 282, see also section 3 of this chapter). Loading items with aspects that apparently favour one answer option can bias results as well, such as when an atheist is described as “bad or dangerous” or, contrastively, when this atheist’s public speech is described as exercising his freedom of speech (Schuman & Presser 1981: 289-292). Euphemistic terms are argued to have a similar biasing effect, though Schuman and Presser (1981: 292-293) found that replacing the term ‘abortion’ with the euphemism ‘ending pregnancy’ did not affect responses to the question whether this should be possible for married women who do not want any more children.

A third study I would like to discuss here, is an experiment conducted by Michael Schober and Frederick Conrad (Conrad & Schober 1997, and Conrad & Schober 2000). They designed an experiment to measure the effects of standardised and conversational interviewing
methods on the accuracy of answers. By the late 1990s two positions on the best way of conducting survey interviews in order to get the most valuable data had crystallised. Standardised interviewer behaviour was argued to provide a guarantee for reliable data and prevent the influence of interviewer error. Conversational interviewing, on the other hand, was argued to provide more valid data by preventing the respondent from interpreting questions idiosyncratically. Schober and Conrad intended to find out which method resulted in the best quality of answers, that is, in answers that were closest to the true values.

The claims of the supporters of standardisation were mainly based on statistical comparisons of large amounts of data, while the claims of the supporters of conversational interviewing were predominantly based on detailed analyses of the interaction of a small number of cases. Neither of these approaches gave direct insight into the ‘true’ values behind the answers that were analysed. Assumptions about the truth-value were based either on quantitative data, or on trouble displayed in the question-answer sequence.

So Schober and Conrad (1997) devised a way to have direct access to the accuracy of answers, controlling the frequency of difficulties. They did that by giving the respondents in their experiment a script on which they were asked to base their answers. The researchers ‘planted’ difficulties in the script that might give rise to some interaction between respondent and interviewer. This way, the script provided the researchers access to the ‘real’ answers to the questions.

Respondents were interviewed using one of two methods. Either the interaction was standardised as prescribed by Fowler and Mangione (1990), meaning that interviewers could only probe in a non-directive way and were not allowed to provide any definitions. Or the interview was more flexible and conversational. The interviewers in the conversational half of the experiment were allowed to provide scripted as well as improvised definitions and clarifications, at the respondent’s request or voluntarily (Schober and Conrad 1997: 580).

Their method provided Schober and Conrad with the means to to measure whether conversational behaviour by the interviewers influenced the respondent’s answers and created interviewer error. But it also enabled them to see whether either of the two approaches resulted in more or less valid survey data.

It turned out that the differences between the two interview methods were clearest where the planted difficulties were concerned. The researchers had planted difficulties in the script for which the respondent might need clarification. When this clarification was
provided (in the flexible interviews) accuracy of the responses was 60 percent higher than when the interviewer was not allowed to provide such a clarification (Schober & Conrad 1997: 587). They did not find evidence for interviewer error related to the flexible interviewing style, though they admit that their sample may have been too small to measure that properly (page 588).

Conrad and Schober were able to repeat these results in a non-experimental setting in 2000. For some questions, correct understanding went up from 57 percent with the standardised interviewing method to 95 percent with the flexible method (Conrad & Schober 2000: 12). And again they did not find that interviewers introduced error by acting in a less standardised fashion (2000: 17).

For validity purposes it is important that interviewers extract ‘true’ answers from respondents. Schober and Conrad (2000) and Conrad and Schober (1997) have demonstrated that, in order to accomplish a higher level of validity, it may be necessary that interviewers act in a less standardised way and provide the respondent with instructions.

These examples illustrate that survey interviews *themselves* can be used as a research method on the quality of survey methodology. By varying the design of the questionnaire and administering it to similar samples of a population, researchers can observe the effects of those variations on the answers. In the following two sections I will show that other disciplines study why these variations may occur (§2.3) and how they are embodied in interaction (§2.4).

### 2.3 The cognitive approach

Obtaining true values is a major pre-occupation of survey researchers. They attempt to measure their respondents’ true attitudes and opinions and try to get them to relate their actual experiences and behaviour. In order to do this they try to minimise biasing factors that might keep the respondent from divulging the truth. In the previous section I discussed research into the wording and order of questions, and the wording and order of response options. Survey researchers have been studying those phenomena from a methodological perspective. In other words: they studied the method of survey research. Other researchers have been looking at similar phenomena from a psychological or cognitive perspective. They too wonder how come respondents reply differently to a question that contains the verb “forbid” than to that same question with the verb “allow”, but they study the respondent’s behaviour, rather than the method.
In the introductory chapter to this dissertation I already referred to the fact that respondents do not always offer ‘true’ answers. This flaw of survey interviews is both discovered and (partially) repaired by confronting and supplementing those data with more factual data or interview data from a different source. One of the examples I cited in the introductory chapter was the discrepancy between the number of sexual partners men and women claimed to have had. In their study Alexander and Fisher (2003) did not manipulate the wording or format of the questionnaire. Instead they manipulated the psychological factors they thought might influence the respondent’s behaviour.

By introducing the threat that the person administering the (written) questionnaire would read their answers, they were able to determine that possible disclosure motivated female respondents to put down a lower number than their male counterparts in the same situation. Connecting the respondents to a fake polygraph resulted in equal answers for both male and female respondents. This research makes clear that the values reported by respondents can be influenced by factors other than the design of the questionnaire. The respondent’s willingness to share personal information may be influenced by contextual factors such as a lack of anonymity or the threat of being caught out by a lie detector.

Personal questions sometimes need to be asked, however. Survey methodologists therefore advise to build a certain level of rapport with respondents.

“The success of each interview depends considerably on the ability of the interviewer to create a friendly, permissive atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence when the respondent is first contacted. (…) [The respondent] should never be made to perceive that, so far as the interviewer or survey sponsors are concerned, there are right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, or better or worse answers to anything asked during the interview. The respondent should feel, for instance, that being Republican or Democrat, buying brand X or Y, driving a Chevrolet or Cadillac, going to church or not, liking or disliking his neighbors, rooting for the Yankees or the Red Sox, viewing Steve Allen or Ed Sullivan, loving or hating children, or being well or poorly educated are equally acceptable” (Adams 1958: 12).

This methodologist writes about the respondent’s psychological and cognitive states that the interviewer is expected to influence by building rapport. She writes about trust and confidence, about how respondents ought to perceive the neutrality of the survey and the
interviewer, and about how they should feel that their answers are acceptable, whatever they are. The interviewer’s behaviour, but also the formulation of the questionnaire, should be geared towards creating such a permissive atmosphere.

This is all to prevent the respondent from adapting his answers to expectations he perceives on the interviewer’s part, or as imbedded in the survey itself. In a less permissive or perhaps less anonymous atmosphere respondents may give answers they feel are more socially acceptable than the answers that really represent their attitude or behaviour. Or, as Banaji, Blair and Schwarz (1996) describe, they may counter such perceived expectations by moving in the other direction. Either way, this process results in invalid data.

A by-product of the expectations respondents may perceive the interviewer or the survey designers to have, is what are called non-attitudes (Schuman & Presser 1981). Schuman and Presser (1981: 147) cite a 1947 publication, in which 70% of a sample interviewed gave their opinion about a fictitious new law, as the source for the assumption that respondents will overwhelmingly produce an opinion about topics they previously never thought about.

Schuman and Presser (1981) replicated the survey with two little-known financial acts rather than with fictitious ones. In their surveys nearly 70% of the respondents answered ‘don’t know’ to the question, even though the interviewer did not explicitly offer that option. Still, nearly a third of the population did supply an opinion about an act that they almost certainly did not know (Schuman & Presser 1981: 149).

They also found that the respondents who provided an answer to the questions about the obscure financial acts did not simply take a guess. That would indeed result in a 50-50 split on the issue. Schuman and Presser (1981) correlated the answers to the bogus item with attitudes those respondents held on other issues. They found that respondents based their response on their attitudes to the government in general, or on their opinion about economic issues in general. So respondents who said to favour the act expressed a more positive attitude about the government in a different question in the survey than the respondents who said they opposed the act (Schuman & Presser 1981: 153-156).

Researchers who have a cognitive approach to survey research describe how answers come about in the respondent’s head. Generally, a four-step model is assumed between hearing the question
and producing an answer (Sudman, Bradburn & Schwarz 1996). “Respondents interpret a question, they retrieve from memory information pertinent to answering it, they integrate that information to render a judgment, and they translate their judgment into a response” (Bassili 1996: 329). Or, as Hollemman (2000: 14) describes the four stages, “interpreting the question and locating the relevant attitude structure (if it already exists) in long term memory; retrieving an evaluation or constructing an attitude (if it did not exist already); rendering a judgement; and reporting the answer by mapping the judgement onto one of the precoded answering categories.”

When respondents display problems answering a question, researchers who approach survey interviews from a cognitive angle aim to find out at which of these stages the problem occurs. Bassili, for example, writes:

“Response latency is affected by processes at every one of these four stages! (…) Steps one and four reflect processes that are idiosyncratic to the questions whereas steps two and three reflect processes that are idiosyncratic to the respondents. (…) When the focus is on properties of questions, interquestion response latency comparisons are most informative. When the focus is on the cognitive properties of attitudes, intersubject response latency comparisons are also most informative” (Bassili 1996: 329-331).

Cognitive researchers study which aspects of the answering process influence the accuracy or validity of the respondent’s answers. For example, Bolton and Bronkhorst (1996:142) observe that for events to be more accurately reported the aspects ‘involvement’ and ‘frequency’ are important. Respondents have more trouble retrieving high frequency, low involvement events (such as making phone calls) than low frequency, high involvement events (such as pregnancy). Both dimensions influence the amount of processing and estimation involved in answering a question.

The cognitive perspective can be applied to the study of question formulation as well. Hollemann (1999, 2000) approached the forbid/allow asymmetry from this angle. From previous research it had become clear that respondents more easily answered ‘no’ to questions containing the verb ‘forbid’ than ‘yes’ to questions containing the word ‘allow’, even though semantically these options appear to be equal (Schuman & Presser 1981, Hollemann 2000). Hollemann researched where in the cognitive process this discrepancy was created.
She grouped the four steps of the cognitive model into two general steps: first, interpreting the question and retrieving the attitude and second, giving an answer. Her research aimed to find out whether respondents retrieved different attitudes in response to the forbid/allow questions, or whether they retrieved the same attitude but came to a different answer for the two questions (2000). Holleman found the latter to be the case: respondents first retrieve their attitude on the topic of the question (e.g. abortion). This attitude is independent of the formulation of the question. However, they subsequently express their answers differently, relative to the question’s verb (Holleman 2000).

The cognitive approach, then, attempts to discover the internal processes that take place in the respondent when answering survey questions. These processes are made visible in a variety of ways. For example, by comparing responses to differently formulated questions, by timing how long it takes for respondents to produce an answer, or by asking respondents to comment on how they constructed their answers.

2.4 The interactional approach

The interactional approach to the study of survey interviews focuses on what happens on the surface in order to find out how answers are constructed: talk, silences, and actions are the focal points of this approach. This approach contrasts with the cognitive approach, which focuses on what we cannot see, what happens in the speaker’s mind while they speak, are silent, or perform an action. Analysis of interaction means that not the mental processes are object of study, but the verbal (and non-verbal) behaviour those processes give rise to. This behaviour is researched using Conversation Analysis and related qualitative methods. Because the research reported on in this dissertation follows this tradition, I will now give a more detailed outline of the relevant research to date.

Conversation Analysis is a relatively new discipline in sociological and linguistic research (see section 5 in this chapter for a more elaborate account of Conversation Analysis). And not until twenty years after the first initiative was taken for a methodology to research the practices of verbal interaction, was it first applied to interaction in survey interviews. Just like the research focussing on surveys as a research method and the research focussing on the cognitive factors involved in survey research, much interactional research revolves
around the validity of responses, and around the way error comes about.

Survey methodologists stress the standardisation of the shape of the messages, both of the questions and of the answers. The cognitivists stress the mental processes through which standardisation of meaning can be achieved. Interaction analysts have been researching the practices through which standardisation is brought about or undermined.

An important issue in research into the interaction in survey interviews is the standardisation of form versus the standardisation of meaning. We have seen in the introductory chapter to this dissertation that the dialogical approach to language recognises that the meaning of an utterance is highly dependent on its context. Every survey interview takes place in its own specific context while it also creates its own specific context. Respondents bring characteristics along and the interaction itself brings certain issues about. In this chapter I already discussed a clear example of an issue that is brought about by the context: the influence of question order on survey results.

But other issues can come up within a single question-answer sequence. Respondents may make an effort to present themselves as happy non-smokers or rather as satisfied chain smokers. They may attempt to display that they do not gamble too much, or that they consider many facets of a social issue before giving an opinion. Or they may display the need to account for attitudes or behaviour they perceive to be dispreferred. Each respondent is unique, which means that each interview is unique where these characteristics are concerned, creating contingencies that are specific for that particular interaction. These contingencies arise in spite of all the efforts to standardise the interaction. Interviewers are faced with the task of handling these contingencies without compromising standardisation.

Survey research institutions train their interviewers to deal with their unique interlocutors in a standardised manner. They are urged to read the questions exactly as worded in the script and are discouraged from giving feedback and from leading the respondent towards a specific response (see for example Fowler & Mangione 1990, and Viterna & Maynard 2002).

Survey researchers also spend considerable energy on the design of questionnaires. I already discussed research on the formulation and the order of questions that is aimed at getting rid of biasing effects. Other research and elaborate pre-tests are aimed at minimising misunderstandings or repair sequences. Questions are
designed in such a way as to minimise interaction between interviewer and respondent. In other words: the question design should enable interviewers to limit themselves to reading out the questions, and it should enable respondents to limit themselves to simply supplying answers in the correct format. Such a design ideally leads to a paradigmatic question-answer sequence in which there is no space for interviewer error.

However, these highly standardised situations still take place in interaction, at times forcing either of the participants to act outside the script for one or more turns. Researchers of interaction have been describing the practices interviewers as well as respondents employ when they deviate from the script. They have also analysed those practices for the effect they may have on the reliability and validity of the data gathered.

2.4.1 Standardisation and Recipient Design

In 1990 Suchman and Jordan wrote a groundbreaking article about interaction in survey interviews. They argue that “there is an unresolved tension between the survey interview as an interactional event and as a neutral measurement instrument” (Suchman & Jordan 1990: 232). They outline several aspects typical of spoken interaction and show how survey interviews are similar to everyday conversation, and how they differ.

They point out how the standardisation of survey interviews means that, to a great extent, the participants do not control the run of the interaction themselves, but that it is controlled externally. The participants have pre-allocated roles that are fixed throughout the interview. Moreover, the questionnaire not only dictates that the interviewer asks the questions, but also which questions he asks, in which order he asks them, and how he formulates those questions (Suchman & Jordan 1990).

A consequence of this pre-allocation of roles as well as turns, is a lack of recipient design (Suchman & Jordan 1990). While in ordinary conversation speakers can design their talk in such a way that it is sensitive to what they know about their co-participant (and what they assume the recipient knows the speaker to know), and so that it is sensitive to what their co-participant has done in the preceding turn, interviewers in standardised interviews are not allowed to adapt the design of their turns to such factors. The objective of reliability prescribes that interviewers read out all the questions and read them
Interaction in survey interviews researched

out exactly as they are worded, which could lead to odd stretches of interaction.

Houtkoop-Steenstra takes up the issue of recipient design in chapter 4 of her book 'Interaction and the Standardized Survey Interview' (2000). She shows how interviewers sometimes act as if they do not know things that have already been established as ‘common ground’ earlier in the interview. When following the script, interviewers sometimes need to ask questions that the respondent has already provided an answer to when elaborating on an earlier response. Because interviewers do follow conversational rules when designing their talk in third position (acknowledgements, probes), they can give the impression that common ground is being built as normal. Questions that display no such knowledge may then throw the respondent off (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 69-75).

In one of the data sets Houtkoop-Steenstra used for her research, the interviewers act in a more conversational way and thereby manage to take information provided earlier in the interview into account (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 76-85). These interviewers manage this dilemma without completely abandoning the standardised format. When they encounter a question to which the respondent has already provided or implicated the answer, they read out the question and immediately provide the answer themselves. In this way, the status of the question “is retrospectively redefined by the interviewer as a case of reading a scripted line” (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 77) rather than a question that requires an answer.

Because in the examples provided in Houtkoop-Steenstra’s book the interviewers give the respondent the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the answer provided by the interviewer, validity is safeguarded in spite of the interviewer’s deviation from standardisation (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 85). This strategy of reading out the question, providing the answer, and inviting the respondent to confirm that answer, enables the interviewers to “meet both ends, that is, being a competent interviewer as well as a competent conversationalist” (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 86).

2.4.2 Standardisation and Repair

Suchman and Jordan (1990) also address the issue of repair in standardised survey interviews. As standardisation does not allow the interviewer to change the wording of questions, interviewers have very little manoeuvring space when the respondent has trouble answering the question. In their instructive work on standardisation, Fowler and
Mangione (1990) advise interviewers to simply repeat the question when asked for an explanation, or to give a ‘whatever it means to you’ response. This means that, while in ordinary conversations speakers can clarify their talk when necessary, interviewers usually cannot.

This may lead to situations in which the interviewer appears to be repairing his utterance, while in effect he is only repeating it. Such a repeat does not offer any clarification of or alternative to the question as the respondent already heard it (Suchman & Jordan 1990: 238). Repeats instead of repairs may promote reliability of the data. However, Suchman and Jordan show that it can lead to highly invalid data.

Moore and Maynard (2002) studied repair sequences in survey interviews in detail. They, too, observe that interviewers tend to offer a repeat of the question, both after the respondent displayed a problem in hearing and after a displayed problem in understanding. They recognise that “this may preserve the reliability of the answers by reducing interviewer variability but may sometimes do so at the price of compromising the validity of those answers” (Moore & Maynard 2002: 306).

While interviewers do not tend to reformulate or clarify their questions when the respondent experiences trouble, they sometimes request a reformulation or clarification from the respondent even when, in strictly conversational terms, there is no actual trouble. When respondents do not use the format of one of the answer options, interviewers are required to probe such an unformatted response, even when that response is “adequate for enabling them to record a single appropriate answer option” (Moore & Maynard 2002: 307).

A typical form of third position repair in standardised survey interviews is the probe (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996, Moore & Maynard 2002). Houtkoop-Steenstra (1996) has dedicated an article to the practice of probing and she found that interviewers pursue inadequate responses in three ways. They present the respondents with examples of possible answer options, in order to show the respondent what kind of answer they were looking for. Secondly, interviewers present just one of the answer options, based on the respondent’s response. And thirdly, interviewers provide formulations of inadequate responses using the terms of an answer option (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996; see also chapter 5 of this dissertation on this subject).

The shape and function of formulations have been researched for different types of interaction. Heritage and Watson (1979) studied formulations in everyday interaction and distinguished between two versions: the formulation of the gist and the formulation of the upshot.
While gists are reformulations of something that has already been said, upshots formulate an aspect of the interaction that has not been made explicit so far (Heritage & Watson 1979).

Formulations have in common with repair sequences that they may be employed as clarifications (Heritage & Watson 1979: 130). Such clarifications are then available for the co-participant to confirm or disconfirm. However, Heritage and Watson write that formulations, rather than expressing a failure to understand, demonstrate understanding and aim to have that understanding attended to and, as a first preference, endorsed (1979: 138).

Especially when interviewers present one answer option to the respondent, either as a suggestion or as a formulation, respondents tend to agree with the suggested response (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996). There is a preference for such agreement in everyday conversation (Pomerantz 1984a) and this mechanism works the same in standardised survey interviews. This means that disagreeing with an answer suggestion is a dispreferred action. The preference organisation may thus result in respondents agreeing with an answer option that they would not have chosen actively, and in survey data of which the validity is doubtful (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996: 221). In chapter 5 of this book the subject of formulations is discussed in detail.

Moore and Maynard (2002) observe that repair sequences provide valuable insight into the troubles respondents run into when answering survey questions. This is in agreement with Van der Zouwen (2002: 62) who states that

“The more we learn from interaction analyses about how to properly design instruments and instruct interviewers, the more we decrease the proportion of nonparadigmatic sequences and, consequently, the less information we will gather from these sequences. Survey researchers will fight nonparadigmatic interactions, but by doing so they also dry out the source of information the nonparadigmatic sequence provides.”

2.4.3 Collaborative Construction of Answers

In everyday conversations, question-answer sequences are usually followed by a next turn that expresses how the answer was received. One way in which the recipient of an answer can display his uptake of that turn, is by designing his subsequent turn as responsive to it and expand the topic. Another way is by simply acknowledging the answer with a token. Heritage (1984a), for example, shows how “oh” in third position displays a particular uptake of the previous turn: that the
information provided in the answer slot has effected a change-of-state in the recipient’s knowledge. Schegloff (1995a) describes acknowledgements in third position more generally as sequence-closing thirds, which work to acknowledge the second pair part (SPP) and also do the work of closing off the particular adjacency pair sequence.

Both these ‘next actions’, designing the turn as responsive to the prior and acknowledging the answer, are problematic in survey interviews. First, in survey interviews the next turn is pre-formulated in the questionnaire. Therefore it is not designed to fit the answer of the previous sequence as exactly as participants in mundane conversation design their turns. Second, the finding that sequence-closing thirds display the uptake of the prior turn gives rise to a methodological issue. Survey interviewers need to behave in a standardised way so as not to influence the respondents. Communicating their stance towards the respondents’ answers in third position would defy that object. “In conversation, the content of the third turn after a question-answer sequence can indicate to the answerer a variety of things, such as whether the answer is heard, understood, accepted, correct, good, and so on” (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 371). There is no reason to assume that respondents in survey interviews treat third-position acknowledgements any different than those same objects in everyday interaction. This means that such acknowledgements should be avoided in order to safeguard the quality of the survey data.

There is another way of dealing with the third position in these question-answer sequences. Apart from using the third position for an action which is overtly contingent upon the SPP or filling the third position with an acknowledgement token, the recipient of the SPP can do nothing. At first glance this seems the most neutral way to deal with responses, avoiding any display of how the interviewer has received the answer. However, as Schegloff (1995b) has shown convincingly, the absence of actions is an action in itself. It is exactly because in everyday interaction the slot after an SPP is usually filled with something that is contingent upon that SPP that, by staying silent in third position, the recipient of the SPP is overtly not displaying having heard, understood, accepted, or approved of the SPP.

Marlaire and Maynard (1990) studied this phenomenon in a test setting where children were tested by clinicians for their mental abilities. These clinicians needed to act in a similarly neutral fashion as is usually required of survey interviewers. They found a correlation
between correct answers by the children and certain interactional practices by the clinician. The clinicians would collapse the question turn when the tested child appeared to have little trouble with the questions, and leave out third-position acknowledgements as well. On the other hand, problematic answers received probes or repairs in third position, in spite of instructions against correcting the child. Both these actions displayed to the examinees how well they were doing, even though the test was set up in such a way that the child should stay unaware of this (Marlaire & Maynard 1990).

The examiners adapted their recipient behaviour to the quality of the answers. Marlaire & Maynard found that the clinicians in their data gave acknowledgements to problematic answers, while they left the third position empty after unproblematic responses (1990: 95-96). Clinicians also varied the type of acknowledgement in such a way that an unproblematic answer received a differently produced ‘okay’ than a problematic answer (Marlaire & Maynard 1990: 96-97, see also chapter 3 in this dissertation).

Marlaire and Maynard describe several of the instructions given to the clinicians in order to administer reliable tests. Clinicians are advised to “be careful that your pattern of comments does not indicate whether answers are correct or incorrect” (1990: 95). The examiners are instructed no to correct the child, or to do it in a specific way or under certain circumstances only (1990: 91). And the testers are often prohibited from giving an assessment of answers, such as would be the norm in interaction between teachers and pupils (1990: 89). These guidelines are aimed at safeguarding the reliability of the test results and preventing the clinician from influencing the results or, in other words, from introducing interviewer error.

Though Marlaire and Maynard do not demonstrate that the interaction in which the answers to test items are produced influences the results of those tests, they do make the important observation that the test scores are “collaborative production” (1990: 99). As other studies showed that factors such as familiarity of examiner and examinee, the test situation, and the degree of supportiveness all influence test results, they argue that the practices found in their study may be the interactional embodiment of such factors. They certainly demonstrate that clinicians are not the “passive conduits of testing stimuli nor waiting depositories of children’s replies” (1990: 99) standardisation dictates them to be.

The potentially leading character of these third position acknowledgements is also clear to survey researchers (see for example Fowler & Mangione 1990). Viterna and Maynard (2002) show that
survey centers prescribe how to use the third position in their interviewer manuals. Interviewers are instructed to use “neutral feedback”, and some manuals urge interviewers to use feedback after acceptable answers and withhold it after unacceptable ones (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 372). The manuals also specify the shape the turn in third-position can take. They found that the different research centers do not agree on what constitutes “neutral feedback”: “At three of the centers visited, interviewers were instructed that saying “yes” or “right” was forbidden because it indicated agreement. (…) Yet (…) four other centers recommend in their manuals using “yes” and four recommend using “okay” when giving feedback” (2002: 374). (On the use of “yes” as a feedback token, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.)

In chapter 3 of this dissertation I will give more evidence of how the receipt of the respondent’s talk can decide whether that talk is treated as an acceptable and sufficient answer. We will see that respondents in fact adjust their behaviour to the interviewer’s uptake in third position, elaborating on their response after the uptake has treated the response as not yet complete or sticking to a tentative response when it is treated as acceptable. Indeed, in many ways answers are constructed in collaboration.

2.4.4 Elaborated and non-conforming answers

Reliability of survey results is threatened in another way. Respondents may answer questions with a non-standardised response, using other words than those provided in one of the answer options. When that happens, interviewers can introduce error in two ways. Either they probe for a formatted response and possibly introduce error by probing in a non-standardised way (see §2.4.2 on repair). Or they do not probe for a formatted answer and select an answer option they think corresponds to the non-standardised response just provided by the respondent. Conform Raymond (2000) I will refer to responses that are not formulated in the words of one of the answer options as ‘non-conforming’, while I will refer to responses that do have the shape of an answer option as ‘type-conforming’.

When interviewers do not probe a non-conforming response for a type-conforming answer, they will usually select an answer category themselves, basing their choice on the content of the respondent’s non-conforming response. In spite of the closed-question format, such an item may then turn into a field coded question: a question that is presented as open to the respondent, but for which the script provides pre-formulated answer options. Fowler and Mangione argue that
“such questions require interviewers to be coders. Interviewers are not chosen nor trained to be coders; they have lots of other things to do in the interview besides think about coding; and worst of all, their coding cannot be check coded to detect errors or find out how bad they are” (1990: 88).

So, though the respondent’s answer may have a high level of validity when he formulates it in his own words, both validity and reliability are threatened in the next phase, in which the interviewer is required to translate such a non-conforming response into one of the available answer options. Reliability is threatened because different interviewers may select different categories after the same non-conforming response. And validity is threatened because the silently selected answer options may not correspond with the ‘true value’.

Since interviewers read out the answer options for most survey questions, it is somewhat surprising that respondents make an effort to formulate their own response rather than simply repeating one of the categories offered. Here, we need to take into account that respondents may apply certain conversational rules to the institutional interaction they are in. In their article Suchman and Jordan (1990: 253) sum the issue up rather neatly: “In some cases, responses that require elaboration are disallowed; in other cases, responses that in ordinary conversation are good enough in survey interviews require unreasonable elaboration”.

If we take the example of a yes/no-question, non-conforming respondents typically take one of two courses of action. One is that they will select an answer category and elaborate on it. The other typical course of action is that they do not select an answer category but instead respond with an alternative formulation. Exactly what these non-conforming responses look like and what they achieve in the context of standardised survey interviews has not yet received very much attention, but this issue will be taken up in chapter 4 of this dissertation. The issue has, however, been researched for ordinary conversation (Raymond 2000, 2003), news interviews (Clayman 1993, 2001), and for doctor-patient interaction (Drew, in press, and Stivers & Heritage 2001).

A question puts enormous constraints on what the addressee of the question can do in the next slot. The first restriction is that when an adjacency pair is initiated with the action type ‘question’ this makes a response relevant of the action type ‘answer’. Second, the grammatical construction of the question, then, places another constraint on the next turn, that of the kind of answer that is made relevant. A yes/no
question places different constraints on the next turn than a wh-
question. And third, the question may constrain the next turn be
cause it activates a preference for one particular response among
those possible responses made relevant by the grammatical form
(Raymond 2003).

In his dissertation of 2000, Raymond deals with responses to
yes/no-questions. He explores the topic thoroughly, introducing
the terms 'type-conforming' and 'non-conforming' response. He explains
how a first pair part (FPP) sets constraints for the second pair part
(SPP), and in which ways SPP speakers may conform to those
constraints. The grammatical form of the FPP decides what kind of
response is type-conforming and what is non-conforming. For
example, by using the grammatical design of a yes/no-question, the
initiator of the adjacency pair “makes ‘yes’ or ‘no’ the relevant terms
for building a responsive turn” (Raymond 2000: 55-56).

So what kinds of actions do SPP-speakers perform when they do
something else or something more than give a type-conforming
response? Raymond found that non-conforming responses can be
divided into three groups, according to the stance they take toward
their first pair parts. Non-conforming responses can express that the
FPP either presumed too much, they can express that the FPP did not
presume enough, or they can work to “avoid choosing between the
either/or choice made relevant by a yes/no type interrogative”
(Raymond 2000: 300).

Stivers and Heritage (2001) discuss expanded answers in doctor-
patient interaction, by which they mean a response to the question
plus a brief elaboration. They compare them with type-conforming,
minimal responses and contrast them with more extensive departures
from the type-conforming framework, which they call “narrative
expansions”. They observe that the expansions found in their data can
be grouped in three classes: they can be employed to address
difficulties in giving a definite answer, to support the given answer, or
to pre-empt negative inferences possibly arising from the answer
(Stivers & Heritage 2001: 154). Narrative expansions, on the other
hand, enable the patient to go into subjects that the doctor did not
provide her with. While an expanded answer is still very much on
topic, patients can employ narrative expansions to discuss a topic
that is on their minds, independent of the doctor’s agenda (Stivers &
Heritage 2001).

Drew (in press) signals a similar phenomenon in out-of-hours
telephone calls to a British GP’s practice. He found that doctors decide
very early on in the phone call whether or not this is an emergency for
which they need to make a house call. When the decision is negative, the doctor continues to ask questions in order to confirm his impression that the case is indeed non-urgent. These questions, however, form a site for the caller to pursue their own objective: communicating the seriousness of their case. Callers pursue this objective by elaborating on their ‘no problem’ responses to diagnostic questions with information that was not requested about symptoms that are present (Drew, in press). “It is as though the further detailing is designed to negate the implication conveyed in the (negative) answer to the question which the doctor asked, that implication being that the patient is ‘normal’ (that is, ‘normally unwell’)” (Drew, in press: 14).

In a more public setting, respondents may provide non-conforming answers with the objective of evading the question. Clayman (1993, 2001) analysed different practices through which public figures attempt to follow their own agenda during news interviews. His 2001 article presents an overview of these practices and what actions they perform. He explains how respondents in news interviews need to solve two problems: when giving a truthful and straightforward answer to a question they may damage their public image, but evasive behaviour may prove just as damaging because of the sly and dishonest image it may project. Respondents in broadcast news interviews thus design their answers in one of two ways. Either they construct the turn in such a way as to avoid detection, or they openly display that they are using their response slot for something else (or something more) than providing an answer to the question (Clayman 2001).

In his 1993 article, Clayman focuses on one specific device: respondents reformulating the question before answering. He describes how, instead of immediately answering the question, respondents may first perform an operation on that question. They paraphrase or “re-present” the interviewer’s turn, after which they continue to answer the question as they formulated it themselves, rather than answering the question as the interviewer initially formulated it. This allows respondents to change the constraints placed on his answer by the interviewer, enabling them to manage the response trajectory or to shift the topical agenda (Clayman 1993). In chapter 4 of this dissertation we will see that respondents can perform similar operations on survey questions.

For standardised survey interviews we can find literature on one type of elaborated responses. Schaeffer and Maynard (2002) and Moore (2004) describe ‘reportings’ volunteered by respondents in answer to closed questions. Drew (1984) described reportings in
mundane interaction, showing how speakers can use reportings to withhold taking positions on the issue placed before them (an invitation, a proposal). They thus leave it to their recipient to determine what the implications of the reporting are for the action that is under way. Recipients of reportings may make the upshot explicit, or they may simply adjust their course of action to the upshot of the reporting by, for example, making alternative proposals (Drew 1984: 137).

In survey interviews, reportings are utilised in order to perform two distinct actions. They can be used to account for an answer, to give the reasoning behind the answer, or to supply the facts on which the answer is based (Moore 2004). Reportings can also be employed to defer giving a type-conforming answer: rather than picking one of the pre-formulated answer options, respondents report on their behaviour and leave it to the interviewer to formulate the upshot of their turn in the terms of one of the answer options (Moore 2004, Schaeffer & Maynard 2002).

Whether or not respondents eventually provide a type-conforming response, the use of reportings displays that they have some problem with the question. Moore (2004) explains that it is not that they have trouble understanding the question, but rather that they experience trouble in fitting their situation to the terms of the question. By making their reasoning transparent, they offer the interviewer the chance to see if it is indeed a sound reasoning. Other reportings are offered to give the interviewers the opportunity to select an answer option on behalf of the respondent. Moore (2004) compares this process with what respondents are asked to do in think-aloud experiments, when they provide these reports for the benefit of the researcher.

In this section I have given an account of some of the areas that interactional research of standardised survey interviews have addressed to date. Studies of the interaction in survey interviews all show that, in spite of standardisation, interviews are still a highly interactional event. For respondents this may be an estranging event, in which their co-participant violates the conversational procedures for the sake of standardisation. On the other hand, both interviewers and respondents apply their knowledge of mundane conversation, leading to interaction that lacks standardisation.
2.5 Methods
This dissertation reports on a qualitative study into interactional behavior in standardised survey interviews. For this research I have used the methodology of Conversation Analysis, of which I will give a succinct account here. For a more elaborate account of Conversation Analysis of survey interaction, please see Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000. A general account of the method can be found in Heritage 1984b, and an excellent account of conversation analysis of institutional interaction can be found in Drew and Heritage 1992b.

Conceived in the 1960s by Harvey Sacks, the study of interaction set out to unravel the structures of social action. The site of social action where Sacks started his first enquiries were recordings of calls to a telephone help line. These phone calls provided a direct record of social action, which could be inspected thoroughly after the fact by replaying and transcribing them (Sacks 1992, Heritage 1984b, Drew 2005).

Though the analysis of everyday interaction was initiated from a sociological perspective, it soon became a territory of interest for linguists as well. Until then the study of language was based on experimental data, introspection, and written texts, because actual speech was considered lacking organisation (Chomsky in Heritage 1984b: 235). However, it has become clear that interaction is not only highly organised from a sociological perspective, but also from a phonetic and syntactic perspective.

The goal of Conversation Analysis (CA) is “the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction. At its most basic, this objective is one of describing the procedures by which conversationalists produce their own behavior and understand and deal with the behavior of others” (Heritage & Atkinson 1984: 1). In other words, the Conversation Analyst aims to find out the methods that conversationalists use to solve conversational puzzles. When you stop viewing conversation, or any other type of verbal interaction, as a random string of turns and start to wonder how participants manage to understand each other, it becomes clear that these participants must orient to largely similar assumptions about the other’s behaviour. Finding out what these assumptions are is the objective of CA.

Verbal interaction, and especially ordinary conversation, may at first glance appear to be a very insignificant site of social action. However, from two perspectives, conversation is recognisable as the
From Text to Talk

primordial site of social life (Schegloff 1996). First, conversation is ubiquitous and it is the means through which persons manage all forms of social organisation to a greater or lesser extent. And second, ordinary conversation is the basic form of interaction and all other forms are transformations of that basic form (Drew, 2005).

One group of such transformations is institutional interaction. While interaction in institutional settings is indeed based on the procedures of mundane conversation, some of these procedures have been adjusted to the specific institutional setting. The analysis of interaction in institutional settings has turned into a research discipline of its own. The book Talk at Work, edited by Drew and Heritage (1992a), gives an excellent overview of the work done at that time and the work that is still to be done. In their introduction to the book, Drew and Heritage (1992b) explain the relevance of studying interaction in institutional settings. A doctor examining patients, job interviews, and courtroom trials are all overwhelmingly brought into being through talk. Asking the wrong questions, giving incomplete answers, or misunderstanding the intentions behind your co-participant’s utterances can lead to misdiagnosis, rejection of a fit candidate for the job, or the wrong judgement from a judge or jury.

Institutional interaction is characterised by the fact that at least one of the participants wants something from the interaction (Drew & Heritage 1992b: 22). A patient wants medical assistance, an interviewer wants information, and an applicant wants a job. Of course, their interactional counterparts have goals of their own: doctors want to make a correct diagnosis before giving medical help, respondents want to give answers that reflect their real situation and opinions, and companies want to hire the right person for the job. The ways in which the participants handle these (sometimes conflicting) goals is one of the main points of focus of the study of interaction in institutional settings.

Institutional interaction has another important characteristic. Though the institutional activity takes place through talk-in-interaction, the contributions that the participants can make are usually constrained by the institutional setting (Drew & Heritage 1992b: 23). It is easy to come up with interactional moves that would be frowned upon in a doctor’s office, in a courtroom, or in a job interview. Analysts of institutional interaction aim to make these rules, to which the participants mostly orient implicitly, explicit, making available to us why it is that actions that are perfectly acceptable in some settings are marked in others.
The data used for conversation analytic research is always real-life, spoken data. Conversation Analysts make observations about the actual conduct of the participants, not about what these participants may have understood or intended (Heritage & Atkinson 1984). The orderliness that CA aims to uncover is not only that which is apparent to the analyst, but instead that which is the resource on which conversationalists rely for making sense of the interaction they participate in. “Generally, the analyst will also take steps to demonstrate that the regularities are methodically produced and oriented to by the participants as normatively oriented-to grounds for inference and action” (Heritage & Atkinson 1984: 2).

By studying real-life interaction, social action is analysed in the context in which it took place. The meaning of each action can be read from the context in which it was performed: to what is the action responsive? And how do the other participants subsequently treat the action?

This action-by-action view of interaction leads to a structured way of analysis focusing on the sequential organisation of conversation. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) explained the basic organisational principles of turn taking, and since then more specific principles have been described. A very strong sequential pattern is the adjacency pair. An adjacency pair is initiated with a first pair part performing an action of certain type, and should be responded to by the recipient of that first pair part with an action that is paired with the first action. So, a greeting should be responded to with a return greeting, an invitation should be accepted or declined, and a question should receive an answer.

In addition to sequential analysis of the interactional data, I have analysed the phonetics of portions of my data. Phonetic research of talk-in-interaction has revealed that conversationalists rely not only on the words spoken, or on the context of those words (see Selting & Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen 2001 for an overview). Speakers also use prosody to communicate meaning and project their next interactional move.

Just as conversation may at first glance seem insignificant socially, it may also initially appear to be an insignificant site of linguistic knowledge. I mentioned that linguists avoided spoken interaction because of its supposedly random character. Linguistic studies focused on describing correct language, and because language users rarely speak in sentences and often pronounce their words incompletely, ordinary conversation does not appear a useful place to
study language. But conversation is not only the means through which we manage our social environment, it is also the means through which we have all learned to use language. And all other forms of language use are derived from this basic form: speeches, stories, written texts.

Studies of prosody in interaction have shown how highly significant prosodic details are in interaction, and how speakers employ them and recipients treat them. In an especially intriguing study Local and Kelly (1986) showed how speakers load silences with different meanings. Speakers have prosodic methods to hold the turn across a silence: by initiating the silence with a ‘stop’, obstructing the airflow by closing the glottis or the lips, a speaker signals that the silence is ‘his’ and that he will continue speaking. In other words, the ‘stop’ signals that this is not a point where speaker change should take place, even though the turn may be complete in every other aspect.

Selting (1996) showed in her study of German interaction that two utterances that look the same can be employed for different activity types. The two activity types can be distinguished only through their prosodic features. Her research makes clear how speakers employ prosody to get their interactional intentions across. But she also shows that recipients employ prosodic analysis in order to understand those utterances as the correct activity types.

In this study I have approached some of my data from this angle. Apart from doing impressionistic analyses of prosody, I have used the computer programme PRAAT for the phonetic analyses. The information that the analysis of prosody gleans can sometimes be used to achieve a better understanding of interactional processes than purely sequential analysis.

Conversation is not thoughtless, sloppy use of language. As Drew (2005) writes, conversation is not some form of inconsequential ‘language idling’. When one recognises everyday conversation as this primordial site of social life as well as of language use, it emerges that studying its structure is very important indeed for both sociologists and linguists.

2.6 Data

For this dissertation I have used three corpora of survey interviews, two of which were collected by Hanneke Houtkoop-Steenstra. One was a survey studying respondents’ possible interest in adult education. These interviews were carried out by a leading Dutch survey research center, using standardised interviewing techniques (see Houtkoop-
Steenstra 2000: 15). Houtkoop-Steenstra’s other corpus was a nationwide survey, recorded in 1995 for a quantitative analysis of the effects of different styles of introductions on response rates, reported on in Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den Bergh 2000. These interviews were carried out by a leading Dutch survey center as well.

The third corpus used in this dissertation is a collection of interviews carried out again by a leading Dutch survey center in 2004. These interviews were not designed for other research purposes than the survey itself, and were recorded for me as they were. This survey studied respondents’ satisfaction with a magazine to which they were subscribed.

For the adult education corpus and the magazine corpus I had the complete questionnaire available. This meant that I was able to see in which way the interviewers adapted the script available to them. For interviewer-coded questions, the questionnaires provided me with the information that the interviewers had available but did not make explicit in the interaction. For the corpus used for Houtkoop-Steenstra and Van den Bergh’s (2000) quantitative study, I had sections of the interviewer’s script available. The other two corpora provided the opportunity to cross-check the validity of my analyses.

All three data collections are telephone interviews, rather than face-to-face interactions. This means that the audio recordings of these interviews capture all the information that was available to both participants at the time of interaction. Of course the interviewer has the script available and knows what constitutes an acceptable answer according to this script. This might seem like an uneven distribution of knowledge between the two participants, something we need to take into special account in the analysis of this type of data. But in fact the circumstances are not much different than the distribution of knowledge in ordinary conversation. Therefore, I do not generally treat the interaction in these survey interviews differently in this respect than I would ordinary conversation.

I have transcribed the data according to the conventions used in CA and developed by Gail Jefferson. In the appendix I explain the meaning of the different transcript symbols. Throughout this book I offer English translations of the Dutch data, as well as the transcripts of the original Dutch interaction itself. These English translations are intended to enable those without knowledge of Dutch to get an impression of how the interaction runs off. I have tried to preserve as much of the original in the translation, which sometimes leaves us with English phrases that are constructed just as awkwardly as they
are in the Dutch original. Where necessary I provide a word-for-word translation of short stretches of talk.
Interaction in survey interviews researched
Chapter 3  **Response tokens in survey interviews:**

**The interviewer as answer recipient**

### 3.1 Introduction

Survey interviewers are usually under scrutiny as the initiator of question-answer sequences but once they have delivered their question, their interactional role switches to that of recipient of the respondent’s talk. Therefore, one of the focus points of this dissertation is the interviewer's interactional role as ‘answer recipient’ rather than as ‘question asker’. Questionnaires do not provide a script for what the interviewer is supposed to do in third position, though interviewers do receive instructions on how to treat the respondent’s answers in a neutral fashion.

Viterna and Maynard (2002) have researched instruction manuals for survey institutes and found that they tend to instruct the interviewer on the purpose and content of their responses in third position. Feedback, as survey researchers call it, should be given either to build rapport with the respondent, or to train the respondent by giving feedback after acceptable answers and withholding feedback after unacceptable answers. The content of the feedback should otherwise not influence the respondent, so phrases like ‘I see’ and ‘It is important to get your ideas about this’ are widely recommended. Some of the manuals studied by Viterna and Maynard (2002) also recommend more conversational tokens, such as ‘mm hm’ and ‘yes’ (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 374).

I have studied the way in which interviewers employ such tokens when they act as the recipient of answers. In my data I found that interviewers often use the response token ‘ja’ (‘yes’) to display uptake of a respondent’s talk. Here I will describe the placement and function of this token.

The starting point for my research is that unproblematic, paradigmatic question-answer sequences in survey interviews consist of two turns: the interviewer reading out the question and the respondent answering that question by selecting an answer category. In this situation, interviewers can stick to their script and do not need to do anything more than read out the questions that are formulated in the questionnaire.
However, it is not a rare event that these sequences get expanded. Respondents do not always simply choose one of the answer options but may give an answer in a different format or expand on their answer. These deviations from the script present the interviewers with unpredictable situations, contingencies they have to deal with on an ad hoc basis. Notwithstanding the unpredictability of the contingencies, there certainly is a sense of order to the interviewers' uptake.

There are also instances when the question-answer sequence follows a completely unproblematic pattern, but nonetheless gets expanded with a response token in third position. Though one could expect that these may be examples of acceptable answers that receive feedback in order to train the respondent, I will show that these receipts are mainly brought about by the local interaction. This chapter, then, explores the order behind the interviewer's recipient behaviour.

I will start by showing what a paradigmatic question-answer sequence looks like and what is involved in performing this unmarked run of events (§3.2). Then I will turn to sequences that get expanded with an action in third position by the interviewer, focussing on the use of 'ja'. Interviewers may receipt the respondent’s talk when it contains a recordable answer, and they may acknowledge that talk when it does not contain such an answer. Response tokens are also employed to manage the trajectory of the respondent’s talk: they can be used as continuers, or as sequence-closing thirds. I will discuss the non-final response tokens in §3.3, and the sequence-final tokens in §3.4. Because all these actions can be performed using the response token 'ja', I will show how the phonetics of the token varies with its sequential function (§3.5).

