

Ja, jo and nei initiating responses to wh-questions in Norwegian

Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No";
anything more than this comes from evil.
Math. 5. 37

1. Introduction

This study investigates the pragmatic functions of the response items *ja*, *jo* and *nei* in contexts where they do not negate or affirm a proposition in the previous question. It is argued that instead they convey modal and interactional aspects of the forthcoming response.¹

The traditional use of the Norwegian words *ja*, *jo* and *nei* is as polarity items, confirming or negating a previously expressed proposition. As such, they can stand alone as "sentence fragments" and constitute an independent contribution to a conversation. *Ja* is used to affirm a positive proposition, *nei* to affirm a negative proposition or to negate a positive proposition, and *jo* is used to negate a negative proposition:

Affirmation

Positive proposition: Du er syk./Er du syk? You are ill./Are you ill?

Ja (det er jeg.) Yes (I am.)

Negative proposition: Du er ikke syk./Er du ikke syk? You aren't ill./Aren't you ill?

Nei (det er jeg ikke.) No (I'm not.)

Negation

Positive proposition: Du er syk./Er du syk? You are ill./Are you ill?

Nei (det er jeg ikke.) No (I'm not.)

Negative proposition: Du er ikke syk./Er du ikke syk? You are not ill./Aren't you ill?

Jo (det er jeg.) Yes (I am.)

However, after wh-questions these words behave differently and seem to express other things. First, they appear in a context where no proposition is set forth to be affirmed or negated – at least not explicitly. Second, they do not constitute responses in themselves but merely *initiate* responses. Here are a couple of examples:

¹ I would like to thank Thorstein Frøtheim, Marianne Lind and Elizabeth Lanza for useful comments on an earlier draft of this article. I am also grateful to Wenche Vagle,

Ulla Børestam Uhlmann, Margareth Sandvik and Guro Karstensen, who have kindly given me permission to use their data for this study. And, finally, thanks to Diana Santos for technical assistance in using FileMaker to design and construct the data base.

- (1) I-er: 'hva vil den her forbindelsesen eh få å bety for folk på Fjellværoyra no.
 IO: 'ja etter 'mett syn på det så vil det værre et stort fremskritt om vi 'får den her forbindelsesen.
 I-er: 'what will this connection eh mean to people on the Fjellvæar island now.
 I-ee: 'ja in 'my view it will be a great progress if we 'get this connection.
 (NILSEN 1992:254)

- (2) E: ja hvordan 'var beskrivelsen?
 I: jo det gikk 'bra liksom.
 E: well how 'was the description?
 I: jo it went 'good sort of.

- (Own data)
 2(3) T: hvem skal betale de greiene her da?
 V: nei ska vel prøve å få gjort det så billig som mulig.
 .. få det selvfinansiert kan du si da.

- T: who's going to pay for these things?
 V: nei I guess we'll try to get it done as cheaply as possible.
 .. have it self-financed you could say.
 (BÖRESTAM ULLMAN 1994)

In this context, I will argue that the response words are pragmatic particles rather than polarity items, and that they do not in themselves convey propositional content. This implies that they have pragmatic functions, such as expressing the speaker's propositional attitude, organizing the conversational interaction of the participants and regulating their interpersonal relationship. The task I have set myself in this article is to describe more precisely in which contexts the particles appear and to explain their pragmatic functions in those contexts.

Initiating responses to wh-questions with *ja*, *jo* and *nei* is a rather common phenomenon in spoken Norwegian, although some people consider it as poor language. As an example of this negative attitude, consider the following extract, in which a journalist expresses her disapproval of what she considers a growing tendency to start sentences by *nei*:

"Plutselig begynner vi alle setninger med *nei*. Når skal du reise på ferie? *Nei*, jeg drar vel i juli. Har du hatt en fin helg? *Nei*, jeg var på en flott skogtur. Dette lille *nei*-et har ikke bare sneket seg inn i nordmannens dagligtale, det er også full aktivitet i radio som fjernsyn. Hva er landsmøtet's viktigste sak? *Nei*, det... Hvordan denne bruk av *nei* dukket opp? Sånn i utide? Aner ikke. Kanskje er det resultatet av to folkeavstemninger som har gjort oss særlig glad i ordet *nei*. At vi rett og slett sier *nei* for sikkerhets skyld."

