

Transitioning between activities in joint projects: The case of German *so*¹

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Abstract

This conversation-analytic paper examines the use of the German particle *so* in managing transitions between activities that form part of a joint project. Building on prior work on the transition relevant property of *so* by Barske/Golato (2010), the paper investigates the particle's use concurrently with other multimodal resources, such as the participants' bodily orientation and their gaze direction. I illustrate that, in addition to marking boundaries between activities and communicating those to co-participants, the examination of speaker and addressee's gaze behaviour reveals that the particle can have a retrospective as well as prospective orientation. What is more, the analysis shows that by alerting their co-interactants of a change-of-activity taking place and of their availability to initiate a new activity, participants manage to achieve coordination and cooperation within the larger project. All in all, the examination of this particle in transition spaces reveals that the organisation of a joint project is a collective and collaborative process that relies on participants' finely tuned coordination of their individual actions.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis – Social Interaction – activity transition – joint project – action coordination – German particles.

German Abstract

Dieser konversationsanalytische Beitrag untersucht den Einsatz der deutschen Partikel *so* bei der Bewältigung von Übergängen zwischen Aktivitäten, die Teil eines gemeinsamen Projekts sind. Aufbauend auf früherer Arbeit zur übergangsrelevanten Eigenschaft von *so* von Barske/Golato (2010), untersucht der Beitrag die Verwendung der Partikel gleichzeitig mit anderen multimodalen Ressourcen, wie die Körperorientierung und die Blickrichtung der Teilnehmer. Ich illustriere, dass, zusätzlich dazu Grenzen zwischen Aktivitäten zu markieren und diese den Mitbeteiligten mitzuteilen, die Untersuchung des Blickverhaltens von Sprecher und Adressaten zeigt, dass die Partikel sowohl eine retrospektive als auch eine prospektive Ausrichtung haben kann. Zusätzlich zeigt die Analyse, dass, indem sie ihre Gesprächspartner über einen stattfindenden Aktivitätswechsel und ihre Verfügbarkeit für die Initiierung einer neuen Aktivität informieren, es den Teilnehmern gelingt, Koordination und Zusammenarbeit innerhalb des größeren Projekts zu erreichen. Zusammengefasst zeigt die Untersuchung dieser Partikel in Übergangsräumen, dass die Organisation eines gemeinsamen Projekts ein kollektiver und kollaborativer Prozess ist, der auf die fein abgestimmte Koordination der individuellen Aktionen der Beteiligten angewiesen ist.

Keywords: Konversationsanalyse – Soziale Interaktion – Aktivitätsübergang – gemeinsames Projekt – Handlungskoordination – deutsche Partikel.

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1 Introduction²

Everyday interaction is often organised around smaller activities or sequences where interlocutors collaborate moment-by-moment for the successful accomplishment of a common goal. Take, for instance, a telephone call, which in its barest form consists of an opening sequence followed by the reason for the call and the closing sequence (Schegloff 1968, 1986, 2002; Schegloff/Sacks 1973). It requires coordination between the participants in order to move from one sequence to the next. Similarly, activities that are to be accomplished collaboratively by two or more participants, such as the preparation of a dish, require coordination of their individual actions. Joint activities are formed of smaller actions that have their own boundaries and, therefore, require coordination between participants (Clark 1996). These boundaries, however, are not predetermined and often need to be negotiated and communicated on a moment-by-moment basis by the interactants themselves. Defining these boundaries then is an interactional work that is accomplished using verbal and nonverbal cues. One practice that interlocutors have at their disposal for signalling these boundaries is what Bangerter/Clark (2003) termed *project markers*, which can include acknowledgment tokens (Jefferson 1984) and discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987), like *right* and *okay*. These are used by participants to enter or exit joint projects, as well as to signal continuation of a joint project. Other linguistic items shown to operate in transition spaces to mark boundaries between activities are particles (see, for instance, Barske/Golato 2010; Grenoble 1998; Keevalik 2010a, b; Ottesjö/Lindström 2005). This study investigates the use of the German particle *so* in managing transitions between activities that form part of a larger 'goal-oriented' joint project, such as cooking a meal together.³ By focusing on these transition spaces, the paper will address the interactional significance of the particle *so* in marking boundaries between participants' activities (Barske/Golato 2010) and communicating those to their co-participants in order to achieve coordination and cooperation within a larger project.

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³ The definition of "activity" adopted for this paper is the one given by Heritage and Sorjonen (1994:4) as "work that is achieved across a sequence or series of sequences as a unit or course of action - meaning by this a relatively sustained topically coherent and/or goal-coherent course of action". Thus, "activity transitions" refer to transitions between "goal-coherent courses of actions", which are often delimited through *so*.

2 Theoretical framework

The communicative role of German *so* has been the focus of much research so far. Depending on its position within a sequence, the particle has been shown to have different interactional functions. One of the main uses associated with this particle is as a modal deictic element when accompanied by gestures (Balantani 2021, 2022; Balantani/Lázaro 2021; Ehlich 1987; Ningelgen/Auer 2017; Streeck 2002; Stukenbrock 2010, 2014, 2015). In modal deixis, *so* has been demonstrated to be implemented as a "flag" (Streeck 2002) or contextualisation cue (Stukenbrock 2010) for an upcoming gesture that needs to be visually perceived by the addressee. The particle is also used as a quotative in storytellings and reported speech, where it has been shown to introduce vocalised sound effects, body movements and gestures (Auer 2006; Golato 2000; Streeck 2002). Furthermore, *so* has been studied in institutional talk, i.e., classroom interactions and work meetings, as a sequence closing particle in topic transitions used to close down one sequence while simultaneously marking the beginning of another (Brünner 1987; Ehlich 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002). Barske/Golato (2010) examine its use as a transition marker from one action or course of action to the next, whereby the second action is the next logical phase within the overall activity. With respect to its position and composition, *so* in such contexts is typically produced faster than the surrounding talk and with falling intonation. It forms a TCU of its own or the first part of a multi-unit turn and is often accompanied by inbreaths and temporal expressions, such as *dann* ('then') or *jetzt* ('now'), which verbalise the shift and contribute to the transition.