### 3.2 Paradigmatic question-answer sequences

The survey-questionnaires on which my data are based mostly contain closed questions. Sometimes the answer categories are left implicit, such as in the case of yes/no-questions or when a favourite cigarette brand is asked for. In these cases the respondent can choose from an implicitly limited range of answers. Sometimes also, questions contain explicit instructions as to what answer categories the respondent can choose from, for example when the question contains a scale.

Ideally, the respondent answers the questions by selecting an answer category from the implicit or explicit list. The interviewer can
then tick this category and move on to the next question. This two-
part question-answer sequence is called paradigmatic sequence,
because it is the typical or standard structure of such a sequence in
survey interviews. As soon as extra things happen, such as repair on
the question or on the answer, the sequence gets expanded and is no
longer paradigmatic.

In survey theory, a paradigmatic question-answer sequence equals
a reliable question-answer sequence. The idea is that as long as the
interviewer does nothing but reading out the question and the
respondent only answers the question in a well-formatted way, the
data does not get polluted by interviewers’ interpretations of a
question or their judgement of answers. This is why questionnaire
designers aim for questions that need as little explanation as possible
and why interviewers get instructed not to interpret questions or
display their opinion about respondents’ answers. In this way,
interviewer error is minimised.

Because the focus of my research (and most other research concerned
with this type of data) is on non-paradigmatic sequences, one may get
the impression that paradigmatic sequences are the exception rather
than the rule. This impression may be confirmed by the apparent
artificiality of strings of question-answer sequences that consist of
just a question and an answer. As Schaeffer and Maynard (1994)
point out, conversationalists tend to construct answers interactively,
which makes departures from the paradigm prototypical and the
unexpanded interview sequence a deviation. However, the
paradigmatic sequence is the prevalent way in which question-answer
sequences in my research corpora run off, so it may just be fair to
treat them as the norm in this genre of interaction. That is why I will
start by showing a number of these unexpanded sequences. The next
fragment contains a series of related questions, introduced in lines 1-
2. The (implicit) answer categories are "yes" and "no".

Fragment 1:

1 IR: a:nd do you yourself have any of the following services with the
2 ↑postbank↓=a current account↑
3 (0.7)
4 IE: e::hm: (0.5) e- (0.3) eYES,
5 (0.3)
6 IR: ↓savings account or savings for adults↑
7 IE: y:es,
IR: a savings account for children↑
IE: no,
IR: a mortgage↑
IE: no;
IR: a credit card↑
IE: no;
IR: a personal loan or continuous credit↑
IE: no;
IR: insurances↑
IE: no,
IR: girotel,
IE: no;
IR: >or maybe something< else↑
IE: no;
IR: in surances↑
IE: no,
IR: girotel,
IE: no;
IR: do you maybe do that through another bank >or financial< institution↑
IE: no neither↓

IR: en heeft u zelf bij de postbank één of meer van de volgende diensten=
IE: betaal rekening↑
(0.7)
IR: spaar rekening of spaartegoed voor volwassenen↑
IE: ja,
(0.2)
IR: spaarrekening voor kinderen↑
IE: nee,
(0.3)
IR: een hypotheek↑
In this fragment we can see that the respondent answers the questions in the appropriate format, picking one of the answer categories ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Her yes/no-answers are orienting to the implied answer categories, and after the first couple of questions in this series her inference is confirmed. The interviewer does not ask her to elaborate on her yes/no-answers, something that might happen in ordinary conversation. One could, for example, easily imagine a follow-up question such as ‘since when?’ or ‘why not?’ Moreover, the respondent does not orient to any of these matters to be implied in the question. This can be seen by the fact that the respondent stops speaking after giving the yes/no-answer, and does not attempt to fill the silences of 0.2 to 0.5 seconds that occur after these answers.

So, from what does not happen in this fragment, we can infer that both interviewer and respondent orient to the paradigmatic, two-part question-answer sequence. The respondent does not display bewilderment after a few of these questions, but complies with every next question. The interviewer does not apologise for being rude and disinterested in the respondent’s details, but merely moves on to the
next question. They treat each other's and their own behaviour as normal and unremarkable.

### 3.3 When contingencies DO arise

In contrast to the question-answer sequences shown in fragment 1, other sequences run a less paradigmatic course. It can happen that, after the interviewer has read out the question, the respondent does not immediately answer that question. Here I am not referring to stretches of silence between the question and the delivery of the answer, though these occur often enough. Rather, respondents take the turn but instead of producing an answer they initiate a repair, give an introduction to their answer, or evaluate the question in some way. Other non-paradigmatic sequences go off-track because the respondent produces an answer to the question that is not in the format required by the questionnaire. In all these cases, the interviewer is presented with a situation in which he needs to respond in some way to this respondent behaviour.

As the questionnaire contains just the questions and their answer categories, this means that, after interviewers have read out a question, they are then left to their own devices to deal with the ensuing talk. As interviewers are usually competent conversationalists, this does not lead to chaos, but it is nonetheless worth noticing that these interactional competences are called upon on more occasions and in more situations than may be assumed. Moreover, the interactional choices interviewers make in these instances are bound to influence the way these interviews run off.

In the next fragment the respondent does not immediately produce an answer, but displays that she has some difficulty in answering the question. The nature of the difficulty becomes clear in the subsequent talk, and the interviewer is required to deal with this divergence without being able to rely on her script.

**Fragment 2:**

1. IR: and which brand >and type of< shag do you smoke most at present↓
2. (0.4)
3. IE: hh E:::h e- shag=
4. IR: =yes↑=
5. IE: =well e- I smoke shag very sp↓radically=.
6. IR: =yes↑=
7. IE: =that's mostly that I nick a:h fag from som↓one m-[hEhe↑ h ]=
8. IR: =and] [which brand ]=
The question the interviewer asks in line 1 is read out from her script. When this question is delivered, the respondent’s answer-slot begins. In this slot, the respondent is expected to deliver a type-conforming answer, in this case the name of a brand of tobacco. When the interviewer has accepted the answer, they can move on to the next question. In the mean time, one can imagine that the respondent can decide to a very large extent what happens in this position. The answer can be delivered immediately or it can be delayed for whatever reason. It can be expanded or modified by the respondent, or questioned or reformulated by the interviewer. In all these circumstances, interviewers have to work with what the respondent gives them and cannot solely rely on their script.

As we have seen in fragment 1, respondents are quite capable of answering in precisely such a way as requested (either explicitly or implicitly). But in fragment 2 we see the respondent doing other things in the slot allocated to her. Her talk in lines 3, 5 and 7 does not contain an answer to the question such as required by the questionnaire. Instead, her talk displays that there is a problem in answering the question, at first in a very general way, through a partial repeat (line 3), but subsequently she formulates the problem more specifically (lines 5 and 7).
The interviewer must now rely on her interactional skills in order to deal with this divergence from the paradigmatic sequence. I will discuss the way she does this, going through the transcript step by step. In line 3, the respondent repeats the main focus of the question, to which the interviewer responds with “yes”.

3 IE: \[.hh E:::h e- \text{shag}\]
4 IR: \[\downarrow \text{ye:s} \uparrow =\downarrow \text{ye:s}\uparrow =\]

This partial repeat by the respondent may be a sign of trouble, like a hearing or understanding check, or it may be a prefatory utterance to an upcoming answer. She targets a specific part of the prior utterance, locating the potential trouble source in “shag” and not in “most” or “at present” or in the prior turn as a whole. However, the action the respondent is performing with this utterance is not quite clear. But, since we have seen in fragment 1 that respondents orient to the paradigmatic question-answer sequence, we (and the interviewer) can interpret this divergence as a sign of some sort of trouble.

The interviewer’s turn is the place where she can display her interpretation of the respondent’s prior turn. However, the interviewer’s choice for “yes” does not betray much of what she took the respondent to be doing in the prior turn. The interviewer uses an explicitly positively framed token to respond with; and she responds with no more than this token. This response can cover several tasks that might be necessary in this position: it can confirm a hearing or understanding check, it can acknowledge a sign of trouble and it can acknowledge a prefatory statement, treating it as incomplete and ‘to be continued’. I would like to point out that not all response tokens are this versatile, compare for example “mm hm”, “oh”, or “yep”. The interviewer’s choice for “yes” in line 4 is one she makes on the spot and is unscripted.

The respondent latches her next turn onto the interviewer’s “yes”. The sequential position is still within the answer slot, meaning that the respondent has a right to the floor. The fact that she does not wait for the interviewer to go on to clarify the question not only signals that the respondent orients to this right to the floor, but also that she may not have sought clarification at this stage.

5 IE: \[=\text{well e- I smoke shag very spo}\text{radically=}\]
6 IR: \[\uparrow \downarrow \text{y\text{es}}\uparrow \downarrow \]
In line 5, repeated here, the respondent addresses a matter that is connected with another aspect of the question, i.e. “most”. If one does something only now and then it may be problematic to determine the way one does that “most”. On the other hand, the respondent could also intend this utterance as a preliminary statement before going on to say something like “but when I do it’s always brand XX”. Nevertheless, this utterance does not contain a well-formatted answer to the question, nor does it offer enough material for the interviewer to base the selection of an answer category on.

Again, the interviewer responds to the respondent’s turn-constructional unit (TCU) with a “yes”, latching it onto the end of the respondent’s TCU. And again, this token may be employed to do more than one task. It acknowledges the prior utterance and it deflects the turn back to the respondent. Notably, by using this particular token, the interviewer does not do floor deflection exclusively, like ‘mm hm’ or ‘hm:’ would have done (see Jefferson 1984). Also, it does not treat the prior as a pragmatically complete unit, as ‘right’ might do. And thirdly, it does not treat the prior turn as news or a topic in its own right, as responses such as ‘oh’ or ‘really’ might do (see Heritage 1984 on ‘oh’). In line 7, the respondent continues her talk and does not wait for the interviewer to acknowledge her talk up to this point.

This next TCU further specifies the trouble she has with the question. She does not smoke this type of tobacco very often because this only happens when she uses someone else’s tobacco. This may mean that she is not very conscious of the brand that she smokes, and moreover that she does not choose this brand actively: it is just what that other person happens to have on them that she “nicks”.

By line 7, the respondent is no longer doing preliminaries to an upcoming answer. While her previous two utterances could be read to be leading up to an acceptable answer, this turn displays possible problems in giving such an answer. She can be understood to say that she does not have an answer to the question, or maybe she does not know the answer because she does not pay attention to what type of shag she nicks from people. In contrast to the previous two TCUs, the interviewer responds to this TCU with a prompt.

When it becomes apparent that an answer is not coming up, the interviewer initiates repair by redoing the question (lines 8-9). So in
contrast to lines 4 and 6 the interviewer now switches from recipiency to taking back the floor.

Notice the way the interviewer designs this second version of the question to fit the context. She starts up her turn with “and” by which she dresses it as a next question, part of an agenda or of a logical sequence following from what came before (Sorjonen & Heritage 1991). She recycles part of the respondent's utterance in the word “mostly”, and she uses the deictic term “then” to refer to the situation the respondent has described in line 7. Clearly, the interviewer pursues an answer that fits the format. She could, instead, have chosen to go along with one of the other possible inferences from what the respondent said in line 7: that she might not know which brand she smokes or that there is no particular brand. This reformulated question receives an answer: “E:::hm yes that’s that medium by van nelle” (line 10).

Questionnaires provide a script for survey interviews, but the script relies on the paradigmatic, two-part question-answer sequences. Literally, it simply provides just the first pair parts of the question-answer adjacency pair. The respondent is to provide the second pair part, after which the interviewer can read out the next first pair part. But in this section we saw how such a sequence can get expanded and that such an expansion sets up contingencies for the interviewer to deal with. The script does not provide the interviewer with responses for a possible third position. Interviewers are thus forced to rely on their knowledge of everyday interaction in order to deal with the contingencies respondents set up.

In this case, the respondent has indicated that she smokes shag, but when she is asked for her current brand, trouble arises. She does not provide an answer to the question in the first available slot but uses this slot to do something else. The interviewer needs to deal with this unscripted event: instead of going on to the next question after receiving a second pair part to the current question, she needs to deal with an insert sequence initiated by the respondent.

The effort the interviewer has to make is most clearly visible in the way she redoes the question in line 8. She needs to design this second version of the question to fit the context, showing how she deals with respondent behaviour on an ad hoc basis. The contingencies set up by this particular respondent could not be predicted by the designers of the questionnaire and are created entirely in the interactional environment of the interview.

However, the same happens on a slightly different scale in lines 4 and 6, where the interviewer says 'yes’ in reply to the respondent’s
talk. The interviewer relies on her competence as a conversationalist to select the appropriate token and to place it in the right slot. Again, such behaviour is difficult to script and happens on the interviewer’s own initiative and in response to specific actions by the respondent.

I would now like to give a more specific analysis of this particular aspect of interviewer behaviour, that is: doing a ‘yes’ in response to a non-answer by the respondent.

3.3.1 Yes as a response token

In the previous section we have seen that interviewers can use ‘yes’ as a response token when the respondent gives an answer that does not correspond to one of the answer categories available to the interviewer. Though I have so far only presented one sequence in which this happens, I have found that it is a recurring phenomenon and that there are certain regularities to its occurrence. One of these regularities is its position relative to the respondent’s talk.

In the following fragment we can see that the interviewer’s ‘yes” in line 8 is placed right at the first transition relevance point (TRP) in the respondent’s turn, overlapping with the beginning of his next TCU. This is the same position as we have seen in fragment 2, line 6.

Fragment 3

1 IR: ↓and if you add together all the times that you skim a magazine↓=
2 =.h how much time do you on average spend a week reading these
3 types of magazines↓ .hh is that half an hour a week, ↓one hour,
4 (0.3)
5 IR: ↓two to three hours for r to five hours ]
6 IE: ↓Y:E:s, ↓there are, eh magazines that you
7 enjoy more than others=  
8 → =it’ll be ↓.hh in total say a: some three hours ↓I think↓=
9 IR: → [↑yes↓]
10 IR: =↓yes↑
11 (0.7)
12 IR: e:hm do you have cable connection for television↓

1 IR: ↓en assu alle keren dat u ’n tijdschrift inkijkt bij elkaar ↓neemt↓=
2 =.h hoeve tijd besteedt u zo gemiddeld in ’n week aan ’t lezen van
3 dit soort tijdschriften↓ .hh is dit ’n half uurje per week, ↓een uur↓,
4 (0.3)
5 IR: ↓twee tot drie uur viel r ’tot vijf uur ]
As in fragment 2, line 6, this "yes" functions to acknowledge the previous utterance and immediately gives the floor back to the respondent. It does not treat the prior as newsworthy in itself, nor does it treat it as problematic or inappropriate. The respondent continues his turn in line 8, taking the interviewer's utterance in his stride. This is evidence that he treats the "yes" the way I have just analysed it: as an acknowledgement and a device to deflect the floor, not as an attempt by the interviewer to conquer the floor.

The following fragment comes from a survey interview about a magazine. Before this excerpt, she has already indicated that she did not yet read this month's edition but has only "leafed through it quickly". She has explained that that is because she receives several magazines and she reads them when she has time. Now the interviewer asks her when she first looks through the magazine after she has received it (lines 1-2). The interviewer lists three answer categories (lines 4 and 6-7), and in line 9 the respondent starts to respond to the question.

Fragment 4:

IR: .hh within how many day:s after ((title)) is received do you usually look through it for the first time?
1
2 (1.3)
3
4 IR: is that e- mostly a day a- it was received==wi thin (a day after) \[ y:es \]
5 IE: \[ y:es \]
6 IR: received or do you say well .h only after a week ((tag)) because all the magazines arrive at the same t(h)ime
7 (0.2)
8
9 IE: \[ y:ES- well: mostly eh I quickly look through it e: \]
10 \[ something li ke around the day \[ it was \] received?\]
11 IR: \[ y:es \]
12 (0.4)
13 IR: \[ okay \] so you look through it e- on the same day or something
14 IE: \[ yes\]
The respondent starts by saying that it is her habit to “quickly look through” the magazine (line 9). The interviewer receives this first part of her response in line 11 with a soft, stretched “yes”. It is placed after an apparent word-search by the respondent (“e:h” in line 9), at a point where potentially just a preposition is necessary to make this TCU syntactically complete. In the Dutch original ‘door’ (‘through’) or ‘in’ would complete this TCU. With her “yes” the interviewer receives the respondent’s talk and displays understanding of it, in spite of its incompleteness.

At this point, however, the respondent’s turn is not yet pragmatically complete. The respondent is required to answer the question, preferably by selecting one of the answer categories. She has not done this yet, so the floor is still hers. Just like in fragments 2 and 3 the interviewer’s “yes” is not a bid for the floor and the respondent does not treat it as such.

The interviewer acknowledges the respondent’s turn with two additional yes-tokens (line 11). The second response token is placed after what is recognisable as leading up to an answer: “mostly I quickly look through it eh something like around the day” (lines 9-10). Here, the rest of the word group is highly projectable. The respondent’s “de dag” is hearable as the first part of “de dag van ontvangst” (literally “the day of reception”), used by the interviewer in line 4. After the respondent has completed her turn the interviewer receives the answer with another “yes”. This token is placed directly adjacent to the respondent’s talk, leaving no gap. I will discuss this use of ‘yes’, receipting a complete answer, in section 4 of this chapter.
In fragment 5 a rather neat thing happens. The interviewer acknowledges the respondent’s talk ‘late’. We saw in fragment 4 that speakers can place their receipt tokens very near the end of their co-participants turn, immediately acknowledging that turn. In fragment 5, however, the interviewer acknowledges the respondent’s talk only after the respondent has delivered a full TCU, left a micro-pause and has tagged on an insecurity marker. This insecurity marker is built to fit on the first TCU as an increment, rather than that it is a new TCU. In the original Dutch version this is visible from the word order: “denk ik” (verb-subject) is the word order for sub-clauses, and is not used at the beginning of indicative main clauses.

Fragment 5:

1 IR: ↓and ↑what do you think of the development of the general economic
2   situation↑.h has it in the ↑Netherlands↑ in the last twelve ↑months
gotten better or ↓worse↓ or remained the ↑same↓
4   (0.3)
5 IE: .hhh e:::hm↓ (0.3) n:yes- (2.8) yes it depends on what you ↑look at right↑
6   ()
7 IE: I think, KG HEHE ↑.HH when you look at unemployment you↑.h or
8 IR: → [ ↓yes ↓]
9 IE: at least what I see around you↑.then ↑I say e:::h well↓ not ↑really
10 IR: ↓[

This respondent actually delays moving on to the next TCU until after the interviewer has done a "yes". At the end of her first TCU she prompts the interviewer for a response to her turn-so-far with “he” (“right?” at the end of line 5). Jefferson (1981) has described this as a response solicitation. The TCU is syntactically and prosodically
complete, but pragmatically it could be considered incomplete. This utterance (“it depends on what you look at”) foreshadows at least two different aspects one could consider when answering this question: it depends whether you look at X or Y. These aspects could be left implicit; however, the interviewer treats the turn as incomplete by not taking over the floor at its point of possible completion. With the increment the respondent prompts the interviewer to acknowledge her turn-so-far.

The interviewer does not respond immediately and after a micro pause (line 6) the respondent tags an extra phrase onto her TCU which in turn gets expanded by laughter (“I think, KGHEHE” in line 7). It is at this point that the interviewer comes in with a response, overlapping with some of the laughter (line 8). After the interviewer has acknowledged the previous utterance, the respondent continues delivering her multi-unit turn. Like in the previous fragments, the respondent in fragment 4 does not treat the token as an interruption or a bid for the floor by the interviewer. This is evident from the fact that she immediately initiates a next TCU after the interviewer’s “yes”, thus treating the interviewers talk as complete.

From these three examples it emerges that these “yes” tokens are placed at the end of the respondent’s initial TCU, and before he or she has finished a possible next TCU. The token appears to function as both an acknowledgement of what the respondent has said so far, and as a device to deflect the floor back to the respondent. The respondents treat the token as such: they do not abandon their turn in response to the “yes” or respond to it in any other way than by continuing their talk.

There is also a regularity emerging as to the type of action these respondents perform in the TCU to which the yes-token is placed as responsive. Here are the relevant turns from the three previous fragments:

From fragment 2:

5 IE:  =well e- I smoke shag very spo↓radically=

From fragment 3:

6 IE:  ↓Y:E:s, ↓there are] eh magazines that you
7       enjoy more than others=
From fragment 4:

9 IE: → y:ES- well: mostly eh I quickly look through it eh

And from fragment 5:

5 IE: .hhh e:::hm (0.3) n:yes- (2.8) yes it depends on what you ↑look at right↑

With all these TCUs the respondents display to be considering an aspect of the question or a factor relevant for the upcoming answer. The answer needs to be seen in the light of the information the respondent provides in this initial statement. So, for the brand of shag the respondent in fragment 2 indicates to smoke “most at present” it is clear that she does not smoke that brand very much either. The respondent in fragment 3 makes clear that the time he spends on reading magazines is not spread equally over the magazines he has indicated reading. So the subsequent answer can be seen in this light.

The same is true for the respondent in fragment 4: she has already indicated that she does not read the magazine until after quite a while, and she now indicates that she looks through it quickly around the day she receives it. The first part of her answer thus displays to the interviewer what it is she does around the day she receives it. And the respondent in fragment 5 also explicates what her answer means. She eventually answers the question with “remained the same”, but her prefatory remarks have displayed to the interviewer that this is a sum of good and bad developments, that happen to cancel each other.

We could call these first parts of all these answers an instruction to the interviewer for how they should hear the upcoming answer. These respondents display their considerations in answering the question. The first TCU is not shaped or presented as a repair, explicitly singling out some trouble-source in the question. They can be described as prefatory remarks, possibly leading to an answer as soon as in the next TCU.

With the “yes” tokens, the interviewer treats them as prefatory and as leading up to an answer. In these fragments, the interviewers do not jump in to repair the respondents’ turn but they leave them the floor. In fragments 3 and 4 the initial TCU is indeed prefatory to an answer in the subsequent talk without any prompting from the interviewer. But in fragments 2 and 5 the interviewer eventually redoes the question in order to get a recordable answer. So it is only in retrospect that the turn-initial statements in fragments 2 and 5 were not prefatory to an answer.
Another regularity about this phenomenon is on the one hand the various things "yes" can be employed to do, and on the other hand the various things it certainly does not do. In all three fragments the yes-token is employed to acknowledge the talk until that point, to deflect the floor back to the respondent and, if the respondent does not take the floor back subsequently, it can retroactively be employed to acknowledge a complete turn, after which the interviewer can take over the floor. This last feature contrasts with the continuer 'mm hm', one that has been shown by Jefferson (1984) to show pure recipiency, unconditionally leaving the floor to the present speaker.

As I pointed out in the analysis of fragment 2, the things 'yes' does not do is receipt the prior as news, topicalise its content or treat it explicitly as pragmatically complete. These actions would not be in the best interest of the interviewer, who is concerned with gathering answers to her questions in as short a time as possible.

3.3.2 "Yes" in survey interviews and in mundane interaction
Jefferson (1983) describes how recipients in her data confirm their recipiency with 'mm hm' tokens, while signalling that they want to take over the turn with a 'yeah' token. Her findings are based on telephone interaction between American and British speakers of English. In her data she found speakers to switch from the recipient token 'mm hm' to 'yeah' when they are about to take over speakership. She also found that some speakers do not switch tokens but do 'yeah' as recipient-token as well as when they want to take over the floor. In those cases the shape of the token changes depending on the action it is performing (Jefferson, 1983: 8).

Gardner (2001) found that the response tokens 'yeah' and 'mm hm' can, under certain conditions, perform similar functions. He also found that single tokens can perform different functions, when they are realised in prosodically different ways. For both 'mm hm' and 'yeah', falling pitch is associated with acknowledgement of the prior, while a rising pitch turns these tokens into a continuer. In his extensive corpus of mundane interaction in English, he found the response token 'yeah' is overwhelmingly produced with a falling pitch contour, and that this token works to acknowledge or affirm the talk to which it is responsive. However, Gardner also found a small number of 'yeah'-tokens with a rising pitch direction. Those appear to perform the task of a continuer similar to 'mm hm' (which is typically produced with a rising pitch), handing the floor back to the prior speaker.
Dutch speakers employ both recipient tokens ‘ja’ and ‘mm hm’. We have already seen that ‘ja’ is used to acknowledge the current speaker’s talk. The response token ‘mm hm’ also occurs in Dutch, and its function is basically the same as in English (Mazeland 1990). This means that a switch from one token to the other would in theory be possible.

An important difference between the data used in Jefferson’s research and my data is that the interaction I am analysing is of a distinct institutional variety. One could argue that it is not very fertile to blindly map findings from other types of interaction onto interaction in survey interviews. Indeed, it may just turn out that differences between Jefferson’s findings and mine can be credited precisely to the institutional character of my data.

I have compared the use of recipient tokens in my data with that described by Jefferson (1983). The first thing to notice is that in the survey interviews that I have analysed, ‘mm hm’ and comparable tokens hardly occur in the interviewers’ talk. This holds across speakers, thus giving the impression that it may have to do with their institutional task and not with idiosyncrasies of individual speakers. I have found one instance, which I will briefly discuss here.

Fragment 6:

1 IR: a:::nd can you (. ) name all the cigarette brands you ↑know= =even if it's
2 only by< name= =so you don't need to smoke them yourself↓=
3 IE: =oOh yes↓
4 (0.4)
5 IE: =[h ]
6 IR: ={can you} name a [few↑]
7 IE: y:es, e:h well so you have philip morris↑ and then
8 you ha:ve[ BR ~OW:::N, ↓and eh↓ BLUE::, ↓and ↑tikh↑ ↑led i think,=
9 IR: =[yes] [yes]
10 IR: =↓y;es,
11 IE: .h e:h then you also have mantano: ↓eh malboro:
12 (0.3)
13 IE: .dhh pall ma:Il↓
14 (0.2)
15 IE: ↓eh↑should I >continue↑<
16 IR: ↑yeah, >heheheheheh< [(as many as you can)]
17 IE: 
18 IR: y;es,=
19 IE: =stuyvesan=:
20 IR:→ =mm[ hm↑]
The question in lines 1-2 asks the respondent to provide a potentially endless list of cigarette brands. It is impossible for the interviewer to predict when the list will end, and it is the interviewer’s task to encourage the respondent to go on naming as many brands as she can. The “mm hm” in line 20 follows the tenth item on the
respondent’s list, after which she goes on to list a further two brands. In line 26 the respondent explicitly ends her list by saying that she has given enough answers by now, which is then confirmed by the interviewer moving on to the next question.

The token ‘mm hm’ displays “passive recipiency”, “its user is proposing that his co-participant is still in the midst of some course of talk, and shall go on talking” (Jefferson 1983: 4). Most survey questions require a single answer, after which the interviewer can ask the next question. Interviewers may not want to display “passive recipiency” in such an environment but have an investment in moving on to the next question. In this particular sequence, however, the answer is potentially endless. This means that the token can appropriately be employed here. It neatly confirms Jefferson’s findings on the function of ‘mm hm’, to find this token in this particular environment within survey interviews. Moreover, it is evidence that at least some of these interviewers are ‘mm hm’-sayers in other environments, but simply do not use this token when interviewing.

So, while in mundane interaction the change from recipiency to next speaker can be marked by changing acknowledgement tokens from ‘mm hm’ to ‘yeah’, the overall absence of ‘mm hm’ in survey interviews prevents this from happening. This absence may therefore also change the status of the ‘yes’ tokens. Clearly, in the examples presented so far, the interviewer’s “yes” was not responded to by the respondent as a bid for the turn. In the next fragment, a repeat and elaboration of fragment 5, we can see the interviewer employ an unexpected strategy to get the floor back, by actually withholding acknowledgement.

Fragment 7:

1 IR: ↓and ↑what do you think of the development of the general economic
2 ↓situation↓ h has it in the ↑Netherlands↑ in the last twelve ↑months
3 ↓gotten better or ↑worse↓ or remained the ↑same↓
4 (0.3)
5 IE: ↓hh c::hm↓ (0.3) n:yes- (2.8) yes it depends on what you ↑look at right↑
6 ()
7 IE: I think, KG HH when you look at unemployment y:es
8 IR:a→ ↓ yes ↓
9 IE: ↓or at least what I see arou↓round y:ou ↓
10 IR:a→ ↓yes↓
11 IE: then I say c::h well↓ not ↑really an↓d the-↓[but it]↑f you then hear the ec-
12 IR:a→ ↓ no ↓
Response tokens in survey interviews

13 IE: eh what's it called the export and such=
14 IR:a→ ye:s=
15 IE:b→ then you say z-HH and the big companies they all do well↓
16 but there's just not- very little being invested then [right↑]
17 IR:c→ but do you your↓ self think ↑that it's gotten better ↑or worse [s:e or↓]
18 IE: [U: ↓h' m:]
19 IR: th↓ same
20 IE: YES
21 IE: ↓
22 ()
23 IE: well it depends for ↑who then [right↑]
24 IR: ye ↓s "mm=
25 IE: =so: it's all >relative<=
26 =WELL (. ) E:::h (1.3) n: not (0.7) ↓not- ↑not ↓ worse I think↓=
27 IR: =no: [so the] SAme "ap proximately
28 IE: then ↓y:es-
29 ()
30 IR: .hh and what according to you will happen in the next ↓twelve months

1 IR: ↓e:n ↑wat vindt u van de ontwikkeling van de algemene economische
2 situatie↓ . h is 't in ↑Nederland↑ in de laatste twaalf ↑maanden
3 beter of slechter ge↓ worden↓ of ↑zelfde ge↓ bleven↓
4 (0.3)
5 IE: .hhh c:::hm ↓ (0.3) n:ja- (2.8) ja 't ligt eraan waar je naar ↑kijkt he↑
6 ()
7 IE: denk ik, KG HEHE].HH als je naar de werkeloosheid kijkt ja
8 IR:a→ ↓ja:
9 IE: .h of tenminste: wat ik dan zo om je heen z ie ]
10 IR:a→ ↓ja:
11 IE: dan zeg ik e::h nou↓ niet echt↑ en: de- [maar al's je dan de eek-
12 IE: ↓nee ]
13 IE: eh hoe heet 't de export enzo: hoort=
14 IR:a→ =ja=
15 IE:b→ =dan zeg je z-HH en de grote bedrijven daar gaat allemaal goed mee↓
16 maar d'r wordt gewoon niet- heel weinig geinvesteerd dan [he↑
17 IR:c→ [maar] vindt
18 u ↓zelf ↑dat 't beter is geworden↑ "of slecht[te:r of↓]
19 IE: [U: ↓h' m:
20 IR: t z,kelfde
21 IE: JA
22 ()
23 IE: nou 't ligt eraan voor ↑wie dan [he↑]
24 IR: ↓ja↓ "mm=
The question in lines 1-3 asks about the respondent’s opinion on the development of the Dutch economy and offers three answer categories: better, worse or the same. The respondent should now select one of these options, conveniently placed at the end of the interviewer’s turn. However, after some hesitation (lines 4-5) the respondent embarks upon a narrative about how some aspects of the economy have got better, while others have deteriorated.

I have argued in the previous paragraph that the "yes" in line 8 is employed to acknowledge the first TCU and to deflect the turn back to the respondent. The interviewer continues to respond to the respondent’s talk with similar tokens, acknowledging and leaving the floor to the respondent. In fact, from line 8 to 14 she places a response token at the end of each of the three TCUs in the respondent’s talk (lines with arrow ‘a’).

The interviewers receipt token in line 10 is placed at the last item of the respondent’s TCU in line 9. In the original Dutch transcript we can see that it overlaps with the unit’s verb. This is the only item necessary to complete the TCU, and it is highly projectable because the phrasal part of the verb has already been delivered. I repeat those two lines here with a gloss line. The words in bold print are the phrasal part of the verb.

The next receipt token, in line 12, is delivered slightly after the end of the next TCU in line 11. The token is designed to align with the respondent’s negatively framed TCU. I will repeat these two turns here. The two diagonal lines indicate the end of the respondent’s TCU, so we can see that the interviewer acknowledges that talk slightly late, ending up in overlap with the beginning of the respondent’s next TCU.
Response tokens in survey interviews

The third token occurs in line 14 and its placement is directly after the last item of the respondent’s TCU in line 13.

13 IE: maar als je dan de eek- eh hoe heet ’t de export enzo: hoort=
    but if you then the ec- how calls it the export and such hear
    but if you then hear the ec- eh what’s it called the export and such=
14 IR:a→ =ja:=

Note that all these TCUs are syntactically complete, but the respondent’s turn is built in such a way that at all these points the turn is not pragmatically complete. In line 5, the respondent sets up an extended turn by saying “it depends on what you look at”. This gives her space to refer to at least two contrasting sides that one could look at when answering this question. Her next TCUs are if/then-constructions, where the if-part projects a then-part, and is not pragmatically complete by itself (lines 7-11 and lines 11-15).

During the respondent’s talk in line 15 the interviewer changes her recipient behaviour. After the respondent quickly finishes the then-part of her second if/then-construction, the interviewer stays silent. And at the transition relevance point between the two TCUs "and the big companies they all do well" (line 15) and "but there’s just not- very little being invested” (line 16), the interviewer does not place a response token. I repeat the respondent’s utterance here, including diagonal lines between TCUs.

15 IE: b→ =then you say z- // and the big companies they all do well//
16 but there's just not- very little being invested then // right//

This may not look like a very significant action, but I argue that the participants themselves orient to it as significant.

At the end of line 16 the respondent prompts the interviewer for a response by adding a tag to her TCU: "right?” or in the Dutch original: "he?” We saw her do the same in line 5 of this fragment, and I have discussed that prompt in the previous section. In that case she actually postponed her next TCU until after she had received an acknowledgement or ‘go-ahead’ from the interviewer. The fact that the respondent places this tag at the end of a TCU that was started up in
the absence of a response token, may signal that she too is monitoring her partner’s behaviour and has perceived a change in recipientship. However, at this point the interviewer does not produce an acknowledgement token, in response to the respondent’s request. In fact, she is already in there with a second version of the question from lines 1-3, overlapping the tag with the first part of her turn. Note that the interviewer does not wait until the respondent has stopped speaking before she starts up her repair. The fact that she latches on to the projected end of the current TCU (or maybe one beat after, as it would have been hard to predict the respondent to go on saying "then") displays that she was planning to come in at the next transition relevance point, whether the respondent would relinquish the floor or not.

I have argued that survey interviewers do not have the recipient token ‘mm hm’ available to them because they do not tend to act as passive recipients. Because Jefferson (1983) found that speakers may change their recipient tokens from ‘mm hm’ to ‘yeah’ in order to signal that they will take over the turn, the question arises how interviewers signal their intention to take over the floor. As they do not use ‘mm hm’, they cannot change tokens from ‘mm hm’ to some form of ‘yes’. And, as they already use ‘yes’ to display acknowledgement of the respondent’s talk, they cannot use the same token to signal that they want to take over the floor. Faced with a respondent that occupies the floor for a long time without moving towards a well-formatted answer, these interviewers change their recipient-behaviour from acknowledging separate TCUs to withholding acknowledgement in order to make an effective claim on the floor.

3.3.3 Receipt as continuer

In this section we have so far dealt with question-answer sequences in which contingencies arise with which the interviewer needs to deal. One of the ways interviewers react when a respondent does something else than deliver an answer is saying ‘yes’. This same token comes up in a slightly different environment in survey interviews, when answers are incomplete as well. This other environment is when a respondent is asked to give a list of answers to one question.

In my data respondents are sometimes asked to list all the examples of X he knows. Respondents are asked to name all the cigarette brands they know by name or all the types of savings accounts they know a particular bank offers. Another question asks them to name all the institutions they know when savings are
concerned. This type of question sets up for a potentially endless list: the respondent does not know how many items are ‘enough’ for the purpose of the questionnaire and the interviewer does not know how many items the respondent can provide. With these types of questions it is then the interviewer’s job to encourage the respondent to continue until all possible answers have been given. The way the interviewers in my data often do this is by saying “yes”. In the previous section we saw an example of such a list already, illustrating the environment in which I found the interviewer saying “mm hm” (fragment 6). This “mm hm” was the exception to the rule I am discussing in this section.

Fragment 8 is an example of such a sequence. The respondent is asked to tell the interviewer which names of types of investments that are offered by a Dutch bank. At first the respondent gives a response that is not in the correct format (line 4), and the interviewer prompts him for a conforming answer (line 6).

Fragment 8:

1 IR: e:h which names of forms of investment that is offered by the ((name))
2 IE: bank do you ↑know↓ even if it’s only by name↓
3 (1.3)
4 IR: every form I think then
5 (0.3)
6 IR: can you name a few
7 (0.4)
8 IE: .fh (0.2) e::h ye: s eh↓ (0.6) so eh hh ((name)) bank equity fu:nd,=
9 =and the bonds fu:nd,= =and hh the: sto:ck fund,
10 ↓and eh↑ (. ) ((name)) bank in↑vestment fu:nd they have
11 (.)
12 IR:→ yes,
13 (0.3)
14 IE: and then they have eh hm >that you then< can buy stocks
15 for a cheap tariff
16 (.)
17 IR: ↓okay↑ .h e:h on which bank

1 IR: e:h welke name van beleggingsvormen die door de ((name))
2 bank worden aangeboden ↑kent u↓ al is ‘t alleen maar van nam↓
3 (1.3)
4 IE: alle vormen denk ik dan
5 (0.3)
6 IR: kunt u d’r wat noemen
After the interviewer prompts him, this respondent gives a list of four names of investment programmes (lines 8-10). The production of the list is very fluent, and the respondent does not seem to need to search for or think about the names very long. After each item, the respondent immediately starts up a new TCU for the next item by latching “and” onto the previous item. The fourth item, however, is not followed by such an onset. Moreover, the respondent adds “they have”, turning the list he has just delivered into a sentence with a verb, subject and several objects.

In line 12 the interviewer receipts the respondent’s previous turn with a “yes”. After a silence, the respondent adds a fifth answer to his list, but this time it is a description instead of the name of an investment programme (lines 14-15). The interviewer then receipts the answer and moves on to ask the next question.

We can see a few things in this fragment. First, the interviewer receipts the respondent’s answers with “yes”. Second, she does not move on to the next question after this receipt. Third, the respondent uses the space the interviewer has left to add another answer to the list. And fourth, the respondent does this, even though he does not actually know another answer to add to the list.

I will discuss this use of the response token “yes” further with reference to the next fragment. Fragment 9 repeats the sequence shown in fragment 6 in this chapter. The respondent is asked to list the names of all the cigarette brands she knows and from line 7 onwards, she supplies the names of eleven brands of cigarettes. We will see that the interviewer places a receipt token after most of these answers. I have marked these receipt tokens with an arrow and the letter ‘a’. 

Fragment 9:
Response tokens in survey interviews

1 IR: a::nd can you (.) name all the cigarette brands you ^know= =>even if it's
2 only by< name= =so you don't need to smoke them yourself↓=
3 IE: =oOh yes↓
4 (0.4)
5 IE: =[^.h  ]
6 IR: [=can you_ name a [few↑]
7 IE: = [yes, m e:h well so you have philip morris↑ and then
8 you have [ BR ^OW:::N, ↓and eh ↓ BLUE:::, ↓and .tlkh ↑r ed i think,=
9 IR:a→ =^[yes] [yes]
10 IR:a→ =[^y:es,=
11 IE: =oOh ja
12 (0.4)
13 IE: =[^.h
14 IR: =[^.h
15 IE: =[^.h
16 IE: =[^.h
17 IE: =[^.h
18 IR:a→ =[^.h
19 IE: =[^.h
20 IR:a→ =[^.h
21 IE: =[^.h
22 IE: =[^.h
23 IR:a→ =[^.h
24 IE: =[^.h
25 b→ (0.3)
26 IE:e→ w:ell WE:LL [I think that is quite enough] ^heheHEhe[^.HH  ]
27 IR: =[^.h
28 think of cigarette brands and sponsoring sports

1 IR: e:::n kunt u (.) alle sigarettenmerken die u ^kent- opnoemen= =>al is 't
2 alleen maar van< naam= = dus je hoeft z:e zelf niet te roken↓=
3 IE: =oOh ja↓
4 (0.4)
5 IE: =[^.h  ]
6 IR: [=kunt u_ d'r 'n paar [noemen↑]
7 IE: =[^.h
8 IE: =[^.h
9 IR:a→ =[^.h
10 IR:a→ =[^.h
11 IE: =[^.h
12 b→ (0.3)
13 IE: =[^.h
14 "belinda, ↓you also [have],
15 IR:a→ =[^.h
16 IE: =[^.h
17 IE: =[^.h
18 IE: =[^.h
19 IE: =[^.h
20 IE: =[^.h
21 IE: =[^.h
22 IE: =[^.h
23 IE: =[^.h
24 IE: =[^.h
25 IE: =[^.h
26 IE:e→ w:ell WE:LL [I think that is quite enough] ^heheHEhe[^.HH  ]
27 IR: =[^.h
28 think of cigarette brands and sponsoring sports
From Text to Talk

The interviewer receipts most answers with some version of “yes”; in line 21 we find the instance of “mm hm” that I discussed in the previous section. In lines 9, 10, and 23 the receipt token is placed a few beats after the answer; in lines 18 and 20 they follow the answer more closely. The quality of these tokens is quite soft and low. The first consonant is often stretched somewhat. Some of them have a slight upward intonation (‘comma intonation’), while others are flat. These acoustic characteristics are consistent across my data: I have not found any examples that are loud or that have a falling intonation when the ‘yes’ is employed to receipt items of an ongoing list.

These tokens appear to do work in not only receipting answers and displaying to the respondent that the interviewer is still with her and monitoring her talk. They also have the function of a continuer: they treat the respondent’s talk as incomplete and thus display to the respondent that she is expected to continue giving answers to the question. There are two kinds of evidence for this. First, the respondent produces a next answer after her previous answer was receipted with a receipt token. And second, I will show that the respondent stops providing answers when her answers are no longer actively receipted by the interviewer.

The respondent goes through two rounds of answering. The first round takes up lines 7-16 and the second round takes up lines 17-27. In the first round, the interviewer receipts the earlier answers with a receipt token (lines 9 and 10). However, in lines 12 and 14 a receipt token is absent. I have marked these lines with an arrow ‘b’. The answers the respondent provides in lines 11 (“then you also have...”)
mantano: ↓eh malboro:”) and 13 (“pall mall”) are not receipted by the interviewer. So, by line 14 the respondent has given three answers that did not get a response from the interviewer, while her prior answers did receive a response, either each single one or after two answers had been delivered. Subsequently, at arrow ‘c’ in line 15, the respondent asks the interviewer whether more answers are called for or not (”should I continue?”). In line 16 the interviewer indicates that she would indeed like the respondent to continue, and in line 17 the respondent starts providing answers again.

This is where the second round of answering starts. We can see the same pattern unfold here. The first three answers are each met with a receipt token (lines 18, 20 and 23) and the interviewer stays silent after the subsequent answer (arrow ‘b’ at line 25). The respondent then proposes to close this question-answer sequence: “well I think that is quite enough” (arrow ‘c’ at line 26). Now the interviewer co-operates in the proposed closing and moves on to the next question (lines 27-28).

I want to argue that these two events, the absence of a receipt and the proposal to close the question-answer sequence, are interactionally connected. The fact that the interviewer does not give a receipt / continuer-token is oriented to as an indication that she has provided a satisfactory number of answers. The respondent takes this opportunity to propose to discontinue her list.

In the second round of the respondent’s answers this may not be a completely one-sided event in which the interviewer is caught unawares, effecting the termination of the sequence in a moment of inattention. We can see in the talk prior to this switch, that the respondent is getting less fluent in the delivery of her answers. Barclay (line 17) and Stuyvesant (line 19) are delivered without hesitation, but in lines 21-22 the respondent displays that she needs to think hard in order to come up with a next item.

21 IE:  ↓ e::hm .hhhhh let me see eh↑= -eh something li:ke (0.6)
22 belinda, ↓you also↓ have
23 IR:a→ ↓ y: ↓es,
24 IE: .h .hhhh e:h chesterfic:ldh

The fourth item in this round, which turns out to be the last one, is delivered after a lengthy inbreath of one second (line 24) and without a continuing contour like some of the previous items. Thus, the respondent displays more and more difficulty in listing new items, foreshadowing it may become impossible to add any more.
If the interviewer, in view of the difficulty displayed by the respondent, had persisted in her recipientship by giving another receipt / continuer-token, then we could have compared this to the subversive use of "mm hm" as described by Jefferson (1983). In her article, she has shown that recipients of talk can pursue their position as a recipient even though the current speaker has made it clear that a change of speakership is called for. Recipients can do this by responding with a continuer like 'mm hm' to pragmatically complete talk, thus forcing the prior speaker to keep the turn even though he tried to effect transition of speakership. The fact that the interviewer withholds her receipt / continuer-token displays sensitivity to the respondent's difficulty in coming up with new items.

Support for this claim can be found in lines 26-27, repeated here. The respondent starts up her turn in line 26 with "nou", translated here as "well". This could lead up to various next moves: a thinking pause, a next answer (compare line 7: "well so you have philip morris"), or, as in this case, a statement announcing that she up gives. Her loud repeat of "nou" gives the impression that a next item is not on its way, but that the respondent is moving to close off this sequence. At this point the interviewer comes in with something that sounds like "that's already a lot" (line 27), displaying that she is satisfied with the respondent's effort.

26 IE:c→ n:ou↓ NOU: nu vind ik 't wel genoeg hoor heheHEhe .HH
27 IR: (dat zijn er al) heel veel heh [j(h)a c:n als u]

The two participants are very much in agreement in this overlapping talk. They respond to each other, in spite of the overlap, displaying their agreement. The interviewer responds to the respondent's talk with "yes", while the respondent reacts to the interviewer by joining in with the laughter initiated by the interviewer. Subsequently, we can see that the interviewer proceeds to the next question without further ado. Neither of the two participants initiates repair on their own or the other person's talk. This indicates that they understood or at least caught the drift of what the other person said in overlap, and that they both had the impression that the other person caught the drift of their own talk. The respondent co-operates in starting the next question-answer sequence by ceasing her laughter almost as soon as the interviewer starts reading out the next question. Clearly, both participants have closed off the previous sequence together, working as a team to find a way for the respondent out of this possibly endless answer.
The closure of this question-answer sequence is done entirely co-operatively. The respondent first displays that she may not be able to come up with a next item. The interviewer responds by not giving a receipt / continuer-token. Both then express that the respondent has done a good job of answering, and finally the interviewer goes on to ask the next question instead of pushing the respondent for more items for the current question.

