

Arnulf Deppermann

“Don’t get me wrong”: Recipient design by using negation to constrain an action’s interpretation¹

Abstract: Speakers’ dialogical orientation to the particular others they talk to is implemented by practices of recipient-design. One such practice is the use of negation as a means to constrain interpretations of speaker’s actions by the partner. The paper situates this use of negation within the larger context of other recipient-designed uses of negation which negate assumptions the speaker makes about what the addressee holds to be true (second-order assumptions) or what the addressee assumes the speaker holds to be true (third-order assumptions). The focus of the study is on the ways in which speakers use negation to disclaim interpretations of their turns which partners have displayed or may possibly arrive at. Special emphasis is given to the positionally sensitive uses of negation, which may occur before, after or inserted between the nucleus actions whose interpretation is constrained by the negation. Interactional motivations and rhetorical potentials of the practice are pointed out, partly depending on the position of the negation vis-à-vis the nucleus action. The analysis shows that the concept of ‘recipient design’ is in need of distinctions which have not been in focus in prior research.

1 Introduction

Other-orientation is a key concept, perhaps the key notion in dialogism. In talk-in-interaction, the individual responds to another and his or her prior actions or utterances, addresses the other and anticipates possible next actions from him or her. (Linell 2009: 355)

Other-orientation crucially implies that speakers formulate their turns at talk in order to be understood correctly by the specific recipients they address. This

¹ This paper builds on common work with my colleague Hardarik Blühdorn (Deppermann/Blühdorn 2013). I thank the editors for comments on a first version of the paper. Thanks to Silke Scheible for checking my English.

basic design principle of turn-construction is captured by the term 'recipient design'. Recipient design is one of the most important grounds for situated choice of grammatical constructions and lexical items in talk. As the above quote from Linell suggests, recipient design has a temporal index: It builds on partners' prior turns and it involves anticipating recipients' interpretations when formulating turns at talk.

One major task of controlling partners' interpretation turns is to discard unaccepted interpretations. Retrospectively, speakers have to correct unaccepted interpretations of their prior turns as evidenced by their partners' responses. Prospectively, speakers have to anticipate partners' possible interpretations when constructing a turn in order to prevent unwanted interpretations from arising. One routine practice to deal with already factual or possible future unaccepted interpretations by partners is negation: Negation can be used to constrain the interpretation of a nucleus action by explicitly negating possible interpretations of it.

This paper deals with how negation is used to constrain an action's interpretation by taking into account the interpretations that recipients are likely to ascribe or already have ascribed to the speaker's nucleus action. It contributes to answering two of the questions concerning the relationship of dialogue and grammar the editors pose in their introduction:

"how are these [linguistic] patterns constructed step-by-step within a local temporal and sequential order that is established and accomplished by all discourse participants in talk-in-interaction and not by one speaker alone?"

"Is it possible to explain the emergence of grammatical forms by the requirements of the dialogical settings they are used to manage?"

First, 'recipient design' is introduced as a key property of dialogical other-orientation in discourse (2.). A short discussion of features of negation which matter for the current study follows (3.). Sect. 4 gives a short survey of ways in which negation is used to build recipient-designed actions. The main body of the paper is devoted to the analysis of one particular practice of negation, i.e., its use to constrain an action's interpretation (5.). Retrospective and anticipatory uses, and interactionally occasioned and self-initiated occurrences are distinguished and analyzed with respect to their sequential, interpretive and rhetorical features in the process of accomplishing mutual understanding. The conclusion summarizes the findings and closes with considerations for developing the concept 'recipient design' further (6.).

2 Dialogism and recipient design

Dialogism's basic tenet is that linguistic practice is other-orientated. One basic and ubiquitous feature of other-orientation is "Addressivity: Every act is addressed to somebody, whether this addressee is individual or collective, real or imaginary, being another person (or group) or an aspect of one's own self" (Linell 2009: 167). Addressivity is not only a fact concerning the *use* of linguistic structures; it informs the situated *construction* of linguistic structures itself as well. The situated design of turns-at-talk with respect to specific addressees is captured by the conversation-analytic concept 'recipient design', which originates in the lectures of Harvey Sacks (1992) in the early 1970s (cf. Malone 1997: 100–119). The classical definition by Sacks et al. (1974: 727) reads:

By 'recipient design' we refer to a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are co-participants. In our work, we have found recipient design to operate with regard to word selection, topic selection, admissibility and ordering of sequences, options and obligations for starting and terminating conversations etc.

'Recipient design' thus covers part of, but definitely not all of what dialogism understands by other-orientation of linguistic practice. While recipient-design refers to "the particular other(s) who are co-participants" (Sacks et al. 1974: 727), dialogic other-orientation in the sense of Bakhtin (1981) concerns a much wider reach of relationships of a current utterance to talk and texts produced by others. The Bakhtinian sense of other-orientation includes all previous uses of linguistic structures, and most importantly, speaker's biographic experience with how other people have used and interpreted them and the genre-relatedness of linguistic structures (Bakhtin 1986). In contrast to this wide, historic and socio-cultural perspective of how linguistic practice is informed by social experience, 'recipient design' more narrowly relates to the selectivity of linguistic practice with respect to a particular definable addressee or a class of addressees. Moreover, recipient design only concerns others who are participants in an interactional encounter in the sense of Goffman (1963), i.e., people who are ratified participants (but maybe also over-hearers and by-standers) able to receive the turn a speaker is about to produce.

'Recipient design' is related to a number of concepts from pragmatics and social psychology, each capturing specific facets of it:

- Politeness theory claims that relative status, social distance and sympathy of speakers vis-à-vis their interlocutors are determinants of choice of linguistic strategies of politeness (Brown/Levinson 1987).
- Studies on linguistic accommodation (Giles/Coupland 1991) and audience design (Bell 2001) show how speakers adapt their choices of register and code to those of their addressees (also Coupland 2007: 54–81).
- Building on Goffman's notion of 'layering' (Goffman 1981), 'audience design' (Clark/Carlson 1982; Clark/Murphy 1982) is to capture how speakers design speech acts with respect to different addressees or one speech act with different meanings for different recipients. In particular when dealing with mediated communication, designing talk for multiple kinds of recipients becomes a major concern ('*Mehrfachadressierung*', Kühn 1995; Hutchby 1995).
- Cognitive pragmatics studies how assumptions of knowledge shared among interlocutors and the common ground which accumulates during interaction impinge on the design of talk (Clark 1992, 1996a, b; Fetzer/Fischer 2007).

Recipient design concerns different properties of the recipient (social status, group membership, personal and social relationship to speaker, knowledge, expectations, preferences, emotional and attentional state). Various linguistic and communicative practices can be used to design turns with respect to a specific recipient (choice of code, lexical choice, grammatical markers, innuendo, irony, sequential formats, genre, etc.).

Although 'recipient design' is a notion often used in conversation analysis, there is surprisingly little research which has tried to explore practices and properties of recipient design systematically. Classic studies have dealt with the choice of referential terms for persons (Sacks/Schegloff 1979; Schegloff 1996) depending on the knowledge of the recipient. Preferences for recognition and minimization of reference forms were identified. Another seminal study along these lines, although not explicitly using the term 'recipient design', is Schegloff (1972), who focuses on place formulations. Hutchby (1995) shows how hosts of radio-phone-ins design their turns with respect to both the individual caller and the anonymous audience, for which the problem talked about might be interesting in a more generic version.

Malone (1997) takes a different approach, considering recipient design as a strategy of altercasting (Weinstein/Deutschberger 1963), i.e., persuading the recipient strategically. Perspective display sequences (Maynard 1991) are means to elicit assumptions about the recipient in order to use them to impart news that are adapted to what the partner expects. Deppermann/Schmitt (2009)

show how recipient design is rooted in the interactional process guided by a speaker who systematically tests his recipient's knowledge by constructing interactive tasks. Online-analysis of the recipient's performance is then used to adapt consecutive turns to what has been revealed about his knowledge and his stance. The recipient's locally relevant properties, i.e., his/her knowledge, motives, stances, identity features, etc., to which turn-design is adapted, are not settled once for all. Relevant properties of the recipient change and evolve continually over an interactional episode. The linguistic features of recipient design, motivations for it and its function thus have to be analyzed with an eye to the interactional history of the parties, which accounts for the unique adequacy (Psathas 1995) of situated recipient design.