The transition-relevant property of particles, like *so*, has also been identified and studied in other languages, such as Swedish *så* (Lindström/Ottesjö 2005), Russian *tak* (Grenoble 1998), Estonian *nii* and *soo* (Keevallik 2010b). With respect to the Estonian *nii* and *soo* for instance, Keevallik (2010b) demonstrates that the particles are used in activity transitions and are usually either followed by a description of the activity that is terminated or an initiation of a new activity. In terms of timing, both tokens seem to be produced at the completion of the last non-verbal part of the prior activity and can be used to mark the termination of non-verbal activities and the return to talk (Keevallik 2010b). Additionally, the author states that, in some cases, *nii* is employed by interlocutors to mark a move from self-talk to talk to other present parties and is used as a resource to re-achieve a common focus between themselves and coordinate their concurrent activities (Keevallik 2010a). In contrast to *nii*, where the new activity transitioned into is a natural follow-up of the prior one (Keevallik 2010a), Heinemann (2017) reports that the Danish change-of-state token *na* marks transition between new, non-contingent activities. The token is often produced following a break in interaction when talk has naturally reached a conclusion and participants have indicated they have nothing else to contribute, thus marking the transition to the new activity.

Discourse markers, such as *right* (Gardner 2004, 2007) and *okay* (Barske 2009; Beach 1993; De Stefani/Mondada 2021; Gaines 2011; Mondada/Sorjonen 2021), have also been analysed in topic or activity transitions. Beach (1993) for instance, who examines *okay* in a wide variety of interactional environments, ranging from telephone openings and pre-closings to assessments, observes that *okay* is a resource that participants rely on in transition spaces to respond to prior turns and, as well, move to next-positioned matters. Although *okay* may recurrently be used as a

response token, there are many instances in which the particle has prospective features that project continuation to the next activity. Similarly, *right* has been shown to function as a change-of-activity token (Gardner 2004, 2007) proposing a move out of the current activity and into a new one and is commonly found in pre-closing of conversations or at the end of extended sequences.

This study builds on prior work on *so*, and specifically on Barske/Golato's (2010) study on the use of the particle in managing sequences and actions. In particular, by applying mobile eye-tracking technology to record participants in naturally occurring social interactions, the current study will expand the analysis on the use of the token by investigating the role of participants' eye gaze in managing their actions and courses of actions in joint projects. By focusing on the participants' eye gaze patterns in relation to concurrent linguistic and gestural practices, the study will demonstrate that the participants' gaze direction and body orientation and the temporality of their movements with the occurrence of this token indicate not only that a transition is taking place but also whether the token has a retrospective or prospective orientation. The aim of the paper then is to extend the study on boundary markings by building on the existing literature on *so* and other particles in such sequential contexts. Specifically, I will investigate instances where participants use the particle *so* to mark the end of an activity and the move back to the joint project. Participants alert their co-participants of a change in activities and thus contribute to the coordination of their actions in the service of the overall project. The purpose of this study is therefore twofold. First, it seeks to provide an understanding of the role of *so* in transition points in joint projects, where participants have to coordinate their actions in the service of an overall project. In particular, I describe how *so* is used to bring the focus back to the joint project after the accomplishment of an activity and is a means for participants to mark their (re-)availability to engage in another activity. Second, by considering the interplay between participants' verbal and embodied behaviour in such transitions, I hope to contribute to continuing research on multiactivity in interaction by showing how *so* features in the coordination of multiple concurrent activities.

3 Data and methodology

The study has been conducted using the methodological principles of Conversation Analysis (Drew 2004; Sacks 1992), which in terms of multimodal analysis describes how talk, gesture, gaze, body posture and the physical surroundings of the participants are jointly used in the performance of social action (Deppermann 2013; Deppermann/Streeck 2018; Goodwin 2017; Kärkkäinen/Thompson 2018; Keevalik 2018; Mondada 2014; Streeck et al. 2011). Data recordings were conducted with the use of mobile eye-tracking glasses (Tobii Pro Glasses 2) worn by the participants and an additional third camera to account for embodied conduct not visible through the eye-tracking. The recordings of the eye-tracking glasses and the third camera were synchronized into one split-screen video and imported into ELAN (2019) for transcription. The verbal transcriptions follow the GAT transcription system developed by Selting et al. (2009) and the embodied conduct was transcribed according to Mondada's (2019) conventions for multimodal transcription (see appendix).

The data analysed is part of a larger corpus on naturally occurring interactions in diverse settings in German and Swiss German collected for a broader research project on deixis and joint attention funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). For the purpose of the current study, a collection of 60 instances has been assembled where *so* is produced at points of possible transition. The participants are engaged in a joint project, i.e., building furniture, cooking, baking or preparing a meal together. They were asked to wear eye-tracking glasses in dyadic interactions with the participation framework occasionally comprising more than two participants. There were instances in the recordings, especially towards the end of the sessions, where the glasses were topicalised, but those did not affect the recordings overall. What is more, in the setting examined in this study, participants are not in a face-to-face constellation and are each occupied with individual activities. During the production of *so*, they are facing different directions and have no visual access to each other. Therefore, the glasses do not pose any problems with respect to the participants' ability to see each other's gaze orientation.

The use of the eye-tracking technology affords us the ability to precisely track the body and eye-gaze movements of the participants and observe their role in such transition spaces. In particular, by taking the participants' gaze orientation into consideration, we can identify what the relationship between language and gaze is. Closing or transitioning activities are often combined with other multimodal resources, preceding or following it, in an emergent way (De Stefani/Mondada 2021). Only through careful observation of the participants' bodily displays when producing the token can we see that a transition is taking place. Hence, the eye-tracking technology is a useful additional tool for us as researchers. However, fixations on a target indicated through the eye-tracking glasses are by no means taken as equal to participants' vision. The technology comes with limitations. Sometimes, for instance, the fixations are not there. Therefore, the recordings are accompanied by external cameras that complement the output from the trackers. What is more, the fact that both participants are looking at a common target, for instance, does not necessarily mean that they are "seeing" the same thing (Goodwin 1994). We can, however, know through the eye-tracking data if both participants were at least sharing attention on the same target prior to it being made interactionally relevant by them (Stukenbrock/Dao 2019). The eye-tracking data then are not taken as absolute measurements but are considered complementary to our observations from the external camera and the sequential analysis.

What is more, in the majority of the cases in the data set, participants are multitasking (for a comprehensive overview of studies on multitasking see Haddington et al. 2014). That is to say, while the participants are engaged in their respective embodied actions, for instance chopping a piece of ginger or putting spices in the food, they are often concurrently engaged in verbal interaction about a certain topic with their co-participants. What we will investigate in this paper then is how participants manage not only activity transitions but also topic transitions (Barske/Golato 2010; Brünner 1987; Ehlich 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002). Participants bring the communicative focus back to the joint project they are engaged in following a change in topic.