In this process the interviewer displays great sensitivity to the respondent’s interactional behaviour. The script provides for the delivery of the question, after which the respondent is free to continue or stop answering, dependent on how familiar she is with the items to be listed. This contingency is set up by the question: the questionnaire designers cannot foresee how many answers respondents will come up with, and how many more answers might be teased out of them when prompted. When survey interviewers switch participant-roles from asking questions to receiving answers, they need to deal with contingencies like these.

We saw in the two examples shown in this paragraph that it is very much negotiated in the interaction whether or not the respondent goes on delivering answers. The recipient behaviour of the interviewer has been shown to influence the respondent’s answering behaviour to a large extent. A small and seemingly insignificant receipt token as “ja” turns out to be a powerful means to keep the respondent in answering mode. We saw this in the lengthy discussion of fragment 9, and in fragment 8 the respondent treated the interviewer’s response token as an invitation to go on answering as well. On the other hand, as we saw in fragment 9, withholding the token can be a subtle way of offering closure for the current sequence and opening up a path to the next question.

### 3.4 Yes as answer-receipt

The yes-token employed as described above is not the only occurrence of the token in my data. I have found that the token can be used to perform a different activity in a very similar environment to the acknowledgment tokens I have already discussed, i.e. after the respondent has produced a response to the question. In contrast to the ‘yes’ I have described above, this other ‘yes’ treats the prior as a complete and acceptable answer rather than as a partial answer or a prefatory remark. In other words, it is not employed as a continuer but purely as receipt token.
When the interviewer receipts the respondent’s answer, a third turn is added to the question-answer adjacency pair. This three-part question-answer sequence is considered typical for certain forms of institutional interaction. In instructional settings, teachers can use the third position to evaluate an answer by a student. Mehan (1979) called this an ‘instructional sequence’. This is a three-part sequence consisting of an initiation, a reply, and an evaluation (Mehan 1979: 52-53).

Marlaire & Maynard (1990) studied question-answer sequences in settings in which children’s abilities were tested by clinicians. They found a three-part sequence as well and refer to it as a ‘testing sequence’. They studied in what environments the third part occurs and what shape it has. Marlaire and Maynard (1990) found that clinicians varied their uptake of child’s response depending on whether the response was correct or incorrect.

"Substantively, correct answers may receive acknowledgments, such as “good” or enthusiastic “okays,” which border on being positive assessments by virtue of their contrast with those neutral acknowledgments (unenthusiastic “okays”) that regularly follow incorrect replies. Formally, the test-item sequence may be collapsed when a subject is giving answers that are right, while the third part reappears in response to answers that are wrong” (Marlaire & Maynard 1990: 98).

Maynard and Schaeffer (2002) describe ‘the generic interviewing sequence’ as consisting of three turns: question, answer and acknowledgement (2002: 14-15). But, they write, “not all survey questions appear in this three part format, with an “okay” or other object in the third position. Often, a paradigmatic, two-part question-answer sequence -- which omits the third position -- appears” (2002: 15). They also link the three-part format to everyday conversations, where they are part of “information-seeking question-answer sequences” (2002: 17).

It appears from the literature that the three-part format is considered the standard for survey interviews. The third position can then either contain an acknowledgement, receipt or feedback, or it can be left empty. This is also the assumption I set out with when going through my data in search for answer-receipts.

However, when analysing the three-part sequences in my data, it turns out that the receipts were not employed as a standard “sequence-closing third” (Schegloff 1995). They occur in very specific environments and appear to perform specific actions there, instead of
being a gratuitous and disposable part of the sequence, merely acknowledging the prior turn. Because, as indeed many others have already observed (see Schober and Conrad 2002: 73), simply moving on to the next question can perform that job, as it signals to the respondent that the answer has been accepted.

So, if third-position receipts or acknowledgements are an optional part of the question-answer sequence in survey interviews, what is their function when they do occur? I have found receipt tokens in third and final positions in two environments. The first context is when, after sequence-elaboration during the answer slot, an acceptable answer is produced and explicitly accepted by the interviewer (§4.1). The second environment where receipts make up the final position in the sequence is when the question-answer sequence that is closed off, is the last in a series of related questions, after which a new block of questions begins (§4.2).

3.4.1 Receipt as closure of an expanded sequence

When I took a first systematic look at answer-receipts in my data, I was struck by the fact that they were not a standard part of every question-answer sequence. In my interviews I counted a ratio of one answer receipt for every three to four questions. Then, looking at the environments in which these receipts do occur, it became clear that they can often be found when the sequence does not run off smoothly (or paradigmatically). Such non-paradigmatic sequences come about when a repair sequence is inserted into the question-answer sequence by one of the participants, or when respondents elaborate within the answer slot by doing more than just providing a well-formatted answer. In my data, the interviewers sometimes receipt answers with a partial repeat, but more often with "yes" (or "no" when the answer was negatively framed, see Jefferson 2002 on “no” as an acknowledgement token), "yes okay" or just "okay".

Here is a short example:

Fragment 10:

1 IR: =the financial ↓daily↑=
2 IE: ↓no=
3 IR: =the telegraph
4 (.)
5 IE: I used to read
6 (0.4)
7 IR: do you >>now now<< not at all read it=
In this example we can see three question-answer sequences. The first one runs paradigmatically: the interviewer asks a question (line 1), the respondent gives an answer in the correct format (line 2), and the interviewer moves on to ask the next question (line 3). The sequence is not expanded, and the interviewer does not receipt the answer. The same holds for the third question-answer sequence in this example: the question in line 10, the answer in line 12, and the next question in line 13.

The middle sequence, however, gets expanded. The interviewer asks the question in line 3 and the respondent gives an answer in line 5. However, the answer is not in the correct format, and in line 7 the interviewer initiates repair on the respondent’s turn. After the respondent has responded to the repair, and thereby answered the question, the interviewer receipts the answer and immediately moves on to the next question.

So, the phenomenon I am discussing in this paragraph is this: receipts of acceptable answers occur at the end of expanded question-answer sequences. Overwhelmingly, interviewers close off unexpanded question-answer sequences by simply moving on to the next question, as we saw in the first and third sequence in fragment 10. Expanded
sequences, however, are often closed off with a receipt token, after which the interviewer immediately starts up the next question.

In the next fragment the interviewer asks a question that follows up on an earlier series of question. The respondent has been asked whether she takes part in various lotteries and other forms of gambling. For those items for which she has confirmed participation, the interviewer asks her another few questions. For example, how many lottery tickets the respondent usually buys, where she buys them and how often she takes part in the particular lottery.

Fragment 11:

1 IR: now you sometimes take part in the state lottery↑=
2 IE: =yes,=
3 IR: =every month there is a ↓lottery,=
4 IE: =mm hm,=
5 IR: =can you tell me< how many times in de past six months
6 you have ↓taken part↓
7 IE: .tsk .hhh e-c::hm:::let's see a couple yes a couple of times↓
8 (1.0)
9 IE: yes about two or three times
10 IR: → hyes↑
11 (0.8) ((tik))
12 IR: a:nd do you buy state lottery tickets cash↑

1 IR: nou u speelt dus wel eens mee in de staatsloterij↑=
2 IE: =ja,=
3 IR: =elke maand wordt er 'n loterij ge↓houden,=
4 IE: =mm hm,=
5 IR: =kunt u mij zeggen< hoe vaak u de afgelopen zes maanden
6 heeft ↓meegespeeld↓=
7 IE: .tsk .hhh e-c::hm::: even kijken 'n paar ja 'n paar keer↓
8 (1.0)
9 IE: ja: stuk of twee drie keer
10 IR: → hja↑
11 (0.8) ((tik))
12 IR: e:n koopt u staatsloten contant↑

In line 7 the respondent begins to answer, but does this in an imprecise way. Her answer “a couple of times” is certainly matched to the question but, as it turns out, it is not in the correct format. The interviewer responds to the answer with silence: she does not take
over the floor, while the respondent’s turn makes change of
speakership relevant. This lack of a receipt token, the initiation of the
next question, typing on the keyboard or even audibly breathing in
gearing up for the next question, may be a signal to the respondent
that something is up with her prior turn. Neither of the participants
takes the floor for one second, the length of time Jefferson (1989)
proposes that speakers orient to as the maximum silence.

The respondent takes the turn again after this lengthy silence and
presents a reformulation of her first answer (line 9). With this action,
she displays that she has inferred that something was the matter with
that first answer. Other possible inferences would be that the line has
suddenly gone dead (to which she could have reacted with “hello?”) or
perhaps that the interviewer was momentarily not paying attention
(which she could have displayed by repeating her first turn).

The respondent reformulates her answer with a numeric
representation of her behaviour. Alternatively, she could have said
something like “not every month” or “whenever I thought of buying a
ticket”, all potentially accurate representations of her situation. Her
choice for “two or three times” displays an orientation to what the
interviewer may be looking for, and was apparently missing in her
prior answer. She thus orients clearly to the interviewer’s task of
ticking a certain box.

The interviewer receipts this second version of the answer with
“hja↑” (line 10). This turn effectively performs three things. Firstly,
through this turn the interviewer shows that she is still paying
attention and is keeping track of what the respondent has said.
Keeping quiet after this second version of the answer would have
added to the likelihood of the other possible inferences described
above. Note that it takes another 0.8 seconds for the interviewer to
type in the answer and prepare to read out the next question. She
could have gone through this process silently, as she does in many
other instances, but then she would run the risk of appearing off-line
or signalling more trouble with the respondent’s answer. By doing
something (anything) at this point, the interviewer displays sensitivity
to these possibilities.

Secondly, the interviewer’s response in line 10 creates a contrast
with the silent receipt of the first version in line 8. Where the
respondent took no receipt to signal a problem, an overt receipt may be
taken to signal that this was better. From the fact that the respondent
does not produce a third version of her answer during the subsequent
pause in line 11, we can conclude that that was indeed her analysis of the interviewer’s response.

And thirdly, the explicitly positive frame of the receipt might be a clue to the respondent that the prior was an acceptable answer. I mean to contrast this to a more neutral receipt such as ‘mm hm’ which might not communicate this acceptability like ‘yes’, ‘okay’ or ‘right’ does. The interviewer could also have displayed being on-line by making any sound in the proper position, such as breathing or ‘eh’. Again, these ‘responses’ would not show an assessment of the prior turn like ‘ja’ does.

In line 11 we can see that the respondent takes line 10 to signal that the prior was an acceptable answer. There is enough time to start up a third attempt at an answer, but this does not happen. Nor does she give some sort of confirmation or repeat of the answer she has already given. Here we need to take into account the possibility that the respondent can also hear the interviewer typing in the answer (“tik” in the transcript), leaving her to conclude that her turn in line 9 was informative enough to enable the interviewer to do this. However that may be, in line 12 the interviewer can ask the next question without further delay.

Fragment 12 is another example of this phenomenon. The sequence starting in line 10 is expanded when the interviewer initiates repair on the respondent’s answer. The answer in line 12 is treated as unacceptable when the interviewer redoes the question in line 14, and again in line 16. In line 17 the respondent performs the repair proper by redoing his answer. The interviewer then receipts this answer in line 19, and immediately moves on to the next question.

Fragment 12:

1 IR: the past twelve months the financial situation of YOUR household
2 gotten \textsuperscript{↑}better or worse or \textsuperscript{↓}remained the same\textsuperscript{↑}
3 ()
4 IE: better h
5 (0.5)
6 IR: a \textsuperscript{↑}little \textsuperscript{↓}or \textsuperscript{↓}clearly better\textsuperscript{↑}
7 (0.3)
8 IE: e-e-e:h e- clearly better h
9 ()
10 IR: .hh and how do you think that it will go in the next \textsuperscript{↓}twelve months\textsuperscript{↑}
11 (0.2)
12 IE: e-e:h-e- I hope better h
I have included the two question-answer sequences that precede the one under analysis in order to show that a receipt is not a standard part of this interview, or of this section of the interview. In this fragment we can now see two sets of two questions after each other. First, the interviewer asks the respondent whether the respondent’s financial situation has improved or deteriorated in the past twelve months. Next is a follow-up question, asking the respondent whether the situation has become “a little or clearly better”. This set of two is repeated, asking the respondent about the next twelve months.

In the first two question-answer sequences in this fragment the respondent immediately answers in the correct format (line 4 and line 8). In both cases he selects one of the answer categories offered to him by the interviewer and does not do anything extra in his response.
After these two answers, we can see the interviewer simply moving on to the next question (line 6 and line 10). She does not expand these sequences by inserting an extra sequence, as she does in lines 14 and 16. Moreover, she does not expand the sequence with a receipt either. These two question-answer sequences are closed off implicitly by asking the next question.

Now we can make a very direct comparison with the sequence that starts in line 10. This time the respondent does something extra when answering the question. Instead of just selecting one of the answer categories, the respondent adds that he hopes the category will apply to him. The interviewer treats this answer as unacceptable, perhaps because we probably all hope that things will go better next year, but that does not mean that we actually expect that to happen. She initiates repair by redoing the question, thus expanding on the paradigmatic question-answer sequence.

In line 19 the interviewer receipts the respondent’s answer. The interviewer thus displays that she accepts the answer, and that the question-answer sequence is now complete. This receipt closes the sequence off after which the interviewer moves on to the next question.

In this paragraph we saw that answer receipts occur in a specific place: at the end of expanded question-answer sequences. The examples showed clearly that in the same list of questions, interviewers did not close off unexpanded sequences with a receipt, but did close off non-paradigmatic sequences.

Again, the interviewer is dealing with contingencies that arise in the interactional environment of the survey interview. Not only do they initiate repair when the respondent does not give an answer in the correct format (see chapter 5 of this book), but they then need to lead the way out of the expanded sequence and into the next question-answer sequence. These interactional moves are impossible to script, and require the interviewer to make unscripted moves in order to deal with these contingencies.

So interviewers do not just use the sequence-closing third in order to display that they have heard and accepted the answer. After all, they can display acceptance by simply asking the next question. This is evident from the examples in this paragraph as well: in fragments 10 and 12 the unexpanded question-answer sequences are not closed
off with a receipt, and neither participant act as if this move is missing from the sequence. Constantly, the interviewers’ interactional capacities are called upon to let the survey interview run a smooth course. While they can limit their interactional behaviour to initiating question-answer sequences as long as they run off paradigmatically, interviewers need to act as recipients when expansion does occur. The answer receipt is one of the ways in which interviewers perform their tasks as recipient.

3.4.2 Receipt at the end of a series of questions
While researching answer-receipts, I also came upon receipts after unexpanded question-answer sequences. This made me wonder why some paradigmatic sequences got a sequence-closing third, while others did not. It turned out that the answer could be found in what happens next. Survey interviewers sometimes place a receipt at the very end of a coherent list of questions, before they move on to the next block of questions. The following is a short example. The interviewer asks this respondent whether he suffers from any of a list of intestine problems. This fragment shows the last three items in the list and the shift to the next topic.

Fragment 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IR:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>↓diarrhea↑</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>IE: n:o,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IR: blockage↑</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>IE: n:o,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>IR: or an irritated bowel syndrome or spastic bowel↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>IE: n:o↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>IR: → &quot;no↑</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>IR: .h (. ↓a::nd did you -or -did anyone else in your household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>in the past twelve months↑ .h travel one or more times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>internationally by ↑airplane↓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|   | IR: ↓diarrhee↑ |   |    |
| 2 | (0.2) |   |    |
| 3 | IE: n::ee, |   |    |
| 4 |   | (.) |    |
The respondent answers in the correct format to all components of the list, and we can see the paradigmatic sequences for the last three. The interviewer does not receipt the answers to the first two items featured in this transcript (lines 1-3 and lines 5-6), but she does receipt the answer to the third (line 10). Clearly the interviewer does not receipt this answer because it is expanded or in an incorrect format: the respondent’s answer in line 9 is no different from that in line 3 and 6. What is going on instead, is that the interviewer closes off the topic before starting up the next.

The next question deals with international flights; quite a different topic from intestine problems. I argue that this receipt is part of the way interviewers mark the end of a series of questions that deal with one particular topic, before starting up a new topic. Other ways in which this interviewer marks the transition are the construction and intonation of the last question in this series (line 8), the silence after the receipt, and the audible inbreath at the beginning of the next question.

The same thing happens in the next example. The interviewer transitions from a coherent list of items one could bring on a hike or bike ride, to questions about the respondent’s bicycle. The topics in this questionnaire are much less varied, so we do not find wild topic changes like in example 13. However, in fragment 14 we can see that the interviewer clearly marks the end of this section before moving on to the next.

Fragment 14:

1 IR: a compass,
2 (0.9)
3 IE: no,
4 (0.2)
5 IR: and- GPS,
From Text to Talk

6 (0.7)
7 IE: c:::h yes,
8 (.)
9 IR: y:es↑= =and binoculars
10 (0.8)
11 IE: sometimes
12 (0.2)
13 IR: eh bird guide
14 (0.4)
15 IE: no=
16 IR: =or a step counter↓
17 (0.8)
18 IE: ↑no↓
19 IR: →

This is the last part of a question about which items this respondent brings with her when she goes on a hike or on a bicycle outing. We can see that the transition from this question to the next is again
marked in several ways. Just like the final item in fragment 13 the item in line 16 (“or a step counter”) has a final formulation as well as final, falling, intonation. This signals to the respondent that this is the last item in the list. Note that in both examples the respondents adjust the intonation of their own turns to this information: their answer to these final items has a falling intonation as well. This contrasts with the flat or slightly rising intonation (or ‘comma intonation’) we can see in the preceding answers in both fragments.

The respondent in fragment 14 answers in the correct format (line 18), and the interviewer receipts this answer (line 19). The interviewer then breathes in audibly and introduces the next block of questions (line 20-21). All these actions display to the respondent that the interviewer transitions from one topic to the next.

What we saw in fragments 13 and 14 is a recurring phenomenon. Interviewers do interactional work to mark the shift from one topic to the next, and the receipt is part of that work. Another example of this can be found in the next fragment, which I will discuss in somewhat more detail. Here, the interviewer asks a question that is the last in a series of related questions dealing with the respondent’s judgment of the financial situation of the country and of her household. The five questions dealing with this topic are structured as follows:

- the first question is about the general economic situation in the Netherlands in the past twelve months;
- the second is about the respondent’s expectations for the Dutch economy in the next twelve months (see fragment 16 below);
- the third question asks whether the respondent thinks it wise for people to buy durable goods at this point;
- the fourth question is the same as the first, but then concerning the respondent’s personal financial situation;
- and the fifth question (in fragment 15) asks about the respondent’s expectations for his own financial situation in the next twelve months.

Fragment 15 shows the last of this series of five and the first of the subsequent block questions.

Fragment 15:

1 IR: >and how do you< think that it will go in the next twelve months
2 >with the financial situation of you own household<
3 IE: e::w::: e- >a bit< ↓less↑
4 (0.3)
The interviewer receipts the answer to this last question in the series with a soft “nyes”. Just like in the previous example, the receipt is not placed after an expanded sequence, but is used to mark the transition to a new topic. And, again like in the previous example, the interviewer uses other means to mark this transition. She leaves a long silence before asking the next question (line 6), and she uses an introductory phrase for the next block of questions (line 7).

Now I would like to compare the sequence in fragment 15 with a question-answer sequence from earlier in the same block of questions (from the same interview). This is the second question in the block of five described above, asking about the respondent’s expectations for the Dutch economy in the next twelve months.

Fragment 16:

1 IR: .hh >>and what according to you will happen<< in the next ↓twelve months with the general ↓economic situation↓ in the netherlands↓ 2 IE: ↓hm::: 3 IR: ↓will it↑ get better or worse or ↓remain the same↓ 4 (0.3) 5 IE: WE:LL- I think a bit ↓better↓ 6 (0.5) (tik) 7 IR: ↓h 8 (0.7) 9 IR: a:nd if ↓furniture↑ a ↓washing machi:ne, a tele↓vision; and other 10 durable goods are concerned,="
While the question in focus in fragment 15 asked about the respondent’s financial expectations for her household, the question in fragment 16 deals with the respondent’s expectations for the Dutch economy. Because of the similarity of the questions as well as the answers, we can easily compare these two sequences. In these cases the respondent answers in a very similar way: “a bit less” versus “I think a bit better”.

The difference I would like to focus on is the interviewer’s recipient behaviour. In fragment 15 we saw that the interviewer received the answer with a quiet “yes”. In this example, however, the interviewer does not receive the answer.

The next question in fragment 16 is topically somewhat related to the prior as it deals with consumer confidence, where the prior dealt with confidence in the financial development in general. More importantly, the next question is presented as related or as part of a larger structure through and-prefacing. And that is where we can find a difference with fragment 15. The next question in that example is topically unrelated (line 9: “what is your highest school education?”) but is also explicitly presented as unrelated by the elaborate introduction of the next group of questions in line 7.

Where these two cases differ is the character of the next question, a receipt occurring before the unrelated next question, and no receipt coinciding with a related next question. This pattern holds quite strongly throughout whole interviews. To be sure, it is not always that the questions are as closely related as the block of questions discussed in this paragraph, where topic and wording are very similar. It is often an artefact of the way the questionnaire is set up, putting questions about marital status, home-ownership and employment in
one block. What the various blocks have in common, however, is that they are presented as related within, and that they are presented as separate from the previous and the next block of questions. The receipt, apparently, is part of this practice of setting up the current sequence as the last in the current block.

Again, we see interviewers deal with the contingencies the questionnaire sets up. The interviewer shows sensitivity to the fact that transitioning from one block of questions is an interactional event that needs to be marked. Though questionnaires sometimes contain phrases introducing the next block, interviewers are left to their own devices where exiting the previous series of questions is concerned. One of the ways they mark closure of such a series is by receipting the final response in that series with a “yes” token.

3.5 Phonetics of ‘yes’

We have seen that the response token ‘yes’ is used to perform several different actions in these survey interviews. These yes-tokens are not all produced in the same way. In fact, it turns out that those tokens that treat the previous talk as an unacceptable answer are produced differently than tokens that treat the previous talk as an acceptable answer. The tokens responsive to respondents’ talk that is not an acceptable answer, or that is delivered as not yet complete, are loud and have a falling intonation. The response tokens that come after acceptable answers, on the other hand, are quieter and have a rising intonation. Though the word itself is the same, the function of it is different in its two different guises. While one says ‘I've heard you, please go on and provide me with a further answer’, the other says ‘I've heard you, and I have accepted that answer’ (see also Gardner 2001 on this subject).

Though there are many instances of receipt and acknowledgement tokens in my data, it turned out to be quite difficult to find instances where they clearly make a difference to the interaction. This is mainly because overwhelmingly the receipt tokens are given after acceptable answers and the acknowledgement tokens are used responsive to talk that does not contain an acceptable answer. It is difficult to find deviant cases, or cases where the use of one token instead of the other makes a clear difference to the way the sequence runs off. Nonetheless, I have found a few examples to illustrate the power of these tokens. I will show three examples here.

In fragment 17, the respondent gives a type-conforming answer to the question which bank he would use for home banking on the
Response tokens in survey interviews

computers. This type-conforming answer (in line 5) is met with a 'ja' from the interviewer. The interviewer produces this token with a gently dropping intonation. Though it is not loud, it shares other important features of the acknowledgement token 'ja', such as the vowel quality and the breathy finish. In lines 9 and 10 the two participants start speaking a beat after each other, with the interviewer starting a new question and the respondent expanding his answer.

Fragment 17:

1 IR: ↓okay↑ .hh a:nd if YOU at the moment >wanted to use the
2 possibility< to take care of finances at home via your own computer↓
3 .H at which bank or institution would you then do that
4 (0.6)
5 IE: e:h e- via the giro because I have that
6 IR: → y:es
7 (.)
8 IE: .hh
9 IR: ↓a:[n if you] at the moment wanted to use↑ that same
10 IE: → [girotel ]
11 IR: possibility↑ .H

On the following page we can see the pitch trace of the interviewer's "ja" in line 6:
In this fragment, the interviewer acknowledges the respondent’s talk with her ‘ja’. She does not receipt the response, and thus does not display that she has accepted the response. By only displaying acknowledgement of the response, the interviewer gives the impression that the response was incomplete or otherwise not recordable. In line 10, the interviewee responds to the interviewer’s uptake of his answer by expanding it, providing the name of the service that particular bank offers.

The two participants end up in overlap, because the interviewer has started asking the next question just before the respondent’s expansion (line 9). This piece of overlapping talk shows that for a short moment interviewer and respondent were not on the same page. The interviewer considers the question-answer sequence closed and moves on to the next question-answer sequence, while at the same time the respondent is still working on the previous sequence. This misalignment is the result of the interviewer’s displayed uptake of the respondent’s answer, with an acknowledgement ‘ja’ rather than with a receipt ‘ja’.

The following two cases show how the interviewer’s uptake may influence more than the fluency of the interaction. Instead, the quality of the data is threatened by the use of these different types of ‘ja’. Fragments 18 and 19 are contrastive cases, where the interviewer responds to two similarly designed response turns with an acknowledgement token in the first case and with a receipt token in the second case. In both fragments, the respondents give two different answers in the first turn after the question: “no / yes” to a yes-no
question in fragment 18, and “favorable / I don’t know” in fragment 19. In both cases, the interviewer responds after the second answer has been delivered, but the response token is different.

The interviewer’s choice of response token then treats the second, contrasting answer as either an acceptable answer or an unacceptable answer. This difference is made by the interviewer’s use of a receipt token in one case (fragment 19) and an acknowledgement token in the other case (fragment 18). These two fragments come from two different interviews with different interviewers.

Fragment 18:

1 IR: do you ever ↑visit a casino↓
2 (0.4)
3 IE: .t e:h (0.5) no: yes I’ve done it ↑once↑ in the past[ just ] purely to
4 IR: →
5 IE: eh .H to have a look at how that goes >you know↑< but no↓ e h c-
6 IR: [and a-
7 (.)
8 IR: are you planning to ever ↓visit a casino in the future↓

In line 3 the respondent initially responds to the question if she ever visits a casino with “no” but immediately continues to say “yes I’ve done it once in the past”. This part of her answer is responded to by the interviewer in line 4 with “ja”. This “ja” is phonetically designed as an acknowledgement of an unacceptable answer rather than as a receipt of an acceptable answer. In other words, this “ja” treats the immediately prior talk, about having been to a casino once, as not an answer to the question.

We will see that the respondent’s subsequent talk is responsive to the interviewer’s treatment of this single visit as ‘not an answer’ by returning to her original negative response. The respondent orients to the interviewer’s response token, as treating the talk it is responsive to
as ‘not an answer’. Her turn is still in progress and while producing
the turn she takes the interviewer’s uptake into account (compare this
with Goodwin (1979) on interactive sentence construction).

Because the terms of the question are somewhat vague, it may not
be clear to the respondent whether one visit to a casino is enough to
qualify for a positive answer to this question. After some delay the
respondent answers “no”, but then undermines this answer by saying
that she did visit a casino once. The fact that she mentions this
information suggests that she considers it to be potentially relevant in
this particular context.

By merely acknowledging this stretch of talk, the interviewer treats
it as something else than an acceptable answer to the question. This
provides the respondent with the information that her one visit does
not qualify, and that her original negative reply was indeed the right
way to go. After she has finished the description of the visit, she says
“but no”, reasserting her initial answer.

In other words: by treating the respondent’s contradicting TCU as
something else than an answer, the interviewer displays her stance
towards that TCU. The respondent then treats her own talk as ‘not an
answer’ as well by re-asserting her first response.

The pitch trace of this token can be seen in the graph below:

![ Pitch trace of “ja” in fragment 18, line 4. ]

In the next fragment, we can see that the opposite can happen as well.
This question is part of a string of questions aimed to measure
consumer confidence. In lines 1-5 the respondent is asked whether
she thinks it is a good time to buy “durable goods”. From line 6 until
17 the respondent reacts to the question without giving a type-
conforming response, displaying that she has trouble giving such a response. In line 18, the respondent eventually gives a type-conforming answer ("I think it's favourable then") immediately followed by "I don't know".

Fragment 19:

1 IR: .h when durable goods >are concerned< such as ↓furniture a washing
2 machine or a tele[vision ↓]
3 IE: ↓ HH ↓ hh ((breaths into mouthpiece))
4 IR: do you think now is for people a ↑favourable or an unfavourable
5 time↑ to make such purchases↑ or neither one nor the other↓
6 (0.5)
7 IE: tsja
8 (.)
9 IE: what should i say about that .hhhh i mean eh .h look h
10 people should decide for them↓selves what eh=
11 IR: =no but ↑what do you think↓
12 (0.4)
13 IE: tsja h (0.5). t e- (.) .H certainly when i look around me people buy
14 everything they ↑need↑ ↓so e:h
15 (0.4)
16 IE: ↓t
17 (0.6)
18 IE: i think it's favourable then I(h) d(h)on't ↑know .h=
19 IR: =no↑
20 (0.5)
21 IE: ↓no i eh couldn't tell y- i can't judge that about someone else= 

1 IR: .h >as 't gaat om< duurzame artikelen zoals ↓meubelen een
2 wasmachine of een tele[vision ↓]
3 IE: ↓ HH ↓ hh ((ademt in hoorn))
4 IR: vindt u dan dat 't nu voor de mensen een ↑gunstige of een ongunstige
5 tijd↑ is om ↑kopen done↑ of noch 't één noch 't ander↓
6 (0.5)
7 IE: tsja
8 (.)
9 IE: wat moet ik daar van zeggen .hhhh ik bedoel eh .h kijk h
10 dat moet een mens toch zelf ↓weten wat eh=
11 IR: =nee maar ↑wat denkt u↓
12 (0.4)
13 IE: tsja h (0.5). t e- (.) .H zeker als ik om me [een kijk open de mensen
14 alles wat ze ↑nodig hebben↑ ↓dus e:h
The turn in line 18 can be understood in two ways. Either it is an answer plus an insecurity marker, or it contains two contrasting answers. The interviewer treats it as the latter by doing an answer receipt after the second TCU instead of a mere acknowledgement like in fragment 18.

The pitch trace of the interviewer’s “nee” is displayed in the graph below.

![Figure 3: Pitch trace of “nee” in fragment 19, line 19.](image)

The respondent’s subsequent talk displays her understanding of the interviewer’s token as having receipted “I don’t know” as an answer rather than as an insecurity marker. She goes along with the interviewer’s acceptance of that answer by confirming it and expanding on it in line 21.

Just like with fragment 18, I would like to argue that the respondent monitors the interviewer’s uptake of her talk. After having struggled with the question for a while, the respondent eventually gives an answer, followed by something that is either an insecurity marker or a contrasting answer. The fact that the interviewer treats the “I don’t know” as an answer by receipting it, displays to the
respondent that apparently “I don’t know” is an acceptable answer, which she then goes along with.

The fact that the receipt token in this example is ‘nee’ instead of ‘ja’ does not interfere with my conclusions for two reasons. The first reason is that, just as ‘ja’, ‘nee’ is used as both an acknowledgement token and as a receipt token, with the corresponding phonetic differences. The second reason is that in both these two examples the token’s polarity corresponds with the polarity of the immediately preceding talk. Schematically:

Fragment 18:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resp. token</td>
<td></td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fragment 19:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>I think it’s favourable then I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resp. token</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, while both response tokens adopt the polarity of the second part of the interviewee’s response, the phonetic design makes them recognisable as an acknowledgement in the first fragment, and as a receipt in the second fragment.

These findings enhance research findings by Koole (2003) and Jefferson (1983). Koole demonstrates that one and the same response token can perform different actions depending on its sequential environment. And Jefferson shows how different response tokens in a sequentially similar place perform a different action. Here, instead, I have demonstrated that one and the same response token, in the same sequential position (that is, after the interviewee’s response) can perform quite different actions depending on certain prosodic features with which it is produced.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that response tokens in standardised survey interviews are not a standard part of the interviewing question-
answer sequence, and also that their occurrence and employment is a deeply interactional practice. They turn up in very specific environments and often perform more than just accepting (or receipting or acknowledging) the respondent’s prior turn. When receipts are employed as ‘sequence closing thirds’, they do not occur in third position of just any question-answer sequence. The second pair parts preceding these receipts have in common that they are problematic in that they are either expanded or delivered with a lot of uncertainty. In this same, third and final, position we have found receipts that signal the end of a series of question. Response tokens can also be used to simply acknowledge what the respondent has just said, simultaneously signalling that the interviewer does not treat the prior as an answer. And, fourthly, we have seen thirds that do not close the current sequence but, on the contrary, are employed to encourage the respondent to keep delivering answers.

The response token ‘ja’ has a seemingly neutral meaning, and is used in apparently random sequential positions. However, we saw that this single response token can be produced in different ways, conveying different meanings. Also, now that we are aware of these different versions of ‘ja’, it becomes transparent that its use is not random (and thus not neutral).

Viterna and Maynard (2002: 371-375) describe in their article about protocols for interviewer behaviour that ten out of the twelve reviewed protocols attempt standardisation of third position responses by interviewers. These protocols are primarily occupied with preventing interviewer error through standardisation of their behaviour. Keeping in mind the analyses in this section, we can see that an instruction to interviewers to “give feedback after every acceptable answer” or “after 30-50 percent of the respondent’s acceptable responses” (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 372) does not capture the function of receipts entirely.

The same can be said for the purpose of feedback defined by these protocols. Some protocols recommend it as a way of “training the respondent” by giving feedback after an acceptable answer and withholding feedback after unacceptable ones (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 372-373). Other protocols advise to use it as a means of building “rapport with the respondent by demonstrating that the interviewer is listening, interested, and non-judgemental” (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 373).

In this chapter, however, I demonstrated that the survey interviewers’ feedback is often very much sequentially motivated. In every single question-answer sequence in a survey interview, the
Interviewer needs to take on the role of recipient as soon as he has handed the floor over to the respondent. In that role, the interviewer needs to address whatever the respondent decides to do, whether that is a repair, an unacceptable answer, a partial answer, or a perfectly type-conforming answer. In this chapter, I have discussed the interviewer's minimal uptake of a few of these possible moves that are contingent on the question.

Interviewers utilise response tokens in their role as a guide through the interview. I have shown for all the receipts and acknowledgement tokens discussed in this chapter how they display the interviewer's uptake of the respondent's talk, and how the respondent orients to that displayed uptake. The acknowledgement token treats the prior turn as 'not an answer' (§3.3.1) and displays to the respondent that the interviewer does not accept the prior as an answer, so that the respondent still 'owes' a recordable answer. The receipt / continuer token after individual responses in a list, treats the prior TCU as an acceptable answer (§3.3.3) but simultaneously treats the respondent's turn as incomplete and instructs him to provide more answers. The receipt after an expanded sequence (§3.4.1) treats the current sequence as complete and signals that the next move will be a new question. And, finally, the receipt at the end of a block of questions (§3.4.2) displays, together with other markers, that the next move is a new question on a different topic or in a different format.

I have also shown that respondents orient to these different uses of the response token 'yes'. When they give an ambiguous or hesitant response, the interviewer's uptake with a receipt token or with a mere acknowledgement token signals to them whether or not the interviewer accepted their response (§3.5). And respondents orient to receipt / continuer tokens as an indication of whether the interviewer expects them to continue providing answers.

As Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000: 75) points out, interviewers in standardised survey interviews follow two sets of interactional rules. When reading out the scripted question, they follow the rules of standardisation. But when acting as a recipient, they follow conversational rules. Here, I offered a detailed study of one area of that behaviour: the use of response tokens. This study has made clear that the interviewer's conversational behaviour in third position has real consequences for the way the standardised interview proceeds.
Chapter 4 Non-conforming and expanded type-conforming respondent turns

4.1 Introduction

As soon as the interviewer has asked the respondent a question, the initiative shifts to the respondent and the interviewer's interactional role changes to become that of 'answer recipient'. In other words: as soon as the survey question is released into the interactional space, the tables turn and the interaction is no longer scripted but becomes contingent upon the script. The interviewer is no longer completely in charge of where the interaction is going, leaving the respondent largely in charge of the floor.

To a great extent, the party that asks the questions still controls what happens in second position (see Raymond 2000 and 2003). For example, by initiating an adjacency pair of the type ‘question-answer sequence’, the questioner has determined that the relevant next action is an answer. Questions also make a certain type of answer relevant: a yes/no-question makes the answers ‘yes’ or ‘no’ relevant, while a wh-question makes a description of some sort relevant. It is very difficult for the recipient of a question to get out of answering that question without giving an account: any turn, or the lack of one, after a question will be taken as responsive to that question, unless the recipient of the question indicates otherwise (see also Schegloff 1995b on this subject).

Recipients of questions do not always comply with all the restrictions that the question places on their turn. This is a familiar phenomenon when it concerns ‘hostile’ questioning such as during a cross-examination, but it occurs in other settings as well (see also section 4.4 of Chapter 2 on this subject). In everyday interaction interlocutors may resist the terms of the question by giving a non-conforming response or by pre-expanding or post-expanding their type-conforming response (Raymond 2000). Respondents in news interviews have similar means to evade the constraints that the interviewer attempts to put on them (Clayman 1993, 2001). And patients can influence the agenda by answering more than the doctor’s question (Drew, in press, and Stivers & Heritage 2001).

In the fragments shown in the previous chapters we have already seen that, just like news interviewees and patients, respondents in
standardised survey interviews do not always answer the question with just a type-conforming response. Sometimes they expand their answer, or they respond to the question in other terms than those set by the questionnaire. In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which respondents use their answer slots, and what these non-conforming or expanded answers perform.

It will become clear that the script that the participants in survey interviews follow, really only provides them with the first of at least two interactional moves. While respondents often provide answers that match those formulated in the script, they may also depart from that script by expanding their type-conforming answer or by providing a response that does not conform to any of the answer categories. I will show how those departures from the script are contingent upon the scripted question and how, though they do not adhere to the script, they are very much responsive to that script. I will explore the contingencies that these expanded or non-conforming answers in turn set up for the interviewer in the subsequent chapter.

We must keep reminding ourselves, however, that most of the time question-answer sequences in survey interviews run off paradigmatically. The interviewer asks a question, the respondent selects one of the answer categories, and the interviewer then moves on to ask the next question. For researchers using survey interviews as their research instrument, this is the ideal situation as it guarantees a certain degree of standardization.

Fragment 1 contains several examples of those paradigmatic sequences.

Fragment 1:

1 IR: a:nd eh >i'd also like to< ask some questions about the ↑other persons↑
2 first about your ↓husband= =how old is your husband↑=
3 IE: → =.hh my husband is e::h forty nine↓
4 (0.2)
5 IR: a:nd e- what- is ↓his highest school[education↑]
6 IE: → ↓hhh ↓HHH MTS:
7 IR: and did he com↓lete that education↑
8 IE: → y↓e:s↑
9 (0.4)
10 IR: a:nd is he active in a profession↑
11 (1.2)
12 IE: → ↓YES,
13 IR: eyea-↑
In lines 3, 6, 8, and 12 of this fragment the respondent answers the previous question with a type-conforming response. The questions in this fragment require different types of answers. Those in line 7 (“did he complete that education?”) and line 10 (“is he active in a profession?”) are yes/no-questions and are answered with a type-conforming item: “yes”. The question in line 2 (“how old is your husband?”) asks for a number that would represent the respondent’s husband’s age in years, and it receives such an answer: “my husband is e:::h forty nine”. The question in line 5 (“what is his highest school education?”) is more open in that the answer categories are not as restricted as in the former two questions. People can have taken all sorts of education and it is up to the respondent to estimate the level of detail the interviewer is interested in. As it happens, the respondent selects a description that is slightly too detailed for the purposes of the questionnaire (“MTS”, line 7), but this is unproblematic for the interviewer. The answer option the interviewer can select looks like this:

Mid-level Vocational Education (e.g. Mid-level Technical School, Mid-level Economic and Administrative Education, Police School, Nursing education)

The answer the respondent gave in line 7 is the first item in the specification provided by the questionnaire. I have underlined it for
you. As it is part of the questionnaire, the interviewer can treat the answer as type-conforming. That is exactly what she does in line 8 by moving on to the next question.

Respondents can formulate their answers in many ways instead of just selecting one of the implicit or explicit answer categories. Here are a few quick examples:

1 IR: are you planning to move house in the next twelve months?
2 IE: no, we’ll stay here.

1 IR: and do you think the combination of a separate route booklet and separate magazine is practical or would you rather have all information in one magazine?
2 IE: mm yes well that matters very little to me
3 (1.1)
4 IR: that doesn’t matter to you
5 IE: n: a:w that matters very li- very little to me
6 (0.7)

1 IR: do you ever have heartburn?
2 IE: well yes listen I need to just give a different answer to that= a short while ago I’ve had surgery on my gall bladder so and that has to do with the stomach right?
3 (1.2)

Some of the expanded responses I found in my data simply contain more information than the interviewer asked for, while in other instances the respondent provides information that actually does not answer the question. Still other times the respondent provides relevant information that just happens to fall outside any of the categories.

The question I want to answer in this chapter is: what kinds of issues do respondents deal with when doing more than simply answering the question? I will explore the types of extra things respondents do and how the respondents shape these expanded answers. By exploring the answers in which respondents target contingencies hidden in the question, we can bring to the surface what kinds of contingencies seemingly straightforward survey questions set up for those respondents. I will start with the most minimally expanded answers (§4.2), after which I will deal with
Non-conforming and expanded type-conforming respondent turns

answers that are more drastically expanded but still contain a type-conforming response (§4.3). Finally, I will explore respondent turns that do not contain a type-conforming response at all (§4.4).

4.2 Minimal expansions

In this section I will discuss respondents’ minimal expansions of their answers. I have grouped together expansions that are not just minimal in size, but above all minimal in their sequential impact. In my data I found many answers that were type-conforming, but that had little items added to them. These little items do not change the meaning of the answer to any large extent, nor do they target aspects of the question as problematic.

The first group of minimal expansions discussed here I have called serial extras (§4.2.1). These expansions signal the answer’s relationship to previous answers, and thus its position in the series of answers the respondent has given. In §4.2.2 I will discuss uncertainty markers. Respondents sometimes add these markers to type-conforming answers. I will explore when and how respondents do this.

4.2.1 Serial extras

In survey interviews questions often come in coherent series. Survey researchers want to know opinions and behaviour about all sorts of topics, and they try to group questions about related topics together. These groups are often introduced with a short statement or with a parent question. An example of a short introductory statement is: “Now we’d like to ask you something about the bicycle that you use for biking tours.” An example of a parent question is: “Can you indicate which of the following magazines you sometimes read? I read out the titles, you can just say “yes” or “no”.”

Another way in which groups of questions are presented as belonging together is by using very similar formulation. In fragments 15 and 16 in chapter 3 we saw an example of this; I will repeat the two related questions here:
These two questions do not directly follow each other, but they are designed to belong together. The set-up of the italicised part of the two questions is so similar, that they can be oriented to as the same question about two different (though related) topics.

When such related questions occur, respondents sometimes display sensitivity to the position of their answer within the list of their answers. They can do this in a very minimal way, and I will call this 'serial extra'. In the following example we come across the related block of questions with one parent question. The respondent is asked whether he “reads or skims” any of a list of newspapers (lines 1-4). He is asked to answer “yes” or “no” for each item (line 7).

Fragment 2:

1 IR: the:n >I now list you a few newspapers that come out in the
2 ↓netherlands↑ .H a:nd can you tell me of each paper if you ever ↓read,
3 or ↓skim that paper,.H that can be at ho:me →but also for example with<
4 neighbours frie nds  ↓family,.H doesn't matter ↓where↑
5 IE: [hm ↑]
6 (0.6)
7 IR: a:nd you can just say yes or no for each paper↓
8 (0.3)
9 IR: ↓.H (.) and the first paper is the par↓ole↑
10 (0.6)
11 IE: no,
12 IR: the tele↓graph↑
13 IE:a→ yes,
14 (0.4)
15 IR: the general ↓daily↑=
16 IE:a→ =yes
Non-conforming and expanded type-conforming respondent turns

17 (0.4)  
18 IR: the financial daily↑ =  
19 IE:a→ =yes,  
20 (0.4)  
21 IR: a regional daily↑  
22 (.)  
23 IE:b→ that too yes,  
24 (0.3)  
25 IR: the en ar cee trades paper↑  
26 IE: no,  
27 (0.4)  
28 IR: loyal↑  
29 (0.5)  
30 IE: no,  
31 IR: and the people's paper↓  
32 IE: yes↓  
33 (1.1)  
34 IR:. hh now of the general daily six issues come out per week

1 IR: dan noem ik u nu een aantal kranten die in nederland verschijnen↑  
2 .H e:n wilt u van elke krant zeggen of u die krant wel eens leest,  
3 of inziet . H dat kan thuis zijn maar ook bijvoorbeeld bij<  
4 buren vrienden familie . h maakt niet uit waar↑  
5 IE: [hm↑]  
6 (0.6)  
7 IR: e:n zegt u maar ja of nee bij elke krant↓  
8 (0.3)  
9 IR:. h (.) en de eerste krant is het parool↑  
10 (0.6)  
11 IE: nee,  
12 IR: de telegraaf↑  
13 IE:a→ ja,  
14 (0.4)  
15 IR: 't algemeen dagblad↑ =  
16 IE:a→ =ja  
17 (0.4)  
18 IR: 't financiele dagblad↑ =  
19 IE:a→ =ja,  
20 (0.4)  
21 IR: 'n regionaal dagblad↑  
22 (.)  
23 IE:b→ ook ja,  
24 (0.3)  
25 IR: het NRC handelsblad↑
In the lines marked with arrow ‘a’ (lines 13, 16, and 19) the respondent has replied “yes” in answer to three different newspapers. His responses consist of a type-conforming answer (“yes”) and nothing else. The fourth time, however, he formulates his positive answer differently and says “ook ja” (“that too, yes”, line 23 at arrow ‘b’), signalling a sensitivity to the sequential position of this particular item. With “ook” the respondent displays awareness of the fact that his answer is part of a list of answers and that he has given the same answer several times. Because he thus treats his answer as part of a series of related answers, I call this a ‘serial extra’.