As a backdrop for analyzing recipient design some conceptual clarifications are in place.

a) 'Recipient design' refers to how a speaker designs a turn on behalf of his/her assumptions about the recipient's knowledge, expectations, attitudes, emotions, likely future reactions to the speaker's turn, etc. Practices of recipient design are thus instances of other-positioning (Lucius-Hoene/Deppermann 2004). Recipient design does not refer to cognitive realities, but to practices of turn-construction which are informed by a meta-cognitive partner model.

b) Recipient design rests on assumptions about the partner, i.e., a meta-cognitive 'partner model'. The partner model is continually updated, taking new experiences with the partner into account. Recipient design can, but need not formulate assumptions which are part of the partner model. Mostly, recipient design is indexical, i.e., it presupposes assumptions about the partner which often can be inferred from the recipient-designed turn with more or less certainty. Indexical meanings of recipient design are not coded in linguistic forms, but have to be gleaned from the sequential and larger interactional and social contexts of the recipient-designed turn.

c) The partner model is a representation by the speaker. In the case of epistemic structures like knowledge, motives, etc., it is a meta-representation containing what the speaker assumes that the partner assumes (2nd and higher order assumptions). The partner model is part of the speaker's perspective, i.e., it is not a model of what the partner him/herself assumes. Recipient design may rest on speaker's observations and inferences from the recipient's previous behavior, but it may also build on assumptions based on supposed common sense, recipient's category membership, or just the speaker's own fears and hopes. Speaker's assumptions are necessarily largely imaginary. Therefore, the partner model must not be identified with the real partner: Whether the partner accepts speaker's assumptions about the partner is not determined by the model, but is only revealed by the partner's reactions. Recipient design is subject to

the more general problem of the opacity of other minds (Husserl 1929; Wittgenstein 1950; Duranti 2008): The speaker can never adapt his/her turn to the partner as such, but only to the partner-as-conceived-of-by-the-speaker. This distinction points to a double equivocation of the notion 'recipient design': Recipient design is produced with respect to addressees-as-conceived-of-by-speakers, but not with respect to factual recipients; recipient design is tailored to intended addressees and maybe other participants who are not (overtly) addressed, but it does not necessarily take into account any person who happens to become a recipient of the turn so designed (e.g., unknown over-hearers, eavesdroppers; cf. Goffman 1981).

Using conversation-analytic methodology, this study deals with a discursive practice of recipient design. It neither aims to identify speaker's partner models nor to check whether they are "correct". However, in order to analyze motivations, functions and meanings of recipient design, speakers' choices need to be accounted for in terms of assumptions about the partner insofar as they can be seen to be indexed in the situated particulars of the talk.

A prime concern of recipient design is to support the achievement of mutual understanding. Formulating turns with an eye on partner's preconditions of understanding requires a recursive dialogical orientation from the speaker. Speaker does not only have to consider the perspective of the other, but also more precisely the perspective of the other on the speaker and his/her meanings, including interpretations the speaker might impute to the other. Turns are recipient-designed in order to effectively guide the recipient to arrive at the interpretation the speaker intends to evoke and to rule out other possible, but unintended interpretations. In other words, recipient design aims to make certain interpretations of a speaker's turn part of the common ground (cf. Clark 1992; 1996b) while excluding other interpretations (which may still be entertained privately, in other contexts, etc.). Negation can be used precisely to do the latter job: to prevent possible interpretations of the speaker's action from becoming part of the common ground and to remove unintended interpretations from it.

3 Negation

This section deals with grammatical, semantic and pragmatic properties of negation which are immediately relevant to its use for concerns of recipient design. Negation is linguistically realized by linguistic structures functioning as a negative operator.² In German, the negative particle (*nicht*, ‘not’) and non-referential negative indefinite expressions (*kein(e/r)*, ‘no(ne)’, *niemand*, ‘nobody’, *nichts*, ‘nothing’, *niemals*, ‘never’) are used for the negation of syntactic constituents. This may range from single-word phrases (which can be fused with the negative morpheme) to whole sentences (and, by virtue of the semantics of the negated structures, beyond). Negation can also be expressed by lexemes with implied negative meanings like *ohne* (‘without’) and by morphological negation (*un-* + ADJ), which, however, in many cases is not strictly compositional (e.g., *unheimlich*, ‘uncanny’) or has no positive antonym without *un-* (e.g., *unglaublich*, ‘incredible’). Since morphological negation almost never presupposes the speaker to assume that the non-negated meaning may be relevant for the recipient (cf. Verhagen 2005: 32–34), it does not belong to the scope of this paper.

Semantically, negative expressions function like focus particles (Blühdorn 2012: 255): They index that the constituent over which the negation has scope, the negated expression, is excluded from the set of contextually relevant alternatives, which are candidates for the place the negated expression inhabits in the speaker’s talk. Negation can operate on three levels (Blühdorn 2012: ch.7–10):

- epistemically, a proposition may be negated;
- with respect to factuality, a state of affairs may be negated;
- meta-linguistically or meta-communicatively, the acceptability of an expression or an action may be negated for reasons of normative, stylistic or descriptive inadequacy (Horn 2001: ch.6; Carston 1993).

Pragmatically, negation has powerful inferential properties. Since it excludes the negated alternative from the set of contextually relevant alternatives, it can be used to pick out one particular alternative without naming it, if the set is restricted to two alternatives or ordered according to likelihood. This is especially the case with scalar implicatures (see Horn 2001: ch.4): It suggests the inference that not just any non-negated point on the scale may be valid, but usually

² The discussion of negation in German in this section follows Blühdorn (2012).

the next relevant point below the negated point (e.g. “It did not hurt much” implicates ‘It hurt’), and sometimes also the next relevant point above the negated point (e.g. in the metalinguistic negation of the appropriateness of “much”: “It did not hurt ‘much’” implicates ‘It hurt intolerably’, see Horn 2001: 382–387).

4 Negation as a dialogical, recipient-designed practice

The relevance of negation for recipient design rests on the fact that negation is never sufficiently motivated only by the fact that some proposition is not true, some state of affairs does not exist or some expression is not acceptable to the speaker. Negation “primarily operates in the dimension of intersubjective coordination” (Verhagen 2005: 76; see also Couper-Kuhlen/Fox/Thompson this volume): The use of negation presupposes that the negated alternative is contextually relevant, i.e., will at least potentially be held to be true, existing or adequate by the recipient or some relevant third party (Verhagen 2005: ch.2). Verhagen (2005) therefore counts negation among the “constructions of intersubjectivity”: By sentential negation, the recipient “is invited to consider-and-abandon [...] a positive epistemic stance to [...] conclusions from the previous discourse” (Verhagen 2005: 72). “Relevant” may mean various states of affairs with respect to what the recipient assumes: S/he may consider the negated expression to be true, likely, expected, preferred, to be inferred from the speaker’s talk, etc. In the following, “assumption” will be used as a cover term for whatever is ascribed to the partner, i.e., knowledge, expectations, intentions, aims, emotional and moral stance, etc. Negation can concern three orders of assumptions, each tied to different sequential practices of using negation.

4.1 Negation of 1st order assumptions

Speaker negates an assumption s/he has made herself, including assumptions that have been shared with the recipient. An example for this is the use of negation in order to retract overstatements (Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson 2005): The speaker negates a formulation which s/he has produced immediately before.

#1 from Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson (2005: 262)

I'm just so glad it's an in service training day tomorrow so I can switch off.
Well. **Not** really **switch off** but you know. **Relax.**

Negation in this case concerns an assumption which the speaker had expressed his/herself, using "switch off" to describe her intended action. She then negates the adequacy of this formulation and replaces it by "relax".