Suddenly we start all sentences by *nei*. When are you going on vacation? *Nei*, reoon I'll be leaving in July. Have you had a nice weekend? *Nei*. I went for a

great hike in the woods. This little word, *nei*, has not just crept into Norwegians' everyday speech, it is also in full activity in radio and television. What is the most important issue of the national congress? *Nei*, it... How this use of *nei* originated? So inopportune? I have no idea. Perhaps it is the result of two referendums which has made us especially fond of the word *no*. That we simply say *no* to be safe.
 (Språkkurøren 1-97.)

One reason why these particles are so disdained may be that they typically belong to spoken language. In writing they are usually avoided, except in cases where the author specifically wants to render the actual oral delivery of the answer, such as in this newspaper interview:

- (4) - Hva slags forhold har du til mørkemennene i partiet ditt?
 - *Nei*... Jeg mener det er galt å si vi har så mange mørkemenn i KrF...
 - Kan du nevne et annet parti som har flere?
 - ...men jeg er klar over at i kulturradikale kretser har man det bildet at indemissionsfolk fra Vestlandet er mørkemenn.
 - What kind of relationship do you have to the religious fanatics in your party?
 - *Nei*... I think it is wrong to say that we have that many fanatics in the Christian Democratic Party ...
 - Can you mention another party which has more?
 - ... but I know that in radical intellectual circles members of the Home Mission on the West Coast are considered to be fanatics.
 (Prime minister Kjell Magne Bondevik interviewed in VG, Sept. 20, 1997)

In this portrait interview, the journalist makes a point of citing the actual delivery of the prime minister's words, including pauses and his ignoring of the second question.

1.1 Previous studies

The use of these particles in responses to wh-questions has not been previously studied extensively. In the comprehensive Norwegian grammar, FAARLUND / LIE / VANNEBO (1997), the phenomenon is mentioned briefly as affirmation or negation of an implicit question. The example is:

- (5) A: Hva skal du gjøre i ferien da?
 B1: *Nei*, vi skal bare ta noen småturer rundt omkring
 B2: *Jo*, det skal jeg si deg - vi skal til Island i år
 (FAARLUND / LIE / VANNEBO 1997:970).

- A: So what are you doing during your vacation?
 B1: Nei, we are just going for some short trips here and there
 B2: Jo, I'll tell you – we're going to Iceland this year

According to the authors, the question "what you are doing during your vacation" implies another question, namely whether or not B is doing something interesting or exciting during the vacation, and this is what B answers *nei* or *jo* to.

More elaborate analyses are found in two recent Master's theses, LIND (1994) and SKARBØ (1997). Lind treats initial *jo* as a marker of coherence with the previous turn, simultaneously she claims that the particle marks adversativity with respect to the implicit message of the prior question. It is somewhat curious that FAARLUND / LIE / VANNBØ (1997) treat *jo* as an affirmation whereas LIND (1994) treats it as a negation of an implicit assumption in the question.

SKARBØ (1997) discusses *nei* following wh-questions. Her examples involve only questions about personal matters, and she claims that the particle is used by the speaker as a hedge, lowering the value of the personal achievements reported in the answer and thus allowing the speaker to avoid self-praise.

HELLBERG (1985) discusses *ja* in Scandinavian reactive sentence types. Basing his claims on invented and literary dialogues, he argues that in response to wh-questions *ja* endorses a presupposition in the question. Furthermore, it "indicates that the answer asked for by the question word will be the one expected by the first speaker" (HELLBERG 1985:51). And he goes on to say that "if the answer is presumed to be unexpected, or if no particular answer is presumed to be expected, the adversative *jo* "yes" will normally take on the function of endorsing the presupposition" (p. 51).