The Dutch word ‘ook’ in this use can be translated into English as ‘also’, ‘as well’ or ‘too’, depending on its position and function. Unlike English, Dutch does not have a separate lexical item for displaying similarity between negatively framed utterance, so where in English one uses ‘(n)either’, Dutch uses ‘ook niet’ (‘also not’).

Just like the words ‘also’, ‘as well’, ‘too’, and ‘(n)either’, ‘ook’ indicates similarity between two or more things. Only when an utterance refers to something similar that has been mentioned recently, can these kinds of words be used in an elliptical construction. For example, one can only make sense of an utterance like ‘me too’ when the talk to which this is responsive is accessible. If a similar item cannot be found in the direct vicinity of such an utterance, it is difficult to make sense of the utterance.

However, speakers do not need to mark similarity every time it occurs. As we can see in the above fragment, the respondent answers with just “yes” to the first three items. Perhaps he displays the connection between these three answers by producing them as very similar (pitch, loudness, and duration are all very similar), but he does not make the connection explicit.

This pattern changes with the fourth affirmative answer in line 25. The addition of “ook” displays the respondent’s awareness of having created a series of positive answers. We can only speculate about why
the respondent does not display this at the second or third affirmative item in the series. We will see in fragment 4 that it certainly is possible to mark similarity at the second item already.

By placing “ook” before the type-conforming response, the respondent’s turn ends with the acceptable answer. This way, the item to respond to by the interviewer is not the expansion, but the type-conforming answer [Raymond 2000: 244-245]. The interviewer responds by asking the next question, thus implicitly accepting the answer. This reaction is in no apparent way different from those in the earlier, non-elaborated instances: a pause of about 0.3 seconds and the subsequent delivery of the next item with a drop-rise question contour.

The serial expansion does not influence the way this sequence runs off. The interviewer simply moves on to the next question, thus treating the respondent’s turn as an acceptable answer. The interviewer’s uptake of the elaborated response is not different as her uptake of the unelaborated answers in lines 13, 16, and 19. In other words: the paradigmatic question-answer sequence is left largely intact. All the serial extra adds to the exchange, is that the respondent signals awareness that his answer is part of a series of answers.

In line 32 the respondent gives another affirmative answer to an item in this list.

31 IR: en de volkskrant
and the (title)
32 IE: ja yes

Even though this is the fifth positive answer this respondent gives, he now does not mark the similarity with his previous positive answers as he did with his fourth positive answer. Instead, he uses a stand-alone ‘yes’ again. This is due to the fact that he responded negatively to the immediately prior item (line 33), so there is no similar item in the direct vicinity of this response with which he could set up the serial connection.

Fragment 3 is another example of the same phenomenon. This is another series of yes/no-questions in which respondent is asked to indicate whether or not she reads certain magazines. In this fragment an interesting pattern unfolds. Three times, the respondent signals similarity between two subsequent items by responding to the first with a simple “nee” and to the second with “ook niet”. I have marked
the first, unelaborated responses with arrow ‘a’, and the second, serially expanded responses with arrow ‘b’.

Fragment 3:

1 IR: and >which of the following types< of ↑magazines do you read
2 regularly= [-] broad ▼ casting magazi:nes↑=
3 IE: oh ↓ =n:no↑
4 (.)
5 IR: ↓women's weeklies↑
6 (1.0)
7 IE: eh no:↑
8 (.)
9 IR: family weeklies= =such as the new revue or panorama,
10 (0.4)
11 IE: y::es-
12 (0.5)
13 IR: e↓xp
14 IE: ↓WELL regularly e:::h I'm not subscribed to 'm but li:ke single
15 issues [right↑] "he:yes .hhh=
16 IR: ↓yes↓ =a:nd expensive ↓monthly↑ >such as<
17 marie ↓claire↑ or eleg:ance↑
18 IE: a→ no↑
19 (0.2)
20 IR: o↓pinion ↑magazines↑ =elsevier and HP >↓de tijd↑<=
21 IE: b→ =m- no neither↑=
22 IR: ↓ports magazines↑
23 (0.8)
24 IE: a→ no↑
25 IR: youth and ↓juvenile magazines↑
26 IE: b→ neither,
27 (.)
28 IR: business magazines and trade ↓journals↑
29 (0.3)
30 IE: e:::h trade journal↑
31 (.)
32 IR: ↓men's magazines↑
33 (0.5)
34 IE: a→ no:;
35 IR: and car magazines↓
36 (0.3)
37 IE: b→ neither↓
38 (0.4)
39 IR: a:nd if you add together all the times that you skim a ↑magazine↓
There does not seem to be anything at work here other than the sequentiality of these responses: one negative response follows the
other and this ‘secondness’ is incorporated in the format of her answer. There is no reason to assume that the modification in the answer might be attributable to the item it is responsive to. For example, while this respondent is neither a man nor a youth, “men’s magazines” gets “nee” and “youth and juvenile magazines” gets “ook niet”.

The first elaborated response, “nee ook niet” in line 21, is very similar to the elaborated answer “ook ja” in fragment 2. The respondent in the present fragment starts with a type-conforming response and then sets up the connection with her previous answer. “Ook” sets up this connection and “niet” indicates that this instance is similar to the prior in its negative content. The next expanded item, in line 26, does not contain a type-conforming response, though of course it is hard to misunderstand this response:

25 IR: jeugd en jongeren blade
   youth and youngsters magazines
26 IE: b→ ook niet,
   also not

Again, the respondent has responded negatively to the previous item and she builds the current item to reflect a sequential connection between the two. Though the respondent does not deliver a type-conforming response, either at the beginning or end of her response, both participants treat it as complete. In the transcript the utterance has been marked with a comma to show slightly rising intonation. This kind intonation is usually associated with incompleteness and described as a turn-holding device. However, in this case it does not signal incompleteness or more to come: respondents tend to reflect the position of the item in the series in the intonation of their responses, copying the interviewer’s prosody. This becomes evident when we compare this sequence with the final sequence of this series of questions (line 36):

35 IR: en autobladen
   and car magazines
36 (0.3)
37 IE: b→ ook niet↓
   also not

The interviewer delivers this last item of the series with a falling intonation, marking its final position. The response to this last item is delivered with a similar falling intonation. (The same pattern is visible
in lines 31-32 of fragment 2.) Thus, the rising intonation in line 26 does not reflect incompleteness of the turn, but is designed to mirror the intonation of the interviewer’s turn. This means that the respondent delivers her turn in line 26 as complete, and the interviewer treats the response as such by moving on to the next question. By doing so, the interviewer displays that the response has been accepted, in spite of the absence of a type-conforming response.

The respondent’s series of negative responses is broken in line 30 where she selects one of the items mentioned in the question (line 28) as a form of affirmative response (“trade journal”). The subsequent item gets an unexpanded type-conforming negative response in line 34.

The absence of a phrase like “ook niet” in this instance reflects that the connection set up by such a phrase must be with something as recent as possible. If the most recent item is different, it is risky to try to reflect similarity to a less recent item. This would bring with it the risk of misunderstanding the present item, or perhaps the prior item: if she answers “ook niet” now, might the respondent have meant to answer “no” to the prior as well? It is possible that the respondent’s not using “ook niet” here, in spite of the fact that there are a few items quite close by with which the comparison can be set up, reflects the issues just described.

The next item (line 35-37) on the other hand, does have its comparable item directly prior to it. And the respondent marks this with another serial expansion:

28 IR: zakenbladen en vakbladen↑
      business magazines and trade journals

30 IE: vakblad↑
      trade journal

31

32 IR: mannenbladen↑
      men’s magazines

33

34 IE: a→ nee,
      no

35 IR: en autobladen↓
      and car magazines

36
Now, when answering negatively to the second item in a row, the respondent can again mark this sequential position without running the risks that I just described. The respondent uses the same phrase as in line 26 ("ook niet"), leaving out a type-conforming response but nonetheless clearly communicating the negative content of the answer. Again, the answer is accepted implicitly by the interviewer moving on to the next question.

In the previous two fragments we saw that respondents set up connections between questionnaire items that follow each other immediately. When two similar answers are distant from each other, the respondents did not mark their similarity. However, respondents do sometimes mark similarities between their answers across longer distances as well. This can happen when questions that are designed as related, are placed some distance apart and separated by questions of a different format.

The following is an example of this phenomenon. The interviewer first asks the respondent how many times in the past year she has gone on a hike for which the starting point was not her home (lines 1-4). This question is followed by three questions asking for the details about her hiking habits (lines 10-24). After these questions concerning hiking, the interviewer asks how many times in the past year the respondent has gone on a bicycle tour for which the starting point was not her home (lines 29-31). The two connected answers are again indicated with arrows 'a' and 'b'.

Fragment 4:

1 IR: .h how often in the past twelve months did you hike recreationally in the Netherlands↓ =where the ↑ starting point was not your home address
2 but you first had to travel a distance with transportation↓ =
3 =for example you want to hike on the ((name)) and you ↓ perhaps go there first by car or train↓
4 (0.6)
5 IE: .mt E::hm: .mt o:h↓ right >I don’t think that’s↓ been very often↓ =
6 a→ =I think only ↑ twice↓
7 IR: ↑ twice in the past year↑
8 10 IE: y:cs↓
9 IR: and what has usually been the distance one way between your
Non-conforming and expanded type-conforming respondent turns

home address and the starting point of the hike

IE: .t E:::hm: .h (. ) YES on average something like: fifteen to twenty kilometer

IR: .h what is the average distance that you usually hiked- after that

(0.6)

IE: .h from the starting point

IR: fifteen to twenty kilometer

(0.5)

IE: yes fifteen to twenty kilometer

(0.5)

IR: yes very rarely

(0.5)

IR: yes

how often in the past twelve months did you cycle in the Netherlands where the starting point was not the home address but first but you first had to travel a distance with transportation

IE: ehm

(0.6)

IE: also only two or three times then

HheH

IR: two times last year

IR: and what is moest de afstand enkele reis tussen uw woonadres en 't startpunt van de wandeling geweest
Even though these two questions are more than a minute apart, the respondent marks her answer to the second question as connected to the first. The serial extra in the second answer (again “ook” or “also”, line 40) marks this answer as similar to a previous answer. And while the two answers are separated by time as well as by several other survey questions, the respondent is able make this connection easily across this larger distance. This is possible because the questions that the interviewer asks between these two items are very different from the two related questions. After the first question about the respondent’s number of hikes, the interviewer goes on to ask about the distances travelled and hiked, and whether the respondent ever takes part in organised hikes, instead of asking the same question about a different topic (for example: “how often in the past twelve months have you skated, run, motorbiked recreationally…?”), as we saw in the previous fragments. This makes it possible for the
respondent to set up a connection in her second answer that skips over the sequences that lie between the two connected items.

So what we have seen now is that respondents sometimes display to the interviewer that their present answer is similar to a previous answer in some way. They can do this by adding a similarity marker to a type-conforming answer, either before it or after it. But they can also leave out the type-conforming token altogether and just imply it by stating that the present answer is similar to the prior.

The answer with the serial extra refers back to the same answer to the directly preceding similar question. In the series of questions about magazines all the questions are similar, so the connection is only displayed between two successive answers. If two answers that are the same are separated by an intervening divergent reply, respondents do not mark their answer with a serial extra.

However, as we saw in the last example, similar questions are sometimes separated by different items. And when two somewhat distant questions are obviously the same, respondents can mark the connection between their similar answers to those items.

We have seen in this section that the serial extra is a minimal expansion of the response turn. Respondents mark some of their answers as similar to previous answers, and that is all they do. The serial extras do not change the meaning of the answers in which they occur, and interviewers do not topicalise or otherwise target serial extras in the subsequent turn. Interviewers display no attention to them, and simply move on to the next question.

4.2.2 Uncertainty markers

Another type of expansion is the imprecision marker or uncertainty marker (Schaeffer, Maynard, and Cradock 1993). Just like the minimal expansions discussed in the previous section, these uncertainty markers are small in size as well as in impact on the question-answer sequence. Respondents sometimes design their answers as guesses or approximations by adding items like “I think” or “just about” to their answers. In my data we can find many instances of this phenomenon, for example in the following fragment. After having indicated which newspapers he sometimes reads, the respondent now needs to answer for each of those newspapers how many of the last six issues he has read or skimmed. In other words, how many issues did he read or skim in the past week.
In line 3 and 7 the respondent displays a lack of precision of his answer by using the formulation “een stuk of…” This can be translated with ‘about’, ‘some’, or ‘give or take’. His answers are designed to display that the respondent is making something of a guess at how many of the particular newspapers he has read. The phrase “een stuk of …” marks only slight imprecision. It might have been one more or less, but it will not be far off the mark.

In spite of the display of imprecision, the answers are delivered as final and certain. Note also that immediately after these answers a silence develops. The respondent does not use this space to redo his answers or make them more certain. By letting his answers ‘stand’ as it were, he displays his judgement of the level of certainty that is necessary for these questions: estimations are good enough.

The interviewer goes along with this judgement. After the answer in line 3 she can be heard to enter information into her computer (“tik tik” in line 4) and in line 5 and line 8 she explicitly accepts the prior
turn as an answer by moving on to the next question without further comment. So, for her the level of certainty displayed by the respondent is high enough for this question.

Here is another example of an uncertainty marker.

Fragment 6:

1 IR: E::hm .hh which cigarette brands sponsor the formula one or the grand prix↓ =do you perhaps know any other brands that do that as ↑well↓
2 (0.6)
3 4 IE: → e::hm well I believe ↑stuyvesant↑ >but that's s-<
5 I wouldn't be ↑sure ↑right,↓ .hhh
6 IR: ↓["yes,\]]
7 (0.5)
8 IR: ↓a:nd which other cigarette brands sponsor the car↓rallies↓:

In this fragment we can see the respondent displaying a somewhat higher level of uncertainty than the respondent in fragment 5. She starts her response turn in line 4 with an uncertainty marker: “volgens mij” which literally translates as “according to me”, and is equivalent to “I believe”. With such a marker, the respondent introduces her upcoming answer as based on personal experience, rather than on objective knowledge (Sneijder 1999). She then gives a type-conforming answer (“stuyvesant”), and displays her uncertainty again: “but I wouldn’t be sure” (line 5). This way the respondent designs her answer as a guess. In line 6 the interviewer receipts the respondent’s talk with a very soft “yes”. With this she displays that she accepts the answer, in spite of its level of uncertainty.

Later in this same interviewer, the interviewer responds differently to the respondent’s display of uncertainty.
Fragment 7:

1 IR: .h does this apply best to- ABN amro↑ the ↓ING bank, the ↓rabobank, or the ↑postbank↓
2 (1.5)
3 IE:→ OY .thh E·:;h let's ↓see right↑ (2.2) w:ell (0.8) I wou’dt know
4 but ↓y- y-]JUST TAKE THE: ING↓
5 IR: ↓no↑
6 (0.4)
7 IE: ↓yes.]yes↓
8 IR: ↑if you really don’t know you can just< ↓say so ri↑
9 IE: ↓yes.]yes↓
10 (0.4) ((pok))
11 IE: E·:;h ↓NO ↑WELL NO, then just say honestly like
12 ↓(that I don’t know) yes-]↑
13 IR: ↓o(h)b(h)ay .h h ↓a:nd perhaps you do know to which bank
14 or financial institution that statement ap·plies least↑

1 IR: .h is dit ’t beste van toepassing op- ABM amro↑ de ↓ING bank, de ↓rabobank, ↓of de ↑postbank
2 (1.5)
3 IE:→ OEI .thh E·:;h even ↓kijken hoor↑ (2.2) n:ou (0.8) ik zou ’t niet weten
4 maar ↓j- j-]NEEM MAAR DE: ING↓
5 IR: ↓“nee↑]
6 (0.4)
7 IE: ↓ja↓
8 IR: ↑als u ’t echt niet weet kunt u ’t ook< ↓zeggen he] or, ]
9 IE: ↓ja↓
10 (0.4) ((pok))
11 IE: E·:;h ↓NEE ↑NOU NEE, dan zeg dan maar eerlijk van
12 ↓(dat ik ’t nie weet) ja-]↑
13 IR: ↓o(h)b(h)ee .h h ↓h e:n zou u mischien wel weten op welke bank
14 of financiele instelling die uitspraak het ↓minst

In lines 4-5 the respondent delivers her answer with a very high level of uncertainty. After a long silence (1.5 seconds line 3) and hesitation she says she “wouldn’t know”. This is followed by an answer that itself is shaped in an uncertain way: “just take the ING”. Just like in fragment 5, the respondent is designing her answer as a guess.

The response contains a type-conforming answer, as the respondent selects one of the answer categories provided by the interviewer in lines 1 and 2. Nonetheless, the interviewer does not accept the answer. In line 8 the interviewer says that the respondent does not need to pick a category if she does not know which to pick.
This reveals to the respondent that there is a fifth answer category that the interviewer did not mention in lines 1-2: the ‘don’t know’ option. The respondent eventually selects this category as her answer (line 11-12).

This example contrasts with fragments 5 and 6 with respect to the uptake of the response turns. The interviewer rejects the hesitant answer in fragment 7, while the answers in fragments 5 and 6 were accepted. Those acceptable hesitant answers simply display that the respondent is not exactly certain of his answer, and for certain questions that is acceptable (see Schaeffer, Maynard & Cradock 1993). These examples show that interviewers take into account that respondents do not exactly know how many times they have read the newspaper in the past week, whether their financial situation will improve, or how many of their hikes in the past year fit the definition used by the questionnaire (see fragment 4 in §4.2.1). However, we saw in fragment 7 that interviewers do not treat all hesitant answers as acceptable. This is a judgement survey interviewers need to make constantly.

4.3 Full-blown expansions: working with the terms of the question

In the previous sections I have discussed minimal expansions, where small items are added to the answer in order to show sensitivity to it being one in a sequence of similar answers, or to display a certain level of imprecision or uncertainty of the answer. I will now move on to focus on less minimal expansions, in which respondents do more complex things such as commenting on the question or on their own answers. In their responses, respondents display an analysis of the question, but this analysis is even more overt in their expanded responses. Though these expansions are a valuable source of information for the analyst of interaction, respondents produce them for the ears of the interviewer.

In this section I will analyse expanded type-conforming responses. This means that the respondent does select one of the answer options offered by the interviewer, but adds something to that answer. This contrasts with non-conforming responses, in which respondents do not design their response in the terms of any of the answer options, described in section 4 of this chapter. Here, I will discuss the design of the expanded type-conforming responses and the actions they perform: what do respondents display to the interviewer by expanding their answers, and how do they set up their answers in order to
display just that? I will start by exploring the features of these expansions, after which I will consider what kinds of aspects of the question they might be responsive to.

4.3.1 Answer + post-expansion

When respondents add something to their type-conforming response they can do so in two places: before or after the type-conforming response. In this section I will discuss the responses that have an initial type-conforming response with an expansion placed after it. By giving a type-conforming response in slot immediately following the question, respondents accept the terms of the question, but their expansions are designed to display to the interviewer how their type-conforming answer should be heard. These post-expansions display to the interviewer that the type-conforming response alone is not an ideal match with the respondent’s situation. By expanding the type-conforming answer, respondents change the meaning of that answer.

Here is an example.

Fragment 8:

1 IR: e:h are you the owner of the house in which you live or is it rented↑=
2 IE: =iwwih it’s a bought house↓ h
3 IR: and are you planning to move house in the next ↓twelve months↑=
4 IE: → =no:, we’ll be staying here↓ heh h
5 IR: ❍ okay↑ nowadays the terms moda

The respondent’s answer in line 4 starts with a type-conforming response ("nee"), delivered without delay or hesitation markers, thus giving the impression of being unproblematic. This unproblematic delivery appears to display that the respondent is complying with the question and the terms formulated in it. In other words, this respondent accepts the terms of the question by giving a type-conforming answer without delay.

The respondent then tags something onto her answer. This expansion targets the length of time in which the respondent is 'not
moving house’, in the question limited to “the next twelve months”. The respondent’s expansion “we blijven hier wel” implies that they plan to stay “here” indefinitely. With this expansion, the respondent changes the scope of her type-conforming answer. Had she left it with just “no”, then she would only have conveyed that she is not moving house in the next twelve months. The expansion shows the interviewer that her “no” means even more: she is not moving house at all.

This expansion seems to perform an operation on the answer and not on the question. The meaning of the type-conforming answer is modified by the post-expansion. It broadens the meaning of the negative response: not only will the respondent not move house in the next twelve months, she will not move at all!

In fragment 9 we can see a slightly different use of post-expansion. This fragment comes from a survey among subscribers of a magazine about hiking and cycling, containing descriptions of tours in the Netherlands for its readers. Most of the interview focuses on previous issues, asking the respondent whether they have read them and whether they have used it to do any of the tours described in the magazine. In this fragment the interviewer asks the respondent whether she has already done any of the tours that were described in the first issue of that year.

Fragment 9:

1 IR: .hh a:nd >have you also followed routes from the ((title)) number one↑
2 or not↓
3 (1.2)
4 IE: → NO i think i don't even have that .hh[ h ]
5 IR: [↑o.]h okay↓
6 (.)
7 IR: .h an:d what do >you actually think of the< number of advertisements

1 IR: .hh e:n >heeft u ook routes uit de ((titel)) nummer één nog gevolgd↑
2 of niet↓
3 (1.2)
4 IE: → NEE volgens mij heb ik die hemaal niet .hh[ h ]
5 IR: [↑o.]h okce↓
6 (.)
7 IR: .h en: wat vindt >u eigenlijk van de< hoeveelheid advertenties
After a 1.2-second silence, the respondent answers with an emphatic type-conforming response: “NEE” (line 4). She then gives an account for this answer: she did not receive that particular issue of the magazine and is thus unable to have done any of the routes described in it. This account targets a presumption that is hidden in the question, namely that she had the routes available. Had the respondent merely answered “no”, then the assumption would have been left intact: she could have, but has not, done any of the routes.

Just like the respondent in fragment 8, this respondent first gives a type-conforming answer to the question. Through this, she initially goes along with the question and accepts its terms. So, though there is resistance to an aspect of the question, the respondent only expresses this resistance after having displayed co-operation in the position adjacent to the question.

In the following example the respondent’s expanded answer contains a type-conforming response at the beginning of her turn as well as at the end. The respondent is asked whether she “at times” visits a casino. This question follows a sequence of questions about the respondent’s participation in games of chance. One of the questions in the string of types of games was about the Holland Casino, a chain of state-run casinos in the Netherlands. The respondent has replied “no” to that question. In this fragment, the interviewer returns to that topic, introducing it in line 1 with a repetition of the respondent’s earlier response. After an introduction instructing the respondent which casinos to consider and what types of visits to include (lines 4-7), the interviewer delivers the question component in line 10: “do you ever visit a casino?”

Fragment 10:

1 IR: a:nd you also just indicated that you yourself don’t play
2 in ↓holland casinos↑=
3 IE: =yes=
4 IR: =in the netherlands and abroad however there are also ↑other casinos
5 where you can play, .H >and furthermore you can of course also<
6 visit a casino without taking part↓=
7 = >for ex ample< ↑to watch or to go out=
8 IE: ↓yes ↑=mm hm↑
9 (.)
10 IR: do you ever ↑vis it a casino↓
11 (0.4)
The focus of my analysis is on the respondent’s turn in lines 12 and 14. The hesitant onset is surprising in view of the respondent’s active recipient behaviour in line 8, and the answer-expansion-answer design of the answer is remarkable. I will go through the fragment step by step in order to show what is happening in this response turn, and I will explain why the respondent designs her turn this way. The design of her answer is responsive to two issues. First, she probably expected a different question than the one delivered in line 10. And second, the question is not clear with respect to what qualifies as “ever visiting a casino”.

While the interviewer introduces the question, the respondent receipts the different parts of this introduction with “yes” and “mm hm” at or just after possible completion points in the interviewer’s talk (line 8). These receipt tokens work to claim understanding of the talk-until-then and giving the speaker the go-ahead to continue. By
recepting the interviewer’s talk with continuer tokens, the respondent also displays that she understands the interviewer’s turn is not complete yet.

In line 10, then, the interviewer delivers the question component: “do you ever visit a casino?” Because a question is a first-pair-part, making a second-pair-part from the co-participant relevant, asking a question makes change of speakership relevant. Moreover, because this is a survey interview, respondents will be especially awaiting these question components before they take over speakership. Until line 8, or more generally: until the question component has been delivered, the respondent can safely consider the turn to be incomplete.

But, while the respondent was quite precise in the placement of her recipient tokens in line 8, she now delays quite some time before taking the turn and delivering an answer. After a gap of 0.4 seconds she hesitates vocally (“t e:h” in line 12) and then leaves another silence of 0.5 seconds. She then delivers a type-conforming response “nee:” in turn-initial position. This could be a complete turn and the floor could be handed back to the interviewer, but instead the respondent continues to speak.

The next item in her turn is “ja”, contradicting her prior “nee” or perhaps announcing that a contradiction is coming up. Indeed, what follows is a description of how the respondent has once been in a casino to have a look, just as described by the interviewer in lines6-7. There are several ways in which the respondent presents herself as an infrequent visitor to casinos, thus supporting her negative answer to the question. I will just repeat the relevant TCU here:

12 IE: → .t e:h (0.5) no: yes I’ve done it ↑once↑ in the past
13 IR: [↑just] purely to eh .H to have a look at how that goes
14 IE: → >you know↑ but no↓ e- ▼

First of all she explicitly refers to the past with “in ’t verleden”, placing the visit she is about to mention in the far past, not just any time before now. Then she uses the phrase “één keer” (one time / just once) and gives this stress by producing it at a high pitch, making it out as just the one time.

The next significant aspect of her turn in this respect is the word “puur” (purely), displaying that what she is about to say is the only thing she did, and nothing more. What she has classified as ‘purely’ is “to have a look at how that goes”. This phrase, and especially the pro-
term “that”, claims her innocence where the world of casinos, blackjack and poker is concerned. She did not go “purely to see how people play blackjack” or “how much money the Chinese put on one hand of cards”; her interest was as a first timer, curious to see what goes on inside a casino.

All this evidence is only slightly contradicted by her use of the words “I've done it”. She does not say, “I've been once in the past”, which would have strengthened the impression of a spectator that she sets up in the previous talk. Instead, the verb phrase seems to reveal that she has taken part in gambling while she was at the casino that one time.

Nonetheless, her report of visiting the casino tallies nicely with the description in the interviewer’s prologue in lines 4-7. One can visit casinos for other reasons than gambling, and she has done just that. This may have triggered her uptake of the interviewer’s talk in line 8, where she placed a recipient token just after the interviewer said “you can of course also visit a casino without taking part”, and again after “for example to watch or go out”. The respondent can recognise her own behaviour in this description, and is perhaps developing a hypothesis as to what kind of question this may be leading to. The design of her response shows that a question along the lines of “have you ever visited a casino?” was expected, to which the respondent could have answered affirmatively. Instead, a slightly different question component is delivered, forcing the respondent to reassess her behaviour, which is made visible in her hesitations in the form of pauses and ehms. Because is it not striking that the respondent, after claiming understanding and really being ‘in there’ in line 6, suddenly falls silent when the question is asked?

The interviewer acknowledges the first part of the respondent’s expansion with a “ja” with falling intonation (line 14). This token treats the prior as a preliminary statement, possibly leading up to an answer (see chapter 3). In other words: the interviewer does not respond with a receipt “ja”, which would have a rising intonation. Thus, the interviewer does not treat the expansion as a revised version of the answer, now affirmative while started with a negative response. Instead, she treats it as part of an ongoing, coherent response.

The third part of the respondent’s turn is a reiteration of her initial response: “but no” (line 15). “But” orients to her setting up a contrast between the prior TCU and the present one. “No” embodies this contrast: even though she has just said that she has visited a casino, the answer to the question is no to the question if she ‘ever visits a casino’. The respondent thus aligns with the interviewer’s treatment of
her prior talk: as one coherent response where two contrastive reports have been used in order to communicate one answer.

This respondent initially gives a type-conforming answer, responding “no” to the question if she ever visits a casino. With her subsequent expansion, however, she modifies this negative answer. In doing this, she offers the interviewer information that might be relevant for her task of selecting the applicable answer category on her computer. By expanding her negative type-conforming answer with a positive expansion, the respondent avoids giving an unequivocally negative or positive answer to the question. This reflects that the categories she has to choose from, i.e. ‘yes, I visit a casino at times’ or ‘no, I do not visit a casino at times’, are problematic for this respondent.


Here, I will look at what types of actions survey respondents perform when they post-expand their type-conforming answers. Indeed, as Raymond describes, these post-expansions serve to adjust the meaning of the type-conforming response. I will propose to look at the two answer categories as placed on a continuum that runs from ‘totally yes’ to ‘totally no’, while in between (and past) those two categories lie the more specific realities of the lives of respondents. The pre-formulated answer categories do not always correspond exactly with the respondent’s actual situation, behaviour, or attitude. In order to convey that actual situation, behaviour, or attitude to the interviewer, respondents sometimes qualify their type-conforming responses. Repeating the core utterances from the three fragments discussed in this section here, we can see the features they share.

Fr.8: IE: → ↓ no;, we’ll be staying here↓ [heh .h]

Fr.9: IE: → NO i think i don’t even have that .hh[ h]
Non-conforming and expanded type-conforming respondent turns

The type of action performed in the second TCU is different for all three. Fragment 8 contains a specification of the answer, fragment 9 is an account, and fragment 10 adds a contrasting story to the type-conforming response.

However, they all target a restriction in the question formulation. Because these answers are all responsive to yes/no-questions, simply answering yes or no will place the respondent in one category or the other. But for respondents these categories are not always an ideal fit. The category in which their type-conforming response places them can be too loose or perhaps too restricted. In two of the above three examples the respondents treat the category of their choice as too loose, while in the third example the respondent treats the category as too restricted.

The expansions in fragments 8 and 9 treat the categories in which the negative response places the respondent as too wide. The negative type-conforming answer in fragment 8 means ‘no, I am not planning to move in the next twelve months’, but this respondent can be more specific than that. For fragment 9 the negative type-conforming response means ‘no, I did not do any tours from the first issue for whatever reason’, but again, this respondent can be more specific than that. Note that these two expansions upgrade the meaning of their type-conforming responses. The respondent in fragment 8 is not just not moving in the next twelve months: she is not moving at all! And the respondent in fragment 9 did not just not follow any of the routes: she couldn’t have even if she had wanted to!

The expansion in fragment 10, on the other hand, seems to be aimed at the mutual exclusiveness of either an affirmative or negative response or, in other words, the categories being too restrictive. This respondent’s type-conforming answer could be taken to mean that she never visits a casino, and the expansion counters that possible interpretation. In contrast to the upgrading character of the expansions in fragments 8 and 9, this expansion is a downgrader: she won’t claim that she has never been inside a casino, but to this question her answer is negative.

In conclusion, these post-expanded type-conforming responses share the following feature. Respondents indicate which answer category applies to them, after which they specify where exactly within that answer category they have placed their situation, behaviour, or attitude. In other words, the expansions work to indicate where on the
imaginary continuum between ‘totally yes’ and ‘totally no’ these respondents place themselves. These three respondents display that just the type-conforming response would not do justice to their particular situation.

4.3.2 Pre-expansion + answer

Having discussed expansions placed after the type-conforming response, I will now explore responses in which the order within the answer turn is reversed. These turns are built up of a pre-expansion after which the respondent delivers a type-conforming answer. By placing the expansion before the answer, the respondent can modify the terms of the question before answering it (Clayman 1993 and 2001, Raymond 2000). The examples in this section show that respondents in survey interviews employ their pre-expansions in such a way as well. However, just like post-expansions, pre-expansions can also be used to solve a mismatch between the answer category and the respondent’s actual situation.

In fragment 11 we can find an example of a respondent pre-expanding her answer. She is asked whether she smokes, “even if that is ever so rarely” (lines 1-2). This question is designed to include all respondents that smoke whatever product at whatever frequency in the affirmative category. As we will see, this respondent does not just answer this question with a “yes” but expands her answer first by stating that “she smokes” (line 4).

Fragment 11:

1 IR: =.hhh then a completely different ↑subject,= =do you ever ↑smoke
2 ↓even if that is ever so rarely↓
3 (.)
4 IE: → eh I ↓smoke yes↑
5 (0.8) ((tik))
6 IR: a::nd then I’ll now name a few ↓smoking articles↑=

1 IR: =.hhh dan ’n heel ander ↑onderwerp,= =rookt u wel eens ↓al is dat
2 zelden↓
3 (.)
4 IE: → eh ik ↓rook ja↑
5 (0.8) ((tik))
6 IR: e::n dan noem ik nu ’n aantal ↓rookwaren op↑=
The question in lines 1-2 is a yes/no-question. The category of respondents answering “no” to this question will be those who never smoke. The group of respondents answering “yes” will be more divers: it will include chain smokers, but also the irregular smokers like people who only smoke when they go out and people who have phases in which they smoke. Thus, by answering “yes” to this question the respondent can be considered part of the category of people that use a smoking product in whatever frequency.

Because the question is formulated this way, a respondent answering just with “yes” may run the risk of being understood to “smoke at times even if that is ever so rarely”, that is: an irregular smoker. Or, at the very least the answer category is so loosely defined that a simple “yes” does not make clear where on the continuum from ‘party smoker’ to ‘chain smoker’ this respondent can be placed. Even though neither the questionnaire nor the interviewer asks for this information, this respondent makes a point of telling where she can be placed on the continuum.

The respondent in this fragment reformulates part of the question before giving an affirmative type-conforming response. This action is quite similar to that in an excerpt in Raymond 2000 (244):

Fragment 12 (Data and transcript: G. Raymond):

1 JOAN: Get my letter.  
2 MARK: I gotcher card, Mm hm=

Raymond describes how putting the amendment first and then answering the question prevents the amendment from being topicalised in the subsequent talk (2000: 244-245). The last slot in the turn is taken up by a form of type-conforming response, and this will then be the first thing the next speaker will respond to.

Another effect of pre-expansions has been described by Clayman (1993 and 2001). He has researched news interviews and the practices respondents (‘IEs’) use to evade potentially damaging questions.

"Before “answering” a given question, an IE may first refer to, characterize, or paraphrase the question at hand. These various operations can modify the question in a way that both facilitates and conceals a shift of the agenda. Thus, not only can IEs adjust the surface form of a response to fit the question, they can also, in effect, adjust the question to fit the response that they intend to give.” (Clayman 2001: 428)
One of the practices respondents use to resist the interviewer’s agenda covertly, is modifying the question slightly before answering it. While Clayman writes about news interviews, fragment 12 illustrates that this practice occurs in everyday interaction as well. And from fragment 11 it becomes clear that respondents in survey interview employ this same practice. While the motivation of the speakers in these two examples may be different from that of cornered politicians, we can nonetheless safely say that they do not go along with all the premises of the question they are asked.

In fragments 11 and 12, the person answering the question changes the terms of the question before giving a (type-conforming) answer. The result is that their answer is responsive to the adapted version of the question instead of to the original. Mark in fragment 12 answers affirmatively to the question he has reformulated himself, and the respondent in fragment 11 does the same: she sets the new terms of the question and answers to those terms.

So, in the case of my fragment, the respondent rephrases the question into the words “I smoke”, deleting large portions of the question and selecting the relevant part. By not repeating (or rephrasing) the bits about smoking “at times” or “ever so rarely”, the respondent displays that these portions of the question are not applicable to her. What is left is the everyday way of saying that she is a habitual smoker. This rephrased and reduced version of the question is then ‘responded to’ with a “yes”.

In the following fragment, the respondent also inserts an expansion before giving a type-conforming response.

Fragment 13:

1 IR: ↓and if you add together all the times that you skim a magazine↓=
2 ↓=h how much time on average do you spend a week reading this
3 ↓kind of magazines↓→ hh is that half an hour a week, ↓one hour,
4 ↓(0.4)
5 IR: ↓two to three hours for↑to five hours, ]
6 IE: ↓→ ↓Y:E:s, there are↑eh magazines that:
7 ↓→ ↓I take more interest in than others=
8 ↓→ ↓=if’ll be ↑hh now in total some three hours ↓I think↓=
9 IR: ↓↑yes↓] =↓yes↑
10 ↓(0.7)
11 IR: ↓and do you have a cable connection for TV↓
In line 6 the respondent starts his answer turn at the point of possible completion after the third answer category (“two to three hours” in line 5). They end up in overlap and the interviewer drops out after she finishes reading out the subsequent answer category. The respondent starts out with a loud “ja” after which the respondent produces a statement that describes his behaviour with respect to reading magazines. While the answer categories are most recent in the interviewer’s talk, and thus adjacent to his response turn, he does not respond to those in particular (as e.g. “no, it’s a lot more than that” would do). Instead, he seems to skip back to the main question and react to that. The gist of his pre-expansion is that he distinguishes between magazines, implying that he spends more time reading some magazines than others.

Before he gives his type-conforming answer, he does more work to adapt the terms of the question. While the interviewer asked him for an average (line 2), he modifies this into a total (line 8). The type-conforming answer he subsequently delivers is a total amount of time that he distributes unevenly over the types of magazines he reads. While his answer is not an exact repeat of one of the answer options offered by the interviewer (“some three hours” as opposed to “two to three hours”), he does use part of an answer options. This answer corresponds with the answer option that the interviewer had just read out when he started to respond. The respondent starts to answer as soon as he has heard the relevant answer option, placing his response right at the end of that category and overlapping with the next one.

The design of this answer enables the respondent to do three things. First, by placing the expansion before the type-conforming he is less likely to lose the floor. Delivering a recordable answer makes turn transition relevant, so the pre-expansion delays that moment. Second, placing the expansion before his type-conforming answer also
enables him to adapt the terms of the question, so that his type-conforming answer applies to his own, new terms. And third, he ends his turn with a type-conforming answer, thus avoiding topicalisation of his expansion.

In the following fragment, the respondent is asked how many days a week she listens to the radio (line 5). She answers with ‘pre-expansion + type-conforming answer’.

Fragment 14:

1 IR: =do you ever listen to the radio:↓
2 (0.3)
3 IE: eyes↑
4 (.)
5 IR: and on how many days of the week is ↑that↑ ↓usually
6 (.)
7 IE: → at ↑any rate at worKh↓ heHEhe .H↓ h
8 IR: ↓[so,]
9 IE: → >>so that’s<< five da[ys ↓] certainly yes= 10 IR: [yes] =kay,
11 IE: ↓yes=
12 IR: =.hhh then a completely different ↑subject,= =do you ever ↑smoke

In line 7 the respondent begins her response to the question by stating the circumstances under which she listens to the radio. Her telling the interviewer that she listens to the radio at work can be employed to do several things.
One possible aim of this TCU is that she displays to the interviewer what the circumstances are of her listening to the radio, in order for the interviewer to judge whether that is the kind of ‘radio listening’ the survey is looking for. We may assume that ‘listening to the radio’ is not what she gets paid to do, so most probably the radio will be on in the background while she is busy doing something else. By telling the interviewer this, she gives her the opportunity to assess whether this indeed qualifies as ‘listening to the radio’. In line 8 the interviewer starts to respond to the pre with “so”. This shows that the interviewer accepts the respondent’s habits as valid ‘radio listening’, and the respondent now goes on to deliver her type-conforming answer.

Secondly, the laughter at the end of the TCU seems to display that the respondent may be making a confession here. Her listening to the radio while she is at work may be a source of slight embarrassment, or in any case a laughing matter. The interviewer does not respond to this possible implication.

Thirdly, her pre-expansion may really be a reporting, communicating the number of days she listens to the radio without actually saying it (Drew, 1984). If the respondent had not added anything to her answer, the interviewer could have formulated the upshot by estimating the number of days the respondent spends at work, most probably four or five. The interviewer’s onset in line 8 (“so”) seems to indicate that she indeed took the respondent to answer by implication.

However, the respondent formulates the upshot of her reporting herself (“so that’s five days certainly”, line 9). Starting this second TCU with “dus”, she sets up a relationship with the prior TCU: what will follow is deduced from what just went before. The respondent then gives a type-conforming response without further delay or hesitation: “that is five days certainly”. The third part of her response, “ja”, seems to work to close off her turn and reconfirm that the answer she has just given is the right one.

Now I would like to explore what kind of action these pre-expansions perform. When respondents address something else before they deliver a type-conforming response, this is called delayed conformity (Raymond 2000). Delayed responses are associated with preference organisation. Speakers will often delay the delivery of a dispreferred turn, for example through silences, repair initiators, or turn prefices (Pomerantz 1984a). In the case of these expanded answers, however, this is not the case. Instead, respondents use pre-expansions to adapt the terms of the question in such a way that it enables them to
answer it with a type-conforming response. In the case of yes/no-questions, recipients of such questions are confronted with an either / or choice. When the speaker of a second pair part (SPP) uses just the type-conforming response, he aligns with all the terms of the question. Pre-expansions are an attempt to modify those terms and, in consequence, the action which the following type-conforming response performs (Raymond 2000: 235).

But these pre-expansions can also work to display the respondent’s reasoning to the interviewer. Not only do these respondents change the terms of the question slightly in order to provide a better fit with their answer; they also display the adjustments they make to the interviewer. By making their reasoning available, respondents enable the interviewer to judge whether the respondent is indeed answering the correct question.

Now let us look at the turns from fragments 11 to 14 that were under scrutiny in this section.

Fr.11 eh I ↓smoke yes↑

Fr.12 I gotcher card, Mm hm¿

Fr.13 ↓Y:E:s, there are eh magazines that I take more interest in than others= =it’ll be .hh now in total some three hours ↓I think↓=

Fr.14 at ↑any rate at workH↓ heHEhe .Hh >>so that's<< five days certainly yes=

Fragments 13 and 14 have in common that the respondent ‘arrives at’ a response after going through some externalised mental process. I discussed the hesitant and hedged delivery of the type-conforming response for the utterance in fragment 13 in detail, and how he designs his eventual answer as if it was arrived at on the spot and not simply as a (partial) repeat of one of the answer categories. Something similar happens in fragment 14: the respondent displays the reasoning behind her answer as if she needs to flip through that information before she can deduce the correct answer from it.

A certain level of resistance does occur in all these instances. These respondents all target a portion of the question and redefine it in their answer. Those definitions need not have been explicit in the question, but may simply be implied by the question. The respondent in fragment 14 redefines ‘listening to the radio’ as a secondary activity rather than a main activity, while in fragment 13 the respondent redefines the interviewer’s homogeneous representation of the
magazines he reads. The speaker in fragment 12 uses a pre-expansion to redefine the object he has received in the mail as a card rather than a letter, and in fragment 11 the respondent redefines the activity of “smoking even if it is ever so rarely” into just “smoking”.

Through these amendments, respondents (and everyday answer-givers) are able to answer more exactly and truthfully to the questions. Moreover, by externalising these considerations, they make them available for the interviewer (and everyday question-asker) to respond to. Perhaps the girl in fragment 12 actually sent a letter as well as a card, or perhaps listening to the radio while doing something else does not count for this questionnaire. The set-up of the answers displays more exactly what the respondent means than a simple type-conforming response would.

4.3.3 How expansions handle dichotomies and presumptions

Because turns-at-talk are mostly designed to respond to a prior turn-at-talk, this responsiveness is pervasive throughout each turn. The uptake of a turn can best be analysed by looking at what happens in the responsive turn. And especially when the prior turn is complex, e.g. consisting of an introduction and question component, simply *anything* can give rise to aspects of the responsive turn.

Survey interviewers and questionnaire designers strive for standardisation, so they will try to get respondents to answer with a type-conforming response and preferably nothing extra. As we have seen in section 1 of this chapter, respondents seem ready to comply with this standardisation most of the time. And in all the expanded fragments shown above, the respondents have displayed themselves perfectly capable of answering the question without help from the interviewer as well. Some of these answers are even delivered quickly, without hesitation, thus giving the impression of being unproblematic. So what is going on when respondents opt for expansion?

These respondents all manage one issue. The expansions are used to instruct their recipient on how their answer should be heard. Respondents take into consideration how their type-conforming response may be heard by the interviewer. So when the interviewer asks if the respondent ‘visits the casino at times’, an unexpanded ‘no’ can be heard as ‘no, I never visit the casino’. By expanding the type-conforming response, respondents control to a much greater extent how the interviewer hears their answer.

In their expansions, respondents react to two different aspects of these survey questions. In some of the cases discussed in this section,
respondents resist the dichotomy that the question has set up for them. The constraints in many survey questions cause an imbalance in meaning of the answer categories in yes/no-questions. Often, one answer will have a very specific meaning, while the meaning of the other answer is necessarily very wide. Sometimes these meanings are too specific or too wide for respondents, and they address this issue in an expansion.

The other aspect of survey questions that respondents may resist is a presumption in the question. These presumptions can be very implicit, such as the presumption that the respondent is able to answer the question, or more explicit, such as the presumption that the respondent received a magazine. I will discuss these two groups in more detail in the following two sections.

I found a group of answers that display responsiveness to a dichotomy being set up in the question. In yes/no-questions a dichotomy is necessarily invoked, and in order to make sure that respondents end up on the right side of the dichotomy, survey questions often contain all sorts of specifications and conditions. These can take the form of time constraints (e.g. “in the past seven days”) frequency constraints (e.g. “even if it is ever so rarely”), or even constraints of place (think of the shampoo question in the introduction to this book), but they can also be less visible on the surface.

Through these specifications, one side of the dichotomy is now very much constrained, leaving the other side a necessarily much wider scope. For example, when asked whether he has read a certain newspaper in the past six days, a fervent reader of this paper may have to answer “no” simply because he was abroad or ill. This way he falls into the same category of people who never do the specified activity. Respondents may see this as a reason to expand their answer in order to make explicit where exactly they fit within the wider scope of the category.

Some survey questions, on the other hand, are formulated very generally, in order to include as many respondents as possible. This means that you can get questions that contain words like “sometimes” and “ever”, or phrases like “even if it is ever so rarely”. Now the positive side of the dichotomy is left wide open, containing respondents who do something “sometimes” as well as those who do it “all the time”.