4.2 Negation of 2nd order assumptions

The speaker negates an assumption which s/he assumes to be held by the recipient. In interaction, negation of 2nd order assumptions is mainly used to construct three kinds of actions: negative responses to polar questions, disagreements, and indexing dispreferred actions.

a) Negative response to polar question

Speaker negates an assumption which the recipient has put forward as a possible assumption in a preceding polar question.

#2 Talk on tv 4050.061 "foreigners", 21:25–21:55

- 762 MS: kann man das so sagen dass uns ausländer die
arbeitsplätze WEGnehmen.
can one say it this way that foreigners take away our jobs?
- 763 schließlich HAben wir ja zwei millionen Arbeitslose. (-)
we got two millions of unemployed people after all.
- 764 WE: **nein!**
no
- 765 da steht die VORstellung dahinter
behind this there is the idea
- 766 dass es n_festes kontingent von ARbeitsplätzen gäb;
that there was a fixed amount of jobs
(...)
- 781 WE: es gibt **nicht ne** knappheit von Arbeitsplätzen
there is not a shortage of jobs
wie es ne knappheit von ÖL oder von GOLD gibt.
like there is a shortage of oil or gold

In the case of a negative response to a polar question, speaker takes a negative stance towards the truth or adequacy of an assumption which the recipient brought up as a possible, or, depending on the preferences established by the

formulation of the polar question (cf. Raymond 2003), probable assumption. Negative responses additionally require “either an account for the denial or a correction of the denied assumption” (Ford 2002: 66) in order to be accountable. This observation seems to indicate that in order to restore intersubjectivity, the respondent has to provide an acceptable reason for negating the position presented in the prior turn (as WE does in S781 of #2) or has to come up with an accountable alternative. The same seems to apply to disagreements (see below; cf. Ford 2001), at least in cooperative interaction.

b) Disagreement

To build disagreement, negation is used to reject an assumption which the recipient has asserted in prior talk. Disagreement typically uses format-tying of the negated expression (Goodwin 1990): Speaker recycles (part of) recipient’s prior formulation, conserves its syntax and wording, to display that s/he deals with and negates precisely what the recipient has asserted. The negative particle is mostly stressed in order to highlight disagreement. In #3, the host MG refers to his addressee BH as an “oberchaot” (‘super slob’). BH rejects this categorization for himself.

#3 Talk on tv 4050.026 “abortion”, 04:30–04:38

- 075 MG: also ich FINde- (.)
well I find
- 076 man muss schon fragen ob ein Oberchaot aus bErLin
WIRKlich als
*one needs to ask if a super slob from Berlin should really sit as
vertreter deutscher interessen im [eurOpaparlament
SITzen soll.]
a representative of German interests in the European parliament*
- 077 BH: [das verBITte ich
mir.=ich bin]
I refuse to tolerate this
- 078 BH: **KEIN oberchaot.**=<<p>ne?>
I am not a super slob right?

c) Displaying dispreferredness

In dispreferred responses, speakers display that they are aware of recipient’s expectations which they do not fulfill. Negation here is routinely used to deny recipient’s expectations which are presupposed for the possibility of producing a preferred response, but which, according to the responder, do not hold. Negation is thus used to make dispreferred responses accountable by negating pre-

suppositions needed for a preferred response. A case in point are epistemic disclaimers, ranging from discourse markers to full-blown denials of knowledge (Weatherall 2011).

#4 Behavior therapy Ronald, 03:15–03:24

001 TRP: wie GEHT_s ihnen damit- (.)
how do you feel
 002 wenn sie_s (.) so an MORgen denken-
when thinking about tomorrow?
 003 (1.8)
 004 PAT: HH <<p> **keine Ahnung** ich **weiß es SELber** no net.>
no idea I do not know myself yet
 005 °hh (1.2)

The patient shows that “keine ahnung” (‘no idea’, S004) here is not merely used as a discourse marker to reduce his claim to truth and precision by reformulating it with a full compositional sentence expressing lack of knowledge (“ich weiß es selber no net”, ‘I do not know myself yet’, S004). With epistemic disclaimers of this kind, speakers display that they perceive the recipient’s expectation that they will produce a statement for which they assume epistemic responsibility. The negation works reflexively, and is part and parcel of the accomplishment of the dispreferred response.

d) Negative formulation of a partner’s prior turn

Another use of negations to deal with 2nd order assumptions is the practice of negative formulation of a partner’s prior turn. Here, the speaker does not negate an assumption which s/he assumes the recipient to be holding; instead, the speaker ascribes a negative assumption to the partner. This practice is used to explicitly exclude an assumption which the recipient could have made or was understood to be entertaining. Extract #5 is from a therapy session; the patient talks about what would happen if his sexual partner discovered that he had blood in his sperm.

#5 Behavior therapy “white jacket”, 09:16–09:33

209 PAT: ich muss mich da jetzt net RECHTfertige-
I do not have to justify myself for this
 210 und wenn_s wirklich- (.)
and if really
 211 TRP: mhm-

- 212 PAT: die FRAge in rAUm gestEllt wird,
the question is posed
- 213 <<all> dann kann ich das ja> s0- (---)
then I can just say it like
- 214 nö kann_s jetzt einfach so (.) SAgen;=oder?
well can say it just like that, right?
- 215 TRP: <<h>mhm.> (---)
- 216 <<p>mhm> <<all>also sie HAM_S noch> NIE erlebt dass
dass die FRA:ge vom pArtner kam?
*m_hm so you never had the experience that that the question came from the
partner*
- 217 (---) sondern Eher so dass SIE das gefühl haben sie
wollen_s erklären,=
but rather that you have the feeling you'd like to explain it
- 218 =also so war_s [BIS]her [jetzt?>]
that is how it was until now
- 219 PAT: [ja;] [ja;]
yes yes
- 220 PAT: ja [RICHTig.]
yes *right*
- 221 TRP: [aha okAY.]
oh okay

With the negative formulation, the therapist reformulates the recipient's prior turn by drawing a negative inference from it: 'you never made the experience that the question came from the partner' (S216). This inference rules out a contextually relevant, possible assumption, which the therapist had reason to ascribe to the patient because of his earlier narrative not rendered here (i.e., the partner asked the patient about the blood in his sperm), but which could be heard to be implicitly denied by the patient's immediately prior conditional turn ('if really the question is posed', S210/212). The therapist's formulation of the negated second order assumption is a check for confirmation. The negative formulation is designed to get the recipient to take a stance on alternatives which the speaker wishes the recipient to choose from. Explicit stance-taking is elicited, because from the speaker's point of view the choice implies inferences and evaluations which are crucial for future action.

4.3 Negation of 3rd order assumptions

The speaker negates an assumption which s/he assumes to be held by the recipient about the speaker him/herself. 3rd order assumptions are assumptions about mutual understanding. They concern second order understandings, i.e., (speaker's) understandings of (partner's) understandings (Deppermann i.pr.). Negation in this case specifically denies that the recipient has arrived at a cor-

5 Using negation to constrain the interpretation of a nucleus action

Negation used in third position repair is but one use of negation to reject interpretations of speaker's actions. The more general structure of the use of negation for this concern is this: Speaker performs a nucleus action, i.e., an action which is the pragmatic point of a turn-at-talk; in addition to this action, speaker produces a negation. The negation constrains the interpretation of the nucleus action by excluding understandings which the recipient might infer from it or which s/he has already displayed.³ In this way, speaker uses negation to prevent unintended meanings from becoming part of the common ground of what speaker has meant. Using negation this way is thus a case of reflexive management of understandings by blocking unintended inferences. It works as a 'disclaimer' (Hewitt/Stokes 1975).⁴

The nucleus action and the negation constraining its interpretation can be positioned vis-à-vis each other in different ways: The negation can precede the nucleus (5.1), it can be inserted between two formulations of the nucleus (5.2), it can follow the nucleus (5.3), and negation(s) can also be designed to constrain the interpretation of a nucleus which, however, is not (clearly) produced (5.4). In addition to how negations constrain the interpretation of the nucleus, the analysis presented in this section focuses on the interactional and rhetorical properties of its use in the different positions. Firstly, it will be analyzed whether the negation responds to manifest or indirect antecedents in recipient's prior actions. Secondly, rhetorical properties of constraining negations will be identified using the *Gesprächsrhetorik*-approach ('rhetorics in conversation') developed by Kallmeyer/Schmitt (1996). They conceive rhetorical potentials of interactive practices in terms of both the chances and the dangers that they involve for the speaker's position. Rhetorical practices pave the way for recipient's responses and for courses of future interaction, which may either be in line with speakers' interests and broaden their pragmatic options or endanger and restrict the speakers' opportunities in future interaction.