4 Empirical Analysis

In what follows, I will concentrate on instances from the data set where *so* marks a transition from one activity to another within a joint project. Then I will provide a couple of examples where, in addition to transition between activities, *so* also marks topic shifts (Barske/Golato 2010; Brünner 1987; Ehlich 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002). And I will finish with two excerpts that highlight another aspect of this marker, namely its function to indicate a participant's (re-)availability to initiate a new activity after the completion of one's prior activity.

4.1 *so* in marking boundaries between activities

Excerpt (1) illustrates the use of *so* to mark a transition between activities. Two sisters, Nina and Sabrina, are baking a cake in Nina's kitchen. Sabrina is cutting the butter into small pieces in a bowl while Nina is opening a box of eggs. Sabrina mentions that she likes beating the butter with the eggs, and her sister fetches her the mixer from the drawer. When she places the beaters on the table, she produces *so* and transitions to a new activity.

(1) Backen_01_07:00-07:31_ "the butter":

(N: Nina, S: Sabrina)

* gaze by S

+ gaze by N

\$ gesture by N

& gesture by S

01 S **wow (.) ich LIEbe da-**
wow I love this
s >>cuts butter-->>

02 (0.5)

03 S **zum [schmö]-**
to taste

04 N **[dä BUT]ter?**
the butter

05 (0.5)

06 S **jo [nei weisch] mit mit dem Z\$Ucker und allem**
zänegmisch=-
yes no you know with the sugar and everything mixed
together
n \$opens box of eggs-->1.10

07 N **[oder WA]?**
or what

08 S **=ich find da isch amel viel äs dä teig isch amel**
schlussendlich viel feiner als-
I think there is for once a lot as the dough is once
finally much finer than

09 (0.2)

10 N **da STIMMT\$ [jo]-**
that is right yes
n -->\$

11 S **[dä] <<lachend> chueche SELber>;**
the cake itself

12 (0.1)

- 13 N **log da chasch emfall NOcher wenn d willsch;**
look here you have in this case later if you want
- 14 **\$(1.3)**
n \$picks up Mixer and places on table-->1.17
- 15 N **do: MIxe,**
the Mixer
- 16 **(1.4)**
- 17 N **chasch süst gad döt Hine\$ häts au\$ ä *steckdose'**
you have there behind you have also a socket
n -->\$PG-----\$
s *gz plug-->
- 18 **(1.3)**
- 19 N **hm:::,**
- 20 **(0.6)\$* (2.7) +(0.4)\$**
n \$picks up beaters and places on table\$
n +gz phone-->
s -->*gz butter-->>
- 21 N → **<<mit weicher Stimme> S#:0::'>**
ptcl
fig #fig1



(Figure 1)

- 22 **(0.7)+(3.3)**
n -->+
- 23 N **<<cresc> PÜderzucker (ein ei nach dem ANder_n dazu.)>**
powder sugar add one egg at a time

Nina's *so* at line 21 is produced at the boundary between two embodied activities. Since the recording takes place in her kitchen and the recipe is on her phone, she is the one bringing all the ingredients and equipment and placing them on the table. Sabrina has been cutting the butter into small pieces, and Nina has been adding the other ingredients to the bowl to be mixed together. At lines 13-15 she suggests to Sabrina to beat the butter *log da chasch emfall NOcher wenn d willsch*; ('look here you have in this case later if you want', 1.13) *do: MIxe*, ('the Mixer', 1.15) and fetches her the mixer from the drawer behind her. At line 17 she directs her co-participant's attention to the location of the plug by pointing at it after the production of the deictic *döt Hine* ('there behind'). Without abandoning her activity, Sabrina shortly directs her gaze to the location of the plug, as it is going to be relevant for her next activity, before directing it back to the butter. Nina then fetches the beaters from the drawer and at the end of her embodied action, and as she removes her fingers from the beater, she produces *so*, thus marking the completion of that activity (Brünner 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002). Note, however, that her eye-gaze is on the phone (see Figure 1 top left corner), where the recipe is located, before the

production of *so*. Thus, she both orients retrospectively to the completion of her previous activity and prospectively to the next step in the process.

Similarly, in excerpt (2), *so* marks a transition between activities. A couple, Rena and Sebastian, are preparing a curry dish with vegetables for dinner. The excerpt contains two *so* produced by the same speaker. While in the first, at line 10, the next activity is not topicalised, at line 28 the speaker's readiness to transition to the next activity is also verbalised in her subsequent turn (Barske/Golato 2010) *DANN können_wir das geMÜse reingeben*, ('then we can add the vegetables', 1.30). The particle in both instances is produced concurrently with the shift of activity and the change in Rena's embodied posture; Rena has already turned her posture towards the next activity in both instances, thus projecting her orientation to the next activity at hand.

(2) Kochen_03_20:14-20:42_ "the yellow lid":

(R: Rena, S: Sebastian)

* gaze by S

+ gaze by R

\$ gesture by R

% bodily conduct by R

& gesture by S

01 R **aber ich muss einfach WIRKlich das andere fInden,**
but I really have to find the other one

02 (0.3)

03 R **weiss ECHT net wo das ist:?**
I really do not know where it is

04 (0.4)

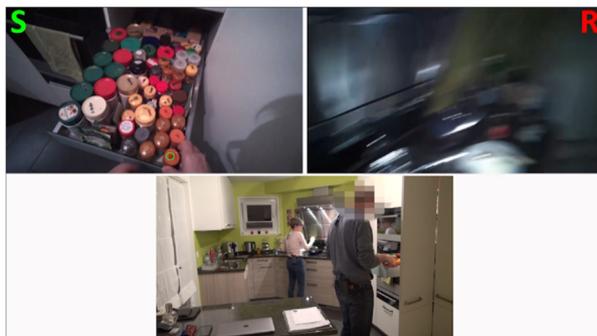
05 R **\$<<all> lass MICH mal suchen_ jetzt NEHmen\$ +wir
einfach)->**
let me look (for it) now we simply take
r \$picks up cilantro -----\$
r +gz label-->

06 R **A+H;**
r -->+

07 (0.1)%(0.5)
r %walks to stove-->

08 R **coriANdre;**
cilantro

09 (2.0)\$ (2.5) \$#
r -->\$adds cilantro to the food\$
fig #fig2



(Figure 2)