We have seen this phenomenon in several of the previous fragments. I will just repeat the relevant parts here.
Fragment 3:

9 IR: family weeklies= such as the new revue or panorama,
10 (0.4)
11 IE: yes-
12 (0.5)
13 IR: e'xp
14 IE: WELL regularly e:::h I'm not subscribed to 'm but li:ke single
15 issues [right↑] theyes .hhh=
16 IR: [yes↓] =a:nd expensive ↓monthlies↑ >such as<
17 marie ↓claire↑ or ele↓gance↑

Fragment 8:

3 IR: and are you planning to move house in the next ↓twelve months↑=
4 IE: → no:, we'll be staying here↑ [ heh .h]↓

Fragment 9:

1 IR: .hh and >have you also followed routes from the ((title)) number one↑
2 or not↓
3 (1.2)
4 IE: → NO i think i don't even have that .hh↓ h ]↑

Fragment 10:

10 IR: do you ever ↑visit a casino↓
11 (0.4)
12 IE: → t.e:h (0.5) no: yes I've done it ↑once↑ in the past
13 [just ] purely to eh .H to have a look at how that goes
14 IR: [yes↓]
15 IE: → >you know↑< but no↓ e h e- ]

Fragment 11:

1 IR: =do you ever ↑smoke
2 ↓even if that is ever so rarely↓
3 (.)
4 IE: → eh I ↓smoke yes↑

I will just discuss fragments 8 and 9 in a little more detail. The question in fragment 8 divides respondents into two possible groups: those answering “yes” to this question are placed in the group of
respondents who actually plan to move house within the set timeframe. However, when answering “no” to this question, one ends up in a wider category of respondents who will definitely not move, respondents who do not plan to move within the next twelve months but might end up moving anyway, and respondents who plan to move after the next twelve months. When one considers oneself ‘a definite non-mover’ rather than someone who just does not have any plans for these next twelve months, just answering “no” does not do to communicate this to the interviewer. This respondent’s expansion communicates just that.

In fragment 9, there is again a dichotomy being set up. On one side there are the respondents who have followed one of the routes described in the year’s first issue (this group will contain subgroups of people who have only done part of one tour through to respondents who have done all the tours in that issue). On the other side of the dichotomy there is the wide group who have not done this. This group will include respondents who did not like any of the tours, those that did not have time to do any, those that never do any of those tours, and, like this respondent, those that did not receive that issue.

Contrasting this respondent’s situation with the other possibilities I mentioned as fitting within this wider category, it becomes clear that this respondent did not choose not to do any of the tours. She simply could not because they were not available to her.

More generally, in all the above fragments, the answers are responsive to yes/no-questions, and in all these cases the respondents display that just a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ does not suffice as an answer. Though there are many questions in which the yes/no-dichotomy poses no problem whatsoever, e.g. respondents either do or do not have an account at a certain bank, this is obviously not the case for the above questions. These questions take into account that respondents can visit a casino once or twice, but that that does not make them regulars. They take into account that respondents can smoke now and then, but that they do not tend to call themselves smokers. In order to catch respondents in the right category, they are set up with the necessary specifications.

The specifications in these questions show that the designers of the questionnaire were aware of potential misunderstandings. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation I showed how survey researchers design questions. The question “Which brand of shampoo do you use?” was made more specific, resulting in the question “Which brand or brands of shampoo have you personally used at home during the last month? In the case of more than one brand, please list all the brands that
apply.” (Malhotra & Birks 2003: 338). A by-product of these specifications is that some respondents react to exactly those aspects of the question. This is the case in fragments 8, 10, and 11: had the question been formulated in a more ‘everyday’ way (are you planning to move? do you ever visit a casino? do you smoke?), then these particular respondents would probably have answered these questions with a simple ‘no’ or ‘yes’.

An important point to stress in relation to these responses is that the respondents do give a type-conforming answer to the question in all these examples. This displays that, though there may be something problematic about the prior utterance, this did not keep them from understanding the content of the question and formulating an appropriate answer to it. A related point is that the interviewers treat these responses as unproblematic by moving on to the next question without further expansion of the question-answer-sequence. Not only do they treat the prior, responding turn to be unproblematic in this way. They also treat their own prior turn, the question, as apparently having been unproblematic. Obviously, expansions to answers could give rise to third-position repairs because they display more of the speaker’s understanding than just the type-conforming token would.

Another action these expansions can perform is dealing with presumptions hidden in the question. Typically, by asking a question the presumption is already made that the respondent is willing and able to provide an answer. Respondents may expand their answer in order to refute such an assumption. But survey questions contain other, more specific presumptions as well, which are not always valid for every respondent. I will repeat those fragments in which respondents negate presumptions in the question.

Fragment 7:

```
1 IR: .h does this apply best to- ABN amro↑ the ↓ING bank,  
2 the ↓rabo bank, or the ↑postbank↓  
3 (1.5)  
4 IE:→ OY .thh E:::h le ↓see right↑ (2.2) w:ell (0.8) I wouldn’t know  
5 but↑↓JUST TAKE THE: ING↓  
6 IR: [↑no↑]  
7 (0.4)  
8 IR: >if you really don’t know you can just< ↓say so r↓ght, ]  
9 IE: [↑yes,↓yes↓]  
10 (0.4) ((pok))  
```
From Text to Talk

11 IE: E:h ↓NO ↑WELL NO, then just say honestly like
12      (that I don't know) yes-
13 IR:  o(h)(k)(h)ay .h h a:nd perhaps you do know to which bank
14      or financial institution that statement applies least↑

Fragment 9:

1 IR:  .hh a:nd >have you also followed routes from the ((title)) number one↑
2      or not↓
3  (1.2)
4 IE:  → NO i think i don't even have that .hh h

Fragment 13:

1 IR:  ↓a:nd if you add together all the times that you skim a magazine↓=
2      =.h how much time on average do you spend a wee:k reading this kind of
3      magazines↓ .hh is that half an hour a wee:k, ↓one hour,
4      (0.4)
5 IR:  ↓two to three hours fou[ r "to five hours,  
6 IE:  ↓↓Y:E:s, there are.] eh magazines that:
7 →  I take more interest in than others=
8 →  =if"ll be ↑.hh now in total some three hours ↓I think↓=

Fragment 14:

1 IR:  =do you ever listen to the radio↓
2      (0.3)
3 IE:  eye:s↑
4      (.)
5 IR:  and on how many days of the week is ↑that↑ ↓usually
6      (.)
7 IE:  → at ↑any rate at worKh↓ heHEhe .H h  
8 IR:  ↓↓so]
9 IE:  → >>so that's<< five da[ y s] certainly yes=

In fragment 7 we can see that the respondent negates the presumption that she has an answer to the question. She displays that she would not know, but gives an answer anyway. After the interviewer has recorded the 'don't know' answer (line 11-12), she goes on to formulate her next question differently: “and perhaps you do know to which bank or financial institution that statement applies least?” (lines 13-14). Now the hidden presumption is no longer hidden, and can more easily be responded to by the respondent.
The respondent in fragment 9 clearly targets the presumption that she has received issue number one. Answering this question with a type-conforming ‘no’ only could be heard as ‘no, I did not follow any routes from that issue but I could have’. By expanding her answer, the respondent eliminates this possible hearing. The presumption targeted in fragment 14 is that listening to the radio could be a main activity. By inserting that she listens to the radio at work, the respondent manages the impression that she makes on the interviewer.

I will discuss fragment 13 here in detail. In the sequence prior to this question, the respondent was asked which types of magazines he “read regularly”. From a list of ten, he confirmed reading five items: broadcasting magazines, family weeklies, opinion magazines, youth and juvenile magazines, and business magazines or trade journals. Of these five, family magazines and youth / juvenile magazines received a qualified answer: ‘at times yes’ and ‘nyeah, once in a while’, while the other three were answered with a simple ‘yes’. This way he has displayed that his reading habits may vary when different kinds of magazines are concerned.

The subsequent question, under scrutiny here, asks him to add together all the times he reads ‘this kind of magazines’ (line 2-3). Though “this kind” is used to refer back to the magazines the respondent has confirmed he reads (and perhaps to exclude any that he may read but were not mentioned in the list, e.g. hobby magazines), it also functions to put all the relevant items into one indistinguishable pile. This pile consists of all the types of magazines that were on my list and of which you confirmed reading them regularly.

The formulation of this follow-up question is not sensitive to the distinctions introduced by the respondent in the previous sequence. The first part of his response deals with exactly that “flaw” in the formulation: he resists the treatment of the magazines he has indicated to read as one homogenous group.

“There’s magazines that I take more interest in than others” at the beginning of his turn modifies the answer the respondent subsequently gives. It is now clear that the time he spends reading magazines is not evenly distributed over the five types that he has confirmed reading. When this modification has been dealt with, he goes on to give the appropriate type-conforming answer.

In conclusion, what the respondent picks up on and takes the opportunity to dwell on, is a detail in the formulation of the question. This utterance is not in the service of being able to answer the
question; all the evidence suggests that he has absolutely no trouble doing this (see §4.3.2 for this evidence). However, it displays a preoccupation on the respondent’s part with being understood correctly. He does not merely answer “about three hours”, but offers some extra information for making sense of that answer. This tendency to give an answer that is not only correct but corresponds with the respondent’s own concepts is a recurrent phenomenon in my data.

4.4 Responses that do not contain a type-conforming answer

In the first half of this chapter we have seen how respondents elaborate their answers after or before giving a type-conforming response to the question. In this section we will look at sequences in which respondents produce an answer to the question without actually supplying a type-conforming response in the first turn after the question. The interviewer accepts some of these non-conforming answers, while others are treated as problematic.

The non-conforming answers take the shape of descriptions of types of behaviour or attitudes. By describing, the respondent avoids committing to one of the answer options, either because they are not certain which applies to their particular situation, or because they resist the choice offered to them. These descriptions are called ‘reportings’ (Drew 1984), and they are designed to leave it to the recipient of the reporting to gather the upshot of the reporting.

Respondents employ such reportings under two different circumstances. They may use a reporting to account for their answer, or they may use it to defer judgement, leaving it to the interviewer to assign them to one of the answer categories (Moore 2004, Schaffer & Maynard 2002). In this section I will discuss several cases of the latter type: reportings that do not contain a type-conforming answer and which leave it to the interviewer to select the right answer category. However, the interviewer is not always able to do this. Sometimes the interviewer accepts the reporting, while at other times the interviewer probes for a type-conforming answer.

In section 4.4.1 I will show non-conforming answers that get accepted by the interviewer and in section 4.4.2 non-conforming answers that get rejected by the interviewer are discussed. I will show that the design of answers that get rejected differs from those that get accepted, and that those design features play a roll in whether the interviewer accepts or rejects the answer (§4.4.3).
4.4.1 Acceptable non-conforming answers

In the following example the interviewer asks where the respondent purchases his tickets for the state lottery. The respondent is given two answer options: cash at a sales point (line 1) or through the giro or bank (line 2). A repeat of partial repeat of one of these options would constitute a type-conforming response. However, the respondent uses a different formulation to answer the question.

Fragment 15:

1 IR: c:: state lottery tickets can be bought cash >at one of the<
2 ↑sales ↓points >but one can also take part through giro or<
3 ↑bank ↓h=
4 IE: =yes↑=
5 IR: =which way do you ↑usually take ↓part↑
6 (0.4)
7 IE: → e:h just↑ i get them myself from the post office,
8 (.)
9 IR: ↑cash ↓=
10 IE: =-yes- H=
11 IR: =and do you ever take part in the state lottery↓ jackpot↑

In line 7 the respondent answers the question, but does not select one of the answer categories that the interviewer has provided in her question. Rather, he describes his behaviour, reporting the specific location where he collects his lottery tickets. In line 9 the interviewer formulates this response into one of the answer options: “cash”, thus giving her understanding of the respondent’s talk. This understanding is stated in a matter-of-fact fashion, with a falling intonation, rather than as a probe redoing the question. After the respondent has
confirmed this understanding, the interviewer immediately moves on to the next question.

A very similar pattern is visible in the following fragment. This question-answer sequence is part of a series of question asking the respondent ‘how many of the latest six issues’ of certain newspapers she has read or skimmed. This is the last question in the series, so the question is abbreviated to “and of a regional daily?” (line 1). Type-conforming responses to this question would be a number between zero and six, but instead the respondent describes her situation (line 2). After a long hesitation marker (a 1.0 second long “eh”), she says that she is subscribed to that paper. This means that all issues are delivered to her door.

Fragment 16:

1 IR: and of a regional \picted{paper}
2 IE: \rightarrow E:e::h to \upicted{that I am subscribed} = = so I \upicted{have that every day}=
3 IR: \left[ all \downicted{six} \right] =
4 IE: = ja
5 \(0.8\)
6 IR: \& which of the following types\picted{of magazines} do you read

The formulation of this TCU in the present tense displays that this is an ongoing situation. Her subscription can be assumed to have been valid in the (recent) past, to still be valid at the moment and to continue at least some time into the future. The respondent does not add any time constraints, like “since yesterday”; thus the validity of the described situation is in principle infinite.

After this first TCU the turn could be complete: it is syntactically, prosodically and pragmatically complete. The interviewer responds to this talk in line 3, and gives an understanding of it. By taking over the turn, she treats the respondent’s talk as possibly complete. Moreover, her action displays that the previous talk contained enough information to base a reformulation on, though not enough to simply
move on to the next question. The falling intonation of the interviewer’s turn shows that it is an understanding rather than a repair, though of course the correction is implicit in this turn.

The two participants end up in overlap because the respondent adds a second part to her turn. In this part she does not deliver a type-conforming response either but draws a conclusion from her first TCU: “so I have that everyday”. Note that the respondent does not say that she reads it everyday or even that she skims it everyday. Basically, the second part of her response reiterates the first part: she receives this newspaper every day.

In spite of the absence of a type-conforming answer in this sequence, the interviewer accepts the response. She does not ask the respondent to confirm whether the respondent has actually read or skimmed all six issues that she has received. The fact that the respondent has implied as much is enough at this point.

4.4.2 Non-conforming answers that do not get accepted

In fragments 15 and 16 we saw unproblematic non-conforming responses. The respondent did not answer in the terms of the question, but the interviewer accepted the answer anyway. Now I will give a few examples of non-conforming answers that do not get accepted, and I will show how these responses share design features. We will see that these rejected non-conforming responses are designed as dispreferred, and they also set up a contrast. The respondent gives an initial answer to the question, but formulates this in such a way that it projects a contrast. In fragment 17 this contrast is merely implied by the respondent, but it is then made explicit by the interviewer. In fragments 18 and 19 the respondent delivers both sides of the contrast.

The first example is in response to the same question as in fragment 16, but about a different newspaper and with a different respondent. In line 8 the interviewer asks how many of the past six issues of a certain newspaper the respondent has read. Again, a number between zero and six qualifies as a type-conforming response, but the respondent gives a description rather than a number (lines 9-11).

Fragment 17:

1  IR: .hh of the general daily six issues ↑come out↑ ↓per week↑ =
2  =.h how many of the past >six issues of the
I will first focus on the respondent’s initial answer in lines 11-13. She starts up her response with a loud and stretched “nou” (“now” / “well”). This could signal that a dispreferred response is coming up
(Pomerantz 1984a). The question seems to prefer a numeric answer between one and six; even though ‘zero’ would be a fitted, type-conforming response, the respondent orients to it as dispreferred. Look for example at line 5 where the respondent’s answer to the previous question is “none” (“geen”). This answer is also designed as dispreferred, starting with “nou” and containing hesitations and pauses.

In line 11 “nou” prefaces an extended response turn that does not contain a type-conforming answer in the form of a number of newspapers that the respondent read in the past week. Instead, the respondent describes her usual behaviour. She starts her description with the word “meestal”, which means mostly, usually, or most of the time. Where this word makes claims about a lot of the time, it is also designed to leave some of the time unaccounted for. “Meestal” is certainly not equivalent to “always”. Think e.g. of a phrase like “usually I pay attention when I cross the street”. One can immediately feel that an accident is just ahead: “but this time....” For this particular utterance we can foresee a less disastrous contrast: last Saturday she did not buy that newspaper, contrary to her habits.

I will repeat the first part of her response here:

11 IE:→ ↑most of the time e:h I buy e::h I'm not subscribed to it 
12 → ↓but if i'm in a: supermarket ↓or in town↓ 

She goes on to say “koop ik” (“I buy” in the word order of a subordinated clause, under the influence of “meestal”). Formulated in the present tense, this verb phrase tells us that she is talking about a present and ongoing habit. It is not something she used to do in the past and then stopped doing, but something she has been doing and will do again in the future. She then cuts this turn-constructional unit (TCU) off (noticeable from the fact that she did not put the object of “buying” in yet) and inserts an explanation: “I’m not subscribed to it”.

The next TCU, “but if I’m in a supermarket or in town”, sets up a contrast with the previous TCU through the use of the conjunction “maar”, and phrases a condition. So, her whereabouts are a necessary condition for her to buy this newspaper. In other words: she does not go to the shop especially to buy the paper, but she will buy it when she is there anyway. This TCU leaves the turn pragmatically incomplete, because the if-clause has projected its complementary then-clause.

This then-clause follows directly:
but if i’m in a: supermarket ↓or in town↓ then: on

SATurdays i always buy the nicely thick newspaper for the ↓weekend

We can see the return of the verb phrase “I buy”, suggesting that this was what the respondent was going to say in line 11. This would mean that not only the bit about not having a subscription is an insertion, but also the preceding if-clause of this if-then construction. She then specifies that the previous condition applies to Saturdays only. So it is not that whenever she is in a shop she will usually buy this paper. It is only when she is in a shop on a Saturday that the ‘then’-part of the condition works.

The next word, “always”, can now only apply to those circumstances when all conditions are met: *always* when she is in a shop and when it is Saturday. The insertion of the if-clause makes this upgrade from “meestal” to “altijd” possible. She has now covered the possible holes in her habit by adding the ‘being in a shop’-condition. She completes her turn by describing the Saturday paper.

The response is now complete in all respects. Syntactically everything is fine. Pragmatically the turn is complete now that the if-then-construction has been finalised. And the turn has a final drop, displaying prosodic completeness. This way, the respondent delivers her response as complete and sufficient. However, the respondent has not given a type-conforming answer to the question. She has only described her usual behaviour without making explicit whether on the past Saturday she behaved as usual.

The respondent’s turn in this fragment is designed as dispreferred. She starts with a loud “nou”, equivalent to English “well”, which is associated with turn-beginnings of dispreferred turns. The following TCU is produced in a hesitant way, containing ‘ehms’ and stretched words. Finally, the contrastive design found in this response strengthens the impression that a dispreferred answer is coming up. Pomerantz (1984a) compares this design with that of disagreement, which she found are built up of weak agreement plus disagreement. “In each case the contrastive prefacing component is a weak or token instance of the preferred action; the prefaced component is a weak instance of the sequentially implicative dispreferred action (Pomerantz 1984a: 80).

And indeed, when the interviewer probes for a different answer (line 15), the respondent answers with a weakened version of a dispreferred zero-response:

15 IR: did you do that- this saturday as well↑
The respondent’s answer (in line 17) to this probe is designed in a very
similar way as her response turn in the previous question-answer
sequence (line 5 of this fragment).

After a short gap, the respondent starts with hesitation markers.
Then, in both turns, the respondent refers to the relevant timeframe:
“the past weeks” (in line 5) and “last Saturday” (in line 17). She then
formulates the answer: “none anymore” (line 5) and “indeed not” (line
17). Both these responses are zero-responses: the respondent has not
read either of these newspapers.

The respondent communicates more than just a negative response
in both these cases. By including a timeframe in the response, the
respondent displays that outside the timeframe the answer may have
been different. This is achieved by placing the time restriction before
the answer itself: as in “I smoke yes” and “your postcard mm hm”, the
answer now applies to the question amended by the preface. This way
the respondent leaves the image intact that was created in the
previous series of questions, in which she indicated that she
sometimes read these two newspapers. By specifying that she did not
read them recently, she can answer negatively without contradicting
her earlier affirmative responses: she does read them sometimes, she
just has not recently.

In the following excerpt, fragment 18, the respondent answers the
question whether he owns or rents his home with a non-conforming
response. Just like some of the cases of section 3 (on expanded type-
conforming answers), the question in this fragment sets up a
dichotomy, offering a choice between the two regular forms of living
arrangements: renting and buying. The respondent does not select
either of those options, but instead offers a description of his
situation.
Fragment 18:

1 IR: .hh are you: >owner of the house in which you live< or is it
2 (0.2)
3 IR: is it a ↓rented hom:e
4 (0.4)
5 IE: → E:h H e-e-w (0.3) I ↑do own a house but e::h I ↑don’t live
6 in an owned ↓house now↓
7 (.)
8 IE: .hh that’s how I’d put it↓
9 (0.8)
10 IR: it’s about j- where you live↓
11 IE: [yes- h]
12 IR: [that is] a rented home↑=

The respondent starts his response turn in line 5 hesitantly. First, he leaves a gap of 0.4 seconds between the question and the onset of his turn. This onset then consists of hesitation markers. After another short silence he formulates his response, starting with “ik heb ↑wel ‘n eigen huis maar e::h ik woon ↑niet” (“I ↑do own a house”). This design projects more talk, because it sets up a contrast with something else through the stress particle “wel”. As there is nothing in the prior turn with which this talk can be contrastive, this can be expected to occur later in the respondent’s talk. It is because of the use of “wel” that the contrast is displayed: “wel” (in this sense) projects “maar niet” (“but not”).

The projected contrasting bit can be found in the next TCU: “maar ik woon niet in een eigen huis nou” (“but I don’t live in an owned house now”). The contrast is signalled by “but” and enhanced by the similarity of the structure of the second TCU to the first:
Ik heb wel ‘n eigen huis
ik woon niet in ‘n eigen huis nou

The verbs “heb” and “woon” are directly contrasted because they feature in the same position in the phrase. This draws attention to the different meaning of the two words. While they do not have opposite meanings, they are presented here as two different and exclusive entities. “Wel” and “niet” are contrasted in the same way: the words are in the same position, and mean opposite things (children’s quarrels often deteriorate into “weltes” versus “nieten”). The construction of the first TCU is retained in the second, showing the contrasting bits even more clearly.

Similar to the answer in fragment 17, this respondent designs his turn as dispreferred. He delays his answer first by leaving a gap before he starts to speak. The answer turn itself contains a pause and hitches. And, as in fragment 17, the respondent sets up a contrast in his turn.

The interviewer’s uptake of the response is congruent with these features. First, the response in lines 5-6 does not get immediate uptake, which signals potential trouble and gives rise to the respondent’s recompletion (“that’s how I’d put it” in line 8). Second, after this recompletion, there is a 0.8 second pause (line 9). The delay may already display that the interviewer treats the respondent’s talk as incomplete. Finally, the interviewer delivers a probe, restating part of the question (line 10). With this probe she treats the respondent’s talk as an insufficient answer and as problematic.

Fragment 19 contains another example of a contrastive response. The question is on how many days this respondent usually listens to the radio. The respondent answers with a description, reporting on her habits. She sets up a contrast within her own turn between her past behaviour and her future behaviour. As it happens, the respondent has bought a radio on the very day of the interview, and claims that she will listen to the radio more often from now on.

Fragment 19:

1 IR: and on >> how many days of the week << do you usually listen
to the radio?
2 IE: → =.HH well until now it was rather bad, (0.3) .klh (.) but eh I eh will
3 mend my ways
4 (0.3)
Again we see design features of a dispreferred turn in the respondent’s answer in lines 3-4. Though she takes the turn as soon as the interviewer has delivered the question, she still delays her answer with an inbreath and the token “nou”. Moreover, what follows is not a recordable answer (“until now it was rather bad”). This description of the past “until now” projects contrastive talk about the present.

After a pause and inbreath, the respondent delivers the projected contrast: “but eh I eh will mend my ways”. Through the conjunction ‘but’ the respondent signals that the following talk is designed to be contrastive to the prior talk. Another way in which the second TCU is designed to contrast with the first, is the tense in which it is formulated. This construction with ‘gaan’ is a present tense, but in combination with an infinitive it is widely used in Dutch to function as a future tense, as it is here. Through this second TCU the respondent has now placed the present tense to be right in the middle of the change she has been describing: she will change old ways, but this has not happened yet.

What she presents as her plan for the future is to “better her life”. This has the same normative tone as her first TCU: her behaviour towards listening to the radio was “bad” and she will “better” herself. Note also that the two concepts “slecht” and “beter” are contrasted very clearly by the fact that they occur in the same, final, position in the utterance.

The second part of the answer is designed to complete the respondent’s turn. Syntactically it is complete. Pragmatic completion is achieved by providing the contrast that was projected in the first TCU. And the gradually falling intonation of the utterance signals
completion as well, especially in contrast to the intonation in the first TCU.

In this case, the interviewer’s uptake of the response is again congruent with this dispreference design. Just like in fragment 18 and to a lesser extent in fragment 17, the uptake by the interviewer is delayed (0.3 second silence in line 5, the respondent’s chuckle in line 6, and another small gap in line 7). When the interviewer eventually takes the turn, she delivers a probe, treating the prior as an insufficient answer.

4.4.3 The influence of design
In the previous two sections we have seen an interesting pattern. Respondents sometimes answer questions without using a type-conforming response. Instead, they describe their situation and leave it to the interviewer to deal with. In §4.4.1 we saw that some of these answers get accepted: the interviewer formulates her understanding of the response and, after the respondent has confirmed the understanding, moves on to the next question. In §4.4.2 we saw that interviewers do more work on other non-conforming answers. They initiate probes or redo the question in some way.

The answers that were followed by such a probe shared a few characteristics. They were all delayed, delivered with hesitations and had a turn-initial “nou”. These are design features of dispreferred turns. Furthermore, all those responses contained a contrast, either in the turn itself, or implied in the turn. The responses in §4.4.1 did not have this design of dispreference, nor did they contain or imply a contrast.

In the following fragment is an interesting case in which the two phenomena mix: the respondent provides something that could be treated as a preferred response in dispreferred format. She provides an expanded answer to the question, and starts out with something that could be treated as those responses in §4.4.1 on acceptable non-conforming answers: the respondent may not exactly repeat one of the answer categories, but her answer is certainly understandable as one. However, she designs her answer like one of the responses in §4.4.2, by which I mean that her turn has features of a dispreferred turn and that it contains a contrast.
Fragment 20:

1 IR: eh can you tell me how much confidence you have in the present government? do you have very much confidence? much confidence? or quite much confidence? or do you have quite little? little or very little confidence?

2 IE: well- I am quite positive about that. I am quite positive about that. my husband also always been in the village politics,

3 IE: that is because my husband also always been in the village politics, and in the big politics they do not do it right. they also do it. according to the people never right according to the people never right. so

4 IR: b→ and how much confidence do you have in the present government?

5 IE: well I have rather some confidence in the present government

6 IR: yes is that very much? much or quite much?

7 IE: well: just much,

8 IR: =m:uch,

9 IE: =m:uch,

10 IR: =m:uch,

11 IE: klnh well- I am quite positive about that. I am quite positive about that. my husband also always been in the village politics,

12 IE: well and eh they never do it right so eh e: not in village politics, -and in the cities, and in the big politics they do- they also do it. eh e: not in village politics, -and in the cities, and in the big politics they do- they also do it. according to the people never right according to the people never right. so

13 IR: b→ you have in the present government?

14 IE: well I have rather some confidence in the present government

15 IR: b→ how much confidence do you have in the present government?

16 IE: well I have rather some confidence in 'm

17 (.)

18 IR: yes is that very much? much or quite much?

19 (0.2)

20 IE: well: just much,

21 IR: =m:uch,

1 IR: eh kunt u mij zeggen hoeveel vertrouwen u heeft in de huidige regering? do you have er: how much confidence? or how much confidence? do you have how much confidence? or how much confidence? do you have how much confidence? or how much confidence? do you have? (0.3)

2 IE: klnh nou- ik denk daar vrij positief over, E:eh

3 IE: dat komt zo omdat me man ook altijd eh in de dorps politiek heef gezeten,

4 IE: in de: politiek heef gezeten,

5 IR: =n:ja,

6 IE: nou en e:ch ze doen 't nooit goed dus eh e: in de dorps politiek niet, -en

7 IE: in de stad niet, en in de grote politiek doe- doen ze 't ook. volgens de mensen nooit goed

8 IE: volgens de mensen nooit goed

9 IR: [en] >hoe veel vertrouwen

10 IR: [en] >hoe veel vertrouwen

11 IR: [en] >hoe veel vertrouwen

12 IR: [en] >hoe veel vertrouwen

13 IR: [en] >hoe veel vertrouwen

14 IR: [en] >hoe veel vertrouwen

15 IE: heeft u in de huidige regering?

16 IE: heeft u in de huidige regering?

17 IE: heeft u in de huidige regering?

18 IR: ja is dat erg veel? veel of vrij veel

19 (0.2)
We can immediately recognise the design features we saw in fragments 17-19, in which the respondents’ talk did not get accepted as an answer. Though the respondent actually delivers something that is recognisable as an answer, she designs her talk as dispreferred. After a gap (in line 5) the respondent starts to answer in a hesitant way, delaying her answer and using the word “well” in turn-initial position (line 6). These two features often preface a turn with a dispreferred content.

The TCU that contains the response to the question is delivered with non-final intonation (transcribed with a comma in the transcript after “about that” in line 6) and the respondent immediately continues speaking. She latches a loud hesitation marker onto that TCU with non-final intonation, giving her strong hold of the floor. She continues her turn with an account for her response (lines 7-8). This account is specked with hesitation markers: ehms, pauses and restarts.

After having expressed her positive stance towards the government, the respondent gives a contrastive statement in lines 11-13: “they never do it right”. It turns out that this is not her own opinion but that of “the people”: “and in the big politics they also do it according to the people never right”. This opinion of the people contrasts with her own positive perception of politicians expressed in line 6. Now we can see the similarities with the fragments in §4.4.2. Just like the response turns in fragments 17, 18 and 19 this respondent has designed her turn as dispreferred, and she has set up a contrast in the turn. While this response differs from those in §4.2 because this respondent actually does produce an answer to the question, they are very similar with respect to their design.

In lines 14 and 15 (at arrows ‘b’), the interviewer probes for a different answer. She repeats nearly the whole question, treating the respondent’s talk as not containing an answer. This is remarkable, because the respondent’s turn started with a clear indication of her attitude towards the government: “I am quite positive about that” (line 6). As I showed in §4.4.1, interviewers accept many non-conforming responses. In fact, in fragment 21 below, taken from a different interview, a similarly imprecise response to the same question is treated very differently. The respondent gives a non-conforming response, saying she has “een beetje” (“a bit of”) confidence in the present government, while the answer categories are ‘very much’, ‘much’, ‘quite much’, ‘quite little’, ‘little’, and ‘very little’. The
interviewer receipts this non-conforming response and then offers the positive side of the scale once more, treating the respondent’s turn as a positive answer.

Fragment 21:

1 IE: ptHH Aw let me just say e- i have a bit of confidence in it.
2 ()
3 IR: yes↑ quite much↑ or much

1 IE: ptHH Ach laat ik maar zeggen e- ik heb er wel een beetje vertrouwen in.
2 ()
3 IR: ja↑ vrij veel↑ of veel

We can now see that some design features of non-conforming responses are associated with acceptance by the interviewer, while others are associated with rejection. Non-conforming responses that contain design features of a dispreferred turn, start with a turn-initial “nou”, and set up some sort of contrast, are usually rejected, while non-conforming responses that do not contain those design features are usually accepted. In other words, the interviewer in fragment 20 responds more to the design of the non-conforming answer than to its content.

4.5 Conclusion

Respondents in standardised survey interviews are required to respond to most questions by selecting one of the answer categories offered in or implied by the question. The assumption is that unexpanded, type-conforming answers provide survey researchers with the most reliable information as such answers do not require the interviewer to do any probing or understanding of the response. This way, no interviewer-error is introduced into the data, and the recorded answers reflect characteristics of that particular respondent only. Survey researchers devote much time and energy to designing questions in such a way that respondents are able to provide such an unexpanded, type-conforming answer.

Most of the time this is precisely what respondents do. But sometimes they offer expanded responses or responses that are not formulated in the terms of any of the answer options. These departures from standardisation vary, and different non-paradigmatic responses have a different impact on the interaction. In this chapter I
discussed minimally expanded type-conforming answers (§4.2), pre- and post-expanded type-conforming answers (§4.3), and responses that do not contain a type-conforming answer at all (§4.4). I organised these actions on a continuum according to how much impact the respondent’s action has on the interaction. Type-conforming responses with a minimal expansion are more compatible with the paradigmatic format than expanded, non-conforming responses with a dispreferred turn-design.

The types of actions that respondents in standardised survey interviews perform in their expanded and non-conforming responses are limited in number. I would like to stress that they certainly do not all work to display trouble answering the question, nor are they all a sign that the question was not designed properly. Expansions may simply arise from the order in which the respondent happens to give his answers, or they may be designed to adjust the meaning of the type-conforming answer to the respondent’s actual situations.

Respondents in standardised survey interviews are usually presented with a choice of answers from a restricted set of categories. Questions with just two answer categories are not unusual (yes/no-questions are abundant in this genre), but even when more than two categories are offered they still restrict the respondent’s freedom of movement. A very mundane consequence of this lack of choice is that respondents may find themselves giving the same answer over and over again. In §4.2.1 I showed that respondents can mark such patterns by inserting a ‘serial extra’ when they give a series of similar responses.

Another consequence of restricted answer options is that none of the options may match the respondent’s particular situation. Though the options may be perfectly mutually exclusive, respondents may still feel that a type-conforming response alone does not properly represent their situation. Such responses go along with the terms of the question, as well as with any presumptions built into that question. In §4.3 we have seen that respondents may expand their type-conforming response to solve dichotomies that are too strict or too wide for their actual circumstances, or to challenge a presumption that does not apply to them.

In the final section of this chapter (§4.4) I discussed respondent turns that do not contain a type-conforming answer at all. In some of these fragments respondents display trouble mapping their behaviour onto one of the categories and instead they offer a reporting. They leave it to the interviewer to gather from the reporting which answer category fits their situation best. Other cases, however, closely
resemble the examples in §4.3, where the respondent shows dissatisfaction with the fit between the applicable answer category and their actual situation. I also showed that non-conforming responses with an ‘unproblematic’ design are treated as more acceptable than those that have design features of a dispreferred action and that invoke a contrast.

This chapter shows that, overwhelmingly, respondents do not expand their type-conforming responses or answer with non-conforming responses because they do not understand the question or the answer options. Respondents give expanded or non-conforming answers when the question and its answer categories are clear, and when it is even clear which of those categories applies to them. Questions like “are you planning to move house in the next twelve months”, “do you ever smoke” or “how many of the past six newspapers have you read” do not cause problems in understanding in themselves. The parameters of the question and the way it needs to be answered are unproblematic. Nor is it problematic for the respondent to retrieve, formulate and deliver an answer to these questions. Instead, when respondents do not simply pick a category but expand their answer, they make an effort to be understood correctly and give an accurate representation of their situation.
Chapter 5  What happens in third position?  
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

5.1 Introduction
While respondents often answer exactly in the terms set by the questionnaire, they sometimes do not do so. Interviewees may provide answers that include an expansion either before or after the type-conforming response. But they may also give an answer that does not contain a type-conforming response at all. Such non-conforming responses can take any shape and contain a range of information that may or may not be pertinent to the question. Those responses pose a difficulty for survey interviewers, who are instructed to handle the respondent’s talk in a standardised way. In such situations, interviewers have to balance the demands of standardisation, with those of obtaining a recordable answer after the respondent failed to provide such an answer. It is the interviewers’ task to clarify precisely what the interviewee’s non-conforming response will amount to, in terms of the answer options provided, while at the same time maintaining the requirement of standardisation.

In the previous chapter I showed that respondents do not always adhere to the ‘rules’ of standardisation. They frequently give answers that deviate somehow from the menu of standardised answer categories. We saw that some of these expanded and non-conforming answers were over-specific, displaying the respondent’s behaviour or attitude more precisely than would have been possible by answering in conformity to the answer options provided. In other cases, the respondent displayed uncertainty about which answer option applied to his situation, supplying the interviewer with a reporting instead.

The fact that some non-conforming and expanded answers are over-specific while others are under-specific, and that in some cases respondents resist the dichotomy the question sets up while in others they negate the question’s presumptions, means that such responses produce different contingencies for the interviewer to deal with. Some responses contain (more than) enough information for the interviewer to infer which answer option applies. We will see that interviewers sometimes treat such informative answers the same way they treat type-conforming answers, by simply accepting them (§5.2). Interviewers treat other informative answers somewhat more
cautiously when they reformulate them in the terms of one of the answer options (§5.3).

Respondents can also give under-informative answers, so that the interviewer needs to probe for more information. An extreme example of this is when the respondent does not give an answer at all. Interviewers respond to interviewees' lengthy silences and hesitations with prompts, explaining a term in the question or reading out the answer options (§5.4). In other cases, the respondent provides an answer which is not specific or informative enough for the interviewer to decide which of the answer categories applies. And, finally, interviewees can respond to a question with an account of a difficulty they have answering. In the latter two situations, interviewees display that they have some problem with the question, in which case survey interviewers may redo the question, re-designing it in such a way that it is responsive to the trouble the interviewee has displayed (§5.5).

This chapter will demonstrate that the question provided in the script is the opening move upon which the next turns are contingent. When respondents do not answer using one of the answer options, it is the interviewer's task to extract a type-conforming answer anyway, either by inference or by probing. I have arranged the sections in this chapter along a continuum that runs from the interviewer's silent acceptance of a response on the one hand, to repeating the question on the other. With every step on this continuum, the interviewer treats the respondent's answer as less complete or fitted.

5.2 Paradigmatic sequences
While this dissertation focuses on expanded question-answer sequences, these are not the norm in standardised survey interviews. Although I have not found one interview that did not contain any expanded sequences, interviewers can mostly restrict themselves to asking questions while respondents simply answer these questions. The resulting paradigmatic sequence is made up of two turns only: question and answer. The third position can be used for a response tokens (see chapter 3).

In this section I will show that there are two kinds of paradigmatic sequences. There are those in which respondents select an answer option and answer with a type-conforming answer (§5.2.1). Interviewers can then enter this answer in their computer and move on to the next question.

But a question-answer sequence can also be paradigmatic when the respondent answers in different terms than one of the categories
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

Even when the response is not formulated as one of the answer options, interviewers can nonetheless accept such a non-conforming response, and move on to the next question without expanding the current question-answer sequence. Interviewers thus treat these answers as acceptable.

5.2.1 Type-conforming answers

In survey interviews respondents often need to choose one of the answer categories offered by the interviewer. Ideally, respondents formulate their answers using the same wording as one of the categories. This way the interviewer can simply tick the corresponding box. By giving a type-conforming answer, the respondent introduces no contingencies for the interviewer to deal with; contingencies that would force him to do something that is not scripted, possibly introducing interviewer error.

My data is full of these unproblematic, paradigmatic sequences. Even when the respondent is offered six answer options to choose from or when the categories are rather complicated phrases, respondents most of the time use one of the scripted categories to respond.

Fragment 1 is an example of this.

Fragment 1:

1 IR: can you tell me <how much confidence you have> in the present
2 ↓government↑ (0.3) you can choose from (0.3) very much↑ (0.4) much,
3 (0.4) quite ↓much, (.) ↓quite little, little or ↑very ↓little↓=
4 IE: → =quite much,
5 (0.7)
6 IR: and what do you think of the development of the general economical
7 situation↓

1 IR: kunt u mij zeggen <hoeveel vertrouwen u heeft> in de huidige
2 regering↑ (0.3) u kunt kiezen uit (0.3) erg veel↑ (0.4) veel,
3 (0.4) vrij ↓veel, (.) ↓vrij weinig, weinig of ↑erg ↓weinig↓=
4 IE: → =vrij veel,
5 (0.7)
6 IR: en wat vindt u van de ontwikkeling van de algemene economische
7 situatie↓
As we can see in line 4, the respondent delivers his answer using the wording of one of the answer categories. This category is not the most recent, but nonetheless he reproduces the formulation used by the interviewer. The interviewer moves on to the next question after a pause of 0.7 seconds, thereby accepting the answer. In this pause, the respondent does not elaborate on his response, with which he treats his own response as acceptable as well.

Something similar happens in the next fragment. Compared to fragment 1, the delivery of this answer is less fluent in that the respondent ‘does thinking’ by leaving silences and by saying “ehm”. However, the answer she subsequently gives in line 8 has the same form as one of the answer categories.

Fragment 2:

1 IR: and where furniture a washing machine, a television, and other
2 durable goods are concerned,=
3 IE: =mm [hm,]
4 IR: do you think that now is >for the people< a favourable
5 or an unfavourable time to make such large purchases=
6 =or neither one nor the other
7 (,)
8 IE: → OY: (0.3) e::hm: (1.9) WELL I think favourable
9 (0.9)
10 IR: and has the financial situation of your household in the last
11 twelve months become better or worse or remained the same

1 IR: en as ’t gaat om meubelen ’n wasmachine; ’n televisie; en andere
2 duurzame artikelen,=
3 IE: =mm [hm,]
4 IR: vindt u dat ’t nu >voor de mensen< ‘n gunstige
5 of ‘n ongunstige tijd is om zulke grote aankopen te doen=
6 =of noch ’t één noch ’t ander
7 (,)
8 IE: → OEI: (0.3) e::hm: (1.9) NOU ik denk gunstig
9 (0.9)
10 IR: en is de laatste twaalf maanden de financiële situatie van uw
11 huishouden beter of slechter geworden of ’tzelfde gebleven

After the respondent has given her answer, the interviewer moves on to ask the next question (line 10-11). By doing this, she displays that she accepts the answer, just like the interviewer in fragment 1. The
hesitation markers the respondent’s talk in line 8 display some possible trouble in answering the question or perhaps uncertainty about the answer. Neither the respondent nor the interviewer treats these possible signs of trouble as grounds for sequence expansion. So, in spite of some uncertainty markers, this is a paradigmatic question-answer sequence.

From these two examples it becomes clear that paradigmatic question-answer sequences are oriented to as the norm by both interviewers and respondents. Respondents make an effort to give a type-conforming answer, and interviewers do not expand sequences when such a type-conforming answer has been offered. In both cases the transition to the next sequence is smooth.

5.2.2 Acceptable non-conforming answers

Clearly, respondents often respond to survey questions with a type-conforming answer, enabling the interviewer to accept their answers and enter them directly into the computer. But even when respondents formulate an answer in different terms than any of the answer categories, interviewers may still accept such a non-conforming response without expanding the question-answer sequence.

In the following fragment we can see an example of such an ‘acceptable answer’. This fragment is of a series of yes/no-questions where the respondent is asked to indicate whether she ever takes part in certain games of chance. The answer categories are ‘yes’ and ‘no’. The respondent answers the first two items of this series with a type-conforming “no” (lines 4 and 7). The third item, however, receives a different type of response (in line 10).

Fragment 3:

1 IR: ↓then a completely different subject↑ how do you yourself ever take part
2 in one of the following ↑games of chance↓ betting on horses?
3 (0.3)
4 IE: n.o.
5 IR: ↓lucky ten↑
6 (0.6)
7 IE: n.o.
8 IR: the scratch lottery;
9 (0.9)
10 IE: → e- hm:: ↑very sporadically, "heheh=
11 IR: =↓toto↑
The sequential run-off of the three question-answer sequences in this fragment is utterly paradigmatic: question, answer, and next question. Neither of the two participants expands the sequences in any way. However, the answer in line 10 is not type-conforming, which in this case means that it is not a “yes” or a “no”.

The answer in line 10 contains enough information for the interviewer to select an answer category. This is apparent from the fact that she does not initiate repair on the answer. Moreover, she is apparently so confident that she will select the right category, that she does not check this with the respondent (e.g. by verbalising her understanding or asking, “is that a yes?”). Instead she moves on to ask the next question (line 11), thereby treating the answer as acceptable.

This makes sense when one considers what types of answers are captured under the generalizing terms ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the question if one ‘at times takes part in’ something. ‘No’ is the overarching category applicable to ‘never’, but probably also to ‘did that last when I was six’ or ‘used to do that but I’ve sworn never to do it again’. For example, if I were asked whether I ever take part in a game of softball, I would answer “no”, even though I did take part on a yearly basis when I was in school, and I might actually take part in one in the future if I just happen to be around, but I do not consider myself someone who takes part in softball.

Similarly, ‘yes’ covers a range of possible answers, ranging from ‘all the time’ to ‘haven’t done that in years but I have been planning to’. Again, if I were asked whether I ever take part in a game of hockey, I would answer ‘yes’, even though the last time I did that was quite a
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while ago and I do not have a next time planned, but I consider myself someone who plays hockey.

As 'yes' and 'no' are the general categories under which all these possible situations can be grouped, we can consider the 'subcategories' as more specific versions of their overarching category. I mean to say, that if the respondent in line 10 had said 'yes', we would not have known what her specific behaviour was: she may take part on a daily basis or only once a year. By telling the interviewer that she takes part "very sporadically" she is more informative than the type-conforming answer on its own would have been. From this, admittedly small, surplus of information, the interviewer easily infers the appropriate answer category (see §4.3.3 in the previous chapter for more on how respondents solve the dichotomies set up by survey questions).

In the next fragment the respondent gives a similarly over-specific answer. A different respondent is asked how many times he has taken part in the State Lottery in the past six months. In a previous series of questions, it has already been established that he sometimes takes part in this lottery. It takes place once a month, so a number between zero and six would constitute a type-conforming answer. Instead the respondent provides an indirect response: "I play every month" (line 7).

Fragment 4:

1 IR: .h well you sometimes take part in the State Lottery↑↓.hh every month
2 IR: there is a ↓lottery↑
3 (.)
4 IR: can you tell me how many times in the past six ↑months
5 you have taken part↓
6 (0.3)
7 IE:→ E:h I play every month,
8 IR: "yes, .hh and do you buy state lottery tickets cash↑

1 IR: .h nou u speelt dus wel es mee in de staatsloterij↑↓.hh elke maand
2 wordt er 'n loterij gehou den↑
3 (.)
4 IR: kunt u mij zeggen hoe vaak u de afgelopen zes ↑maanden
5 heeft ↓meegespeeld↓
6 (0.3)
Again, the question-answer sequence in this excerpt runs off paradigmatically. The interviewer asks a question (line 4-5), the respondent gives an answer (line 7), the interviewer receipts the answer, and she moves on to the next question without delay (line 8). Looking at the formulation of the answer in line 7, it is apparent that the respondent gives more information than the question actually asked for.