³ Using the terminology proposed by Mann/Thompson (1988) in their Rhetorical Structure Theory, the negation is the satellite with respect to the nucleus action.

⁴ Hewitt/Stokes (1975) state that disclaimers are used to constrain the interpretation of an action in order to prevent ruptures of social order and face-threats. In the case of negation used to constrain interpretation, this can be the case (see #8 and #11 below), but it does not necessarily have to be like this.

The study rests on N=65 instances of negations used to constrain the interpretation of nucleus actions. They are drawn from different interaction types: two televised talk-shows (corpus "Gespräche im Fernsehen", IDS Mannheim), three psychotherapy sessions, five sociolinguistic interviews (corpus "Deutsch heute", IDS Mannheim), five oral university exams and three conversations among students (both from corpus "FOLK", IDS Mannheim).

5.1 Pre-positioned constraint on interpretation

In the case of pre-positioned constraint of interpretation, speaker produces the negation before the nucleus action within a multi-unit turn. Speaker excludes a possible interpretation of the nucleus self-initiatedly, before recipient may infer it from the nucleus. The turn-construction schematically runs as follows:

Speaker: Negation
 Nucleus

In #7, the patient talks about his partner who is HIV-positive.

#7 Behaviour therapy Ronald, 13:36–14:15

001 PAT: (-) mein PARTner SELber (hat AUCh,)
 my partner himself has also

002 (-) <<pp>isch->
 is

003 (-) <<h>ha i VAU,>
 HIV

004 TRP: (-) mHM,
 m_hm

005 PAT: °hh (--)<<f> u::nd ä::hm;
 and erm

006 (3.2)
007 bei I:HM:,>
 as far as he is concerned

008 (1.9)
009 na ich (-) <<p,all>WILL net;>
 well I do not want

010 (-) ich: S:AG jetzt <<all>NET dass er k;>
 I'm not saying now that he

011 (-) d_schon dran erKRANKT isch,
 has already got ill from it

012 °hh (--)<<Aber; (.) Ä:HM-
 but erm

- 013 (.) er hat mittlerweile schon SO viel DURCHgmacht, =un
 he has already gone through so much by now and
- 014 (--) wo er SELber sAgt;
 where he says himself
- 015 (-) s: (-) er is SCHON an dem punkt,
 he has already reached the point
- 016 (---) <<dim,all>dass er die medikaMENTe Absetzt;>
 where he stops taking medication

Negation: 'I do not want I'm not saying now that he has already got ill from it' (S009-011)

Nucleus: 'He has already gone through so much by now (...)' (S013-016)

Having stated that his partner is HIV-positive (S001-003), the patient negates that he intends to say that his partner has already fallen ill from it, i.e., that the partner is already suffering from AIDS (S009-011). The negation does not respond to an antecedent produced by the therapist, but builds on inferences which could be drawn from the patient's own prior statement that his partner is HIV-positive. It is thus a recipient-designed anticipatory negation. The negations "ich will net" ('I do not want', S009) and "ich sag jetzt net" ('I'm not saying now', S010) establish constraints for the interpretation of the following statement (S012-016), which is prefaced by the adversative connective "aber" ('but'): The anticipatory negation blocks the inference that the partner already suffers from AIDS, which the therapist otherwise might draw from the patient's report that his partner has already gone through much.

Pre-positioning a constraining negation aims to exclude possible inferences before the nucleus is even produced and before the recipient may arrive at an unwanted interpretation by him/herself. In contrast to post-positioning the negation after the nucleus (see 5.2/5.3), pre-positioning the constraining negation may seem more credible, because the speaker constrains the interpretation of the nucleus self-initiatedly, and does not do this in response to unaccepted responses by the recipient. The negation therefore is more likely to be treated as what it purports to be, a clarification of intended meaning to preempt misunderstanding. It is less likely thought to be motivated by strategic interests of its producer, i.e., not reflecting speaker's authentic intended meaning, but inspired by caution, avoidance of conflict or even misleading manipulation. Pre-positioning the negation is also advantageous in terms of turn-taking. Pre-positioned constraints of interpretation establish a strong projection (cf. Auer 2005; Günthner this volume) for the ensuing production of the nucleus in the same turn; thus, they help the speaker to keep the turn. If the nucleus is pro-

duced first, however, the speaker may run the risk of losing the turn before being able to constrain its interpretation.

While pre-positioned negation is advantageous in terms of turn-taking and credibility, it may cause problems of online-processing (cf. Auer 2009). For the recipient, pre-positioning constraints of interpretation to a nucleus not yet produced might hamper understanding because of problems with information-structure. Since the recipient does not yet know the nucleus when the negation is produced, s/he may miss why and how negation affects the nucleus assertion, and the more so, the more extended the negated expression is and the further remote the nucleus is. These problems may account for the fact that in the data studied, “pure” pre-positioned negation almost never occurs. As in #7, the speaker almost always first formulates an aboutness-topic (S001–003: ‘my partner has also is also HIV’), which establishes a topical frame for the interpretation of the following negation.

Still, there is a more general problem, which applies to all uses of negation to constrain the interpretation of a nucleus action: By negating an interpretation, the speaker may run the risk of making exactly the interpretation that is to be excluded salient and possibly relevant for the recipient in the first place. Perhaps, the recipient would not have arrived at this interpretation or would not have thought that it might matter to the speaker, if the speaker had not produced the negation. This rhetorical dilemma derives from the grammar of negation: In order to negate a fact, a proposition or the adequacy of an expression, it has to be formulated as negated expression. Negation inevitably expresses what is to be excluded, and thus may lead the recipient to arrive at the very interpretation which should be excluded from common ground by its formulation.

5.2 Inserted constraint on interpretation

In the overwhelming number of instances in my data, the constraining negation is produced as an insertion between two formulations of the nucleus. There are two formats of sequential organization: reactive, interactionally occasioned constraints on interpretation and self-initiated constraints on interpretation.

a) Reactive, interactionally occasioned constraint on interpretation

Negation may be produced to constrain an interpretation of a previously produced nucleus action after a recipient’s response which displays an interpretation of the nucleus which is not accepted by its producer. Constraining negation is then used as third-position repair (cf. 4.3). It is an other-correction which negates, and by this excludes, an interpretation of the speaker’s turn in first

position which the speaker ascribes to his/her recipient on behalf of his/her intervening talk. The sequential pattern looks like this:

Speaker: Nucleus

Recipient: Response displaying interpretation of nucleus

Speaker: Negation

Re-instatement of nucleus

In extract #8 from a TV-broadcast, the host MG and the politician BH talk about BH's position as a representative of the Green party in the European parliament. BH had been renowned as publisher of a radical left-wing political magazine. He was sentenced to go to prison because he had published admission statements of leftist groups claiming responsibility for terroristic assaults. He was able to avoid imprisonment only by being elected to the European Parliament. MG challenges BH's aptness as a representative of Germany in the European Parliament by calling him an "oberchaot" ('super slob', cf. #3 supra).