10 R → SO;
 ptcl
 11 %* (0.7) *(1.0)
 r %walks to the drawer-->
 s *gz cilantro*
 12 R (ALso,)
 so
 13 (0.1)%
 r -->%
 14 R ein GELber deckel ganz vOrn;
 a yellow lid at the very front
 15 (0.6)
 16 R [waRUM i]st-
 why is
 17 S [<<all> WArte mal,>]
 wait
 18 S ([GIB_s] dahin,)
 put it there
 19 R [DES ist-]
 that is
 20 (0.2)
 21 R waRUM ist-
 why is
 22 R NEIN das sind-
 no these are
 23 (0.2)
 24 R <<pp> hm;>
 25 (2.1)
 26 R <<p> Ok;>
 27 (0.3)+(0.5)+\$(0.3)% (0.9) %
 r +,,,,,+gz at stove-->1.30
 r \$closes cupboard-->
 r %takes a step back%
 28 R → %SO;\$#
 ptcl
 r -->\$
 r %walks towards stove-->>
 fig #fig3



(Figure 3)

29 (0.5)
 30 R DANN können_wir+ das gemÜse reingeben,
 then we can add the vegetables
 r -->+

While the two participants are adding different spices into the pan with the sauce, Rena picks up some spices and walks over to the drawer that contains all the spices announcing that she must find the other spice, by "other" meaning the cilantro *aber ich muss einfach WIRKlich das andere fInden*, ('but I really have to find the other one', 1.01). At line 05, Rena picks up a spice from the drawer, reads the label and, while walking to the stove, announces that she found the cilantro she was looking for *coriANdre* ('cilantro', 1.08). She walks over to the stove and puts cilantro in the food. After the last stroke of her hand and at the moment she turns her body around to walk back to the drawer (see Rena's eye-tracking at the top right in Figure 2), she produces *SO*: Produced at a transition between two activities, *so* marks the end of her embodied action of putting cilantro in the food and the transition to the next, the return of the cilantro to the drawer. The temporal alignment of the particle with body orientation away from the just completed activity marks it as forward oriented. This transition-relevant property of *so* is also oriented to by the addressee. At the end of Rena's articulation of the particle, Sebastian directs his gaze to the cilantro in her hands and when Rena comes back to the drawer, he moves the other spices around so that she can place the cilantro back in the drawer. Thus, his gaze and embodied action following the production of the particle indicate his readiness to move to the next activity at hand.

Having returned the cilantro to the drawer, all the spices that have been used in the prior activity are now stored away and the activity of putting spices in the food is terminated, marked by the closing-implicative token "ok" (1.26) (Mondada & Sorjonen, 2021) and her embodied action of closing the cupboard 8s later. After the production of "ok" (1.26), Rena shifts her gaze away from the cupboard and towards the stove. Just before the cupboard door shuts and her finger moves away from the door (see Figure 3) she produces *so*. Her body orientation is away from the first activity and her eye-gaze is on the stove where Sebastian is currently stirring the sauce. Hence, with her body torqued towards the stove (Schegloff 1998) and her gaze already on the next activity at hand, Rena bodily displays that the prior engagement with the spices is terminated and her "dominant involvement" (Goffman 1963) now is the next activity at hand. The *so* then marks retrospectively the completion of the activity regarding the spices and prospectively the next step in the overall project they are engaged in, the meal they are preparing. Note that the next move *DANN können_wir das geMÜse reingeben*, ('then we can add the vegetables', 1.30) is verbalised 2s after the cupboard door is shut (there is a hearable sound of the cupboard closing), hence when the prior activity is also "hearably" closed. It is introduced with a turn-initial *dann* ('then', 1.30) (Helmer 2011) that marks this as the next item on the agenda and is produced with the plural first pronoun *wir* ('we', 1.30), indicating the collaborativeness of the next activity.

In sum, both *so* (1.10 and 1.28) mark the transition between activities and in both occurrences the speaker's body posture and gaze orientation indicate the particle's forward-oriented quality; while orienting retrospectively to the just completed activity, Rena's body posture and gaze direction project an orientation to the next activity.

4.2 so in shifting focus back to the joint project

The transition-relevant property of *so* is observable also in the next extract from the same recording where, in addition to a transition between activities, *so* also marks a shift in focus from a side sequence (Jefferson 1972) to the ongoing activity. This observation corroborates Barske/Golato's (2010:259) findings that *so* can indicate both an action and a topic shift. Rena and Sebastian have taken some of the vegetables out of the fridge. Rena is peeling the ginger while Sebastian is moving objects around on the counter. Occupied with their individual actions and with no visual access to each other, the two participants are discussing Rena's inability to find cilantro in the market (1.01-23).

(3) Kochen_03_12:41-13:10_"cilantro":

(R: Rena, S: Sebastian)

* gaze by S

+ gaze by R

\$ gesture by R

& gesture by S

- 01 R hab KEInen koriander (gekriegt) un[ten;]
I did not get any cilantro downstairs
r >>peels ginger-->1.28
- 02 S [AH] [SIEHST?]
ah you see
- 03 R [keinen FRI]
[schen;]
not any fresh one
- 04 S [DAS ha]b ich dir gesa[gt,]
I told you that
- 05 R [J]A;
yes
- 06 S (in der FRÜH),
early in the morning
- 07 R baSIlikum haben sie gehabt,
basil they had
- 08 (0.3)
- 09 R weil sie IHN mal um die zeit-
because they get it around this time
10 (0.5)
- 11 S haben_s[ie_das baS]Ili[kum g]ehabt;
they had basil
- 12 R [JA;]
yes
- 13 R [JA;]
yes
- 14 S aber KEIN koria[nder;]
but no cilantro
- 15 R [aber] KEInen koriander;
but no cilantro
- 16 (0.4)
- 17 S <<pp> (AH ja);>
ah yes
- 18 R peterSIlie,
parsley

19 R **ROSmarin,**
rosemary

20 R **A[Lles war da,]**
everything was there

21 S **[(das hat AUCH)_ne ganz An*dere-)**
this has also a very different
s *gz broccoli-->1.33

22 (0.5)

23 R **ja auch_ne GANZ mit der (0.2) saison,**
yes also completely with the season

24 (1.6)

25 R **AH:::,**

26 (0.2)

27 R **oKAY,**

28 (0.6)\$(0.3)
r -->\$
r +gz ginger-->

29 R → **SO;**
ptcl

30 R **h+h°**
r -->+.....-->

31 (0.6)+#(0.5)
r -->+gz cutting board-->
fig #fig4



(Figure 4)

32 R **dann SCHNEId ich (dana-)+**
then I cut
r -->+

33 (0.4)*(2.9)
s -->*

34 R **(neine) EIN stück;**
a piece

35 (0.7)