Finally, LINDSTRÖM (1999) treats a related phenomenon in Swedish, namely what she calls a "curled" *ja* initiating responses to various first pair parts of adjacency pairs, mostly requests and other types of directive speech acts. By calling it a "curled" *ja*, she means that the word is elongated and pronounced with a final rising tone. She notes that *ja* in these cases projects a "non-aligning response", such as for instance declining a request. Thus, whereas Hellberg sees *ja* as projecting an expected answer, Lindström considers that (curled) *ja* projects what is usually considered an unexpected response.

As we see, the proposals put forward so far are limited in scope, treating only one or two of the particles, and they are to a large extent contradictory.

1.2 The data

The data I will be using in the analysis are exclusively excerpts from actual, recorded interviews and conversations. The particles are to a large extent parts of unconscious, automatized conversational routines, and only partially open to introspection. For instance, I do not at all share the previously cited journalist's intuition that this is a natural use of the particle *nei*:

Har du hatt en fin helg?
 Nei, jeg var på en flott skogtur.
 Have you had a nice weekend?
 Nei, I went for a great hike in the woods.

Rather than arguing about intuitions, I will thus investigate what people actually say in a corpus of conversations.

The data consist of excerpts from various sources of transcribed spoken Norwegian. Some are interviews – socio-linguistic as well as broadcast – whereas others are spontaneous, informal conversations. The types of conversations in the corpus and their source are presented in Table 1.2

Type of conversation and source	No. of instances
1 Sociolinguistic interviews (Talemålsundersøkelsen i Oslo (TAUS), HANSEN et al. 1978)	111
2 Broadcast interviews and talk shows (KARSTENSEN 1998, VAGLE 1990, in prep., NILSEN 1992, SANDVIK, in prep)	32
3 Informal conversations (SVENNEVIG 1999, BÖRESTAM UHLIMANN 1994)	10
Total:	153

Table 1: Distribution of particles on the various types of conversations in the corpus

The corpus consists of a total of 153 particles. Of these, the particle *ja* is by far the most frequent, with a total of 77 instances. There are 42 instances of *nei*, and 34 instances of *jo* (cf. Table 2).

2

The data of the studies referred to in the table are not available in the publications themselves, but have been put to my disposal by the authors. The references in the examples to the data source are thus not to the publications themselves, but to the data base underlying them. The sociolinguistic interviews are available in the data base at the University of Oslo, Tekstlaboratoriet. The different sources originally use different transcription systems. For presentational purposes I have simplified and standardized the transcriptions. Furthermore, the transcriptions present different amounts of prosodic and extra-linguistic information. The TAUS corpus, from which the majority of the examples are taken, includes little such information.

Particle	No. of instances
<i>Ja</i>	77
<i>Nei</i>	42
<i>Jo</i>	34
Total:	153

Table 2: Distribution of particle types in the corpus

2. *Nei* signalling a breach of expectations

The general function of *nei* as a response initiator is to signal that, in some respect, the response is not fully consonant with the expectations or projections implied by the question. The respondents may not be in a position to answer the question as it is formulated, or they may intend to signal less than full commitment to the answer.

2.1 Renouncing to answer

In asking questions, speakers display the expectation that their interlocutors are able and willing to answer them. This is part of the felicity conditions or the conversational postulates of performing the speech act of asking a question (Searle 1969). However, sometimes this expectation is not warranted. Sometimes the interlocutors are not, after all, able or willing to provide the information requested in the question. Hence, when they renounce to answer a question, they often initiate the response with the particle *nei*. Their response is, in such cases, not an answer, but usually an account for why they cannot or do not want to provide the information³:

(6) I-er: e= hva er deres første minne fra barndommen.

IO: ... nei= det det kan jæ -kke e=

jæ vet ikke hva det ska- ut på.

så det det det e=

I-er: e= nei. ... d- æ- greii det. ...