#8 Talk on tv 4050.026 "abortion", 04:30-04:55

- 075 MG: also ich FINde- (.)
well I find
- 076 man muss schon frAgen ob ein Oberchaot aus bErlin
 WIRKlich als
*one needs to ask if a super slob from Berlin should really sit as
 vertreter deutscher interessen im [eurOpaparlament
 SITzen soll.]
 a representative of German interests in the European parliament*
- 077 BH: [das verBITte ich
 mir.=ich bin] *I refuse to tolerate this*
- 078 BH: **KEIN oberchaot.**=<<p>ne?>
I am not a super slob right?
- 079 (0.5)
- 080 MG: das is ja auch EIgentlich ein wOrt das gelegentlich ah-
well actually this is a word which sometimes
- 081 (0.8)
- 082 MG: **GAR nich so böse gemEInt Is,** (.)
isn't meant in a bad way
- 083 chaoten sind ja (.) in ALler regel sogar sympAthische
 [leute,]
as a rule slobs are usually even likeable people
- 084 BH: [aber]
but
- 085 Oberchaoten das [is schon so-] (0.5) wieder diese
 militärische-

- 086 MG: *super slob* that's already again like this military
[is zu VIEL?]
is too much?
- 087 MG: aber ich weiß dass [benny härlin]in Allen zirkeln der
but I know that Benny Härlin is and was at home in all groups of
- 088 BH: [<<p>kategorie.>]
category
- 089 MG: alternativen scene in berlin zu hAUse IST und wAr.
the alternative crowds in Berlin
- 090 bei der TAZ bei der a EL,
at the Tageszeitung (= left-wing newspaper) and the Alternative Liste (=
green, left-wing party)
- 091 (0.5)
- 092 MG: an in allen möglichen SELBStverwalteten
SELBSTbewirtschafteten betRIEben und kollektIven,
in all possible self-governed self-managed enterprises and collectives
- 093 (0.8)
- 094 MG: <<all>dA sind sie ja zu HAUse
That's where your home is
- 095 dA kommen sie hEr.=
that's where you come from
- 096 =eine !PFLAN!ze aus dieser->
a plant from this
- 097 aus diesem milieu SIND sie ja.
from this milieu you are

Speaker: Nucleus: 'One has to ask if a super slob ...' (S076)

Recipient: Response: 'I refuse to tolerate this. I am not a super slob.' (S077f.)

Speaker: Negation: 'this is a word which incidentally isn't meant in a bad way.' (S80-82)

Re-instatement of nucleus: 'but I know that Benny Härlin is and was at home in all groups of alternative crowds...' (S087-097)

The expression "oberchaot" ('super slob', S076) is derived from *Chaot* ('slob'), which at the time of the recording (1989) was used as an abusive term to refer to people with a radical left-wing orientation by their opponents. As a response, leftists also started to use it affirmatively for self-categorization. The superlative "oberchaot", however, was not used affirmatively. It could only be heard as being abusive. BH refuses this expression to be applied to him (S077f.), i.e., he negates its appropriateness metalinguistically. In S080-082, MG responds by constraining the interpretation of *Oberchaot*, claiming it does not have to be interpreted as malevolent, i.e., as a negative assessment; instead, he asserts that "chaoten" ('slobs') are likeable as a rule (S083). MG now does not use the superlative "oberchaot" anymore, thus implicitly backing down from its use.

This can be understood as conceding that the original formulation cannot be interpreted innocently.

By rejecting a necessarily malevolent intention, MG's negation displays his understanding of the reason for BH's disagreement, namely, that BH understands "oberchaot" as a malevolent devaluation of himself. Still, BH does not accept MG's declaration of a possibly innocent interpretation (B084f.). Taking up the term MG had originally used, BH insists that "oberchaot" is a 'military category', alluding to the fact that it was used as a stigma word to devalue opponents. In S087–097, MG reinstates the non-polemic descriptive core content of what he had previously glossed by "oberchaot": He enumerates BH's activities which testify his strong affiliation to the leftist-alternative milieu of Berlin.

The linguistic format of MG's negation is an instance of a non-canonical repair-format "X does not necessarily mean Y". It mitigates the negative assessment which BH treated to be implied by "oberchaot" by claiming that a negative assessment need not be intended or understood. It might seem puzzling that MG does not claim not to have meant a negative assessment. The fact that MG leaves open what he (claims to have) meant by "oberchaot" in his first-positioned turn is indicative of the participation framework of the broadcast. MG displays that he does not take a stance on BH's political position. In Goffman's terms, MG displays that he does not use "oberchaot" as principal (Goffman 1981), but rather as animator and author, giving voice to possible views on BH from the point of view of different political positions. Accordingly, the unusual form of repair displays that he does not seek agreement with BH on how BH is to be categorized, but rather invites self-disclosure from BH by confronting him with how he is viewed by others (cf. Clayman/Heritage 2002).

Reactive constraints of interpretation by negation respond either to semantic misunderstandings or to disaffiliative recipient reactions like disagreement, displays of skepticism, and rejection of offers and requests. In cases of disaffiliation (like in #8), constraining negation serves to make speaker's nucleus action more acceptable by excluding interpretations which manifestly or, from the speaker's perspective, presumably have caused its disaffiliative uptake. Constraining negation may overcome the recipient's disaffiliation by clarifying and differentiating speaker's meaning. In the specific genre of broadcast discussion, the combination of attack (nucleus) and mitigating repair (negation) provides flexible means of eliciting stances by guests, testing their readiness for discussion and limits of confrontation. Hosts can do this because they are not held to take a consistent evaluative political stance.

As we saw in #8, a post-hoc constraint on interpretation, however, may be rejected as being incredible by the recipient. It may be considered as a strategic

move to avoid unwanted interactional consequences (face-threat, conflict, ruptures of intersubjectivity, etc.), but not as an honest expression of speaker's attitude.

b) Self-initiated constraint on interpretation

Speakers may also produce a constraining negation self-initiatedly after their nucleus turn, i.e., before any misunderstanding or disaffiliative reaction by recipients occurs, and then reinstate the nucleus action.⁵ The pattern is:

Speaker: Nucleus
 Negation
 Re-instatement of nucleus

Extract #9 is taken from a sociolinguistic interview: The interviewer (IV) asks WIE2 to categorize the variety of speech WIE2 uses in the interview. WIE2 first responds that it belongs to a 'higher' level, but hastens to add that it is not his 'literary German'.

#9 Sociolinguistic interview DH WIE2, 07:56–08:28

0222 IV was ist das, (.)
 what is this

0223 was WIR miteinander jetzt rEden;
 which we speak with one another now

0224 wie (.) [würdest du das]
 how would you

0225 WIE2 [ja schon eher]die Höhere [äh-]
 well already rather the higher (one) uhm

0226 IV [aha.]
 oh

0227 WIE2 äh also <<f> **nicht nicht ganz**> der l mein literarisches
 (.)
 °hh [DEUTSCH,]
 uhm well not not absolutely my literary German

0228 IV [<<p>hm hm;]

⁵ This use resembles what Mazeland (2007) has found for recipient-designed parenthetical inserts in turns, which can evolve into small sequences of mutual verification of prerequisites necessary for understanding the ongoing turn.