36 S **soll ich DIE schälen?**
shall I peel these

37 S (0.4)

38 R **WAS;**
what

39 (0.1)

40 R **SCHÄlen,**
peel

41 S **<<pp> die [ZUCCH->]**
the zucch

42 R **[NA]H die zucchini nee,=**
nah the zucchini no

At line 27 Rena produces *oKAY* which marks the end of her embodied action of peeling the ginger (Barske 2009; Mondada/Sorjonen 2021). With her gaze directed at the ginger, inspecting the object for any remaining pieces left to peel, she produces *so*, indicating her readiness to transition to the next activity (Barske/Golato 2010). At the end of *so*, she directs her body orientation to the other direction where the cutting board is placed (Figure 4). She walks towards it to cut the ginger into pieces thus projecting the next step in the overall project, the cutting of the ginger, also articulated in her next turn *dann SCHNEId ich (dana-)* ('then I cut', 1.32). The transition is achieved with a set of multimodal resources and practices that point to the particle as forward oriented, i.e., body and gaze orientation away from the prior activity and towards the next and an explicit articulation of the next relevant activity in the next turn.

The particle, however, not only marks the transition between two activities but also a topic shift (Barske/Golato 2010; Brünner 1987; Ehlich 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002) from talk about herbs to the joint project, refocusing the participants' attention to the project. In the beginning of the sequence (1.01-23), the topic concerns Rena's inability to find cilantro in the market. After the production of *so*, there is a shift in focus by both participants to the joint project, Rena articulating her next action *dann SCHNEId ich (dana-)* ('then I cut', 1.32) and Sebastian anticipating his next action *soll ich DIE schälen?* ('shall I peel these', 1.36). The *so* then marks not only an activity transition but also a shift back to the joint project after a side sequence about the herbs and a refocusing of the participant's attention to the project they are involved in (Keevallik 2010a). The participants have no visual access to each other during their embodied actions, hence the *so* is also a public display of the speaker's transitioning between activities so that they can coordinate their actions in the service of the overall project. As we can see from the transcript, Sebastian continues with his embodied action of cleaning the counter and does not shift his gaze to Rena. The lack of gaze shift on Sebastian's part after the production of *so*, however, is not an indicator that he does not orient to the token as transition relevant, since with his interrogative at line 36 *soll ich DIE schälen?* ('shall I peel these') he anticipates the next relevant action and thus orients to the progressivity of the joint project.

To illustrate the systematicity of using *so* to switch from side sequences (Jefferson 1972) to the joint project, I provide another example that comes from a few minutes later in the recording. While the talk in the sequence prior to the production of *so* in excerpt (3) is thematically related to the project, as the talk concerns one of the ingredients used for the dish, the side sequence in excerpt (4) is not directly related to the project. Rena and Sebastian are discussing being greeted with *tu* or *vous* by a younger person and shift to talk concerning the joint project after the production of *so*.

(4) Kochen_03_13:33-14:17_ "tu":

(R: Rena, S: Sebastian)

* gaze by S

+ gaze by R

\$ gesture by R

& gesture by S

- 01 R **(was war ich wie) heute da mit dem KLEInen spazieren war,**
 (I was how) today there with the little one for a walk
 r >>chops ginger into small pieces-->1.12
 s >>gz zucchini-->>
- 02 (0.8)
- 03 R **HAB ich-**
 have I
- 04 (0.7)
- 05 R **d_n (monsieur MATte,) h°**
 the monsieur matte
- 06 (1.2)
- 07 S **öh:: SANDique,**
 öh Sandique
- 08 R **JA,**
 yes
- 09 (0.1)
- 10 R **gesehen,**
 seen
- 11 (0.9)
- 12 R **und zuERST-**
 and first
- 13 (1.1)
- 14 R **hat er mich nicht erKENNT,**
 he did not recognise me
- 15 R **<<all> (nur ich so)> AH::; ((lacht))**
 only I like ah ((laughter))
- 16 (0.5)
- 17 R **vous avez Un chien ET !le petIt!?**
 you have a dog and the little one
- 18 R **<<all> hab ich gesagt OUAI,>**
 I said yes
- 19 (2.0)
- 20 R **AH:;**
- 21 R **[le-]**
 the
- 22 S **[er s]agt VOUS zu dir?**
 he says you to you
- 23 (0.4)
- 24 R **natürlich**
 of course
- 25 (1.3)
- 26 S **(wag)**
- 27 R **(WIE so? [was soll denn-])**
 why what should
- 28 S **[(voll) de] respect,**
 very respectful
- 29 (0.2)
- 30 R **((lacht)) [((lacht))]**
 ((laughter))
- 31 S **[(MON di)]**
 my god
- 32 R **((lacht)) [((lacht))]**
 ((laughter))
- 33 S **[(((lacht))] ((lacht))**
 ((laughter))
- 34 (0.5)
- 35 R **<<:-> der war mit mir nEt in der SCHUle,>=**
 he was not with me in school

36 R ==<<:-)> **warum soll der zu mir TU [sagen?>]**
 why should he say to me tu

37 S [JA;]
 yes

38 (0.4)

39 R **JA;**
 yes

40 (0.8)

41 R **(meine) ich KENN denn ja net so,**
 I mean I do not know him so

42 (0.2)

43 S **und zwar (),**
 in fact

44 (0.1)

45 R **geNAU h°\$**
 exactly

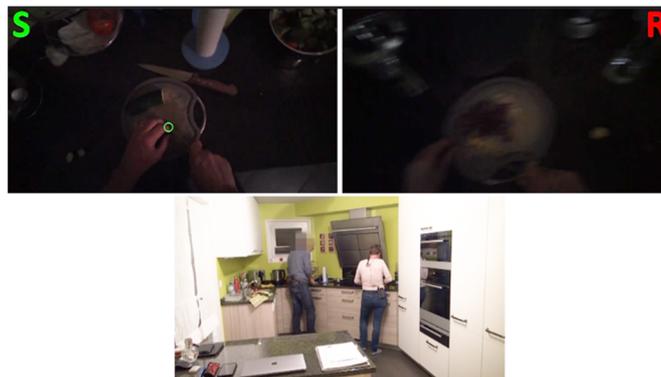
r -->\$

46 (0.7)

47 R → **S+O;#**
 ptcl

r +,,,-->

fig #fig5



(Figure 5)

48 (0.1)+ (0.2) +(0.5)
 r ,,,,,+gz ginger⁴+

49 R **das gib ich dann noch da\$ZU rein;**
 I will give that in too

r \$opens fridge-->

50 (0.4)\$ (0.5)
 r -->\$picks up Tupperware-->

51 R **zum () das ein DING,\$**
 to () this a thing

r -->\$

52 (0.7)

53 R **kann ich MORgen-**
 I can tomorrow

54 (0.1)

55 R **für den SCHAKE verwenden,**
 use for the shake

⁴ Before beginning to chop the ginger, Rena cut the piece into two and left one piece next to the chopping board. At this moment she directs her gaze to the piece that is next to the chopping board.