The respondent’s answer is informative about more than just the past six months. Note that he does not say that he ‘has played’ every month, but that he ‘plays’ every month, expressing that he has been doing this for some time and will keep doing this for some time to come. The six-month period specified by the interviewer can probably be placed somewhere on that time line, and will by default contain six occasions on which this respondent took part. So now that the interviewer knows more than she has asked for, this surplus of knowledge enables her to infer the answer applicable to her question.

The interviewer, in line 8, receipts the answer with a soft “ja” and goes on to ask the next question. The receipt as well as the next question display clearly that she has accepted the answer. Both respondent and interviewer treat the answer as unproblematic.

The two examples in this section show that paradigmatic question-answer sequences do not necessarily contain a type-conforming answer. Respondents can use their answer slot to convey more information than a type-conforming response would. In these two cases, however, the responses still make clear which answer option applies. As Moore and Maynard (2002: 302) write, these answers strongly implicate an answer category and are “adequate for enabling the interviewer to record an answer”.

5.3 Reformulating the response into answer option

The examples in the previous section showed paradigmatic question-answer sequences in which the interviewer accepted the respondent’s answers. The rest of this chapter is devoted to the ways in which interviewers collaborate with the respondent in order to elicit an acceptable answer after the respondent has given a response that was not adequate. In this section I will show two ways in which interviewers reformulate the inadequate response. In §5.3.1 I will deal
with cases where the interviewer simply gives a reformulation of the
answer. In §5.3.2 I will show more tentative cases in which the
interviewer offers an answer option by asking if that one applies.

5.3.1 The interviewer reformulates the answer

I have found cases related to those in the previous section where the
respondent’s answer is not type-conforming but contains the relevant
information. However, in the next few cases the interviewer
reformulates these responses into the terms of one of the answer
categories, before moving on to the next question. The following
fragment contains an example of such a reformulation. After the
respondent has answered a short series of questions about how much
she hikes, she is now asked if she ever takes part in “hikes organised
by others”.

Fragment 5:

1 IR: a→ .fh do you ever take part in hikes organised by others,
2 such as the four days marches in Nijmegen or something↑
3 (0.5)
4 IE: b→ mm::: well: yes I do walk the local four-day marches here↓
5 that I ↓
6 IR: c→ ↓yes the↑ n:
7 IE: d→ ↓yes
8 IR: .hh and how often in the past twelve months have you ↑cycled↑
9 recreationally

1 IR: a→ .fh neemt u wel eens deel aan door derde partijen georganiseerde
2 wandeltochten, zoals de: Vierdaagse in Nijmegen ofzo↑
3 (0.5)
4 IE: b→ mm::: nou: ja ik loop wel hier de plaatselijke vierdaagse↓
5 dat wel ↑ja ↓
6 IR: c→ ↓ja du↓:
7 IE: d→ ↓ja
8 IR: .hh en hoe vaak heeft u de afgelopen twaalf maanden recreatief
9 ge↑fiets↑

The interviewer asks whether the respondent ever takes part in
organised hikes (arrow ‘a’). In line 2 she adds an example of such an
organised event to the question: the Four-day marches of Nijmegen, a
large and well-known international event. This is a yes/no-question,
which means that ‘yes’ or ‘no’ are type-conforming answers and are thus preferred.

The respondent replies hesitantly to this question. After a pause (line 3) and hesitation markers, she replies that she does take part in a local four-day march, a smaller event that is organised in various towns throughout the Netherlands (at arrow ‘b’, lines 4-5). This answer is not type-conforming: it describes her behaviour and gives the interviewer the opportunity to judge whether that behaviour qualifies for the negative or the positive answer category.

The interviewer’s uptake of the response is in line 6 (at arrow ‘c’):

6 IR: c→ ja du↓: yes so
   yes then:

She reformulates the respondent’s turn into the positive answer category “yes”. She marks the reformulation as a conclusion by adding “dus” (“so”) to it, displaying to the respondent that this answer option is based on what she has just told the interviewer. This differentiates this particular uptake from a receipt or acknowledgement. The interviewer clearly performs an action on the response, showing the respondent that what she has just said translates into this particular answer category.

The respondent confirms this reformulation with “yes” (at arrow ‘d’, line 7). She thus accepts the answer option that the interviewer has selected on her behalf. This closes off this post-sequence, as well as the question-answer sequence it was part of. The interviewer then moves on to ask the next question.

The following fragment contains another example of such a confidently delivered reformulation. This is another question about gambling habits from yet another interview. The interviewer asks how the respondent buys his lottery tickets: cash at a sales point, or automatically through the bank (line 4, at arrow ‘a’). This question sets up a preference for an answer that clearly selects one of these two options, like ‘I buy them at a sales point’, ‘I buy them cash’, or ‘through the bank’.

Fragment 6:

1 IR: e:: State lottery tickets can be bought cash at one of the sales points but one can also take part through giro or bank.
2 IE: =yes↑=
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

We can see the same pattern unfold in this fragment as in fragment 5. The interviewer asks a question (arrow ‘a’, line 4) with two answer options: the respondent either buys his lottery tickets at one of the sales points, or he takes part automatically through the bank. The respondent replies by describing his behaviour (arrow ‘b’, line 6). He answers that he picks up the tickets from the post office. This answer does not explicitly select one category and, therefore, it is not type-conforming. However, it certainly implicates one answer category: the respondent has told the interviewer at which sales point he buys his tickets, thus conveying that the first answer option applies to him.

The interviewer reformulates that answer at arrow ‘c’ (line 8). She does this by simply repeating one of the central words of the first answer option: “cash”. The reformulation is delivered with a falling intonation, which makes it sound definite and not like a question. Note that the intonation is the same as the reformulation in fragment 5 “ja dus:.”

At arrow ‘d’ (line 9), the respondent confirms the understanding the interviewer has offered at arrow ‘c’. He does a clipped “yes”, agreeing with the interviewer’s reformulation. The clipped delivery displays that he is not going to do more than that (Heritage & Sorjonen 1994: 25 and Curl 2002: 79). The respondent’s confirmation closes off the post-sequence as well as the question-answer sequence,
and the interviewer immediately moves on to the next question (line 10).

In fragment 7, interaction follows the same four-step pattern as in the previous two.

a. IR Question
b. IE Response
c. IR Reformulation of prior into answer option
d. IE Confirmation

The question in this fragment is the last of a series of questions about newspapers. The interviewer asks the respondent how many of the latest six issues she has read of newspapers about which she has earlier indicated that she reads them sometimes. Here, she delivers a truncated version of that question in line 1.

Fragment 7:

1. IR: a→ and of a regional ↓paper
2. IE: b→ E:e::h to ↑that I am subscribed= = so I have it every day]
3. IR: c→ ↓[ so all ↓si,jx=]
4. IE: d→ =yes
5. (0.8)
6. IR: aand >which of the following types< of ↑magazines do you read regularly

Newspapers in the Netherlands have six issues a week, because they appear every day except Sundays. It is possible (and rather usual) to take a subscription on one or more newspapers, in which case it is delivered to your house every day that it appears. The respondent, at arrow 'b' (line 2), responds to the question with reference to this custom. Similar to the answer in fragment 4 ("I play every month") this turn describes an ongoing situation. The respondent is subscribed to that newspaper and can be understood to receive it
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

every day, not just on the days targeted by the question. Therefore, the fact that she has read or skimmed all previous six issues is part of a larger pattern instead of the result of a freak week.

At arrow ‘c’ (line 3), the interviewer reformulates the response into one of the answer options: “so all six”. Similar to what we saw in fragment 5, the reformulation is designed as logically following from what the respondent has just said by the turn-initial “so”. And, just like we saw in both fragments 5 and 6, this reformulation is delivered with a falling intonation, making it sound like a definite choice rather than an offer or a question.

Again, the respondent confirms the interviewer’s understanding of her talk at arrow ‘d’ (line 4). With a quick “yes”, this sequence is closed off and the interviewer can presumably tick the applicable answer option. Without further sequence expansion, the interviewer moves on to ask the next question.

The difference between the sequences in this section and those discussed in §5.2.2 on acceptable answers, is the way the interviewer treats the respondent’s answer. While the non-conforming answers in §5.2.2 got accepted, and the interviewer simply moved on to the next question, the question-answer sequences in the present section are expanded with a reformulation-confirmation sequence. The interviewer thus treats the answer as inadequate.

Moore and Maynard (2002) have described these expanded sequences as well. In their article their focus is to what degree interviewers lead respondents to a certain answer. They observe that these reformulations may appear to be leading, but “because the respondents have already indicated [the answer] using other words, proffering that answer option moves to verify it” (Moore & Maynard 2002: 303). Moore and Maynard were even able to observe in their data that the interviewers actually recorded an answer before the respondent had confirmed the reformulation.

Thus, while initiating a reformulation-confirmation sequence displays that the interviewer is less confident about which answer option to select, interviewers are often still confident enough to proffer just one answer option. Moreover, they are so confident that their understanding is correct that they frequently record that answer before the respondent has ratified the reformulation. That is what links them to the fragments in §5.2.2, where the interviewers did not offer an understanding of the non-conforming response. The fragments in the next section differ from those we have seen until now.
on exactly this dimension: we will see that the interviewers deliver their understanding in a more tentative way.

5.3.2 Tentative reformulation

Interviewers do not always deliver reformulations in the confident way we saw in the previous section. They may offer their understanding of the respondent’s answer in a more tentative way. With this, interviewers display some insecurity about whether they should assign this response to that particular answer option.

Fragment 8 contains an example of such a tentative reformulation. The interviewer asks the respondent for which party he voted in the previous national elections. A type-conforming answer to this question consists of the name of a Dutch political party that took part in those elections.

Fragment 8:

1. IR: a→ .hh what party did you vote for ↓at the↓ last ↑parliamentary
2. IE: b→ =for none
   4
3. IR: c→ you did ↑not vote↑ =
4. IE: d→ =no h=
5. IR: =what if today there would be elections for parliament↑ =

The respondent does not give a type-conforming answer. Instead he says, “for none” (arrow ‘b’, line 3). The interviewer subsequently offers a reformulation of that answer: “you did not vote?” (arrow ‘c’, line 5). The respondent confirms this reformulation with “no” (arrow ‘d’, line 6), confirming the interviewer’s negatively framed utterance (Mazeland 1990), and the interviewer moves on to the next question (line 7).

The respondent’s turn is delivered without hesitation or delay. However, as it happens, this is not an adequate response. The
interviewer’s uptake makes this clear. First of all, she does not simply accept the answer and select the appropriate answer category without consulting the respondent, like the fragments in §5.2.2. Instead, the interviewer proffers the respondent a specific answer category, based on the respondent’s turn. But the design of that turn is less confident than the ones we saw in §5.3.1. It is more elaborate, as it contains a predicate and subject, and it has a rising intonation, which gives it the shape of a question.

The less confident design of the reformulation may be due to the less perfect fit between the response and one of the answer categories. This response, “for none”, implicates two answer categories: either this respondent went to vote and left his ballot paper blank, a way of protesting against the political system; or he did not participate in the elections at all. The interviewer offers the latter option, but only in a tentative manner.

In the following fragment, we will see another example of this practice. In response to the question where she would open a savings account, the respondent displays some trouble. After she has explained what her difficulty with the question is, the interviewer formulates the upshot of her talk.

Fragment 9:

1 IR:a→ .h and if you at ↑ this moment↑ wanted to open a savings account=
2 =where would you ↑ do that↓
3 IE:b→ hhhhh E::::::hm↓ YES- that's a bit hard right↑ because a-a-a-g- I- you s-
4 do that very easily at your OWN: b' ank ↑ then tHH↑ BU:T ↓
5 IR: \[↑yes↓\] \[well you ca↓\n
6 IE:b→ y-yes e- that e:h y- right↑ but (0.2) >nowadays< you'd say like
7 >> because the interest is of course rather lо:w↓
8 that you just look a bit ↑ further that your<< nose is long↓=
9 IR: =yes↓=
10 IE: =.hhh [ h so eh ]
11 IR:c→ [>so you could< not] name a spe↑cific bank↑ or \[\]
12 IE:d→ [n.;lo↓]
13 >no↑ n]o↓< not specifically↓ y et
14 IR: \[no↑\]
15 (0.2)
16 IR: a:nd if you >at this mo<ment wanted to open a savings account= 
In this fragment, as well as in fragment 8, the proffered answer option was ‘hidden’. This means that the category exists, even though the interviewer does not read it out to the respondent (see Schuman & Presser 1981 on these hidden categories). They only come to the surface when the respondent implies them. So, while both the ‘don’t know’ option and the ‘did not vote’ option are possible answers, they are not preferred responses to the questions.

The reformulation in fragment 9 (“so you could not name a specific bank or”), at arrow ‘c’) shares some characteristics with the one in fragment 8 (“you did not vote”). These characteristics set them apart from the reformulations in the previous sections. The reformulations in fragments 8 and 9 contain a predicate and subject, they are formulated as a statement, but they have the rising intonation of a question. The word “or” at the end of the reformulation in fragment 9 makes this proffer more tentative, because it leaves open the possibility that the respondent can select another answer category.
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses than the one offered by the interviewer. These categories are not made explicit, but left hanging in the air.

The respondent’s uptake of the reformulation in fragment 9 is somewhat more elaborate than we have seen so far:

12 IE: d→ ⌊n:lo⌋
13 >no< n:lo< not specifically "yet et

She confirms the interviewer’s understanding with “no”. She then strengthens this confirmation by repeating that confirmation twice. Subsequently, she downgrades her response by saying that she does not know “specifically yet,” recycling the word “specifiek” from the interviewer’s reformulation. This elaborate confirmation and reformulation of her own response suggests that the interviewer’s turn is not as direct a representation of the respondent’s original utterance as we saw in the previous fragments. The respondents in fragments 5-8 strongly implicated one of the answer categories, and the interviewer’s reformulation was therefore just a formality. This is evident from their treatment of those reformulations, confirming them with a minimal answer. In this case, the reformulation-confirmation sequence is more than a formality.

The following fragment is a more elaborate example of the same question-answer-reformulation-confirmation pattern. At arrow ‘a’ the interviewer asks her question, followed by the three answer options. The respondent needs to indicate how interesting she finds the puzzle in the magazine that this survey deals with. The answer options are “interesting”, “somewhat interesting” and “if it were not in there I would not miss it either”, so a type-conforming response would have the shape of any of these three options.

Fragment 10:

1 IR:a→ ch what do you think of ↓such a puzzle in every issue↑=
2 =do you find that interesting somewhat interesting↓ or do you say if it
3 were not in there I wouldn’t ↓miss it if↑ther↓
4 IE:b→ [w:ELL I wouldn’t ↓miss it if↑ther↓]
5 IR: [(doubt↓)]
6 IE:b→ but my husband perhaps would because he reads it mo- he ↑does it
7 mostly s(h)o heh heh↑
8 ↑Hh↑ for him it’s ↓nice if its if(h)n the(h):re↑[.h]h=
9 IR:c→ [(hm)] ["well"]
From Text to Talk

10 =shall we then just say somewhat interesting↑ =
11 IE:d → y:ea↓ somewhat that’s a ↓go↑ od one →
12 IR: [because if ↑ you don’t do it↑]
13 perhaps your ↓ husband will↓ =
14 IE: = t YES
15 IR: hh on page eighty two there’s information about the next

At arrow ‘b’ (line 4) the respondent starts with a type-conforming response: “well, I wouldn’t miss it”, but she immediately goes on to contrast this response with another possible answer: in contrast to herself, her husband might miss the puzzle (lines 6-8). The respondent has thus offered the interviewer two possible answers: the puzzle is not interesting for herself, but it is interesting for someone else.

The interviewer offers a solution for this problem (arrow ‘c’, lines 9-10). She proffers the middle answer category “somewhat interesting”. Her proffer is formulated in the interrogative mode and has a rising intonation that corresponds with that mode. It is also designed explicitly as a solution: with “shall we say” the interviewer approaches this dilemma as something they can solve together.

The respondent immediately confirms this proffer with “yes” (arrow ‘d’, line 11). She then repeats the salient part of the proffered answer option (“somewhat”) and positively evaluates that option with “that’s a good one”. With this expansion of her confirmation, the respondent treats the proffered option as new, as something the interviewer came up with, rather than as a reformulation of what she had already said.
in her initial response. This is similar to the respondent’s uptake in fragment 9.

A final example of this same pattern can be found in fragment 11. The question to be answered in this excerpt is on how many days of the week the respondent watches television. Instead of giving a number, the respondent describes her habits (lines 6+8, arrows 'b'). The interviewer subsequently asks her if one specific answer option would apply to her, basing the choice of that option on the information just provided by the respondent.

Fragment 11:

1 IR: "and" do you ever watch teevee↓
2 (0.2)
3 IE: ehy:e:s,
4 IR: a→ >and on how many days< of the week is that ↓usually↓
5 (.)
6 IE: b→ e:::hm: w:ec:ll (.) H .tlk YES it is often on
7 but I don‘t al ways watch↓ but tha’s↑
8 IR: ↓you need↓
9 IE: b→ usually the thing when you're home alone
10 ↓then e:h↓(then↓ you go like)↑
11 IR: c→ ↓but do you watch a↓
12 little every↓day↑ or↓
13 IE: d→ ↓yes↓
14 IR: ↓yes↓
15 (0.4) ((tik tik))
16 IE: = and ↓d‘you listen↓
17 IR: =m- ↓think ↓al- so- YES- just about "yes"=
18 IR: =do you ever listen to the radio:↓

1 IR: "en" kijkt u wel eens teevee↓
2 (0.2)
3 IE: ehya:,
4 IR: a→ >en op hoeveel da<gen van de week is dat ge↓woonlijk↓
5 (.)
6 IE: b→ e:::hm: n:ac:u (.) H .tlk JA hij staat vaak aan
7 maar ik kijk niet al ↑tijd↓ maar das↓
8 IR: ↓"j:a↓↓ "t hoeft ↓
9 IE: b→ meestal ↑t punt he↓ als je alleen thuis ben
10 ↓dan e:h↓ (dan↓ heb je zoiets van↓)
Similar to fragments 9 and 10, the respondent’s answer to this question (arrows ‘b’) is once again shaped as a contrast: the television is often on, but the respondent does not always watch it. So instead of responding with a type-conforming answer (a number of days a week), the respondent gives a description of her behaviour. One that shows how providing an answer to the question may be problematic.

The interviewer then proffers one of the answer categories in the shape of a question (arrow ‘c’, lines 11-12). This proffer shows her understanding of the response that has just been provided, but its design is very tentative, leaving open the possibility that the proffered answer option might not apply to this respondent after all. Its tentativeness is apparent in its interrogative format and the clearly rising pitch. Also, after the completion of this turn-constructional unit (TCU), the interviewer adds “or”, implying that the respondent has a choice of other answer options, but without listing them.

The respondent immediately confirms the interviewer’s understanding with a loud “yes” (arrow ‘d’, line 13). This confirmation is expanded by a clearer affiliation with the answer option: “that I do yes yes”. This expanded confirmation of the answer option displays that the respondent did not already say as much in her first attempted response, just like in fragments 9 and 10.

The pattern that became visible in the previous section is strengthened by the examples here. I will repeat the four parts of the pattern here, adding some information.

a. IR Question
b. IE Response
c. IR Proffer of answer option (understanding of prior / reformulation of prior / reformulation into answer option)
d. IE Confirmation (plus affirmation)
The interviewers ask a question, to which the respondents react with a description of their behaviour or their situation instead of with a type-conforming response. The interviewers then reformulate that response into one of the answer options and proffer it to the respondent for confirmation. Some of these reformulations have a very confident design and delivery, while the design and delivery of others is more tentative. The degree of confidence or tentativeness depends on how well the respondent’s description fits one of the answer options. The respondents then take the turn to confirm this understanding of their answer. Respondents sometimes elaborate this confirmation with a more active affirmation of the suggested answer option, repeating the answer option or repeating their confirming response.

Now, interviewers do not always proffer the correct answer option to their respondents. In the following fragment the interviewer asks the respondent to indicate the reason for not planning to take a course (arrow ‘a’, lines 1-2). This is an interviewer-coded question, which means that the interviewer does not give a list of reasons, though she has such a list available. So, instead of choosing from a list of answer options, the respondent needs to formulate her own answer. The interviewer then needs to map that answer onto one of the pre-formulated answer options.

At arrow ‘b1’ (lines 4-5), the respondent gives her reason for not planning to take part in a course or education. Her response is quite unclear and general, and she refers back to something she has said earlier in the interview. At arrow ‘c1’ (line 7) the interviewer reformulates the response into one of answer options.

Fragment 12:

1 IR:a→ >so you are not< planning to take a course or
2    education ↓anytime soon↑ .hh can you tell me ↑why noT↓
3    (0.7)
4 IE:b1→ E:h ↑well for the ↑reasons I ↑mentioned >earlier because<
5    you’re al already involved ↓in h (.) all sorts of things↑
6    and- *hh* E:h experience (. ) ↓usually,. (.)is is ↑most↑ important↑
7    (0.4)
8 IR:c1→ ↓myes so you say again e-e:h >>actually<< I can’t leave home
9    because of the children↓
10    (.)
11 IR:  °.hhh
From Text to Talk

12 (0.2)
13 IR: > or do you [say like well]
14 IE:X→ e-E: ↑ WELL- that is by now no longer relevant
15 b2→ but you [are] already in so: many things
16 IR: [yes]
17 IE:b2→ with which you ↑ gained ↓ experience ↓ > that you gained by eh=
18 IR: =yes,=
19 IE: =.hh Other,
20 (0.4)
21 IR: yes,
22 (0.3)
23 IR:c2→ .hh could I eh could we describe it like I have ↑ nicer activities
24 then following a >> course or ↑ education ↓ <<
25 (.).
26 IE:d→ ↑ I ↓ thought ↑ so ↓ yes [you] can call it that,
27 IR: [yes ]
28 (.).
29 IR: yes, .hh you have just told me > that within the next few years

1 IR:a→ > u bent niet< van plan binnen > afzienbare tijd dus een< cursus of
2 opleiding te gaan ↓ volgen↑ .hh kunt u mij zeggen waarom↑ nieT↓
3 (0.7)
4 IE:b1→ E:h ↑ nou om eerder ge↑ noemde ↑ redenen omdat<
5 je dus al al be↑ gaan bent ↓ met h(.) allerhande dingen↑
6 en- .hh E:h ervaring (. ) ↓ meestal, (. ) ut ut ↑ hoogste↑ telt↑
7 (0.4)
8 IR:c1→ ↓ mja dus u zegt weger e-e:h >> eigenlijk<< ik kan niet van huis
9 vanwege 't gezin↓
10 (.).
11 IR: ..hh
12 (0.2)
13 IR: > of zegt [u van nou]
14 IE:X→ e-E: ↑ NOUW- dat is dus inmiddels achterhald
15 b2→ maar je [zit] al in zo: veel ↓ dinge
16 IR: [ja ]
17 IE:b2→ waar je ervaring mee ↑ op ↓ heb gedaan↓ > wat je op heb gedaan door eh=
18 IR: =ja,=
19 IE: =.hh Andere,
20 (0.4)
21 IR: ja,
22 (0.3)
23 IR:c2→ HH zou ik eh zouden we 't kunnen omschrijven van ik heb ↑ leuker
24 bezigheden dan 't volgen van 'n >> cursus of ↑ op↓ leiding ↑ <<
25 (.).
The interviewer’s reformulation does not match the respondent’s answer very well. It is positioned as responsive to the respondent’s “experience, usually, is most important” (line 6), summing it up as “I can’t leave the home because of the children” (line 8-9). As it happens, this is the answer the respondent gave to an earlier question (not in this fragment), asking the respondent why she did not take any courses in the past five years. The interviewer has thus picked up on the respondent’s “reasons I mentioned earlier” (line 4), though she reaches back to a different earlier statement than the one invoked by the respondent.

The respondent does not immediately confirm the reformulation proffered by the interviewer. In lines 10-12 she does not take the turn, even though the interviewer’s reformulation makes a confirmation relevant. The respondent withholds talk for nearly a full second, a length of time conversationalists orient to as a signal for interactional trouble (Jefferson 1989). At this point, the interviewer takes the turn again (line 13) with what could be the beginning of another answer option, or perhaps a more open recompletion of her own turn in lines 8-9: “or do you say like well” (comparable to the trailing off “or” in fragments 9 and 11).

In overlap with this turn, the respondent starts the rejection of the interviewer’s reformulation (arrow ‘X’ at line 14). She says that that answer option no longer applies, after which she goes on to provide a further response to the question. With the reformulation rejected, the question-answer sequence has not yet been completed. In lines 15-26 the respondent and interviewer go through a second round of answer (arrows ‘b2’ at line 15 -17), reformulation (arrow ‘c2’, lines 23-24) and this time confirmation (arrow ‘d’, line 26). After this second reformulation-confirmation sequence has been completed, the interviewer moves on to the next question (line 29).

The interaction in lines 8-14 of fragment 12 shows a few things. First, a confirmation of a tentative reformulation is oriented to as necessary by the interviewer before she can move on to the next question. Second, the absence of such a confirmation is taken to be an implicit rejection of the reformulation, which makes it relevant for the interviewer to supply a different understanding, or prompt the respondent for more information. And third, rejecting the
reformulation is oriented to as dispreferred, as we can see from the delayed and hesitant delivery of the rejection, and the account that accompanies it.

5.4 Prompts
Interviewers in standardised survey interviews are sometimes confronted with non-responses: after the interviewer has read out the question, the interviewer stays silent, says ‘ehm’, or hesitantly repeats a portion of the question. When this happens, interviewers can prompt the respondent for an answer. The term ‘prompting’ is especially appropriate here, because it is reminiscent of an actor on stage who has lost his line and is assisted by a ‘prompter’ providing him with the next words. Like the actor on the stage, the respondent falls silent and receives a prompt from the interviewer.

Prompts are different from the reformulations we saw in the previous section. Those give an understanding of the prior talk, reformulating that talk into one of the answer options, asking the respondent for no more than a confirmation of this understanding. As soon as the respondent has given that confirmation, the interviewer can go on to ask the next question. These reformulations treat the response as inadequate, but nonetheless informative enough to base the reformulation on.

A prompt, however, is an extension of the question, only separated from the original question by the respondent’s silence or hesitation. It pushes for a first response to the question. The preferred next action is not a confirmation, as with reformulations, but a type-conforming response to the survey question.

In the previous section I have shown that interviewers formulate their third position to fit the respondent’s immediately prior turn. They proffer an answer option based on the information provided by the respondent. But when interviewers have very little to go by, they still attempt to fit a prompt or reparative action to the context.

Pomerantz (1984b) has described this practice for mundane conversation. When the recipient of a turn fails to take the floor at a transition relevance point, the speaker of that turn will try to make sense of the recipient’s reasons for withholding talk. Pomerantz (1984b) found that speakers orient to three possible reasons for such a failure to take the turn. The recipient may not have understood the prior turn, the recipient may lack knowledge that the speaker assumed was shared, or the recipient may not support the speaker’s assertion. The speaker of the problematic turn may attempt to solve
one of these three problems, by providing a clarification, providing the piece of information that may not have been shared, or by changing the position asserted in the problematic turn.

Schaeffer and Maynard (2002: 273) describe interviewers’ reparative actions after a delay from the respondent as a pre-emptive probe or ‘preprobe’.

“[… T]he interviewer’s preprobe routinely displays some diagnosis of where the reason for the delay might lie. The proposals the interviewers make in the preprobes we have examined include problems in comprehension or interpretation, in retrieval of information from memory, and in mapping an answer onto the response categories.”

(Schaeffer & Maynard 2002: 274)

Thus, in order to infer the recipient’s reason for withholding talk, the speaker may take the recipient’s perspective, so that he can discover what action he can take to elicit a response after all. Since the site where one usually finds the understanding of the prior turn is left blank, the speaker of the problematic turn will have to track back to see where the problem might originate.

In my data I found that interviewers have three strategies for dealing with the respondent’s non-response. First, I will show several examples of interviewers clarifying aspects of the question in order to assist the respondent in the answering process. The second strategy for dealing with the respondent’s silence consists of reading out the answer categories. A third strategy relies on information the respondent has provided in previous responses: interviewers prompt respondents by offering them the answer option that is similar to an earlier answer provided by the respondent. With those prompts, the interviewer displays sensitivity to the contingencies of the respondent’s behaviour that spans more than the question-answer sequence in which they occur.

In the following three fragments the respondents display trouble answering the question. After the interviewer has finished reading out the question, all these respondents leave a silence (line 5 in fragment 13, line 4 in fragment 14, line 2 in fragment 15). Then they all do a long “ehm”, indicating hesitation or trouble. In all three fragments, it is the interviewer who speaks next.
Fragment 13:

1 IR: *now of the general daily six issues come out per week*
2 (0.5)
3 IR:a→ how many of the last six issues of the general daily did you read or skim
4 b→ (0.4)
5 IE:b→ c::h=
6 IR:c→ =so of the past six days
7 (0.2)
8 IE:d→ hn: *three*
9 (1.1)
10 IE: (joa h)=
11 IR: *how many of the last six of the financial daily*

Fragment 14:

1 IR: *how often in the past twelve months have you cycled* <recreationally> in the Netherlands (0.4) where the starting point wasn’t your home address but first- but you first traveled a distance with transportation =
2 (0.5)
3 IE:b→ c::hm:
4 (0.2)
5 IR:c→ it does not just need to be about one of the cycle tours of (title)
6 (right )= also [*] NO:
7 IE:d→ [NO]: okay YES- _h_ let’s see < YES I bike a lot
8 to work and such, Heh. _h_ but that doesn’t count [ ]
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

1. IR:a→ “ja ↑.h hoe vaak heeft u de afgelopen twaalf maanden
2. <recreatief>in Nederland gefietst (0.4) waarbij het startpunt niet
3. 't woonadres was maar eers (0.4) maar u eerst met vervoer een afstand
4. moest overbruggen↓
5. b→ (0.5)
6. IE:b→ c:::hm:
7. (0.2)
8. IR:c→ het hoeft ↑niet alleen over fiestochten van ↓(title)) te gaan↓ he↑=
9. =ook [ (*) ]
10. IE:d→ [NEE:] okee↓ JA- .hhee kijke< JA ik ik fiets heel veel
11. naar me werk enzo, Heh .h maar dat ↑[ mag nie meetelle ↑]

Fragment 15:

1. IR:a→ and have you also done tours from ((title)) number one↑
2. b→ (1.4)
3. IE:b→ °.hhh° ↑c:::h[m]
4. IR:c→ ↓ o,↑febru↓ary two thousand four↑
5. (1.3)
6. IE:d→ mno I don’t ↑think so↓
7. (1.1) ((tik tik))
8. IR: since early two thousand four ((title)) has changed considerably,

After the respondent’s hesitation, the interviewers take the turn in order to clarify part of the question (at arrow ‘c’ in all three fragments). In fragment 13 (“so of the past six days”, line 7), the interviewer rephrases the entity ‘issues’ to its equivalent in ‘days’. The clarification in fragment 14 deals with the definition of ‘cycling recreationally’: the respondent does not need to limit herself to tours from the particular magazine this survey deals with (line 8). And in fragment 15 the term “number one” gets unpacked by giving the date of its release (“of February 2004”, line 4).
In all three fragments, the respondents do not give any other indication about the reason for their hesitation. They simply display that they have some trouble getting to an answer, and the interviewer offers a potential solution to whatever might be the cause of that trouble. The extra information the interviewers in fragments 14 and 15 offer is scripted: they read out information that the questionnaire offers as optional.

The outcome of these three sequences is different. In fragments 13 and 15 the respondents answer the question after the prompt (at arrow 'd' in these fragments). Whether or not the prompt helped them arrive at that answer is not visible from their answers. What we can see, however, is that they do not design their answer as dispreferred. Though they hesitate somewhat, they deliver their answers without further ado.

In fragment 14, however, the interviewer’s prompt did not help the respondent to get to an answer to the question. At arrow ‘d’ (lines 10-11), the respondent takes the turn without delay, but she then hesitates profusely: “no okay yes .hh let’s see yes”. She then gives an account for her hesitation: her cycling to work cannot count as an answer for this question. This response to the prompt is thus designed as dispreferred.

These examples demonstrate that survey interviewers take silences and hesitation markers to mean that the respondent has trouble in answering the question. Without any clues as to what kind of trouble the respondent is experiencing, the interviewer offers a possible solution, prompting the respondent to answer. The preferred response to this prompt is an answer to the original question. So we get the following pattern:

a. IR Question
b. IE Non-response: silence + hesitation marker
c. IR Prompt: clarifying a term in the question
d. IE Answer

These prompts can have different shapes. In fragments 13, 14 and 15 the interviewer clarified an aspect of the question: “issues” was replaced by “days”, “cycling recreationally” was explained to include any cycling tours, not just those from the magazine, and “issue number one” was clarified with its date of publication.

Another way to prompt a respondent who has not responded to the question yet, is by offering the answer options to the question. We can see examples of this in the following two fragments. The pattern that
emerges from these fragments is the following. The interviewer asks the question (arrow ‘a’), the respondent does not take the turn and a silence results (arrow ‘b’). The interviewer subsequently provides the respondent with all the answer options (arrow ‘c’), after which the respondent answers the question (arrow ‘d’).

Fragment 16:

1 IR: a → hh within how many days of receiving it
2 do you usually first look through (title)
3 b → (1.4)
4 IR: c → is that e- mostly a day a- it was received= =wi thin (a day of)
5 IE:
6 IR: c → receiving or do you say well .h only after a week (tag) because
7 all the magazines arr(h)ive at the same time (smiley voice)
8 (0.2)
9 IE: d → y:ES- well: mostly eh I quickly look through it e:h something like
10 IR:
11 IE: d → around the day [of re]ceiving
12 IR: 
13 (0.4)
14 IR: 
15 IE: yes=
16 IR: =h then I would now like to ask you a few questions about

1 IR: a → hh binnen hoeveel dagen na ontvangst
2 kijkt u over ‘t algemeen (title) voor ‘t eerst in
3 b → (1.4)
4 IR: c → is dat e- meestal ‘n dag na ontvangst= =binnen (een dag na)
5 IE:
6 IR: c → ontvangst of zegt u nou .h pas na ‘n week hoor want
7 alle tijdschriften k(h)omen allemaal tegelijk (smiley voice)
8 (0.2)
9 IE: d → j:A- nou: meestal eh kijk ik ‘m vluchtig e:h zo’n beetje
10 IR:
11 IE: d → rond de dag [van on]vangst door=
12 IR:
13 (0.4)
14 IR: 
15 IE: ja==
16 IR: =h dan wil ik nu ‘n aantal vragen stellen over
Fragment 17:

1 IR: and the hiking tour story ((title of item))↑
2  (0.3)
3 IE: no nei↑
4 IR: ↑ n.o↑ not planning to read either (.)
5 a→ an: on page twenty one the column e:h ((title of item))↑
6 b→ (0.8)
7 IR: c→ read of still planning to or ↑not planning to↑
8  (0.3)
9 IE: d→ .hhhh ↑e::h eh eh eh↓ let's see right well- no- not e[h]↑ HH
10 IR: ↓
11 IR: ↑o(h)kay I understand= =and page twenty two and twenty five↑

1 IR: en het wandelrouteverhaal ((title of item))↑
2  (0.3)
3 IE: nee oo k niet↓
4 IR: ↑ n.e↑ ook niet van plan te leze (.)
5 a→ en: op pagina eentwintig de rubriek e:h ((title of item))↑
6 b→ (0.8)
7 IR: c→ gelezen of nog van plan of ↑niet van plan↑
8  (0.3)
9 IE: d→ .hhhh ↑e::h eh eh eh↓ even kijken hoor hh no- nee- niet e[h]↑ HH
10 IR: ↓
11 IR: ↑o(h)kee dat begrijp ik= =en pagina tweeëntwintig en vijventwintig↑

In fragment 16 a particularly long silence develops (1.4 seconds at arrow ‘b’, line 3) after the interviewer as finished reading the question. The maximum of one-second silence is well exceeded and, as the next relevant action is an answer by the respondent, this gap is a clear signal of trouble. The question asks for the number of days that it takes the respondent to have a first look at the magazine that this survey is about. The interviewer has at first left the answer options implicit, but after 1.4 seconds of silence, in which a response is noticeably absent, she reads them out (arrows ‘c’, lines 4-7).

Fragment 17 is part of a long series of questions about different items and articles in the magazine. The respondent needs to indicate for each item whether she has already read it, is planning to read it, or is not planning to read it. The answer options are the same for each item in the series and are thus very predictable. We can see that in the first question-answer sequence in this fragment, in which the
interviewer did not list the answer categories, the respondent answers
the question after a 0.3 second gap (lines 1-3).

The second question-answer sequence in this fragment (lines 5-11)
runs a somewhat different course. After the interviewer has read out
the question, the respondent does not take the turn for 0.8 seconds
(at arrow 'b', line 6). The interviewer subsequently prompts the
respondent by repeating the answer options (arrow 'c', line 7). After a
short gap (line 8) the respondent takes the turn, and hesitantly
delivers an answer to the question (arrow ‘d’, line 9).

So the pattern in these sequences is as follows:

a. IR Question
b. IE Non-response: silence
c. IR Prompt: all answer options
d. IE Answer

In the sequences that we have seen the respondents’ non-response
merely indicates trouble, but not what kind of trouble they have that
keeps them from answering the question. However, sometimes the
interviewer has more information to go on. In the following two
examples, the respondents do not indicate what kind of trouble they
are experiencing either. But now the interviewer can base her prompt
on the respondent’s talk in a prior sequence.

These interviewers prompt the respondent by proposing a
candidate answer. This candidate answer is based on the respondent’s
answer to an earlier, related question. When confronted with silence
from the respondent, the interviewer reaches back for that earlier
answer and proffers it to the respondent. In the following two
transcripts, I have included the earlier sequence on which the
interviewer bases the candidate answer (arrow ‘z’). The candidate
answer in the subsequent sequence is indicated with arrow ‘d’.

Fragment 18:

1 IR: .h and if you at ↑this moment↑ wanted to open a savings account=
2 =where would you ↑do that↓
3
4 (left out 10 lines)
5 6 IR: z→ >so you could< not name a specific bank↑ [or]
7 IE: z→ [n:lo↓]
8 >not specifically ‘yet
And if you at this moment wanted to open a savings account = with which bank or institution would you certainly not do that?

Certainly not.

If you know that:

No, I do not know.

And if you at this moment a savings account would you certainly not do that?

Certainly not.

As you listed the Postbank which names of saving forms and:

The Postbank.

Have you read or skimmed the Large magazine yet or have you only just leafed through it quickly?

Have you skimmed the tour booklet or also only just leafed through it quickly?

Can you indicate why you did not read ((title)) number.
The interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses

Again, arrows a-d indicate the four parts of the expanded question-answer sequence. In these cases, the four parts look like this:

a. IR Question
b. IE Non-response: hesitation / silence
c. IR Prompt: a candidate answer
d. IE Answer: repeat of the suggested answer option

Just like in the previous cases, the respondents’ non-responses do not reveal what kind of trouble they are experiencing. But in both these cases the interviewer gives a different kind of prompt than we have seen thus far: they offer one answer option. We have seen interviewers offer a specific answer option in the previous section on reformulations. In those cases they rephrased the respondent’s talk into one of the answer options and proffered it for confirmation. Here, however, the proffered option is not a reformulation of the respondent’s talk.

Instead, the interviewers base their proffer on the answer to the previous question-answer sequence. When we look at the first lines of fragments 18 and 19 we can see that the preceding question-answer sequences are related to the sequences under analysis. In fragment 18 the interviewer first asks at which bank the respondent would open a savings account, and then at which bank the respondent would not open a savings account. In fragment 19 the interviewer first asks whether the respondent has “read or skimmed” the large magazine,
after which she asks the same question about the accompanying tour booklet.

I have marked the answer to the first question with arrow ‘z’. In fragment 18 the answer is a ‘don’t know’ response (see fragment 9 in this chapter to see how this answer came about). In fragment 19 the answer to the first question is “only just leafed through it quickly”. These are exactly the answer options that the interviewer proffers in the next sequence.

Now it becomes clear that the interviewer uses the answer to the previous question to formulate a prompt in the present question-answer sequence. And this makes perfect sense: when a respondent has trouble naming a bank with which to open a savings account, she will probably have trouble saying with which bank she would not open such an account. And when a respondent has only leafed through one part of the publication, chances are that she did the same with the other part of the publication.

All the sequences in this section share a pattern. The respondent does not answer the question but stays silent, does a hesitation marker, or expresses trouble of some unspecified kind. The interviewer then takes the turn and prompts the respondent in some way. After the prompt, the respondent’s preferred next action is to give an answer to the question.

The prompts do not all have the same shape. I found three types in my data: unpacking a term in the question, listing the answer options, and proffering one answer option based on the previous sequence. But all these prompts create a new transition-relevance point after the respondent has failed to supply a response in the designated slot. And they all ask for an answer to the question, not a confirmation.

Interviewers can use reformulations after the respondent gives a response that is informative enough to implicate one of the answer options, but that is not formulated as one of the answer options. Prompts, on the other hand, are used after an uninformative response or a non-response. They are an expansion of the question, and are sometimes shaped as such. The prompts in fragments 15 (“of February two thousand four”), 18 (“if you know that”), and 19 (“or also only just leafed through it quickly”) are shaped as increments, leaning heavily on the grammatical structure of the initial question.
5.5 The interviewer redoes the question

I have so far discussed three ways in which interviewers deal with non-conforming responses. In §5.2.2 we saw that such answers sometimes simply get accepted. In §5.3 I discussed how interviewers can reformulate non-conforming responses into one of the answer options, and proffer that option to the respondent for confirmation. And in §5.4 we saw interviewers prompt their respondents for an answer after they did not provide a response in the initial answer slot. They do this by unpacking a term in the question, listing the answer options, or proffering one answer option based on a previous sequence.

In the last section of this chapter I will explore a fourth way in which interviewers deal with non-conforming responses: redoing the question in some fashion. Surveys are based on standardised interviewing methods. Each respondent is supposed to get the same stimulus, which means that the interviewers should not vary the wording of questions across respondents. For standardisation purposes, it is recommended that the interviewer repeat the question, offering it to the respondent in the same form as the original, without introducing any terms that were not in that original question (Fowler & Mangione 1990, Moore & Maynard 2002). Fowler and Mangione (1990: 38) add that the interviewer can stress those parts of the question that the respondent missed in the first reading.

These redoings can be classified as a type of third-position self-repair. Third-position repair is associated with misunderstanding displayed in second position by the recipient of the turn in first position (Schegloff 1987, 1992). By responding to a first turn, speakers display their understanding of that talk, and make this understanding available for the original speaker. The original speaker can now check whether his turn was heard and understood correctly and, if necessary, initiate repair. When the speaker of the utterance in first position initiates repair on his own turn in third position, based on what his co-participant has said in second position, this is called third-position repair (Schegloff 1992).

The standardised way of doing a third position repair, is a clearer repeat (Schegloff 1992: 1310): simply saying the same words in a prosodically different manner. Indeed, we find those in survey interviews and I will discuss them in §5.5.1. More often, however, interviewers leave out parts of the original wording of the question or rephrase it slightly (see §5.5.2). And thirdly, interviewers sometimes adjust the redoing of the question more drastically to the respondent’s
talk by *adding* words or phrases to the question, referencing to the respondent’s talk. We will see that these three types of redoings are all built to be responsive to the respondent’s talk in the answer slot, though perhaps to different degrees.

5.5.1 Different representation of the same words

The most standardised way to redo a question is by simply repeating it exactly. It is also the least responsive to the respondent’s talk in the answer slot. While reformulating the response or adjusting the wording of the question to the characteristics of that response obviously takes that response into account, an exact repeat can make it seem as if that response never happened.

Exact repeats are very rare in my data corpus. Most redoings are either a partial repeat (see §5.5.2) or they contain extra items that are responsive to the respondent’s talk in the answer slot (see §5.5.3). But, as we will see in this section, even verbatim repeats are built to be responsive to the respondent’s talk.

The following fragment contains such a repeat. This is a sequence from early on in the interaction, before the interview has actually started. The interviewer has established how many persons live in the household that she has called, and the computer has selected which family member should be interviewed: the “female head of the family”. At arrow 1 the interviewer attempts to establish that she is speaking to that person.

Fragment 20: ¹

```
1  IR: ↓okay, I would like to do the interview with you please=
2     a→ =↑you are the female↑↓head of the family I assume↓
3       (0.3)
4  IE: b→ .H YΕ:S I also have a husband ↓right,
5       (0.2)
6  IR: c→ ↓yes↑ but (0.2) ↑you are the female head of the family↑
7     on my ⎜computer eh ⎟
8  IE: d→ [YE:S YΕeς↓]
9       >hyes yes<< [heheh]
10 IR: ↓okay...↓ in that case I would like to
11 ask you the questions↓=
```

¹ The third position repair in this example, as well as those in the examples still to come, are not built up of the same four components as those described by Schegloff 1992. Whether this is a product of the data being in Dutch, or of them being standardised survey interviews, needs more research.
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The respondent starts her response (at arrow ‘b’, line 4) with a loud, stretched “ja”. It is uncertain if she means this as a positive answer to the question, or as an introduction to the negating statement that follows it. “A ‘ja’ may be used as an acknowledgement token, or to agree with the prior speaker. It may also be used as the beginning and the postponement of a non-agreeing action. In Anglo-Saxon conversations, “well” would be used in such a case (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1996). In this example, the “ja” is indeed followed by a non-agreeing statement: “I also have a husband right”. This respondent apparently resists the description of herself as “head of the family”.