- 0229 WIE2 aber,
but
 0230 (1.3)
 0231 WIE2 weil ich jetzt nicht- (.)
because now I do not
- 0232 **extra ACHte auf die-** (.)
specifically pay attention to
- 0233 IV [((coughs))]
 0234 WIE2 [**auf die**]**beTONung oder,**
the stress or
 0235 **äh oder auf die,**
uhm or the
 0236 (0.7)
 0237 WIE2 **äh auf die ausSPRache-**
uhm or the pronunciation
- 0238 (0.4)
 0239 WIE2 aber doch Eher,
but still rather
 0240 (0.7)
 0241 WIE2 ja weil ich mErke sie kOmmen (.) aus DEUTSCHland,
yes since I realize that you come from Germany
- 0242 (0.8)
 0243 WIE2 versuch ich schon Irgendwie-
I indeed try somehow
 0244 (0.6)
 0245 IV Mhm;
 0246 (0.4)
 0247 IV okay,
 0248 WIE2 <<p>ja.>=
yes
 0249 =wenn ich jetzt rüber in die KLASse gehe,
if I now move over to the classroom
- 0250 täte ich: (.)
I would
- 0251 wahrscheinlich ganz Anders wieder REden.
probably talk completely differently again

Nucleus: 'well already rather the higher (one)' (S225)

Negation: 'not not absolutely my literary German ...' (S227-237)

Re-instatement of nucleus: 'but still rather yes since I realize you come from Germany ...' (S239-251)

In his initial answer “ja schon eher die höhere” (‘well already rather the higher (one)’, S225) WIE2 uses the definite article. This can be understood to imply that WIE2 commands only two different varieties or styles of speaking, and that the one he uses in the interview is the more sophisticated one of these two. IV’s change-of-state token “aha” (‘I see’, S226; cf. Golato 2010) may be heard to display that IV has gained this understanding. WIE2 then hastens to exclude the inference IV might have drawn that the variety he uses now is the highest available to him by adding the constraining negation ‘not not absolutely my literary German’ (S227). This indexes that he is in command of a still higher, but not currently used variety he calls ‘my literary German’. The negation here is used for a self-repairing specification (indexed by *also*). WIE2 goes on to explain what he means by ‘my literary German’ (S231–237), thus warranting his claim of being in command of another, more prestigious variety. Finally, he reinstates the nucleus of his answer by explaining what he means by the “higher” variety mentioned earlier, which he uses with the interviewer (S239–251).

The self-initiated, post-positioned constraining negation ‘not not absolutely my literary German’ has no antecedent in IV’s actions. Like pre-positioned constraining negation, it is anticipatory in being designed to prevent the partner from arriving at an unintended interpretation of the nucleus. The negation is produced to avoid impending misunderstanding. Moreover, we can see in #9 how constraining negation is exploited to display careful usage of terms. WIE2 displays his ability to reflect on and describe nuances of the subject matter. He uses it to transcend the scope of the question by positioning himself as a speaker of a most prestigious variety. Still, this additional differentiation between linguistic varieties might be considered puzzling or irrelevant by the recipient. It thus may be misunderstood in its function, and discarded or treated as pretentious.

From an interactional point of view it might seem questionable to treat both reactive and self-initiated formats as inserted cases of negation constraining the interpretation of a nucleus action. However, the difference between the two cases is not binary, but much more of a continuum: It ranges from cases like #8, where the third-positioned constraining negation sequentially follows a recipient’s response to a first-positioned nucleus, over instances in which the constraining negation is produced in an ongoing turn in response to simultaneous multimodal recipient responses (like facial expression displaying skepticism, cf. Crespo Sendra et al. 2013), to cases where there is no discernible recipient’s response the speaker reacts to. As we could see in #9, a speaker’s change-of-state token may also occasion a constraining negation, because it may be taken as a premature display of understanding in need of repair.

5.3 Post-positioned constraint on interpretation

Negation can also be post-positioned after the nucleus to constrain its interpretation without the nucleus being re-instated afterwards. The sequential pattern is thus:

Speaker: Nucleus
Negation

In #10 from an oral university exam in literary studies, the examinee (EE) answers the question how the Orient is represented in the Middle High German verse romance “Herzog Ernst”. In the course of her answer, she talks about the image of the Orient in medieval literature in general (S531–541), but then adds that some of its properties do not apply to “Herzog Ernst”.

#10 Oral university exam FOLK_E_00062_SE_01_T_01, 19:45–20:05

- 531 EE: der Orient wurde also als °h äh-
the Orient was then considered
- 532 (0.4) einerseits gesegnete WELTgegend,
on the one hand as a blessed quarter of the world
- 533 mit den °h paraDIESflüssen, (.)
with the paradise rivers
- 534 EUphrat [und TIG]ris gesehen- [°h]
Euphrates and Tigris
- 535 EX: [jaha,] [hm_hm.]
yes M_hm
- 536 EE: (0.4) also als,
I mean as
- 537 (0.5) ja:,
yes
- 538 (.) als ähm- (.)
as erm
- 539 ((dental click)) lOcus aMOEnus,
locus amoenus (lat.; ,pleasant place')
- 540 und andererseits eben auch als-
and on the other hand also as
- 541 (0.7) hm (.) Fabelhafter orient mit Fabelvölkern und
MONStren die
ja (.) °h ähm;
uhm mythical Orient with mythical tribes and monsters which yes uhm

- 542 (0.5) aber hier im im im herzog Ernst **keine** (.)
keine ROLle spielen,
however do not play a role in the Herzog Ernst
- 543 DA: ham wir_s ja mit fabelv_völkern-
there we are rather faced with
- 544 (0.6)
- 545 EE: fabelWesen eher zu tun-
mythical creatures
- 546 k auf jeden fall **nich mit MONStren im sinne von °h einer**
 (.) **HEILSgeschichtlichen auslegung oder-**
in any case not with monsters in the sense of an eschatological exegesis or
- 547 (0.6)
- 548 EE: [äh] (.) **symbolischen** (.) **bedEUTung;**
erm **symbolic** **meaning**
- 549 EX: [mhm;]
uhum
- 550 (2.2)
- 551 EE: ja-
yes
- 552 EX: gut. (.)
okay
- 553 womIt, (.) wann beginnt denn das dass man diese WEsen
 (...)
with which when does it start that one represents these creatures

Nucleus: “mythical Orient with mythical tribes and monsters” (S541)

Negation: “which however do not play a role in the Herzog Ernst ... ” (S542, 546/548)

The examinee demonstrates her knowledge about the image of the Orient in Middle High German literature. This gets her into trouble, because the examiner may assume that she intends her statements to also be valid for the verse romance “Herzog Ernst”, which was the established discourse topic until this point. By explicitly negating that monsters play a role in “Herzog Ernst”, the examinee aims to prevent the examiner from ascribing this interpretation to her. Obviously, the examinee takes care to exclude interpretations of her statements which she considers wrong and thus potentially harmful for her.

In my data, post-positioned negation is used in responsive turns where the nucleus action does not establish projections for next action, which would have to be renewed after the constraining negation (as is done in the case of inserted constraining negation, cf. 5.2). Thus we find post-positioned negation in respondents’ turns in interviews and exams, where answers do not establish projections for next questions. If, however, the nucleus projects some next action

as in questions, requests and statements or assessments calling for agreement, the nucleus is re-instated after a negation constraining its interpretation.

5.4 Constraining the interpretation of the unsaid

In sect. 5.1–5.3 we have seen how negation is used to constrain the interpretation of a nucleus action by denying an interpretation of it which the recipient does or may ascribe to the speaker. Sometimes, however, speakers may find it so difficult to produce a (definite) nucleus action that their turn essentially consists only of negations ruling out unwanted interpretations, without producing a (definite) positive nucleus action. This pattern occurs in my data where sensitive, dispreferred actions are produced: Negation is then used in order to preempt all possible problematic interpretations of the dispreferred move, whose nature, however, is reflexively adumbrated precisely by the negations which aim to frame and mitigate its interpretation.

We see this in #11 from a psychoanalytic session. The patient had previously complained that she was unable to defend herself against other people abusing her. The therapist asks how the patient's feeling of being defenseless impacts on the therapeutic relationship.