While chopping the ginger that she previously peeled, and without suspending her embodied action, Rena launches a story about her walk in the morning with her grandchild (*was war ich wie) heute da mit dem KLEInen spazieren war*, ('(I was how) today there with the little one for a walk', 1.01). At line 17 she claims to have been addressed with *vous vous avez Un chien ET !le petIt!?* ('you have a dog and the little one', 1.17) which is received with surprise by her husband *er sagt VOUS zu dir?* ('he says you to you', 1.22). After explaining that the person who addressed her with *vous* is too young <<:-)>*der war mit mir nEt in der SCHUle,*> ('he was not with me in school', 1.35) and that they are not very well acquainted (*meine) ich KENN denn ja net so*, ('I mean I do not know him so', 1.41), Sebastian affiliates with her⁵ (Stivers 2008) and the sequence and topic closes down with *geNAU* ('exactly', 1.45) (Oloff 2017). At the end of *geNAU* Rena also cuts the last piece of the ginger (there is a hearable sound of the knife hitting the cutting board), which completes her embodied activity. She then produces *so* and subsequently verbalises her next action, which is the next logical phase within the overall activity (Barske/Golato 2010) *das gib ich dann noch daZU rein;* ('this I will add to it', 1.49).

In the middle of *so*, however, she shifts her eye-gaze to the piece of ginger that she previously placed next to the cutting board (Figure 5). Her embodied activity orients to the next activity at hand; towards the end of her turn (1.49), she opens the fridge and takes out a Tupperware to store away the ginger. The *so* (1.47) then timely produced at the boundary between two activities is finely tuned with the shift of activity and the change in the embodied posture and eye-gaze. Concurrently, there is a shift from a side sequence initiated about "the use of address terms" to the joint project, bringing the focus back to the project the two participants are involved in (Keavallik 2010a). The speakers have no visual access to each other and, even after the articulation of *so*, Sebastian does not gaze away from his own activity. Therefore, by marking the transition with *so*, Rena also involves the other participant into her "routine" and the transition between her activities that may have an impact on his workload and the joint overall project.

4.3 *so* as a marker of (re-)availability

The next two excerpts, will focus on another function of this token, briefly described in the previous section, namely its use as a marker of speaker's (re-)availability. By articulating *so* at the transition between activities, speakers mark their (re-)availability after the completion of an activity and involve the addressee in their routine. In this way, speaker and addressee can coordinate their actions and collaborate more effectively with regard to the joint project. In excerpt (5), there are two *so* from two different speakers. While Rena's *so* (1.11) is closing implicative (Brünner 1987; Ehlich 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002) since there is no orientation to the next activity by either participant, after Sebastian's *so* at line 13, Rena enquires about other vegetables that should be included in the recipe. Hence, she treats Sebastian's *so* as an "announcement" of the completion of the activity she is

⁵ Although it is not clear what Sebastian articulates at line 43, we can presume it is an affiliative turn as Rena subsequently provides a confirmation with *geNAU* ('exactly', 1.45).

involved in that marks his (re-)availability and an opportunity space to transition back to the joint project.

(5) Kochen_03_01:08-01:25_"carrots":

(R: Rena, S: Sebastian)

* gaze by S

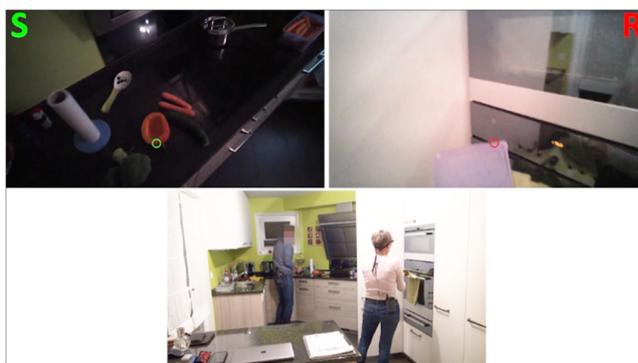
+ gaze by R

\$ gesture by R

& gesture by S

01 R **TUN wir mal_ne karOtte auch wenn_s magst;**
 let us put a carrot also if you like it
 02 (1.7)
 03 R **AP;**
 04 (0.8)
 05 S <<p> **(UND,)>**
 and
 06 (0.3)\$ (0.1)
 r \$gives S carrots-->
 07 R ***zwei [kaRO] [tten,]**
 two carrots
 s *gz broccoli-->1.12
 08 S **[oKAY;]_[O]PS;⁶**
 okay
 09 R **O\$PS,**
 r -->\$
 10 \$ (1.0) \$
 r \$picks up Tupperware lid\$
 11 R → **SO;**
 ptcl
 12 (0.6)*+(0.5)&(0.3)\$ (1.5) &(0.9)* (0.5) *(0.2)#
 r +gz towel-->1.20
 r \$wipes Tupperware lid-->1.20
 s &puts wrapping away&
 s -->* *gz vegetables*gz
 pumpkin-->
 fig

#fig6



(Figure 6)

⁶ The *ops* (1.08) produced by Sebastian here is a response cry (Goffman 1978). As he is unpacking the broccoli, a small piece falls out. Rena directs her gaze at the piece and produces an affiliative repetition of the response cry in the next turn (1.09).

13 S → SO&; ;
 prt1
 s &picks up pumpkin-->
 14 (0.6)
 15 R ZWI&Eb*el?
 onion
 s -->&
 s -->*
 16 (0.5)
 17 S JA na[tür-]
 yes of course
 18 R [zwie]bel_KNO:blau:ch,
 onion garlic
 19 (0.1)
 20 R U:::+ND\$ Ingwer.
 and ginger
 r -->+
 r -->\$

Having handed over some carrots, taken out of a Tupperware, to Sebastian, Rena picks up the lid, produces *so* (1.11) and after 1.4s she wipes the lid off with a towel. The *so* here marks the end of her activity concerning the carrots, and there is no clear projection to the next. The speaker does not initiate a new activity and for the duration of the activity her eye-gaze is directed at the towel and the lid in her hand, with no monitoring of her co-participant or the physical surroundings. Hence, her eye-gaze and embodied posture mark the particle in this position as backward-oriented, closing down an activity with no immediate projection to the next. The addressee also does not shift his gaze but keeps his visual attention on the activity he is preoccupied with.