At arrow ‘c’ (line 6-7), the interviewer redoes the question: “you are the female head of the family?” The words and word order are the same as in the original question at arrow ‘a’, though it is enclosed in different items. I will repeat the two versions here:

```
2 IR: ↓okee, ik zou ‘t gesprek graag met u wille voeren=
3 a→ =↑u bent ‘t vrouwelijk↑ ge↓zinshoofd neem ik ik↓
(0.3)
4 IE: b→ .H JA: ik heb ook nog ‘n man ↓he;
5 (0.2)
6 IR: c→ ↓ja↑ maar (0.2) ↑u bent ‘t vrouwelijk gezinshoofd↑
7 op mijn ↑computer eh]
8 IE: d→ ↓JA:JAa↓
9 >hjaja<↑ heheh ]
10 IR: ↓ okee..., in dat geval zou ik graag
11 de vra↓gen aan u willen stellen↓=
```

Though lexically the second version of the question is the same as the first, prosodically it is different. We can see from the arrows up and down in the transcript that in the first version the pitch drops from high to low at the word group “head of the family” (“gezinshoofd”). The pitch then stays low. In the second version, the interviewer’s pitch stays high throughout the question, and rises a little more at the very end, giving the turn a questioning intonation.

The result of this prosodic variation is that in the first version, the word group “head of the family” is prominent in the question. In the second version, on the other hand, the even pitch across the question
causes the larger word group “female head of the family” to sound more cohesive, so that “head of the family” no longer stands out.

Lexically, then, this redoing is not responsive to the respondent’s talk. The wording of the question is not adjusted to the respondent’s turn. However, prosodically the two versions are not identical. The interviewer adjusts the pitch of the word group in focus to the trouble that the respondent displays to have with the first version of the question.

The following fragment shows this phenomenon even more clearly. The interviewer asks the respondent about her level of confidence in the Dutch government (arrow ‘a’, lines 1-4). The response (at arrows ‘b’, lines 6-8 and 11-13) is on topic, in that the respondent deals with politics and her feelings about that; however, it does not contain a type-conforming answer.

Fragment 21:

1 IR: a→ .hH↑ eh can you tell me how much↑ confidence you have in the
2 present government↓ = .h do you have very much confidence↓ much
3 >confidence↓< or ↓quite much confidence↑
4 (.).h or do you have quite little↓ -little↓ or very ↓little confidence↓
5 (0.3)
6 IE: b→ .klhh well- (0.4) I am quite positive a↓ bout that, E::eh↓
7 eh that is because my husband has also always eh been in the m- (0.3)
8 vil- in the- politics,=
9 IR: =↑m↓ yes,
10 (0.2)
11 IE: b→ well and e:h they never do it right so eh c- not in village politics,
12 -and ↓ not in the cities, and in the big politics they do- they also↓ do it
13 .h according to the people never right↓ [h ] [ so ]
14 IR: c→ [and↓ ]how ↓[much]< confidence
15 do you have in the pref sent go↓ vernement↑
16 IE: d→ [ well I have ] rather some conf↓idence
17 in ‘m↓
18 (.)
19 IR: ↑yes is that very much ↓much or quite ↓much

1 IR: a→ .hH↑ eh kunt u mij zeggen hoeveel↓ ver↑ trouwen u heeft in de
2 huidige regering↓ = .h heeft u er: g veel vertrouwen↓ v:eel
3 >vertrouwen< of ↓vrij veel vertrouwen↑
4 (.).h of heeft u vrij weinig↓ -weinig↓ of er: g ↓weinig vertrouwen↓
The first version of the question, asked at arrow 'a' is: “can you tell me how much confidence you have in the present government”. The second version, done at arrow 'c' is: “and how much confidence do you have in the present government” (lines 14-15). Just like in fragment 20, the wording and word order of the question is the same in both versions, though it is enclosed in different items.

The respondent’s talk in between these two versions is on topic, in that she talks about politics and how she feels about politics, themes closely related to government and confidence or trust. So, though clearly non-conforming, the response does not stray as far as to deal with kitchen appliances or pets. This displays to the interviewer an understanding of the general direction of the question.

However, the response does not deal with the “present government” specifically but with politics in general, from village politics to “the big politics”. One can imagine that someone is positive about politics in general, but for some specific reason not about the present government.

Even though the redone version of the question in third position is lexically the same as the original version, we will see that it is still built as responsive to the respondent’s talk. The responsiveness can be found in the prosody of the words: the interviewer adapts the intonation of the question as well as the rhythm at which she produces the words to the respondent’s talk.

I have represented the two turns in pitch graphs. These graphs display how high or low the speaker’s pitch is for every part of the turn. I have labelled the graphs so that we can see, for example, that the pitch in the first version of the question rises on the word
“vertrouwen” (confidence) and falls steeply on the word “regering” (government).

Version 1: “how much confidence you have in the present government”

Version 2: “but how much confidence do you have in the present government?”
One general difference we can see between these two versions is that the pitch in the first version fluctuates much more than in the second version. The pitch in the redoing stays on quite a high plane, making the turn sound higher overall in spite of the fact that its peaks are lower than those in the first version.

As a consequence, the second version contains fewer peaks than the first. In the original question, the interviewer puts clear pitch peaks on three words, while the second version only contains one clear pitch peak, plus a steep rise at the end. This peak is placed on the word “huidige” (present), and makes that word stand out clearly from the rest of this utterance.

While all three words “vertrouwen” (confidence), “huidige” (present), and “regering” (government) have a prominent peak in the first version of the question, “vertrouwen” and “regering” do not have such prominence anymore in the redone version. “Vertrouwen” is produced in a very flat tone and, though “regering” has a final rise for question intonation, its syllable does not have any prominence either. Unfortunately this can not be visualised in the graph, because of the respondent’s overlapping talk.

We can also see that the word “vertrouwen” (confidence) is compressed in the second version into “ftrouwen”. The word loses a syllable in the redone question, and is thus also produced faster. The word “regering” (government) is also compressed, and is produced twice as fast in the redoing as it was in the first version of the question. The word “huidige” (present) is produced at approximately the same speed in both versions and retains its pitch peak.

In the first version the three central items of the question were presented as equally important. But the adjustments of the pace and pitch in the redoing cause one word to stand out: “huidige”. Now we can see that the redoing is responsive to the talk in the answer slot, in spite of the fact that the interviewer repeats the question almost exactly. The interviewer targets the issue that the respondent expressed her feelings about the wrong entity, i.e. the present government, by stressing only the word “present” in the redoing. By compressing the word “confidence” the interviewer displays an understanding of the respondent’s turn as on-topic for as far as that concept is concerned. Similarly, by removing stress from the word “government” the prior turn is treated as having dealt with that in a proper way.
5.5.2 Partial repeats

In the previous section we saw that interviewers can make portions of the question sound more or less prominent when redoing a question. I have shown that these adjustments are responsive to the respondent’s answer attempt. It is also possible for interviewers to leave out those aspects of the question that the respondent has clearly displayed or claimed to have understood from the second version of that question.

The next fragment is a nice example of this. In lines 1-2 the interviewer asks the respondent to indicate whether the Dutch economy (left implicit) will get better, worse or remain the same. After the respondent has chosen a category from this three-point scale, the follow-up question, at arrow ‘a’ in line 8, is designed to get an answer fitted to a five-point scale: a little or clearly worse / better. After a non-conforming answer by the respondent at arrow ‘b’ (line 9), the interviewer redoes this follow-up question at arrow ‘c’ (line 11).

Fragment 22:

1 IR: =.h and what according to you will happen in the ↓next twelve months↑=
2 IR: =.h will it get better or ↓worse ↑or re↑main the same↑
3 (0.5)
4 IE: .pth (.) now yes god when I hear bolkestein about those national-
5 health insurances >now then ↓of course it gets < ↑worse↓
6 .h so i hope [ that that >all ↓] doesn’t< ↑happen↓ heh.h=
7 IR: []>do you think a bit< ‘worse’
8 IR: a→ =do you think a bit worse↑ or clearly worse↓=
9 IE: b→ =↑we’ll, (0.5) well I ↓think c:h↓ (. ) I think ↓worse↓
10 (0.6)
11 IR: c→ but a little bit or clearly↓=
12 IE: d→ =well a ↓little bit [(‘↓i’d think’S)]]
13 IR: = only a little=/.H and when ↓durable goods are

1 IR: =.h en wat zal er volgens u in de ↓komende twaalf maanden gebeuren↑=
2 IR: =.h zal ↑beter of slechter ↓worden ↑of ongewijzigd blijven↑
3 (0.5)
4 IE: .pth (.) ou ja god als ik bolkestein hoor over die zieken- fonds
5 verzekeringen >nou dan ↓wordt ↑natuurlijk< ↑slechter↓
6 .h ik hoop ↓ook dat dat ↑almaal niet< ↑doorgaat↓ heh.h=
7 IR: []>denkt u iets< ‘slecht’
8 IR: a→ =denkt u iets slechter↑ of duidelijk slechter↓=
9 IE: b→ =↑nou; (0.5) nou ik ↓denk e:h↓ (. ) ik denk ↓slechter↓
10 (0.6)
I will just line up the two versions, so that the differences can be seen more clearly.

8 IR: a→ =do you think a bit worse↑ or clearly worse↓=
11 IR: c→ but a little bit or clearly↓=

8 IR: a→ =denkt u iets slechter↑ of duidelijk slechter↓=
11 IR: c→ maar ietsje↑ of duidelijk↓=

Three parts of the original question have been left out from the second version: the questioning phrase “do you think” and both occasions of “worse”. Considering the respondent’s talk between the two versions, we can immediately see that the left out parts correspond perfectly with the parts repeated (and thus displayed as understood) by the respondent’s “I think worse” in line 9.

Leaving these items out from the redoing firstly displays an understanding of the respondent’s prior turn as having displayed a proper understanding of those parts of the question. Secondly, it means that the parts that are repeated will stand out more clearly and run less risk of being concealed by the portions that were already understood.

Here is another example illustrating the same phenomenon. This is a fragment from a list of related questions. Before this excerpt the respondent has indicated that there are several newspapers that she sometimes reads. Now the interviewer asks her how many issues of those newspapers she has actually read or skimmed in the past week.

The first item on the interviewer’s list (the ‘general daily’) is introduced and subsequently embedded in a proper question format (lines 1–4). In the 14 lines left out of this fragment, a second newspaper is dealt with. The third item in the series (at arrow ‘a’, line 8) is of interest to us. It is presented on its own, with the question implied, leaving it to the respondent to make the connection between this item and the previous two.

Fragment 23:

1 IR: of the general ↑daily six issues come out per ↓week, ↓h[h]
I will just repeat the key phrases from this fragment here, in order to display the differences more clearly.

1-4 1st item  how many of the of the ↑Latest six issues↑ of ((title)) did you read or skim↓
8 Question  and of ((title))
Comparing the redoing with the first item of the series, we can see that parts have been left out. The word “issues” has been dropped from the phrase “the last six issues”, the phrase “have you read or skimmed” has disappeared, and the title of the newspaper is not repeated in the redoing of the question. What remains is a skeletal version of the question, retaining the aspects that are essential for this specific environment.

But even in what remains of the question, the interviewer still stresses different items than in the full first question. In the first question the word group “latest six issues” is most prominent because both “latest” and “issues” are stressed with pitch peaks. The redoing, however, contains just one pitch peak apart from the steep rise at the end, signalling the end of the question. The reservation of one peak for a specific aspect of the utterance has the effect of singling out that particular aspect for the listener. The main, non-final, pitch peak in this utterance is placed at “hoeveel” (“how many”).

The way the interviewer redoes the question is responsive to the respondent’s talk in the answer slot. I will repeat the attempted answer here:

First, the respondent uses the proterm “that” to refer to the item this question is about: “de Volkskrant”. The respondent thus refers to the focus of the question, showing no sign of trouble in hearing or understanding it. The interviewer orients to this by leaving the title out of the redoing of the question.

Second, the respondent explicitly states that she has “seen” the item. This displays a no-problem understanding of the part of the question “have you read or skimmed” in a way that for example “that one I know” or “that one I like” would not have. The interviewer orients to this unproblematic understanding by leaving that entire phrase out of the redone version of the question.

Of course the missing information from the respondent’s turn is the number of issues she has seen of that newspaper. And that is exactly the part that the interviewer stresses in the redoing. By
putting a pitch peak on “hoeveel” (how many), and leaving out the parts that the respondent already responded to, the interviewer does not simply repeat the question, but repeats it in such a way to focus attention on the information she needs to tick the appropriate box.

5.5.3 Incorporation of the respondent’s talk in the redoing

In the previous two sections we have seen that interviewers can redo questions by simply repeating it or by repeating parts of it. These redoings are responsive to the respondent’s prior turn in very subtle ways: some parts of the question receive more stress or prominence than others, depending on the understanding the respondent has displayed of the first version of the question. Interviewers can leave terms out of the redoing when the respondent has displayed (or claimed) proper understanding of them, or produce them in an unmarked way. And the terms that the respondent did not deal with correctly can receive greater stress, simply by repeating them, or by giving them prosodic prominence.

There is a third way in which interviewers can be responsive to the respondent’s talk when they redo the question. They can incorporate portions of the respondent’s utterance in the redoing. By using words and phrases from the response, they can build a custom-made version of the question, dealing with exactly those issues that the respondent has displayed to struggle with.

In the fragments in this chapter we have seen that respondents who have trouble answering a question often supply a description of their situation or their opinion instead of using the terms of one of the answer options. Such descriptions can give rise to a simple acceptance by the interviewer (§2.2), to a reformulation (§3), or to a second version of the question (this section). The descriptions offer the interviewers material to work with in their third position turn. We will now look at cases in which the interviewer explicitly reformulates the question in such a way that it takes this particular respondent’s situation into account.

The following fragment is a very simple example of this phenomenon. The interviewer asks the respondent which brand of cigarettes she smokes most at present (arrow ‘a’, line 1). The respondent initially gives a type-conforming answer, but then elaborates and lists all the brands that she smokes regularly (arrow ‘b’, lines 3-4). The interviewer responds to this turn with a redoing of the question (arrow c, line 7), asking the respondent to name one brand that she smokes the most.
The difference between the first and second version of the question is quite subtle. Similar to what we saw in the previous section on partial repeats, we can see that the interviewer repeats certain words and leaves out others. This time, however, the interviewer also adds the term “toch” (“still”, “in spite of that”).

This adaptation is responsive to the respondent’s prior turn. The respondent has listed three cigarette brands that she smokes, saying that she usually gets one of those three. She then adds that she varies these three brands, rather than smoking one brand all the time. The interviewer’s “toch” asks the respondent to name the one brand that she smokes the most, in spite of the fact that she regularly smokes several brands.
With this, the question is more fitted to the respondent’s situation than a simple repeat would be. The interviewer thus acknowledges the response while pursuing an answer to the original question at the same time.

The following fragment contains a lengthy question-answer sequence that goes through three rounds (1, 2, and 3) before the interviewer finally accepts an answer. I want to focus on the interviewer’s first third-position turn, at arrow ‘c1’ (line 11). The interviewer asks this respondent how many days a week she listens to the radio (arrow ‘a’, line 4). A type-conforming response to this question would be a number between zero and seven. This respondent, however, does not give such an answer. Instead, she gives a joking description of her behaviour (at arrows ‘b1’, lines 6+8). The interviewer joins in the laughter, and redoes the question at arrow ‘c1’.

Fragment 25:

1  IR:  Do >you als ever< listen ↓to the radio↑=
2  IE:  =.HHH sometimes I’ve just ↑↑bought a radio↓ so .fh ((sniffs))=
3  IR:  =yen↑ ↓
4  IR:a→  =a:nd on >>[how] many da ys ] of the week<<
5  IE:  ↓.fh ] [heh]
6  IR:a→  do you usually listen↓ to the radio↑=
7  IE:b1→  =.HH well until no:w it was ↑rather bad
8  (0.2)
9  IE:b1→  .klhh but eh I eh will mend my ↓ways
10  (0.3)
11  IE:  Heh
12  IR:c1→  eheh bu(h)↓t how m(h)any i↓s it now on ↑aver-age↑=
13  IE:b2→  ↑m↑heheh↓ ↓kl↓=.H no I’ve just
14  this afternoon bought a radio↓
15  ↓so eh hehehe "HEhe↓    
16  IR:c2→  ↑oh well that’s ↓a coincidence,↓ but how much↓ was it then before
17  ↓you the radi↓ o e:h
18  IE:b3→  ↓.hh ↓well yes↓ that- look - there’s days that the radio
19  >>is always on<< k- sometimes not for weeks? I mean eh (0.2) .pthh
20  just depends on my state of mind and ↓how much time I have and if
21  I’m there   ↓at ↓all et cetera .hh↓ h   ↓right↓
22  IR:c3→  ↓yes↓ ↓so↓ not an↓ aver-age eh
23  (such as nor[mally it’s])↓ like two ↓days a week ↓o r r e:h↓
24  IE:d3→  =NA::W not e:h ↑↑no ((tag))↓↓ ↑h ↓↑n_o
25  ((tag))↓ I really cannot e:h indi↓cate th↓ at↓
In the first answer slot to this question, the respondent answers that "until now" she did not listen to the radio very much, but that she will "mend her ways" (arrows 'b1' at lines 7 and 9). In answer to the previous question, she had mentioned that she just bought a radio (line 2), so that is probably what she refers to with 'mending her ways'. This response does not contain a type-conforming answer. The interviewer does not treat the respondent’s talk as acceptable, nor does she offer a reformulation of the response into one of the answer options. Instead, she redoes the question.

The redoing at arrow ‘c1’ (line 12) is built to be responsive to the respondent’s talk at ‘b1’. Just like in the redos we saw in the previous section, the interviewer repeats part of the question and leaves out other parts. However, this time the interviewer also replaces
parts and adds things to the redoing. I will repeat the first version and the redoing of the question here to show the differences more clearly.

4 =a:nd on >>how many days of the week<< do you usually listen↑= to the radio↑=
12 cheh bu(h)↓ it how m(h)any is it now on average↑=

4 =e:n op >>hoeveel dagen van de week<< luistert u gewoonlijk ↓naar de radio↑=
12 cheh maa(h)r hoev(h)eel is het nu gemiddeld↑=

The interviewer repeats the word “hoeveel” (“how many” or “how much”) from the original question. This is the central matter that the respondent did not deal with in her response, similar to fragment 23 in the previous section. She then adds the term “now”. This was not part of the original question and is introduced on the interviewer’s own initiative. It is built to be responsive to the respondent’s “until now”.

The interviewer then replaces the term “usually” with “on average”. Because the respondent has said that “until now” her radio listening behaviour was “rather bad”, the period that the interviewer asks about is probably very short. “Until now” could refer to until a few days, weeks, or months ago. Thus “usually” may no longer be an appropriate term. “On average” lays fewer claims on duration; one can calculate an average over one week or even extrapolate an average from a few days. Thus, replacing “usually” with “on average” is also built to be responsive to the respondent’s talk in the answer slot.

The redoing is not followed by a type-conforming answer. At arrow ‘b2’ the respondent accounts for the fact that she cannot answer the interviewer’s question: “no I’ve just this afternoon bought a radio” (lines 13-14). This means that she has not yet had time to get an average. The interviewer responds to this turn with another custom made redoing at arrow ‘c2’, incorporating the respondent’s talk about buying a radio: “but how much was it then before you the radio e:h” (lines 16-17).

This redoing does not get a type-conforming response either (arrow ‘b3’, lines 18-21). The respondent describes her radio-listening behaviour as erratic, sometimes listening for days and then not listening at all. The interviewer responds to this turn with a reformulation (arrow ‘c3’, lines 22-23), proffering the answer category “not an average”. At arrow ‘d3’ (lines 24-25) the respondent confirms this reformulation, closing off the question-answer sequence.
The following fragment is another, more elaborate example of this. It is a continuation of fragment 2 in chapter 3. In that sequence the respondent indicated to smoke shag only sporadically, and that she only smoked it off others. This made it difficult for her to say which brand of shag she usually smoked. She finally indicates that she smokes Van Nelle’s medium shag.

In fragment 26 the interviewer asks her a follow-up question (arrow ‘a’, line 1): how long has the respondent been smoking that particular type of shag? The respondent explains that she has trouble answering that question because she only smokes it very rarely, and only from other people (at arrow ‘b’, lines 3-4). This response elicits a redoing from the interviewer (at arrow ‘c’, lines 5-6).

Fragment 26:

1 IR:a→ and roughly how long have you been smoking that version of van nelle↓
2 (0.5)
3 IE:b→ yes that's very hard because I just now and then from someone at times a cigarette↑↓
4 1 can imagine but how long have you been smoking now and then from someone at times a=
5 IR:c→ yes, but I can’t imagine the respondent answers that she “now and then” smokes “from someone at times a cigarette”. The respondent trails off, and the interviewer takes over the floor when only the predicate is missing (in
Dutch subordinated clauses placed all the way at the end). This predicate is highly projectable, however.

The interviewer then redoes the question. She repeats the words “hoe lang rookt u” (“how long have you been smoking”) from the original question and leaves out the rest. She then inserts a repeat of a large part of the respondent's turn. I will repeat the two turns here for easy comparison.

3-4 IE:  because I e:h now a- just now and then from someone at times a eh cigarette::h
5-6 IR:  but how long have you been smoking now and then from someone at times "a-

3-4 IE:  omdat ik een e:h af e- hee
318 af en toe van iemand wel eens een e sigaretje::h
5-6 IR:  maar hoe lang rookt u af en toe van iemand wel eens "eem

Not only does the interviewer repeat the words the respondent has just used. She also copies the respondent’s intonation pattern, which is very flat and falling gently all through the turn. The interviewer produces the repetition at the same pitch as the respondent did, and also copies the cadence, though the repetition is sped up compared to the respondent's original. Finally, the interviewer lets her TCU trail off as well, leaving out a single word that is highly projectable. In this case it is the direct object of the turn, cigarette.2

The interviewer thus overtly designs this part of her turn as a repetition. She does not accidentally string the same words together as the respondent just did. Instead she has taken those words and hearably reused them in her redoing of the question.

The incorporation of the respondent's words in the redone question causes the redoing to be tailor-made for the respondent. Standardised survey questions are designed for all possible respondents and for no single respondent in particular. Redoings that incorporate aspects of the respondent's talk, however, are designed for that particular respondent only.

Such redoings urge the respondent to answer the question in spite of the trouble they have shown to have with the question. The adjustments and repeats work to acknowledge the response. The interviewers in these fragments display to their respondents that they take into consideration what they have just said, but ask them to come up with an answer to the question anyway.

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2 The interviewer's turn has interrogative word order: verb-subject-object, while the respondent's turn was a subordinated clause with word order subject-object-verb.
In these three sections I have discussed three types of redoings: the nearly exact repeat, the partial repeat, and the redoing that incorporates the respondent's talk. When interviewers incorporate the respondent's talk in a redoing, they can be seen to design their probe as overtly responsive to that talk.

However, I have shown that partial repeats are responsive to the respondent's talk as well. Interviewers leave out those parts that the respondent has displayed understanding of, and repeat those aspects of the question that the respondent did not deal with to their satisfaction.

And even the nearly exact repeats are hearably responsive to the talk in the answer slot. Interviewers can make certain portions of the question stand out more than others through prosody. Similar to partial repeats, the prominent parts of the full redoing correspond with the aspects of the question the respondent did not deal with properly.

This means that interviewers never do an exact repeat of the question. Even when they leave the wording of the question intact, the prosody of the redoing is responsive to the respondent's talk.

5.6 Conclusion

I have now shown the various ways in which survey interviewers deal with non-conforming responses. I have placed the techniques employed by interviewers on a continuum that runs from accepting the non-conforming answer on one extreme, to redoing the question on the other. On one side of the continuum the respondent is not called upon to provide extra information, while on the other side the respondent is asked to provide the interviewer with a completely new answer.

Interviewers can simply accept responses that clearly implicate one of the answer options available to them. They do not always initiate repair on responses that may not contain the exact wording of the answer option, but that nonetheless can only be taken to mean one thing. These answers get treated the same as type-conforming responses: the interviewer may receipt the answer and moves on to the next question without delay.

I have placed reformulations in between the two extremes of acceptance and redoing the question. Interviewers sometimes reformulate the respondent's non-conforming turn into one of the answer options. The respondent is only required to confirm the reformulation in order to close off the question-answer sequence.
When the interviewer designs the reformulation as more tentative, respondents will often give a confirmation plus a repeat of the proffered option.

I have placed pre-emptive prompts next on the continuum. These prompts ask the respondent for a first response after a non-response in the answer slot. Pre-emptive prompts do not take the shape of a repeat of the question. Instead, interviewers tend to unpack a term in the question that they judge might be problematic. Another way to prompt the respondent is by reading out the answer options. And the third way to pre-emptively prompt is to proffer one specific answer option based on the respondent’s answer to a previous question.

These prompts require an answer to the original question rather than a confirmation of the prompt. Even when the interviewer prompts the respondent by proffering one answer option, respondents reply to this with a repetition of that option rather than with a simple confirmation.

Lastly, interviewers can ask the question again after the respondent has already provided them with a response. Such redoings require the respondent to produce a new answer to the question. Interviewers acknowledge the respondent’s talk by the design of the redoing. The differences between the original question and the redoing may be subtle, when it is only a matter of prosody. Or they may be more overt, such as when the interviewer incorporates the respondent’s talk into the redoing.

The continuum thus runs from a low effort for respondents on the one extreme, when the interviewer simply accepts the non-conforming response, to a high effort for respondents on the other extreme, when the interviewer redoes the question and requires them to produce a completely new response. Interviewers orient to this in the choice of their third position action.

In this final example of the chapter we can see that the interviewer uses two different actions to elicit a type-conforming answer from the respondent. At arrow ‘a’ (line 1) she asks the respondents financial expectations for the next twelve months. The respondent answers that he hopes it will go better (arrow ‘b1’ line 3). The interviewer responds to this with a partial redoing of the question, stressing the word “think” (at arrow ‘c1’, line 5).

Fragment 27:

1 IR:a→ .hh and how do you think that it will go in the next twelve months↑

2 (0.2)
At arrow ‘b2’ we can see the respondent’s reaction to the redoing: a 0.5-second silence (line 6). He does not offer a new answer to the question. After this non-response the interviewer does another third position action: she prompts him with a tentative reformulation, proffering an answer option (arrow ‘c2’, line 7). This action requires only a confirmation from the respondent. At arrow ‘d’ (line 8) we can see that the respondent provides the interviewer with that confirmation.

The interviewer shifts gears in this sequence. She initially asks an open question in third position, acknowledging the respondents talk without accepting it. This action requires a high-effort response from the respondent, in the shape of a new answer. When the interviewee does not respond to this action, the interviewer shifts to a tentative reformulation of the interviewee’s initial response. She now treats the response as an attempted answer, proffering a reformulation of it to the respondent for confirmation. (See also Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 157 and Houtkoop-Steenstra & Antaki 1997 on this subject).

Standardisation in survey interviews prescribes that interviewers should read out the questions exactly as worded and do no more than that. A standardised response to a non-conforming answer, according to the strict guidelines of Fowler and Mangione (1990), is to repeat the question. The reason for this advice is that all respondents should be “exposed to the same question experience (…) so that any differences in the answer can be correctly interpreted as reflecting differences
between respondents rather than differences in the process that produced the answer” (Fowler & Mangione 1990: 14).

Reformulations and prompts are non-standardised ways of dealing with non-conforming responses. The respondents that are supplied with such a reformulation or prompt receive a different stimulus than respondents who do not display trouble or those who respond in type-conforming fashion (Fowler & Mangione 1990). In the case of reformulations, the interviewer could be heard to ‘lead’ the respondent to one particular answer option, and when the interviewer simply accepts the non-conforming response, the respondent is not provided the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the interviewer’s choice.

But, as I have shown in this chapter, even repeats of the question are not standardised. Because, to a greater or lesser extent, they are built as responsive to the respondent’s talk, each repeat will be unique to that particular situation. Interviewers adjust the delivery of the question to the troubles they perceive the respondent to have. Moreover, such redoings require the interviewer to produce an understanding of the respondent’s talk, and discover how it relates to the question or answer categories to which it is responsive. This interpretative work is interviewer-dependent and non-standardised to a very similar extent as the other ways interviewers deal with non-conforming responses shown in this chapter.
6.1 Introduction

Survey interviews are a ubiquitous instrument for researching the behaviour and attitudes of populations. Essentially, today’s research method is the same as it has been for centuries: decide what information you need, ask all respondents for that information, and tally the scores. In ancient times, the census officers did not just ask the citizens a few random questions; they collected the data that was required for whatever aim the census had: the respondent’s profession, property, number of children, et cetera. This is true for the land surveys in medieval times as well: the Domesday Book consists of endless descriptions of William the Conqueror’s England. Not just any descriptions, but descriptions of the size of woodlands and meadows, of how many people lived in a certain area, how many animals they owned, and what kind of buildings were present in the area. Without good instructions, the surveyors may have returned with reports on the beauty of the surveyed area, or if its inhabitants were hospitable.

Of course, important changes have been made in survey methodology since then. The use of sampling techniques guarantees that data collected from a small group of respondents can be generalised to a whole population. Telephones are now so widespread that many surveys are done over the phone from call centres. And personal computers have made computer-assisted telephone interviewing possible since the 1980s.

These advances mean that a higher level of standardisation is possible. Interviewers are supplied with identical questionnaires, are trained to read out the questions as worded, and can be monitored to see if they adhere to the rules of standardisation. Survey interviewers today are under much stricter control than those at the time of the Domesday Book, who may have estimated the number of ploughs here, and forgotten a few buildings there.

The consequences of this level of standardisation, and the way it can be optimised, have been the object of research for decades. This study is part of that tradition, and deals specifically with the interaction to which standardised survey interviews give rise. Interviewers and respondents involved in survey interviews handle the rules of the standardised interaction in which they participate in
systematic ways. I will discuss the most important conclusions of the study in this final chapter.

6.2 Conduit theory

Standardisation in survey interviews is based on a conduit-like view of communication. Interviewers read out pre-formulated questions from a written script in order to give each respondent the same stimulus. Theoretically, differences in answers between respondents can then be attributed to differences in the characteristics of those respondents, rather than to variation in the stimulus. That is why interviewers are required to read questions exactly as worded in the script, safeguarding reliability of the measurement instrument.

Respondents are then required to formulate their answers in the terms of one of the answer options. The interviewer sometimes reads these options out but they may also be left implicit, such as in the case of a yes/no-question. Respondents need to repeat one of the answer options back to the interviewer. When they do this in such a way that the interviewer can select the right category on his computer without having to make inferences and without probing, error is less likely to be introduced.

Ideally, this type-conforming answer is followed by a next question. That way, the interview unfolds as a series of two-part sequences, perhaps elaborated with a sequence-closing third (Schegloff 1995a). Survey researchers consider these paradigmatic sequences the most reliable because they do not harbour opportunities for interviewer-related error (Van der Zouwen 2002).

The conduit, then, is assumed to go in two directions. The interviewer communicates the questions to each respondent in the same way, guaranteeing that each respondent receives the question in the same way. When the respondent subsequently provides a type-conforming answer, information is communicated back to the interviewer, enabling him to tick the appropriate box. We can represent this process using an adaptation of the Shannon and Weaver (1962) model.
Figure 1: The conduit model

From left to right, we can follow the question from the questionnaire, which is the source, to the respondent’s mind, which is the destination. The interviewer functions as the transmitter of the message, and the transmission to the respondent (the receiver) is accomplished through talk. From right to left, we can see the route the answer travels. The respondent’s mind is the source of the answer, and the respondent transmits this message through talk to the interviewer. The interviewer receives the answer and types it into his computer, the destination of the message. In both directions, the interviewer does not interfere with the message. By reading the questions as worded he leaves that message intact; and by typing the type-conforming answer as the respondent worded it into the computer, he leaves that message intact as well.

In the introductory chapter of this book I described this view of communication as ‘monological’. Monologism considers communication successful “if the message arrives at the destination, in the listener’s mind, in the same form as the intended message had in the speaker’s mind, i.e. it has not, on its way from source to destination, been distorted by any kind of ‘noise’” (Linell 1998: p.23).

Indeed, for many question-answer sequences in survey interviews this appears to be the way in which communication works. However, there are many sequences in which more happens than just the transmission of a question to the respondent and the transmission of the answer to the interviewer. A very minor example is the serial extra, a little addition to an answer that displays the respondent’s awareness that the answer is similar to an earlier answer (chapter 4, §2.1). This extra is not directed at the same destination as the answer itself is assumed to be directed at: the serial extra is produced for the ears of the interviewer, while the answer is supposedly produced for the computer. All of a sudden the interviewer is no longer a neutral receiver, simply passing the respondent’s message on to the computer; he is now the intended destination for at least part of that message.
I have described the interaction between interviewers and respondents, showing what else happens in the question-answer sequences besides the interviewer reading out the question and the respondent giving a type-conforming answer. The results confirm the findings of earlier studies that show that respondents treat the interviewer as a co-participant rather than as a receptacle of their answers. Respondents provide accounts for their answers, report on their behaviour rather than selecting one of the categories, or respond in different terms than those categories.

Indeed, respondents construct their answers in interaction with the interviewer. One does not do the answering process justice when viewing it as a cognitive process where the respondent retrieves the relevant attitude or memory, maps it onto one of the answer categories, and reports it to the interviewer. I have thus clearly demonstrated that the conduit model does not represent the interviewing process adequately. This conclusion has far-reaching consequences for the practice of standardised survey methodology.

6.3 Answers are not flowers, waiting to be picked

Though the abundance of paradigmatic sequences in standardised survey interviews suggests otherwise, all answers are shaped in interaction, even when there appears to be no interaction. Respondents, like all conversationalists, monitor their recipients for the uptake of their talk and adjust their talk accordingly. This comes to the surface in expanded and non-conforming responses, in which respondents clearly treat the interviewer as their recipient by acting responsive to his uptake of the talk. This is why Van der Zouwen (2002) describes non-paradigmatic sequences as an important source of information about interaction in survey interviews. Getting rid of these non-paradigmatic sequences does not mean that answers are not constructed in interaction anymore; it simply means that we can no longer see clearly how they came about.

Once the scripted question is delivered, it is released into the interactional space; a space that is not as standardised as survey researchers would like to think. It is here that answers are constructed, and in the different chapters I have shown the respondent’s as well as the interviewer’s contributions to the construction of those answers.

In chapter 3 I showed how the interviewer displays his stance towards the respondent’s talk through the use of different versions of the response token ‘yes’. These tokens are built to be responsive to the
Conclusions

A loud, falling ‘ja’ treats that to which it is responsive as ‘not an answer’ and acknowledges the talk but does not receipt it as an answer.

A soft, rising ‘ja’, on the other hand, treats the turn-constructional unit (TCU) it is responsive to as an acceptable answer and works to receipt that answer. Interviewers do not use these receipt tokens after every acceptable answer, nor is their distribution random. I found them overwhelmingly in three different environments. First, they occur after expanded question-answer sequences, closing off that sequence before the interviewer moves on to the next question. Second, they occur at the end of a series of questions, where the receipt the last answer in that series. In these two positions one could describe the receipt token as a sequence-closing third.

The third environment in which I found this receipt token is in question-answer sequences where the respondent is required to give multiple answers to one question. The interviewer receipts the individual answers, at the same time stimulating the respondent to continue providing answers. In that position the receipt token ‘ja’ does not function as a sequence closing third, but rather as a continuer.

These analyses are based on the sequential position of those tokens, as well as on the respondent’s uptake of them. Respondents orient to these tokens as I described them, adjusting the course of their response to the interviewer’s uptake. This is very much parallel to what Goodwin (1979) found on sentence construction in face-to-face interaction. Speakers constantly look at, or listen to, their recipients in order to find out how the recipient treats their talk. The recipient’s uptake, for example loss of eye contact, can occasion adjustments in the turn, even during its production (Goodwin 1979).

Thus, in chapter 3 I have shown how the course of the respondent’s turn can be adjusted in response to the interviewer’s recipient behaviour. With small response tokens, the interviewer displays his uptake of the respondent’s talk. Just like in everyday conversation, this is information on which the speaker can base the design of his subsequent talk.

In chapter 4 I described in more detail what respondents do in their answer slots. Though most respondents are aware that their answers are reduced to statistical data and that the interviewers discard the extra information provided by the respondent, they still
expand their answers or respond to questions in their own words rather than by repeating one of the answer categories. So, while in the conduit view of survey interviews the destination of the respondent’s information is the computer, respondents orient to the interviewer as the intended recipient of their talk.

This means that, even when respondents can see to which answer category they should assign their behaviour or attitude, they may nonetheless provide an expanded or non-conforming response. These responses are usually aimed at managing the recipient’s understanding of the answer. Most pre-formulated answer categories are necessarily very broad, because they divide the whole population into two, or perhaps five or six, groups. Yes/no-questions often have a number of specifications constraining one side of the dichotomy, leaving the other side wide open.

By giving a type-conforming answer, respondents commit to one of those groups, even though their exact situation, behaviour, or attitude may be somewhat vaguer or somewhat more precise. By giving only a type-conforming answer, the respondent communicates nothing more to the interviewer than that he is part of that particular group of respondents. An expansion, or a non-conforming response, displays to the interviewer exactly how the type-conforming response should be heard.

Survey questions also contain presumptions about the respondent. When answering with a type-conforming answer only, respondents implicitly agree with those presumptions by leaving them intact. Their interlocutor can then take their answer to mean that the presumptions were valid for this respondent. When respondents resist such presumptions by negating them in an expansion or non-conforming response, they do so for the ears of the interviewer, thus managing the understanding of their answer in more detail than a type-conforming answer would.

According to the cognitive model, respondents retrieve the necessary information and map it onto one of the answer categories, after which they communicate that to the interviewer. This model gives the impression that answering questions is a very individualist process that happens in the respondent’s mind entirely, independent from the mind of the interviewer, unless it is disturbed by the interviewer. This resonates with the conduit model described in figure 1 above, in which the answer originates in the respondent’s mind and travels to the interviewer, after which the interviewer can give feedback to the respondent. Instead, we can see that respondents anticipate the interviewers understanding of their talk, and respond to
that anticipated understanding during their turn. When a type-conforming response alone would lead to an understanding that does not entirely correspond with the respondent's actual situation, the respondent may expand his answer, managing the interviewer's understanding of the talk more precisely.

In chapter 5 I described how interviewers deal with non-conforming responses in order to get a recordable answer from their respondent. I approached the interviewer's actions as a continuum on one extreme of which we find the acceptance of non-conforming responses, and on the other extreme of which we find the complete repeat of the question.

In all cases the interviewer's redoing is built as responsive to the respondent's turn. This is most evident when the interviewer gives a reformulation of the respondent's turn in the terms of one of the answer options. But even when interviewers repeat the question, they tailor it to fit the respondent's talk so far. They do this by repeating only those parts of the question that the respondent did not attend to or, if they repeat a larger portion of the scripted question, by making those parts stand out prosodically. Such repeats are built to display to the respondent what was missing from the response, or for what other reason the response was not recordable.

Interviewers, then, do not just take the respondent's answer and, when they are unable to fit it on one of the answer options, repeat the question as if they are asking it for the first time. Instead, they work with the answer, recognising the respondent's understanding of the question, and correcting it with a partial or clearer repeat of the original question. The subsequent answer is thus constructed in the interaction between interviewer and respondent.

The degree to which interviewers attempt to take the respondent's perspective becomes most evident in their prompts. When the respondents displays problems answering a question, interviewers can lend a hand before the respondent has given an answer to the question. Signs of hesitation, such as silence and hesitation markers, display to the interviewer that the respondent has some sort of problem with the question but it does not specify what kind of problem. In those situations interviewers sometimes offer a solution, like a clarification of a term in the question or some of the answer categories, based on what they perceive to be the problem the respondent is experiencing.

All the actions discussed in chapter 5 are built as responsive to the respondent's non-conforming response. They supply the respondent with more information about what kind of answer is
expected from them, and assist the respondent in getting to such an answer. When the interviewer reformulates the respondent’s non-conforming answer he actually provides the answer for his respondent but, as I said, even when the interviewer repeats the question he co-constructs the answer.

All three chapters show that answers are not always ready-made objects that are already present in the respondent’s mind and just need to be retrieved. Survey researchers are aware of the biasing characteristics of probes and normative feedback, but my analysis shows that co-construction is ubiquitous. Respondents shape their answers with the interviewer in mind, anticipating the interviewer’s understanding and designing their response so that it guides that understanding more precisely than a type-conforming response might. Interviewers interact with the respondent during their response-turn, using response tokens to display their uptake of the talk so far. This very neutral feedback can nonetheless assist respondents in determining whether more is expected from them, or if their answer was sufficient and accepted. And, while Fowler and Mangione (1990) recommend repeating the question in response to a non-conforming answer, such repeats inevitably involve the interviewer in the answering process.

These findings throw a different light on the matter of valid answers. If answers are constructed in interaction with the interviewer, even the validity of answers to factual questions is difficult to establish. When respondents’ actual attitudes or situations do not precisely fit one of the categories, or when the presumptions in the question make such a fit awkward, they may turn to the interviewer for assistance with selecting one of the answer options. We cannot judge such answers to be more or less valid than unelaborated type-conforming answers, simply because people’s lives are not made up of categorised experiences. In other words: answers are not flowers that are waiting to be picked.

6.4 Implications for standardised survey research
The influence of the interaction on the survey data that it generates is even more pervasive than was apparent from previous research. Respondents and interviewers are interactional partners and orient to each other as such. They design their talk for their recipient, taking into account how their recipient may understand their talk. Respondents design their answers for the ears of the interviewer to the
same extent as interviewers design their unscripted talk specifically for the respondent. All the respondent’s answers are obtained in interaction and are formulated in response to the questionnaire. This means that those answers should always be analysed as a product of those two factors.

Many researchers of standardised survey interaction distinguish two types of response token: those that provide an evaluation of the prior talk, and those that do not (Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000: 25). Standardisation requires interviewers to avoid evaluating the respondent’s talk, so they are instructed to use only certain response tokens, such as ‘I see’ or ‘yes’ (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 374). In this study I had a closer look at the use of ‘yes’, and found that interviewers employ that token to display their uptake of the talk to which it is responsive.

The results of my study confirm Marlaire and Maynard’s (1990) finding that the clinicians in the test setting they studied display their uptake of the examinee’s answers in very subtle ways. Interviewers use different versions of the neutral response token ‘ja’ to display to the respondent how they understand their response. In section 5 of chapter 3 I have shown how this can influence the respondent’s answer.

Survey researchers need to be aware of the power of feedback tokens. A token always communicates something, if no more than ‘I treat your turn as complete’ or ‘I treat your turn as incomplete’. My study has shown the possible effects of such minimal responses in the setting of standardised survey interviews. Respondents pay close attention to the interviewer’s uptake of their answers because it is up to the interviewer to determine whether those answers are acceptable or not. Though it is probably impossible to eliminate the effects of recipient behaviour altogether, it is certainly a factor that survey researchers must take into account.

Respondents in standardised survey interviews are expected to behave in a standardised manner as well as the interviewer. They are required to provide answers in a certain format, without expanding them. They are not expected to start asking the interviewer questions as well, or to introduce topics of their own. The interviewer asks standardised questions, and the respondent provides standardised answers.

If the respondent does not do this, the interviewer should train the respondent, by explaining the procedures of the interview (Fowler & Mangione 1990: 50), or by giving feedback after acceptable answers
and withholding it after unacceptable ones (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 372-3). This training of the respondent should result in the respondent providing more type-conforming answers.

However, the expanded and non-conforming answers discussed in this dissertation are of two types. Either respondents display uncertainty about which answer category applies to their situation, and supply a reporting of that situation so that the interviewer can assist in choosing the right answer option. Or they aim to control the interviewer’s understanding to a higher extent than a simple type-conforming answer would, in order to resist certain features of the question or of the answer categories.

Unquestionably, some respondents do not know what ‘doing being a respondent in a standardised survey interview’ entails, but those are rare exceptions. In my corpus, I have found two such respondents and it proved impossible to generalise their actions to the rest of the data. The ‘able’ respondents, however, all behave in very similar ways, including expanding some of their type-conforming answers as well as providing non-conforming responses. Thus, survey researchers should change their perception of those non-paradigmatic responses: they do not reflect the respondent’s inability of unwillingness to behave in a standardised manner, but are a by-product of collecting data with a live interviewer. Training the respondent, therefore, will not necessarily lead to more paradigmatic sequences.

The third implication for standardised survey research concerns the interviewer’s uptake of non-conforming responses and the way they probe for recordable answers. Fowler and Mangione (1990: 38) recommend rereading the entire question, stressing those parts that the respondent missed in the first reading. When interviewers indeed follow these instructions, survey researchers should be aware of the effects because such a rereading displays several things to the respondent. First, it displays that the response was not acceptable. Second, it displays to the respondent why the response was not acceptable and what the response was lacking. And third, it instructs the respondent on what he needs to do in order to produce an acceptable answer.

This is hardly a smaller effort than the effort the interviewer makes when he reformulates the respondent’s non-conforming response into one of the answer options, and the interviewer needs to do a lot of interpretative work in both these cases. In both situations, the interviewer needs to judge the content of the answer and understand how it relates to the question. When reformulating the response into
one of the answer options, a directive probing strategy, the interviewer applies his understanding of the respondent’s talk to the answer categories before him, choosing the one that corresponds most with his understanding of that talk. When redoing the question, he applies his understanding of the response to the question, in order to determine which portions the respondent disregarded or displayed to have misunderstood in the initial response, so that he can stress those portions in his redoing. In both situations, the interviewer does not behave as a neutral conduit. Survey researchers must take into account that interviewers always display their understanding of the respondent’s talk, however non-directive their probe.

Finally, survey researchers need to take into account that ‘standardised survey research’ really only standardises the first pair parts (FPPs) of the survey. Survey interviews are a string of question-answer sequences, in which the interviewer delivers the question and the respondent supplies the answer. Though the script contains the questions as well as the answers, the respondents do not have that script available and, as I have shown in chapter 4, they do not always follow the script. The scripted FPP, then, just forms the starting point of an otherwise unscripted question-answer sequence.