3 The transcription symbols used are:

.. short silence (under 0.7 seconds)

... (1.0) long, measured silence (over 0.7 seconds)

= unmeasured silence

... elongation

, continuing intonation contour

. terminal intonation contour

? question intonation

' stress

(()) transcriber's comment

xx[xx]

(vertically aligned brackets) overlap

IO: husker ikke, ...

I-er: nei

I-er: e= what is your first memory from childhood.

I-ee: ... nei= I I I can't e=

I don't know what that should be,

so I I I I e=

I-er: e= no. ... that's OK. ...

I-ee: don't remember, ...

I-er: no

(Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS)

Here the question conveys the expectation that the interviewee does have a readily accessible "first memory". However, she renounces the question. The answer is characterized by other markers of uncertainty as well, such as self-editing (stammering and restarts) and hesitation (filled pauses). The response takes the form of an account for the inability to answer, namely that the interviewee does not know or does not remember what her first memory is.

In this case the interlocutor could not answer because of lack of knowledge or memory. In other cases, it may be that the question involves matters which are so complex or encompassing that it is difficult or not practically possible to give a simple answer at the current stage of the conversation. In these cases, the response may also be marked by *nei* to indicate that the response does not fulfill the expectations projected by the question:

(7) H: men men altså det 'ska være en viss form for rettferdighet

som æ i grunnen etterlyser

W: nei 'altså eh

.. 'hva er da rettferdighet i det i denne sammenhengen?

H: nei 'det er det mange som har spurt om ((LATTER))

hva rettferdighet er

et meget vanskelig 'spørsmål

og 'særlig for 'mæ å bevare i forbindelse med det 'her

men det virke 'umiddelbart urettferdig da for å si det 'slik

H: but but well there 'ought to be a certain degree of 'justice

that I actually 'call for

W: well eh

.. 'what is then 'justice in that in this connection?

H: nei 'that is something many have asked about ((LAUGHTER))

what 'justice is

a very difficult 'question

and 'especially for 'me to answer in connection with 'this

but it appears 'intuitively as unjust to put it that way

(Radio talk show, NILSEN 1992:240)

In this excerpt, the speaker (H) does not claim to lack the knowledge required to answer the question, but admits that it is a difficult question and renounces to answer it at present. In such cases, then, the pragmatic particle projects that the speaker will not be able to provide the requested information.

2.2 Questioning a presupposition

Another way a response may go contrary to the expectations displayed by the question is when the responder questions or refutes a presupposition. Such responses are also recurrently introduced by *nei*:

- (8) S: du har gjort 'masse.
..koss får du 'lån til så mang- mang- mange 'år da?
M: .. nei=_s,
altså det var en periode jeg 'ikke 'tok opp 'lån,
for jeg 'jobbet veldig mye ved 'siden av,
S: .. o'key.
M: .. men= jeg tror nok 'egentlig atte det skulle gå bra uan'sett asså,
S: you've done a lot.
.. how do you get 'loans for so man- man- many 'years?
M: .. nei=_s,
well there was a period when I 'didn't have loans,
cause I 'worked a lot on the side,
S: .. 'okay.
M: .. but= I think that in 'fact it would work out well 'anyway,

(Informal conversation, SVENNEVIG 1999)

Here it is presupposed in the question that Marta has financed all her studies by student loans. However, Martha initiates her response by explicitly denying this. In this way she deviates from the expectations implied by the question. It is obvious that when a wh-question contains unacceptable presuppositions the interlocutor cannot answer the question as it is formulated. What Marta does here, however, is to provide an answer to the hypothetical case in which she had taken up student loans ("but I think that in fact it would work out well anyway").

This use can be explained by reference to the theory of *preference organization* (POMERANTZ 1984, SACKS 1987). In conversation, certain responses may be produced either in a preferred format or in a dispreferred format. Preferred responses in conversation are those which take up and accept the project proposed in the prior turn or which are in some way aligned with the projections set up by it. They are produced in a short, direct, unhedged, and non-hesitating format. Dispreferred responses include a declination component and are characterized by mitigation, elaboration and delay. The use of *nei* to cancel presuppositions thus works as a dispreference marker, signalling that the answer is not consonant with the projections of the question.