While Rena is drying the lid with a towel, Sebastian puts the wrapping of the broccoli away. He then returns his gaze back to the vegetables on the counter (Figure 6) and produces a slightly prolonged *so*. While uttering *so*, he picks up the pumpkin, holds it up and stares at it, thus projecting a candidate next action. The *so* then produced at a transition place is forward oriented as it marks the closing down of one activity, putting away the wrapping paper, and there is a projection to what comes next, cutting the vegetables starting with the pumpkin. The two participants are engaged in different activities, facing different directions, and have no visual access to each other's activities. Hence, with the production of *so*, Sebastian marks his (re-)availability to his co-participant after having dealt with the activity with which he was engaged. Without directing her gaze at him, Rena orients to this *so* as an "announcement" of her co-participant's potential availability to initiate a new action and launches the next turn related to their joint project, namely what vegetable should go into the pot next.

This orientation of *so* by co-participants as a marker of (re-)availability is evidenced in the next excerpt as well. After Sebastian completes his embodied action and proffers *so*, Rena orients to this as an opportunity space for her to request assistance.

(6) Kochen_03_17:44-18:22_"cilantro II":

(R: Rena, S: Sebastian)

* gaze by S

+ gaze by R

\$ gesture by R

& gesture by S

01 R **kannst du (schnell) () die gewÜRze rausholen?**
can you take out the spices quickly

02 (0.3)

03 R **wir BRAUchen dann noch äh::m;**
we still need

04 (1.5)

05 R **kurKUma,**
turmeric

06 (1.2)

07 R **CURry,**
curry

08 (0.5)

09 R **koriANder,**
cilantro

10 (3.5)

11 S **äh::m-**

12 (0.8)

13 S **musst DU machen;**
you have to do it

14 (0.3)+(0.5)

r +gz spices-->>

15 R **NAH: okay;**

16 **&(0.6)**

s_{RRH} &stirs food--> 1.33

17 R **dann NEHmen_wir da-**
then we will take the

18 (0.7)

19 R **kurKU:ma,**
turmeric

20 (0.9)

21 R **CURry,**
curry

22 R **<<all> und jetzt MUSS ich noch den->**
and now I have to still the

23 (1.2)

24 R **koriANder finden;**
find the cilantro

25 (2.6)

26 R **<<p> (da da da da CU:min,)>**
cumin

27 (1.8)

28 R **curry (MAta),**
curry (mata)

29 (1.3)

30 R **SPINN ich?**
am I crazy

31 (0.8)

32 R **waCHO*L[der,]**
juniper

s *gz curry container-->

33 S → [SO, &] #
 ptcl
 s -->&
 fig #fig7



(Figure 7)

34 &(0.4) *(0.6)
 S -->*
 S_{LH} &picks up curry container-->
 35 R (XXX) kannst scho&n mal das nEhmen,
 can you take this already
 S_{LH} -->&

Rena's request to take out the spices *kannst du (schnell) () die geWÜRze rausholen?* ('can you take out the spices quickly', 1.01) is initially complied with by Sebastian who walks over to the drawer, while Rena calls out the ones they need for the recipe (1.03-09). After a few seconds of looking at the drawer, Sebastian requests Rena to do it *musst DU machen*; ('you have to do it', 1.13), which she accepts *NAH: okay*; (1.15). Sebastian then returns to the stove and starts stirring the food, while Rena searches for the spices. At the completion of his embodied action of stirring the food, Sebastian directs his gaze at the empty curry container, leaves the spatula and with his left hand he picks up the container and puts it aside (see Figure 7), indexing the end of his activity. He does not initiate a new activity, and his posture remains directed at the stove. Thus, the *so* is backward oriented. However, its production also functions as an indicator for Rena, who has no visual access to Sebastian, of his availability to engage in another activity. Rena, who has been keeping the spices in her left hand the whole time, orients to Sebastian's *so* as a transition marker with which he marks his (re-)availability and, without shifting her gaze away from the spices, takes it as an opportunity space to request help (XXX) *kannst schon mal das nEhmen*, ('can you take this already', 1.35).

To sum up, while the excerpts provided embody somewhat differing characteristics, they present recognisably the same practice. *so* at transition spaces is employed by interlocutors to mark the boundaries between activities (Barske/Golato 2010; Brünner 1987; Ehlich 1987; Mazeland 1983; Meier 2002), marking the completion of one activity and their orientation to the next within an overall joint project. What is more, by considering the temporal organisation of the participants' bodily orientation and gaze direction when producing *so* in transition spaces, the paper illustrates that the particle can have a forward- or backward- looking orientation.

5 Discussion

The paper has investigated the use of the German particle *so* in transition spaces to mark the boundaries of activities in the course of a joint project. Building on Barske/Golato's (2010) previous work on *so* as a transition marker, the present work has investigated the role of participants' gaze in transitions between activities. The analysis has shown that while there is a speaker's shift in gaze direction accompanied by the token, the addressee's gaze does not shift after the production of the marker, unless they are involved in the next activity (see, for instance, ex.2, l.10). Addressees' gaze remains on their own activity. However, coordinating their actions does not require the addressee to look at the speaker. The addressees' verbal uptakes indicate they are attentive to the token and orient to it as transition relevant. See, for instance, in excerpt (3) where, after the transition marker, Sebastian produces an interrogative at line 36 *soll ich DIE schälen?* ('shall I peel these') that anticipates the next relevant action and thus orients to the progressivity of the joint project. That is, the production of *so* in transition spaces orients to the progressivity of the overall project, as participants mark transitions between activities and manifest these transitions for their interlocutors as well. Co-participants are then "informed" about the progress of their interlocutors and can coordinate their actions for the progress of the overall project, an observation that corroborates Keevallik's (2010a) work on *nii* in Estonian.