#11 Psychoanalytic session, 31:50–33:17

- 786 TP: .h wie is das denn hIEr mit UNS beiden
how about the two of us here?
- 787 ich mein hier stehen sie ja doch AUch eher WEHRlos da
I mean here you're also in a rather defenseless position
- 788 (2.1)
- 789 geFÜHLvoll-
feeling
- 790 (8.2)
- 791 PA: ((sighs))
- 792 also auf jEden fall- .h (.)
well in any case
- 793 hab ich KEIne angst vor ihnen- ((lacht))=
I am not afraid of you ((laughs))
- 794 TP: =mh; (-)
- 795 PA: .h und äh- (.) ich weiß
and uhm I know
- 796 ich ich ich glaube auch sie würden MIR- (-)
I I I guess you also would
- 797 sie mö?
you like

- 798 sie würden mir auch **nich e? entSETZlich wEH tun WOLLen.**
 (-)
you also would not want to hurt me terribly
- 799 .h <<h> vielleIcht (1.0) SCHON- (--)
maybe you would just
- 800 um um um irgendeine reaktION bei mir, (--)
to to to elicit some kind of reaction from me
- 801 .hh rauszuLÖcken oder irgendwas (-)
or dig out something
- 802 Untergründiges- (.)
latent
- 803 hervorzuKRamen;
 804 TP: <<p> mhm.>
 805 PA: DAS kann ich mir schon vorstellen;
I can imagine that
- 806 Aber ich **meine jEtzt NICHT,**
but I do not mean now
- 807 (1.0)
 808 .h ähm- (.) ((glottal))
uhm
- 809 (1.0)
 810 **EInfach um jemanden WEH tun zu WOLLen.**
simply in order to hurt somebody
- 811 Einfach,
simply
- 812 (2.6)
 813 naja:-
well
- 814 ich **will nich sagen AUSprobieren,**
I do not want to say try out
- 815 .hh aber ähm-
but uhm
- 816 (4,0)
 817 PA: ((sighs))
 818 (4,5)
 819 PA: .h HH ich weiß es;=
I know
- 820 =em be!WUSST! wolln wer mal sagen;=
erm let's say deliberately
- 821 TP: =mh[m.]
 822 PA: [so] bewusst.
like deliberately
- 823 †MANCHmal tut man ja auch jemandem unbewusst WEH; (.)
sometimes you hurt somebody unknowingly
- 824 und **WILL_s gar nich,** (.)
and you do not want to
- 825 nich?=
right?

- 826 TP: =mhm, =
- 827 PA: aber- (.) .h ich meine jetzt wirklich bewusst
das gl?
but I mean now really deliberately I guess
- 828 n_nö- (.)
no
- 829 da- (.)
there
- 830 <<p> 'hm 'hm> (-)
- 831 .h käm ich gar nicht auf die id[EE-]
wouldn't even occur to me
- 832 TP: [mhm,]
- 833 PA: dass sie das tUn würden- (-)
that you would do this
- 834 WOLLen- (---)
want to
- 835 SOLlten; (.)
should
- 836 waRUM auch- (-)
why anyway?
- 837 TP: was unter[SCHEIdet mich denn da:]
what distinguishes me there?
- 838 PA: [sie WOLLen ja] nichts von mir- (--)
you do not want anything from me
- 839 TP: [(nichts) ((lacht))]
nothing ((laughs))
- 840 PA: [((laughs))]

The multi-unit turn of the patient (S792–836) contains seven negations, which deny ascriptions the patient could be expected or even be heard to attribute to herself and the therapist. None of the patient's statements in her turn is put forward as a definite nucleus action. All negations deny interpretations of the therapist's actions and the patient's feelings which would be problematic and undesirable in the context of the therapeutic relationship. The patient makes clear which interpretations are not intended, thus displaying which inferences the therapist should not draw from her turn. However, this presupposes that the corresponding assumptions are indeed relevant to some degree and that the therapist could draw these inferences with some likelihood, which, at least in part, are motivated by the very negations used to prevent the inferences.

After a long delay of more than eight seconds, the patient begins her answer with a negative statement ('well in any case I am not afraid of you', S792f.), which is framed as a constraining background preface for what is to follow and which can be considered, at most, a partial answer. The patient had used the

expression “angst” (‘fear’) twice in her prior turn (not shown in the transcript), saying that she was afraid to reveal her feelings to others, because she fears to appear ‘naked’ then. These are antecedents to the therapists ascription of being ‘defenseless’ (S787) to the patient in the therapeutic situation. The patient’s negation ‘I am not afraid of you’ (S793) can therefore be heard to deny a second order assumption she ascribes to the therapist on behalf of her preceding turn, namely, that feeling ‘defenseless’ (which the patient does not deny) might imply that the patient is afraid of the therapist. Thus, the patient’s initial negation in S792f. seems to negate therapist’s assumptions about the patient which the latter infers from the therapist’s question turn S786–789. While the patient explicitly excludes ‘fear’ as a candidate for categorizing her feelings towards the therapist, she does not offer a positive alternative.

Instead, the patient adds a statement which can be heard as an account for why she is not afraid of the therapist: ‘you also would not want to hurt me terribly’ (S798). It is not exactly clear what is negated in this TCU because of the modal qualifiers and because “entsetzlich” (‘terribly’), “wehtun” (‘hurt’) and “wollen” (‘want’) are almost equally stressed; none of them receives distinct focal stress. Is it the action ‘hurting’ as such, the intention to hurt (‘want’), or only an excessive (‘terrible’) degree of (wanting to) hurt which is negated? Depending on what is seen to be negated, the recipient is invited to infer one of the following possible problematic assumptions to hold by way of scalar implicatures (Horn 2001):

- ‘you do not want to hurt me terribly’ implicates ‘you want to hurt me’;
- ‘you do not want to hurt me terribly’ implicates ‘you hurt me’;
- ‘you do not want to hurt me terribly’ implicates ‘you (want to) cause me uncomfortable sensations, but these do not amount to hurting me’.

In what follows, the patient goes on to discuss whether the therapist intends to hurt her, thereby letting transpire that she feels hurt by her. Reflexively, this makes it relevant for the patient to elaborate further on disclaiming that she ascribes undesirable intentions to the therapist which the therapist could be assuming the patient to ascribe to her. Such undesirable intentions could be heard to be implied in S798 ‘You also would not want to hurt me terribly’: The patient might implicitly reproach the therapist of acting recklessly, accepting to hurt the patient, or even might accuse her of acting sadistically, intending to hurt the patient. In S799–805, the patient expands on the issue of intentionality by speculating on potential motives of the therapist which could be seen to legitimize hurting the patient by recourse to common sense about psychoanalytic procedures: ‘maybe just to to to elicit some kind of reaction from me or dig out something latent.’ Retrospectively, this legitimizing account suggests the

inference that the patient indeed considers ascribing the motive of wanting to hurt to the therapist, but only in the service of mutually known, legitimate therapeutic ends (thus suggesting an alternative to 'terribly'). This is backed further by the following constraining negations 'I do not mean now simply in order to hurt somebody' (S806–810; again primary stress is equally distributed over three expressions 'simply', 'want' and 'hurt', leaving open which alternatives might be relevant) and 'I do not want to say try out' (S814), which again denies the ascription of sadistic or irresponsible motives (acting by trial and error) to the therapist. Finally, the patient discusses whether she imputes the conscious motive to want to hurt her to the therapist (S820–836). Using an impersonal formulation, the patient concedes: 'sometimes you hurt somebody unknowingly and you don't want to' (S823f.), thus again adumbrating that the therapist may hurt her without intending do so. The discussion about whether or not the therapist consciously hurts the patient could suggest to the therapist that the patient is considering the fact that she may consciously and deliberately hurt the patient. The patient negates this second order assumption the therapist might infer from the patient's turn by disclaiming: 'does not even occur to me' (S831).

In her lengthy turn, the patient is occupied mainly and increasingly with excluding possible interpretations of what she may be taken to mean by the therapist. The therapist's response to this turn, her question: 'what distinguishes me?' (S837), presupposes that the patient has managed to convey that the therapeutic relationship is somehow different from her interpersonal relations outside the therapy. However, the therapist displays that the patient did not provide a distinct positive characterization, leaving open how and why the therapeutic relationship is different.