The script sets the interviewer up for talk that is contingent upon the scripted question, but that itself does not necessarily follow the script. This presents the interviewer, who is instructed to behave in a standardised manner, with a problem. The respondent can make countless next moves in response to the question, and the script does not provide the interviewer with a standardised reaction to all those possible responses. In other words, after the interviewer has read out the question, he is left to his own devices to handle what happens next.

I have shown in this book that the respondent’s answers are constructed in interaction. Surveys are designed to collect exactly those answers, and they are standardised so that the data are collected in the same way for every respondent. However, it is important to realise that the interaction in which those answers are constructed is for the main part not scripted or standardised.

6.5 Relevance for interaction research

This book has dealt with three different parts of the question-answer sequence in standardised survey interviews: response tokens, answers, and the subsequent pursuit of a recordable answer. In all
three areas, my research forms an addition to the existing body of research, adding new findings and confirming others. For some phenomena that have been studied in mundane conversation, I have found that they work in a similar fashion in standardised survey interaction. For others, I have been able to provide an alternative explanation, or sharpen the edges of the existing description.

My findings and conclusions are all based on analyses of Dutch interaction between interviewers and respondents in standardised survey interviews. However, question-answer sequences in everyday interaction share many features with those in standardised interviews. Therefore, some of my findings are just as relevant for the study of mundane interaction as they are for the survey methodology.

An important finding of my study or response tokens, is that one and the same token can perform different actions depending on its prosodic features. The sequential position of ‘ja’ does not decide its function, but the way in which it is realised. That is, a soft ‘ja’ with a rising intonation is employed to receipt and accept an answer. A louder ‘ja’ with a falling pitch, on the other hand, functions as an acknowledgement in the same sequential position, treating it as preliminary to an answer rather than as an answer in itself. These differently produced tokens thus display a different uptake of the talk to which it is responsive and, as I have demonstrated, it is also oriented to as such.

Response tokens have mostly been described as of a certain kind. Heritage (1984a) shows how the token ‘oh’ displays a change of state in the producer’s knowledge, brought about by the talk to which the token is responsive. Marlaire and Maynard (1990) discuss the response tokens ‘okay’ and ‘good’, which examiners use in test situations to acknowledge the examinee’s answers. Jefferson (1983) demonstrates how speakers employ ‘mm hm’ to display passive recipiency, and ‘yeah’ to project imminent speakership. In his analysis of interaction in research interviews in English, Koole (2003) shows how the interviewer’s response token ‘hm’ has a different meaning depending on its context. If it occurs in the context of the interviewer aligning with the respondent, ‘hm’ is oriented to as a kind of detachment, while it is oriented to as a form of affiliation when used in an environment of criticism.

The results of my study of response tokens in standardised survey interviews resonate more clearly with Jefferson’s (1983) findings that speakers can use the response token ‘yeah’ both for passive recipiency and for projecting speakership, simply by varying the shape of the ‘yeah’ token. Gardner (2001) studied this phenomenon in detail for
different varieties of English, finding that the response tokens 'mm', 'yeah', and 'mm hm' can be used to perform different actions when produced with a different pitch contour.

The phenomenon I found in Dutch survey data is very similar. Speakers can use the Dutch response token 'ja' for displaying different kinds of uptake, even when the different tokens are placed in the same position: after a response to an interrogative. In the case of a negatively framed response, the same two functions can be accomplished by ja’s negative counterpart ‘nee’. The speakers accomplish this by varying the prosody of the token. The most distinguishing prosodic features are loudness and pitch, though the tokens differ on other parameters as well. Thus, one seemingly uniform response token can be employed to perform different actions in the same position, depending on its prosody. As Jefferson’s as well as Gardner’s findings are based on everyday conversational data, it is to be expected that my findings can be generalised to other genres of Dutch interaction.

In my study of elaborated and non-conforming interviewee responses I found that the responses that are designed as dispreferred also contain a contrastive construction. Pomerantz (1984: 80) associates contrastive constructions with dispreferred turns in response to first assessments or to requests for a first assessment. She describes the contrastive prefices as similar to the turn shape for disagreements: weak agreement followed by disagreement.

The respondents in my data sometimes avoid giving a type-conforming answer, and do so with a contrastive construction. In the initial portion of the response, the respondent appears to go along with one of the answer categories, but this is denied when the contrast is completed. Respondents either complete this contrast themselves, making explicit that they will not give one clear answer, or they leave the contrastive part implicit, leaving it to the interviewer to complete or infer their answer (another way of avoiding to perform a dispreferred action). This construction strongly resembles the turn shape described by Pomerantz for disagreements and disaligning second assessments.

It is interesting and significant that that turn shape turns up in such a different environment as non-conforming responses in standardised survey interview. The finding motivates me to suggest a broader formulation of the construction ‘weak agreement plus disagreement’. Instead, I propose to refer to this and similar constructions (such as those found in my data) with ‘weak preferred
preface plus contrastive dispreferred component.’ Then this turn design appears to be a more pervasive feature of dispreferred turns in general rather than just in the environment of assessments.

In the same chapter, I found that the recipient of a turn that is designed as dispreferred, may treat this turn as dispreferred in spite of its preferred content. The reverse holds as well: turns that have a dispreferred content but are designed as preferred, may get treated as preferred. Of course by designing his turn as preferred or dispreferred, the speaker displays the way he orients to his own turn. These design features form a useful cue for the recipient with respect to how the speaker intends the talk to be understood.

In survey interviews, one expects that the preferred or dispreferred status of the respondent’s talk is mainly determined by the prescriptions in the script: type-conforming answers are preferred and non-conforming responses are dispreferred. Supposedly then, interviewers judge their respondents’ answers on their content, looking for conforming aspects. However, experienced conversationalists as they are, interviewers listen out for other cues apart from just the content. Those cues greatly influence the way interviewers orient to the response as displayed in their acceptance or rejection of those responses.

Of the three sequential positions discussed in this work, the redoings and reformulations dealt with in chapter 5 are most typical for standardised survey interviews. Respondents are required to provide answers in a certain format in order to enable statistical analysis of the data. Interviewers, therefore, pursue answers that are type-conforming, even if an expanded or non-conforming answer is equally or more informative. In contrast, participants in everyday conversation usually ask questions in order to get an informative answer without demanding a particular wording or formulation of that answer. This means that answers that non-conforming answers that would be perfectly acceptable and informative in everyday conversations, do not always get accepted in the context of standardised survey interviews. Instead, interviewers reformulate such responses or renew the question in some way.

The way these pursuits, prompts, and reformulations are shaped may be relevant for the research of interaction in general. While they perform the action of repair, they are often not shaped as a repair, but rather as a next question, as an increment, or as a formulation. This is an issue that deserves more detailed research in the future.
6.6 Standardised vs. conversational interviewing

This study is part of the research corpus dedicated to the question whether the results of survey interviews are of better quality under standardised circumstances or when the interview is conducted in a conversational manner. Previous studies showed that certain awkward situations can be prevented when interviewers are allowed to act in a more conversational way (e.g. Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000) and that problems with understanding can be solved better when interviews are less standardised (Schober & Conrad 1997, Conrad & Schober 2000).

In this study I have taken a detailed look at how interviewers and respondents actually behave in standardised survey interviews. I have shown that on many occasions the participants do not let the script rule their interaction entirely, and that they instead orient to the rules of everyday conversation in order to understand their co-participant’s actions. I have also shown that the participants orient to their co-participants orientation to those rules. This is evident from the way they design their turns so as to prevent certain inferences their recipient might make, and from they way they work to promote the desired understanding. For example, respondents expand their answers when the type-conforming answer alone could lead to an incomplete understanding with the interviewer (chapter 4), and interviewers deliver prompts based on what problem they infer the respondent to have (chapter 5).

Once the scripted question has been released into the interactional space, the written script does not offer much support for the participants. Especially when the respondent does something else or something more than giving a type-conforming answer, the interviewer is left to his own devices to deal with this. Interviewers are trained to deal with these situations, but must still rely on their conversational skills. Thus, to a great extent the standardised survey interview is conversational already (see also Schaeffer 1991).

For example, interviewers are instructed which response tokens they can use without compromising the data. The actual use and placement of those tokens, however, is very much an interactional event, and requires interviewers to apply the rules of everyday conversation. The same applies to the interviewer’s redoings of the question. Though they are instructed how they should probe for a recordable answer, interviewers are required to apply those rules during the interaction. In order to place, formulate, and produce the redoing in such a way that it will generate a recordable answer,
interviewers apply the rules of mundane conversation, to which the respondent also orients.

In other words, standardised survey interviewing is already a highly conversational event, and those aspects of conversation that are present are very hard to eliminate. Without them, the interview would become an estranging experience for the respondent. And indeed, 'building rapport' is one of the reasons cited for the use of those response tokens (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 373).

On the other hand, my analyses of the interviewer's behaviour showed that non-standardised actions can be of influence on the data gathered through survey interviews. Interviewers rely on their conversational experience, rather than on a standardised script, when they have the role of recipient of the respondent's talk and when they probe to obtain recordable answers. Therefore, those actions are not controlled to the same extent as the formulation of the questions is, but instead they are dependent on the interviewer's discretion. During the interview, the interviewer needs to make judgements on where to take which action, and when to remain silent (an action in itself).

I have shown the actions interviewers perform with response tokens (chapter 3) and with the way they handle non-conforming answers (chapter 5). The response tokens display to respondents how the interviewer has understood their talk, and project the next action. The interviewer has an understanding of the respondent's talk and fits his response token with it, thus displaying his understanding to the respondent. This understanding is to some extent occasioned by the respondent's talk as well as by the script that the interviewer has available. However, there is certainly a subjective, uncontrollable aspect to these understandings.

The interviewer's actions in third turn after a non-conforming response are based on this same mix of information. The interviewer has the script available, telling him what answer options the respondent needs to choose from. He also has the respondent's talk available, responding to the question without overtly selecting one of the answer options. The interviewer himself is another important factor deciding what he will do next: accept the non-conforming answer, offer the respondent a reformulation, or redo the question? Thus, the interviewer's behaviour is partly based on his subjective understanding of the respondent's talk.

It is exactly these subjective understandings that survey researchers attempt to eliminate through standardisation. My research shows that they are correct in doing so. Even very minor and seemingly neutral conversational behaviour by the interviewer can
lead the respondent’s talk in one direction or the other. However, at the same time my research shows that it is impossible to standardise interviews to such an extent that these non-standardised actions no longer occur. Interviewers need to rely on their own judgements in order to formulate a useful probe that assists the respondent in providing a recordable answer in the second instance. And while response tokens perform a problematic action backwards, displaying the interviewer’s understanding of the respondent’s prior talk, they perform a necessary function forwards. This projecting function of response tokens displays to the respondent what is expected of them next: ‘listen to the next question because your answer has been accepted’, ‘provide a new answer because your talk was not accepted as an answer’, or ‘provide a new answer because we are still in the process of giving multiple answers to one question’.

6.7 The unobtainable protocol
Survey researchers aim for standardisation of the interaction in survey interviews in order to minimise interviewer-related error and to maximise the reliability of the gathered data. They provide the interviewers with a script that contains their questions as well as the answers the respondent can choose from. This way they presumably cover all their bases: the interviewer reads out the questions from the script and offers the respondent the available answer options. The respondent selects one of those options, and the interviewer asks the next question.
Such protocols look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(61) How often have you cycled recreationally in the Netherlands in the past 12 months, where the starting point was not your home address, but where you first travelled a distance with transportation?</td>
<td>(This does not concern cycle tours from (title) only)&lt;br/&gt;&lt;&lt;INT: We mean cycling with the aim to enjoy the surroundings and cycling itself, and not with the aim commuting or getting groceries.&gt;&gt; &lt;br/&gt;Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(64) What is usually the distance one way between your home address and the starting point of the cycle tour?</td>
<td>INT: MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE  Mostly up to 20 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(65) What is the average distance that you mostly cycle on those occasions?</td>
<td>INT: MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE Up to ± 25 KM per time some 1½ hours cycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(66) Do you ever take part in cycle tours organised by others?</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Example of a protocol

The protocol provides the interviewer with the questions and answers. For some items it offers explanations or reminders that may be useful
to the respondent for answering, or for the interviewer for determining whether the respondent’s answer is acceptable. For example, item 65 contains the extra text “only cycle tours that are preceded by transportation”, reiterating the definition of ‘cycle tours’ used in item 61. The interviewer can read these explanations out to the respondent if necessary, when the respondent displays trouble with the definition of terms in the question. The protocol also contains directions for the interviewer, in this protocol written in capitals. The interviewer does not need to read these out; instead they contain instructions for the interviewer with respect to what kind of answer he should accept, if he should write the answer down verbatim, et cetera.

In the following fragment we can see how the protocol works in interaction. The portions that correspond with the text on the questionnaire are printed in bold; the rest is left as normal. At a glance, it becomes clear that the interviewer is confronted with a large number of situations for which the script does not provide and with which she needs to deal on the spot.

Fragment 1:

1  IR: how often have you cycled recreationally in the Netherlands
2 in the past twelve months
3 (0.4)
4  IR: where the starting point was not the home address but where first
5 (0.4) but where you first travelled a distance with transportation↓
6 (0.5)
7  IE: e:::hm:
8 (0.2)
9  IR: it does not need to concern cycle tours of ↓((title)) only↓ right↑=
10 =also [(*) ]
11  IE: [NO]: okay↓ YES- hh >let’s see< YES I I cycle a lot to work and
12 such, Heh .h but that [cannot count↑ ]
13  IR: [but it does need↓] you have the aim in advance like
14 right I’m going cy:cling: [in L]imburg↑=
15 IE: [yes-] [y=ys ex=actly↓ ]
16 IR: [>but then you have to<] first go to Limburg= =so from there -on
17 (0.3)
18  IE: y=yes-
19  IR: cycled↓ =how often <did all that> approximately: happen in the past year↓
20 IE: .t e:::hm: (0.4) .dh () I think also ↓only two or three times then↓ HHeH
21 22 IR: "okay=
23 IE: =it all sounds very little↓ .h ((smiley voice))
24 IR: well alright [I mean] it’s of course always different
25 IE: [HHH]
26 IR: if you first have to go somewhere with other transportation right↑
27 IE: yes↓
28 IR: .H
29 IE: yes exactly=
30 IR: =^yes^ what is mostly the distance one way between your home
31 address and the starting point of the ↓cycle tour↑
32 (0.7)
33 IE: .t E::hm yes that is somewhat further:
34 that is I think >something like< forty fifty kilometer↑
35 IR: forty fifty kilometer↓
36 .hh >and what is the average distance that you then< cycle mostly↑
37 (0.6)
38 IE: eE::h something like fifty:
39 (0.6)
40 IE: forty fifty kilometer↓
41 (.)
42 IR: forty to fifty kilometer↓
43 (0.9) ((tik))
44 IR: do you ever take part in cycle tours or- ganised by others↑
45 (0.9)
46 IE: E::h ↑just sometimes↓
47 (1.3)
48 IR: .h what were for you the reasons

In lines 1-2 the interviewer reads out part of the question. After a silence (in line 3) in which the respondent does not take over the turn, the interviewer reads out the rest of the question. This is first met with a silence (line 6), and in line 7 the respondent starts with a hesitation marker, possibly displaying some kind of problem answering the question. The interviewer responds with a prompt, adapting the text on the questionnaire for this aim (line 9). In lines 10-12 the respondent gives a non-conforming response, reporting her habit of cycling to work. The respondent comments on her own talk that “that cannot count”, indicating that she orients to her own response as unacceptable. In lines 13-17 the interviewer responds with an example of what kind of cycle tours would count, using a popular cycling area in the south of the Netherlands (where the respondent does not live) as her example.

In line 20 the interviewer redoes the question, a partial repeat with paraphrases of the scripted question. The respondent answers this second version of the question with an expanded type-conforming answer (line 21). The expansions indicate her stance towards her own
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answer: with “only two or three times” she orients to her answer as a number that is low, or perhaps too low. With “two or three times then”, the respondent shows that the low number is a product of the constraints of the question. In line 22 the interviewer receipts the answer, closing off the expanded question-answer sequence. In lines 23-29 the respondent comments on her answer, and the interviewer reassures the respondent.

The next two question-answer sequences (lines 30-42) consist of a scripted question, a sizeable gap, a pre-expanded type-conforming answer, and the interviewer’s repetition of the type-conforming answer. The last question-answer sequence consists of the scripted question (line 44), a long gap (line 45), a non-conforming response (line 46), and another long gap (line 47). The interviewer accepts the non-conforming response by moving on to the next question (line 48).

This excerpt is a little more than one minute long. In such a short amount of time, the interviewer deals with a number of situations for which the script does not provide. This example makes clear that the script provides the participants with the first pair parts to question-answer sequences that consist of at least two turns. Respondents do not always give type-conforming answers, and even if they do select one answer category, they may expand their turn before or after they deliver the type-conforming answer. In other words: the written script sets the interviewers up for talk that is contingent upon that first pair part (FPP), but that may not always be a type-conforming second pair part (SPP). After the interviewer has read out the scripted question and the answer options, the script provides no more written text to deal with the respondent’s talk. Interviewers may be instructed to give feedback tokens, but exactly when and how they give those feedback tokens is not specified in the script.

However, the excerpt also makes clear that the interviewer facilitates interaction tremendously with her non-standardised behaviour. She explains the terms of the question, redoes the question, displays to the respondent that her answers have been accepted, and accepts a non-conforming response that can easily be translated into one of the answer categories. The example contains a number of the systematic, non-standardised actions I have discussed in this book, and we can see how the interviewer is involved in the answering process. Not just because of the interviewer’s own actions, but also because the respondent designs her answers for the interviewer’s ears.

Thus an important finding of my research, restated in this section, is that it is impossible to design a protocol that works throughout the
interview. Respondents orient to the interviewer as their recipient, and the interviewer acts as one. Although both participants thus engage in conversational rather than completely standardised interaction, this is the level of conversation that is necessary in order to be able to conduct the survey interview at all. In other words: providing written instructions that cover more than the first pair parts is impossible as well as undesirable.


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References


Appendix:

Transcription conventions

IR: Indicates that it is the interviewer speaking
IE: Indicates that it is the respondent / interviewee speaking

(0.4) Silence (of 0.4 seconds)
(.) A beat of silence, less than 0.2 seconds
[  ] Overlapping talk between brackets
\ ]

word= Speaker latches his talk onto that of the previous speaker leaving no gap. Also used when a speaker ‘rushes through’ to a next TCU, without leaving a gap. The equal sign is placed at the end of the previous TCU and at the beginning of the next.

=word Stressed syllable or sound

WORD Upper case indicates increased volume compared to the surrounding talk

\word The degree sign indicates talk that is quieter than the surrounding talk

word: Stretching of the sound that is followed by the colons. One colon indicates a stretching of about 0.2 seconds

word↑ Rise in pitch

word↓ Drop in pitch

↑word↓ Pitch rises and then drops (or the other way around)

word, The pitch rises to mid

wo- Indicates that a word or sound is cut off, usually with a stop

>word< The talk between these brackets is sped up relative to the surrounding talk

<word> The talk between these brackets is slower than the surrounding talk

hH Hearable breathing, probably breathing out. Upper
case indicates that the breathing is particularly loud. One ‘h’ indicates a breath of about 0.2 seconds.

.hh Hearable inbreath. Upper case indicates that the breathing is particularly loud. One ‘h’ indicates a breath of about 0.2 seconds.

(h) Laughter particles during talk

heheh↓ A rendition of laughter

(word) Between brackets is talk that is difficult to understand. It is a candidate hearing.

(***) In the absence of a candidate hearing, these symbols are provided. Each star indicates one syllable of indistinguishable talk.

((title)) The transcriber has inserted a comment or replaced a word or name

.t .pt Clicks, often turn-initial. Transcription takes into account where the sound is produced (p, m for labial clicks, t for alveolar clicks, etc.)

((tik)) Audible strike on the interviewer’s keyboard
Samenvatting

Survey interviews worden geacht volgens een vast stramien te verlopen; de interactie dient gestandaardiseerd, voorspelbaar en in elk gesprek hetzelfde te zijn. Interviewers worden geïnstrueerd de vragen precies zo voor te lezen als ze geschreven staan en leren ook om elk antwoord hetzelfde te behandelen. De standaardisering van deze gesprekken is gebaseerd op de volgende aanname: als iedere respondent dezelfde vragen op dezelfde manier krijgt voorgelegd, dan zijn variaties in de antwoorden te wijten aan verschillen tussen de respondenten en niet aan de manier waarop zij ondervraagd zijn.

Deze redenering leunt stevig op een opvatting van communicatie die men de conduit metafoor noemt. Deze metafoor beschrijft hoe communicatie bestaat uit een boodschap, een zender en een ontvanger. Na het encoderen van de boodschap verstuurt de zender deze via een medium naar de ontvanger. De ontvanger decodeert de boodschap waarbij, afhankelijk van de kwaliteit van de encodering en van het gebruikte medium, de originele boodschap ontvangen is (Shannon en Weaver, 1962 en Reddy, 1979). Uit deze redenering vloeit voort dat wanneer dezelfde boodschap op dezelfde wijze geformuleerd op verschillende ontvangers (respondenten) wordt overgebracht, alle ontvangers de boodschap op dezelfde wijze zullen begrijpen.

Dit proefschrift laat zien dat de geschreven vragenlijst slechts de aanzetten bevat voor interactie waarop standaardiseringsregels maar weinig vat hebben. De vragenlijst bevat gestandaardiseerde vragen, maar nadat zo'n vraag door de interviewer in de interactionele ruimte is losgelaten, bouwen de daaropvolgende beurten op de vraag voort zonder verder op het script te steunen. De interactionele rollen van de deelnemers veranderen op dat moment. Interviewers worden recipiënt van datgene dat de respondent te zeggen heeft. Respondenten kunnen hun antwoordbeurt gebruiken om hun houding ten opzichte van de vraag of de antwoorden duidelijk te maken.

Door drie verschillende corpora Nederlandse survey interviews in detail te analyseren, is gebleken welke handelingen interviewers en respondenten verrichten nadat de gestandaardiseerde vraag is gesteld. Ik heb hierbij gebruik gemaakt van de methodologie van Conversatie Analyse. Daarnaast heb ik prosodische analyses uitgevoerd op enkele details in de interactie.

Voorgaand onderzoek naar interactie in survey interviews heeft aangetoond dat de standaardiseringsregels soms botsen met de
interactionele regels waarop gespreksdeelnemers zich oriënteren. Suchman en Jordan (1990) hebben in een overzichtsartikel laten zien hoe de realiteit van gestandaardiseerde interviews botst met de achterliggende theorie. Ze beschrijven dat het gestandaardiseerde survey interview als interactionele gebeurtenis op gespannen voet staat met het survey interview als neutraal meetinstrument (Suchman & Jordan 1990: 232). In hun artikel exploreren ze verschillende terreinen waar deze spanning aan de oppervlakte komt, zoals de vaste rolverdeling waaraan interviewer en respondent gebonden zijn, en de vaste volgorde van de vragen waardoor de beurten van de interviewer niet op de lopende interactie afgestemd kunnen zijn. Maar ze signaleren ook dat standaardiseringsregels de deelnemers beletten repairs uit te voeren op de manier die we kennen uit alledaagse conversaties.

Uit een andere studie (Marlaire en Maynard 1990) blijkt hoezeer de antwoorden in gestandaardiseerde tests tot stand worden gebracht in de interactie tussen examinator en geëxamineerde. Het interactionele gedrag van de examinatoren in hun data correleerde sterk met de kwaliteit van de antwoorden van de geteste kinderen. Door de vraag-antwoord sequenties anders af te handelen, of door de wijze waarop het antwoord werd ontvangen te variëren, lieten de examinatoren zien hoe goed of slecht de respondent het deed.

Sinds het terrein van gestandaardiseerde gesprekken door deze twee artikelen is opengelegd, is het door verschillende onderzoekers verder in kaart gebracht. Het onderzoek waarvan in dit proefschrift verslag wordt gedaan, zet deze lijnen voort en vult de kaart verder in.

Dit onderzoek richt zich op datgene dat plaatsvindt in gestandaardiseerde survey interviews nadat de interviewer de vraag heeft voorgelezen. Vraag-antwoord sequenties in survey interviews verlopen veelal ‘paradigmatisch’, wat betekent dat die sequenties elk bestaan uit een vraag en een antwoord. Na dit antwoord stelt de interviewer de volgende vraag. Zowel de interviewers als de respondenten doen in die gevallen niets meer dan het script hen voorschrijft: de interviewer leest de vraag voor, en de respondent selecteert een van de antwoordcategorieën. Vraag-antwoord sequenties worden echter regelmatig uitgebreid en dit onderzoek laat zien op wat voor manieren de deelnemers hun beurt of de sequentie uitbreiden.
Response tokens in survey interviews: The interviewer as answer recipient (hoofdstuk 3)

Interviewers gebruiken response tokens in gestandaardiseerde survey interviews als ‘feedback’ voor de respondent. Niet alle vormen van feedback zijn toegelaten omdat interviewers neutraal dienen te zijn ten opzichte van de antwoorden van de respondent. Andere vormen van feedback worden juist aangemoedigd. Het response token ‘ja’ wordt over het algemeen neutraal geacht of aangemoedigd door onderzoeksbureaus (Viterna & Maynard 2002: 373). De theoretische functie van feedback is het opbouwen van een positieve relatie met de respondent: feedback tokens laten zien dat de interviewer luistert, geïnteresseerd is, en niet oordeelt (Viterna & Maynard, 2002: 373). Hoewel sommige onderzoeksbureaus aangeven dat de interviewer feedback dient te geven na bruikbare antwoorden en het dient te onthouden na onbruikbare antwoorden, is nog niet duidelijk wanneer interviewers in praktijk feedback geven.


‘Ja’ sluit de sequentie niet af


De tweede sequentiële omgeving waarin het ‘ja’-token niet als afsluiter wordt ingezet is zeer specifiek, namelijk in het geval dat de
respondent meerdere antwoorden dient te geven op een vraag. Het komt bijvoorbeeld voor dat de respondent gevraagd wordt alle sigarettenmerken of namen van banken op te noemen die hij kent. Omdat het van tevoren niet vast staat hoeveel antwoorden de respondent zal geven, is een bruikbaar antwoord niet automatisch het einde van de vraag-antwoord sequentie. Interviewers gebruiken het response token 'ja' na antwoorden in een dergelijke lijst.

Interviewers zetten het response token 'ja' in deze positie in als receipt en continuer. De receipt-functie van dit token is erin gelegen dat het aan de respondent toont dat het voorgaande een bruikbaar antwoord is. Met de continuer-functie van het token 'ja' behandelt de interviewer de antwoordbeurt van de respondent als incompleet en geeft de beurt direct terug aan de respondent. Respondenten oriënteren zich op deze beide functies van het token.

Ja' als afsluiting van de sequentie

Survey interviewers gebruiken het response token 'ja' als afsluiting van de lopende vraag-antwoord sequentie in twee specifieke specifieke sequentiële omgevingen. De ene situatie is ter afsluiting van een vraag-antwoord sequentie die is uitgebreid. Sequenties kunnen op verschillende manieren worden uitgebreid: met een repairsequentie waaraan zowel de interviewer als de respondent deelenemen, met een self-repair van de respondent, of de sequentie kan zijn uitgebreid doordat de respondent zijn antwoord met veel onzekerheid brengt. Het receipt token 'ja' is te vinden in de positie na een bruikbaar antwoord van de respondent.

De andere plaats waar receipt tokens veel voorkomen is aan het eind van de laatste vraag-antwoord sequentie in een samenhangend blok vragen. Interviewers plaatsen het response token 'ja' na het antwoord op de laatste vraag van zo'n serie vragen, waarna zij aan een nieuwe serie over een ander onderwerp beginnen. Behalve met het receipt tokens markeren interviewers de grens tussen twee blokken vragen op nog meer manieren. Het laatste item in de lijst wordt uitgebreid met een voegwoord, en daarnaast markeert de dalende intonatie van het laatste item het einde van de serie vragen.

De acknowledgement tokens 'ja' en de receipt tokens 'ja' komen op praktisch dezelfde sequentiële positie voor: na een beurt-opbouw eenheid van de respondent in antwoord op de vraag. Dit zou voor verwarring kunnen zorgen. Het blijkt echter dat survey interviewers het acknowledgement token 'ja' anders uitspreken dan het receipt

Respondenten blijken zich aan te passen aan het recipiëntgedrag van de interviewer. Wanneer zij een ambigu of weifelend antwoord geven, kan een receipt token of juist een acknowledgement token van de interviewer aangeven of het antwoord al dan niet bruikbaar is. En respondenten gebruiken het receipt / continuer token als wegwijzer waaraan zij kunnen aflezen of de interviewer van hen verwacht dat ze doorgaan met antwoorden geven. Deze wegwijzers zijn zo sterk dat respondenten zelfs doorgaan met antwoorden als zij eigenlijk geen antwoord meer weten.

Non-conformerende en uitgebreide antwoordbeurten (hoofdstuk 4)


Ik heb onderzocht wat voor extra dingen respondenten doen wanneer hun respons iets meer of iets anders bevat dan een van de antwoordcategorieën. De analyse van deze responsen brengt aan het licht welke aspecten van surveyvragen door respondenten geproblematiseerd worden.

Minimale expansies

Minimale expansies hebben het minste invloed op het verloop van de interactie. Ik heb twee soorten minimale expansions geïdentificeerd: seriële extra’s en onzekerheidsmarkingen. Met seriële extra’s geven respondenten aan dat hun antwoord vergelijkbaar is met een voorgaand antwoord. Door bijvoorbeeld “ook ja” te zeggen, laten respondenten zien dat zij zich ervan bewust zijn dat zij meerdere dezelfde antwoorden achter elkaar hebben gegeven. Respondenten leggen deze verbanden tussen vragen die elkaar direct opvolgen. Maar het blijkt ook mogelijk dit soort verbanden te leggen tussen
antwoorden die verder van elkaar verwijderd zijn. Dit kan wanneer de vragen die zich tussen de vergelijkbare antwoorden bevinden over een ander onderwerp gingen.

Onzekerheidsmarkeringen zijn de tweede soort minimale expansies die veel in survey interviews voorkomen. Kleine toevoegingen als “denk ik” en “een stuk of...” laten zien dat respondenten hun antwoorden niet al te precies formuleren. Meestal worden deze ‘onzekere’ antwoorden geaccepteerd door de interviewer, die er blijkbaar rekening mee houdt dat de respondent niet alle vragen precies kan beantwoorden.

**Non-minimale expansions**

Non-minimale expansions hebben meer invloed op het verloop van de vraag-antwoord sequentie. Geëxpandeerde responsen bevatten een van de antwoordcategorieën plus een uitbreiding die bijvoorbeeld dat antwoord toelicht. Deze uitbreidingen kunnen zich voor of na de antwoordcategorie bevinden.

Post-expansies worden door respondenten ingezet om toe te lichten waar zij zich positioneren binnen de gekozen antwoordcategorie. Gesloten vragen vereenvoudigen de wereld sterk door deze in twee (of drie, of vijf) categoriën onder te verdelen. De werkelijke situatie van respondenten is echter altijd zeer specifiek. Zij breiden hun antwoordbeurt soms uit om aan de interviewer te laten zien waar hun werkelijke situatie zich bevindt binnen de geselecteerde antwoordcategorie.

Pre-expansies worden ingezet om de termen van de vraag aan te passen voordat het antwoord gegeven wordt (Raymond 2000). Maar respondenten gebruiken pre-expansies ook om de redenering waarop ze hun antwoord baseren voor de interviewer inzichtelijk te maken. Respondenten maken hun redenering zo beschikbaar voor de interviewer, zodat deze eventuele problemen kan onderscheppen. Een zodanig opgezet antwoord laat duidelijker zien wat respondenten bedoelen dan wanneer zij slechts een van de antwoordcategorieën herhalen.

Pre- en post-expansies worden ingezet om twee aspecten van surveyvragen aan de kaak te stellen. In sommige gevallen biedt de respondent weerstand aan de tweedeling die de vraag stelt. Door de begrenzingen in surveyvragen heeft een van de antwoordcategorieën vaak een zeer specifieke betekenis, terwijl de andere categorie juist zeer ruim is. Soms is een categorie te specifiek voor de respondent, of juist niet specifiek genoeg. Respondenten verzetten zich dan tegen de
restricties van de antwoordcategorieën door hun antwoord uit te breiden.

In andere gevallen verzetten respondenten zich tegen een vooronderstelling die zich in de vraag bevindt. Respondenten hebben in dit soort gevallen geen moeite de juiste antwoordcategorie te selecteren. Maar de uitbreiding maakt duidelijk hoe de geselecteerde categorie door de interviewer begrepen dient te worden.

**Responsen die geen antwoordcategorie bevatten.**


Desondanks accepteren survey interviewers sommige non-conformerende responsen wel en andere niet. Uit mijn analyses blijkt dat de manier waarop respondenten non-conformerende antwoorden formuleren hierop van invloed is. De antwoorden waarna interviewers doorvragen hebben een aantal kenmerken met elkaar gemeen. Ze worden alle na een stilte ingezet, worden hakkelend geproduceerd, en beginnen met “nou”. Dit zijn kenmerken van gedisprefereerde beurten (Pomerantz 1984a). Daarnaast bevatten antwoorden die niet direct geaccepteerd worden een contrast dat ofwel impliciet blijft, ofwel in de antwoordbeurt wordt uitgewerkt.

**Hoe gaat de interviewer om met non-conformerende responsen? (Hoofdstuk 5)**

Wanneer respondenten hun respons niet in termen van een van de antwoordcategorieën formuleren, staat de interviewer voor de taak met dit respons om te gaan en eventueel alsnog een bruikbaar antwoord van de respondent te krijgen. Omdat het script ervanuit gaat dat respondenten zich volgens de standaardiseringsregels gedragen, kan de interviewer in deze situaties niet op de tekst van het script steunen. Ik heb onderzocht hoe interviewers omgaan met dergelijke non-conformerende responsen en deze manieren georganiseerd op een continuüm. Aan de ene kant van het continuüm laat de interviewer de paradigmatische vraag-antwoord sequentie intact, terwijl aan de
andere kant van het continuüm de interviewer de vraag herhaalt en de sequentie dus opnieuw wordt uitgevoerd.

Paradigmatische vraag-antwoord sequenties bevatten niet noodzakelijkerwijs een antwoord in de termen van een van de antwoordcategorieën. Respondenten kunnen hun antwoordbeurt gebruiken om meer informatie over te brengen dan de keuze voor een categorie duidelijk zou maken. Hoewel ze dan een non-conformerend antwoord geven, impliceren respondenten in die gevallen wel sterk welke categorie van toepassing is. Dit maakt het de interviewer mogelijk een antwoord op te schrijven zonder de vraag-antwoord sequentie te hoeven uitbreiden.

**Herformuleringen**

Interviewers lossen het probleem van een non-conformerend respons ook op door het respons te herformuleren in de woorden van een van de antwoordopties. Interviewers laten met zo’n herformulering zien dat zij minder zeker zijn welke optie zij moeten selecteren, dan wanneer zij het non-conformerende respons stilzwijgend accepteren. Maar zij zijn toch nog zeker genoeg van hun zaak om slechts één antwoordcategorie te selecteren.

Interviewers kunnen hun herformuleringen ook wat meer tentatief vormgeven. Ze maken er dan een zin van met een onderwerp en gezegde, in vraagvorm of met stijgende intonatie. Soms laat de interviewer de mogelijkheid zien dat er meer antwoordmogelijkheden op de respondent van toepassing zouden kunnen zijn door de herformulering af te sluiten met “of...”.

Deze tentatieve herformuleringen worden door respondenten anders behandeld dan hun meer zelfverzekerde soortgenoten. De laatsten worden door de respondent bevestigd met een response token, terwijl de eersten vaak ook nog een herhaling van de categorie door de respondent uitlokken. Met die herhaling stemmen de respondenten expliciet in met de keuze van de interviewer, maar laten ze ook zien dat hun eerste (non-conformerende) antwoordpoging niet precies die antwoordcategorie bevatte.

**Prompts**

Wanneer respondenten niets zeggen in antwoord op de vraag kunnen interviewers hen ‘souffleren’ oftewel van een ‘prompt’ voorzien. Omdat de respondent nog niets heeft gezegd kan de prompt niet gebaseerd worden op een eerste respons, zoals dat het geval is bij herformuleringen. In plaats daarvan is de prompt een verlengstuk van
Interviewers blijken drie strategieën te hebben waar het non-respons van de geïnterviewde betreft. Ze verduidelijken een aspect van de vraag om zo de respondent te helpen met antwoorden. Of ze lezen alle antwoordmogelijkheden voor. Of ze suggereren een antwoordoptie op basis van een vergelijkbaar antwoord dat de respondent eerder heeft gegeven.

**De interviewer doet de vraag over**

Het andere uiteinde van het continuüm bestaat eruit dat de interviewer de vraag opnieuw stelt. Standaardiseringsregels raden aan dat interviewers de vraag herhalen in dezelfde vorm als het origineel, zonder nieuwe termen te introduceren (Fowler & Mangione 1990, Moore & Maynard 2002). Naast deze woordelijke herhaling doen survey interviewers de vraag op nog twee andere manieren over: door delen weg te laten of enigszins te veranderen, en door aspecten van het respons van de geïnterviewde in de herhaling op te nemen.

De woordelijke herhalingen, die dus de standaardiseringsregels volgen, zijn op het lexicale niveau niet responsief op datgene wat de respondent heeft gezegd. Het blijkt echter dat interviewers de prosodie van de tweede versie aanpassen aan de antwoordbeurt van de respondent. Ut die antwoordbeurt blijkt hoe de respondent de vraag begrepen heeft. In hun woordelijke herhalingen benadrukken interviewers woorden of woordgroepen die de respondent blijkbaar niet goed begrepen heeft, en leggen minder nadruk op aspecten van de vraag die respondent wel goed verwerkt heeft.

Interviewers doen iets vergelijkbaars wanneer zij de vraag gedeeltelijk herhalen. Op basis van de antwoordpoging van de respondent laten ze delen van de vraag weg die de respondent goed begrepen lijkt te hebben, terwijl ze de delen intact laten die problematisch lijken te zijn. Zo blijft een geraamte van de vraag over waarin die aspecten behouden zijn gebleven die noodzakelijk zijn voor de specifieke omgeving waarin de vraag moet functioneren.
De derde manier waarop interviewers de vraag overdoen is door nieuwe dingen aan de oorspronkelijke vraag toe te voegen in plaats van delen weg te laten. Interviewers voegen nieuwe delen toe op basis van de antwoordpoging van de respondent. Deze toevoegingen kunnen variëren van een enkel woord tot een heel zinsdeel uit de antwoordbeurt, door de interviewer herhaald met dezelfde prosodie.

Deze laatste wijze van de vraag herhalen is zeer responsief op de beurt van de geïnterviewde aangezien zo een op-maat-gemaakte versie van de vraag ontstaat, precies toegesneden op de problemen die de respondent naar voor heeft gebracht in zijn antwoordbeurt. Deze opnieuw gestelde vragen sporen de respondent aan de vraag te beantwoorden ondanks de problemen waarvan ze in hun antwoordpoging blijk hebben gegeven. De aanpassingen en herhalingen laten zien dat de interviewer naar de respondent luistert, dat hij rekening houdt met datgene wat de respondent zojuist heeft gezegd, maar dat hij desondanks toch een antwoord verwacht.

Conclusies (hoofdstuk 6)
Het onderzoek beschreven in dit proefschrift laat zien dat de contuit metafoor, waarop de theorie achter gestandaardiseerde survey interviews gedeeltelijk rust, niet van toepassing is. Niet alleen blijken respondenten en interviewers zich niet te beperken tot het stellen van vragen en het selecteren van antwoordcategorieën. De antwoorden van de respondent blijken zelfs in sterke mate in de interactie tot stand te komen.

Antwoorden zijn niet als bloemen die wachten om geplukt te worden. De koers van de antwoordbeurt kan worden beïnvloed door de response tokens die de interviewer gebruikt, door aspecten van de vraag waartegen de respondent zich verzet, en door de manier waarop interviewers omgaan met een non-conformerend respons. Antwoorden zijn dus geen kant-en-klare objecten die in het hoofd van de respondent bestaan en slechts opgehaald dienen te worden.

Gevolgen voor gestandaardiseerd survey onderzoek
De invloed van de interactie op de survey data die in die interactie gegenereerd wordt, is nog groter dan uit voorgaand onderzoek is gebleken. Respondenten en interviewers zijn gesprekspartners en behandelen elkaar ook als zodanig. Ze ontwerpen hun beurten voor hun recipiënt en houden rekening met de manier waarop de recipiënt hun beurt zou kunnen begrijpen.
Over het algemeen worden twee soorten response tokens onderscheiden in survey onderzoek: response tokens die een oordeel vellen over de beurt van de respondent, en response tokens die dat niet doen. Uit dit onderzoek blijkt echter dat interviewers een neutraal geacht response token als ‘ja’ inzetten om te laten zien hoe zij het voorgaande begrijpen. Ik heb laten zien in welke mate dat het antwoordproces beïnvloedt.

Survey onderzoekers dienen zich bewust te zijn van de kracht van response tokens. Een token communiceert altijd iets, al is het maar ‘ik beschouw jouw beurt als compleet’ of ‘ik beschouw jouw beurt als incompleet’. Respondenten houden het recipiëntgedrag van de interviewer nauw in de gaten omdat de interviewer bepaalt of hun antwoorden al dan niet bruikbaar zijn. Hoewel het waarschijnlijk onmogelijk is om deze effecten volledig te elimineren, is het zonder twijfel een factor waar survey onderzoekers rekening mee moeten houden.

De uitgebreide antwoorden en non-conformerende responsen die in deze dissertatie besproken worden, zijn te verdelen in twee groepen. Ofwel de respondent toont onzekerheid over welke antwoordcategorie van toepassing is en lost dit op door zijn situatie te beschrijven zodat de interviewer kan helpen bij de keuze voor de juiste antwoordmogelijkheid. Ofwel de respondent geeft een specifieker antwoord dan de antwoordcategorie, en verzet zich daarmee tegen bepaalde aspecten van de vraag of de antwoordmogelijkheden.

Dit soort antwoorden worden niet veroorzaakt doordat de respondent niet in staat of niet van zins is zich op een gestandaardiseerde manier te gedragen. In plaats daarvan zijn ze een bijproduct van de onderzoeksmethode waarbij data wordt verzameld met een interviewer. Het idee de respondent te trainen (zoals Fowler & Mangione 1990 suggereren) zal dus niet leiden tot meer paradigmatische sequenties.

Ook moeten survey onderzoekers er rekening mee houden dat ‘gestandaardiseerd survey research’ eigenlijk alleen de eerste paar-delen van het survey interview standaardiseert. Hoewel het script zowel de vragen als de antwoorden bevat, hebben de respondenten het script niet tot hun beschikking en volgen zij het script niet altijd. Het gestandaardiseerde eerste paar-deel vormt dus slechts de aanzet voor een verder ongestandaardiseerde vraag-antwoord sequentie.
Relevante voor interactie onderzoek


Uit mijn onderzoek naar uitgebreide en non-conformerende responsen blijkt dat antwoorden die kenmerken van een gedisprefereerde beurt hebben, ook een contrast bevatten. Respondenten lijken aanvankelijk voor een van de antwoordcategorieën te kiezen, maar gaan hier vervolgens tegenin met het contrasterend gedeelte. Deze constructie lijkt sterk op de vorm die Pomerantz (1984a) beschrijft voor een verschil van mening.

Deze uitkomst zet mij ertoe aan een bredere formulering voor te stellen voor de constructie ‘weak agreement plus disagreement’. In plaats daarvan stel ik voor aan deze en vergelijkbare constructies (zoals die in mijn data) te refereren met ‘weak preferred preface plus contrastive dispreferred component’ (‘zwakke, geprefereerde inleiding plus contrasterende, gedisprefereerde component’).

Ten slotte is van belang dat de manieren waarop interviewers de vraag overdoen vaak niet zijn vormgegeven als een repair. Hoewel zij wel repairwerkzaamheden verrichten, zien ze eruit als een volgende vraag, een increment, of een herformulering.

Het onmogelijke protocol

Survey interviews worden uitgevoerd op basis van een geschreven protocol. Wanneer je een stuk van dat protocol vergelijkt met de interactie die naar aanleiding daarvan ontstaat, dan wordt duidelijk dat interviewers met allerlei situaties geconfronteerd worden die niet in het script staan. Respondenten geven niet altijd een antwoord in de vorm van een van de categorieën en doen ze dat wel, dan breiden ze hun beurt soms uit met meer informatie. Nadat de interviewer de vraag heeft voorgelezen, geeft het script geen informatie meer over hoe hij met de beurt van de respondent moet omgaan. Interviewers worden misschien wel geïnstrueerd response tokens te gebruiken, maar wanneer precies en hoe, kan vooraf niet gespecificeerd worden.

Het is echter ook duidelijk dat interviewers de interactie ontzettend verbeteren met hun ongestandaardiseerde gedrag. Ze leggen aspecten
van de vraag uit, doen de vraag over, laten de respondent merken dat hun antwoorden worden geaccepteerd, en accepteren non-conformerende responses waarin een antwoordcategorie gemakkelijk te herkennen is. Een belangrijke conclusie van mijn onderzoek is dus dat het onmogelijk is een protocol te ontwerpen dat gedurende het hele interview werkt.
Curriculum vitae

Sanne van ’t Hof was born on July 24, 1976 in Middelburg, The Netherlands. After she and her family moved to Oosterbeek, she attended the Van Lingen College in Arnhem and in 1994 she received her VWO diploma. She went on to study at the University of Groningen, receiving her Propedeuse in Romance Languages and Cultures in 1997 and her Master’s Degree in Communication Studies in 2000. During that degree she first learned about Conversation Analysis and immediately took to the subject.

From February 2001 to February 2006 she was employed as a PhD student at the Utrecht Institute of Linguistics OTS, Utrecht University, to perform a study on spoken interaction based on written questionnaires. In 2003 and 2004 she spent fourteen months in York, England, where studied the sociology and phonetics of interaction and where she conducted a major portion of her study. This dissertation contains the results of her research.