If the question has negative polarity, the denial of a presupposition will be preceded by *jo* instead of *nei*, as in this example:

- (9) RK: ... men sluttigen
... altså svenskene har jo holdt på med kjønnsrolledebatt nå i ti år ikke sant
... og de innrømmer da så vidt jeg ... skjønner at de ikke har nådd særlig
langt utover denne radikale kjønnsrolle og aktivistkretsen
... og hvorfor har de ikke det
KS: ... jo men jeg tror de har nådd ... mye lenger
jeg har sittet og ... og lest akkurat i det siste en del svenske bøker
og de har kommet mye lenger enn oss
RK: ... but finally
... I mean the Swedes have been debating sex roles for ten years now right
... and they admit as far as I ... understand that they haven't reached
beyond this radical sex role and activist circle
... and why haven't they
KS: ... jo but I do believe they have reached much wider
I've been ... been reading just lately some Swedish books
and they have come a lot further than we have
(Radio interview, VAGLE, in prep.)

Here the presupposition in the question about the failure of the Swedish debate on sex roles is in the negative form ("the Swedes have not reached beyond the radical activist circle"). This presupposition is explicitly addressed and denied in the response. The initiating particle here is *jo*, which, in conjunction with "but", signals a certain adversativity.

As we see here, these uses of *nei* and *jo* have certain common traits with the corresponding response items. They mark a certain opposition, *nei* with a positive proposition and *jo* with a negative proposition. *Nei* is usually followed by an utterance with negative polarity, as in the examples above (though there may also be other ways of invalidating a presupposition or of claiming inability to answer), whereas *jo* generally initiates a positive polarity utterance. Unlike the response items, however, they do not affirm or negate anything in themselves. They are invariably followed by a response which expresses explicitly the refutation of the presuppositions contained in the question.

2.3 Hedging

In the examples above, the responder was not able to answer the question as it was formulated. There are other cases where an answer is provided, but where the speaker marks a reduced commitment to the proposition expressed. Here the particle is used as a *hedge*, reducing the epistemic commitment of the speaker:

(10) LR: .. 'o=g .. De lover oss jo faktisk at vi skulle få litt midnattssos i 'kveld

.. 'men .. det ser det ikke ut som det kan bli
.. det skifter veldig fort her 'oppe 'hva?

B: .. 'ja .. det gjør 'det

LR: .. 'hva kommer det av i dag at det har skiftet sånn da

B: .. 'nei det var vel helst den nordlige 'lufa som
.. trængt inn over .. Finnmark og Troms 'her ja
LR: .. De hadde ikke ventet den De 'heller da?

LR: .. 'a=nd .. actually you promised us that we would get some midnight sun
to 'night

.. 'but .. it doesn't look as if it's 'going to be
.. it changes very quickly 'up here 'doesn't it?

B: .. 'yeah .. it 'does

LR: .. so how come it has changed so 'much today

B: .. 'nei it was most likely the Northern 'air which
.. pressed in over .. Finnmark and Troms 'here yeah

LR: .. so then you hadn't expected it 'either?
(Radio entertainment, YAGLE, in prep.)

Here the particle is followed by what seems to be presented by the speaker and accepted by the co-participant as an adequate answer to the question. Thus, the particle does not seem to be a dispreference marker. Rather, it is a hedge, that is, a downgrading or softening element reducing the epistemic commitment of the speaker.

In the present example the particle modifies the assertiveness of the answer. This is supported by the fact that the answer itself is also hedged, both by the particle *vel*, which is usually interpreted as a marker of uncertainty (FRETHEIM 1981, LIND 1994), and by the adverb *helst* (translated "most likely"), which also reduces the certainty of the statement.