In #11, the speaker uses negations to perform a sensitive interpersonal action (avowing uncomfortable feelings and experiences caused by the recipient), while trying to avoid a face threat to the recipient by denying ascriptions to the recipient which amount to criticism and reproach. By their presuppositional properties, by scalar implicatures and by indexing that certain problematic actions and emotions are possibly relevant, the negations themselves adumbrate the sensitive actions whose interpretation they constrain, i.e., without a positive nucleus action being produced. The negations display the speaker's assumption that the recipient might infer undesirable ascriptions to her, which partly arise from negations produced in the extended turn itself. Regarding a specific rhetorical topos of negation, the litotes, Bergmann has stated that the use of negation instead of a definite positive description may be allusive, enabling the speaker to "go on talking without specifying what one is talking about" (Bergmann 1992: 149). He adds that while allusive communication may

be designed to deal with delicate matters, “the delicacy of the matter talked about is constituted by the very fact of talking about it allusively” (Bergmann 1992: 150). In the same way, constraining negation, which aims to prevent the recipient from drawing unwanted inferences by negating them, at once suggests the possible relevance of these inferences to the recipient and thus may lead her to arrive at them in the first place.

In the interaction so far, the therapist had not displayed to hold any of the assumptions negated in #11. This is a case where the notion ‘recipient design’ is obviously misleading if it is taken to mean that turns are designed according to what the factual recipient knows, expects, etc. Rather, the patient’s turn is designed with respect to an imaginary addressee, informed by what the therapist might potentially, probably, etc. expect, assume and understand. It is the recipient-designed action itself which establishes the possible relevance and interactional reality of the negated assumptions.

6 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how negation is used to constrain the interpretation of a nucleus action by the same speaker. This use of negation is specifically recipient-designed in denying interpretations of the nucleus turn which the recipient either has already manifested to have arrived at or which s/he will possibly arrive at. The practice publicly displays speaker’s dialogic orientation to how their addressees may interpret their actions and which inferences they might draw from them. The study thus is a contribution to how epistemics and intersubjectivity are managed in and how they impinge on interaction (cf. Depermann *i.pr.*; Stivers/Mondada/Steensig 2011; see also Imo and Linell/Mertzlufft this volume).

Speakers use constraining negation to correct or prevent misunderstandings, i.e., interpretations the speaker does not accept to become part of the common ground of what his/her nucleus action means. This may involve preventing semantic misunderstandings. Moreover, the use of negation as a constraint on interpretation has its place in the context of acting cautiously, i.e., in cases where the speaker cannot take for granted that the recipient arrives at the intended interpretation and where the recipient is likely to react with detailed scrutiny of the speaker’s words, skepticism, disagreement, or negative assessment. Constraining negation is a resource for mitigating sensitive or dispreferred actions by negating face-threatening interpretations (cf. Hewitt/Stokes

1975). The practice is thus to deal with both epistemic issues (avoiding misunderstanding) and socio-pragmatic issues (avoiding disaffiliation).

Negation requires that the interpretation to be discarded has to be made explicit and available as negated expression (cf. Verhagen 2005: ch.2). Thus, the speaker is faced with the problem that the very production of constraining negation may make the disclaimed interpretation salient and relevant to the recipient in the first place. Thus it can itself cause the unwanted interactional consequences it aims to prevent, which then, of course, lie well beyond the control of the speaker. Still, this property can also be used strategically: The speaker can use negation to suggest the relevance of certain interpretations of the nucleus to the recipient without being held accountable for subscribing to these interpretations.

Constraining negation is a flexible interactional practice. It can occupy different sequential positions with respect to a nucleus action. Negation may be pre-positioned, inserted or post-positioned. Each of these positions involves specific potentials and problems concerning online-understanding of the emerging turn and the nucleus action, speaker's control over the floor and his/her credibility including possible inferences to strategic motives. By producing it in different sequential positions, negation may be used to respond flexibly to emerging interactional contingencies arising from both recipients' responses and auto-epistemic processes, because the speaker may arrive at possible interpretations of his/her own actions from the perspective of the recipient only while or after formulating his/her turn. Constraining negation is used both reactively, i.e., in response to an interpretation of the nucleus publicly manifested by the recipient, and anticipatorily to prevent the recipient from arriving at the unintended interpretation.

This study contributes to the study of recipient design and dialogicity. It is the first study to discuss the linguistic resources of negation and, in more detail, the practice of constraining negation to exclude recipient's (possible) understandings from common ground in the context of their contribution to recipient-designed action. It reveals that negation is a deeply dialogical construction (see also Couper-Kuhlen/Fox/Thompson this volume): It is a construction specialized in relating speaker's current linguistic action to the addressee's perspective. Negation displays the speaker's dialogical orientation by taking into account the partner's perspective, his/her expectations and strategies of interpretation as relevant conditions for understanding. Negation is a key instance of a linguistic structure which neither simply refers to states of affairs nor expresses speaker's propositional attitudes directly, but which is used to design talk so as to take assumptions about the partner's perspective into consideration. The use of negation to constrain interpretations takes alterity into account

in the pursuit of intersubjectivity: Speaker shows that s/he assumes that the other has interpreted, or may/will interpret a nucleus action differently from the way the speaker (at least officially) intends it. Thus alterity (in the sense of difference between speaker's and addressee's perspectives) here is not the opposite of intersubjectivity (cf. Linell 2009: 81–85). Just to the contrary, considering alterity actively and observably by negation is put into service of increasing the chance of arriving at intersubjective meanings.

The study of constraining negation hints at conceptual distinctions relevant to the study of recipient design beyond the specific practice analyzed. In particular, it shows that we have to distinguish between the factual recipient and the recipient-as-conceived-of-by-the-speaker, i.e., the addressee. Speakers can design their actions only with respect to the addressee, not to the factual recipient. This becomes particularly clear in the case of anticipatory recipient design, which may largely be imaginary. Concerning the range of its uses, the practice of constraining negation lies at the intersection between recipient design and a more general dialogical other-orientation: It may be used on behalf of assumptions and interpretive stances ascribed to the addressee which are solidly known by prior interaction or categorical membership; and it may as well be used on behalf of assumptions about possible interpretations available to just any “generalized other”, resting on less partner-specific socio-cultural knowledge and communicative experience. The practice of constraining negation is often used for designing actions with respect to a specific recipient by drawing on the latter perspective: It makes use of experiences about how turns may be heard and responded to in general, in order to exclude possible motivated interpretations which the other in the very situation of interacting might arrive at. As such, it is a practice which does not necessarily use knowledge about the particular recipient's interpretive stance, but, just the other way round, it can be designed to fill gaps of insecurity about how the recipient will interpret the nucleus action.

This insight is closely related to another point of theoretical interest, the emergence and continuous transition of the recipient in interaction. The features of the recipient which are relevant for some next action to be produced may change, because recipient's actions continuously supply updated knowledge about the recipient. Such updates, in part, are occasioned by speaker's actions which presuppose, anticipate or test some feature of the recipient. Future research on recipient design thus may fruitfully study recipient design as a temporally emerging phenomenon in talk-in-interaction.

Finally, the study of negation led us to distinguish between 1st, 2nd and 3rd order assumptions about recipients: Recipient design may address an assumption the speaker takes the recipient to hold in common with him/herself (1st

order assumption: common ground), an assumption which the recipient specifically holds (2nd order assumption: not shared with, but known by the speaker) and an assumption the recipient holds about what the speaker holds, which may or may not match the speaker's own assumptions (3rd order assumptions: speaker's understandings of how the recipient conceives of the speaker). It was shown that speakers use specific practices by which they show that they hold 2nd and 3rd order assumptions about recipients, and by which they try to exclude such assumptions from common ground. Recipient design is not simply about achieving common ground with the speaker. It also takes into account differences in perspective between participants and works on transforming them in the pursuit of intersubjectivity.

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Introduction

In 1981, Charles Goodwin (1981: 170–173¹) pointed out that in self-repairs such as (1),

(1) I ask him if he- (0.4) could- if you could call him.

linguistic units and relations are not merely 'used' to achieve interactional goals, but are actually produced, 'done', in the process of achieving such goals.

In the repair to (1), the speaker thus articulates 'I ask him if he- (0.4) could-' into two successive units: 'I ask him' and 'if he- (0.4) could-', then produces an alternative to the second unit: 'if you could', and finally continues with a further unit: 'call him'.

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2. See also Goodwin 2005: 100–103.

3. In the sense of Sacks (1997). See further sections 6 and 10.