Additionally, in almost all the excerpts, participants are multitasking; while occupied with their individual activities, they are also engaged in talk. In such cases, *so* not only marks the boundaries between their activities but also manages topic transitions (Barske/Golato 2010), from talk about a certain topic back to talk concerning the joint project, thus refocusing the participants' attention to the project. This observation resonates with Keevallik's (2010a) remarks on *nii* as a resource implemented by interlocutors to re-achieve a common focus between themselves and coordinate their concurrent activities. What transverses the examples examined is that *so* alerts the co-present parties that a transition is taking place. Since the participants are engaged in a joint project, their individual actions might depend on or have consequences for the other participants involved. By proffering *so* after the completion of an activity, participants are alerting their co-participants that they are available to engage in an action or initiate a new activity. This, in turn, leads to a more collaborative environment as participants can coordinate their concurrent activities in the overall project in which they are involved.

The particle *so* in these environments has similar interactional functions to the ones observed for *okay* in German (Barske 2009). As Barske (2009) shows, *okay* in business meetings is employed by chairpersons to transition between sections of the meeting and thus facilitate the progress of the meeting. Similarly, by marking the boundaries between activities with *so*, participants achieve coordination in the course of a joint project and contribute to its progressivity. It is implemented by interlocutors to close down the prior activity while orienting to the move to the next one. While it is not responsive to the prior action, as is the case with the English *okay* (Beach 1993) or *right* (Gardner 2004, 2007), the particle has nevertheless prospective features, proposing a move out of the current activity and into a new one.

What is more, in accordance with Mondada/Sorjonen's (2021) and De Stefani/Mondada's (2021) observation on *okay* in transition spaces, by investigating its use

concurrently with other multimodal resources, such as the participants' bodily orientation and their gaze direction, the paper illustrates that *so* can have retrospective as well as prospective features. There are instances in the data set where *so* marks the end of a prior activity but there is no clear projection to the next, thus adopting a backward-looking orientation. In other instances, *so* has a forward-looking orientation as it marks the closing down of one activity and there is an orientation by the participants to what comes next. With respect to the next activity, this is often introduced with temporal expressions, such as *dann* (ex.2) and *und dann* (ex.1,3), which, as Barske/Golato (2010) observe in their data, verbalise the shift and contribute to the transition. Since the activities in my data set form part of a larger joint project, the composition of these turns with the turn-initial temporal expressions marks the next activity as a member of a series of activities that form part of a whole. Participants move from one activity to another, following an agenda. So, the next activity is proposed as a routine next in a series of activities that need to be fulfilled in order to complete the project. With respect to its temporality, the token is produced at the completion of the embodied action of the prior activity or immediately following it. In terms of position and composition, *so* forms a TCU of its own and is typically produced with a falling intonation, which is in line with Barske and Golato's (2010) observations on *so* in their data set. However, unlike their data where *so* is produced faster than the surrounding talk, in my data the sound on *so* is often stretched out.

On the whole, the practice described in this paper illustrates how participants in interaction can achieve coordination in the course of a joint project by marking the boundaries between activities. By alerting their co-participants of a change-of-activity taking place, participants bring the focus back to the joint project and are in a position to coordinate their concurrent activities and achieve a more collaborative environment. Finally, the analysis has revealed that the organisation of a joint project is a collective and collaborative process that relies on participants' finely tuned coordination of their individual actions.

This study investigated the use of the token in the context of joint projects where participants have to collaborate to achieve a common goal. Future research could build on this line of enquiry and explore the use of the particle in different sequential contexts where collaboration between participants is not mandatory. It would be interesting to see also how gaze and body orientation, both of speaker and addressee, function in such environments, and whether the findings would corroborate those of the current study in terms of the particle's forward- and backward-looking orientation.

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7 Appendix A

GAT 2 transcription conventions (GAT2, Selting et al., 2009; for the English translation see Couper-Kuhlen and Barth-Weingarten, 2011)

Sequential structure

[]	Overlap and simultaneous talk
=(latching)	Fast, immediate continuation with a new turn or segment

In- and outbreaths

h / ḣ	In-/outbreaths of appr. 0.2--0.5 s duration
hh / hh°	In-/outbreaths of appr. 0.5--0.8 s duration
hhh / hhh°	In-/outbreaths of appr. 0.8--1.0 s duration

Pauses

(.)	Micro pause, estimated, up to 0.2 s duration appr.
(0.5)/(2.0)	Measured pause of appr. 0.5 / 2.0 sec. duration (to tenth of a second)

Other segmental conventions

and_uh	Cliticizations within units
uh, uhm, etc.	Hesitation markers, so-called "filled pauses"
:	Lengthening, by about 0.2-0.5 sec.
::	Lengthening, by about 0.5-0.8 sec.
:::	Lengthening, by about 0.8-1.0 sec.
?	Cut-off by glottal closure

Laughter and crying

haha hehe hihi	Syllabic laughter
((laughs)) ((cries))	Description of laughter and crying
<<laughing> >	Laughter particles accompanying speech with indication of scope
<<:-)> so>	Smile voice

Continuers

hm, yes, no, yeah	Monosyllabic tokens
hm_hm, ye_es, no_o	Bi-syllabic tokens
?hm?hm	With glottal closure, often negating

Accentuation

SYLlable	Focus accent
sYllable	Secondary accent
!SYL!lable	Extra strong accent

Final pitch movements of intonation phrases

?	Rising to high
,	Rising to mid
--	Level
;	Falling to mid
.	Falling to low
<<surprised> >	Interpretive comment with indication of scope
<<f> >	Forte, loud
<<ff> >	Fortissimo, very loud
<<p> >	Piano, soft
<<pp> >	Pianissimo, very soft
<<all> >	Allegro, fast
<<len> >	Lento, slow
<cresc> >	Crescendo, increasingly louder
<<dim> >	Diminuendo, increasingly softer
<<acc> >	Accelerando, increasingly faster

Other conventions

(xxx), (xxx xxx)	One or two unintelligible syllables
(may i)	Assumed wording
((. . .))	Omission in transcript

8 Appendix B

Embodied actions are transcribed according to the following conventions developed by Lorenza Mondada (see Mondada 2018 for a conceptual discussion).
<https://www.lorenzamondada.net/multimodal-transcription>

* *	Descriptions of embodied actions are delimited between
++	two identical symbols (one symbol per participant and per type of
action)	
Δ Δ	that are synchronized with correspondent stretches of talk or time
indications.	
*--->	The action described continues across subsequent lines
--->*	until the same symbol is reached.
>>	The action described begins before the excerpt's beginning.
--->>	The action described continues after the excerpt's end.
.....	Action's preparation.
----	Action's apex is reached and maintained.
,,,,,	Action's retraction.
ric	Participant doing the embodied action is identified in small caps in
	the margin.
fig	The exact moment at which a screen shot has been taken
#	is indicated with a sign (#) showing its position within the turn/a
	time measure.

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