Hedges may be used to signal *real* uncertainty, or they may be used as a politeness strategy. In performing a speech act, the speaker does not just make an epistemic commitment to the propositional content of the utterance, but also an affective commitment of involvement in the topic and in the interlocutor (KATRLEL / DASCAL 1989). Hedges may thus also be used for reducing the involvement of the speaker for purposes of politeness. One reason may be to reduce the potential imposition of a statement (BROWN / LEVINSON 1987:145f). By hedging one's claims or opinions, one achieves an effect of modesty and cautiousness, and thereby one shows respect for the potentially diverging opinions of the interlocutor.

The particle *nei* as a hedge may be used in both these functions. In the following example the answerer clearly displays actual uncertainty:

(11) IO: men jæ husker det var no sånn=... var -e -er a u eff (RAUF) eller=
... det huske jæ det var ganske mye a-,

... både for ungdom og og=

I-er: hva arrangerte de,

IO: ... nei= det va- vel= jæ var aldri der men det va- vel no sånne=
gikk på sånne=... hyggekvelder og=
... og j- va- vel mye i forbindelse me første mai og=
... jæ bare husker får jæ var ikke med på no a- det så

I-ee: but I remember there were some sort of= ... was it R.A.U.F. or=
... I remember there was pretty much of that,
for both youth and and=

I-er: what did they arrange,

I-ee: ... nei= I guess there were= I never was there,
but I guess there were some such= ... get-togethers and=
... and j- probably was much in connection with the First of May and=
... I just remember cause I didn't participate in any of it so

(Sociolinguistic interview, TAU5)

Here the speaker states two times that he did not go to the get-togethers and thus that he does not have first hand information. The answer is initiated by *nei* and includes two instances of the medial particle *vel* (translated as "I guess" and "probably"). In the next example, however, it is difficult to see how the hedge can mark actual uncertainty:

(12) IO: og så ha- jæ læst på å dra nedover ti- jugoslavia,
... ta med båten ned der,

... så bare= (smart) rygge ned te- stranda.

og så kan du kjøre litt utover=

... istedenfor å myldre -ræ me e= alle turista asså.

det bli- suverent asså.

I-er: ... hvor stor er den båten -a,

IO: ... nei= d'n -n sånn søttenfot sånn=... morebas ... deikruser ...
I-er: nei si- mæ ikke no. ((HVISKENDE))

I-ee: and then I want to go down to Jugoslavia,

... take along the boat down there,

... and then just= (smack) back down to the beach.

and then you can go out a bit=

... instead of mangle- yourself with e= all the tourists.

that'll be just superb.

I-er: ...how big is that boat,

I-ee: ... nei= it's a like seventeen foot like=... Mørchas ... Daycruiser ...

I-er: no doesn't ring a bell. ((WHISPERING))

(Sociolinguistic interview, TAU5)

Here there is no reason to believe that the speaker is uncertain of the size of his boat. The answer is hedged, but there are no signs of hesitation or other markers of un-

certainly. The hedge must be interpreted as motivated by politeness. Here the particle is used metaphorically, conveying not reduced certainty, but reduced **affective commitment** to what is said.

By reducing the importance of the statement, the speaker appears less self-confident. In other words, hedging is a strategy used to lower oneself with respect to the interlocutor. In the present example we may thus interpret the use of the particle as the interviewee's wish not to appear as bragging about his belongings. In the first of these examples (8), the hedging also seems to reflect social rather than cognitive concerns. It seems to be an instance of "academic cautiousness", where one displays modesty about possessing absolute or certain knowledge.

3. *Jo* as an upgrader

Jo as a response particle indicates the opposite of what *nei* indicates. It introduces preferred responses, and upgrades the assertiveness or affective commitment of the speaker. Here is an example:

- (13) IS: de ivrar 'nest for .. å få til ein=
endå ein ny 'syssettingskomite eller eit 'utval.
'kvifor i alle 'dager .. måtte de ha eit nytt 'utval.

KMB: ... *jo*,
fordi at vi ser at de virkemiddel vi har brukt frem til 'nå,
de har ikke gitt gode nok resultat.

IS: you are the most 'eager to .. get a=
yet a new 'employment committee or a 'panel.
'why on earth .. did you have to have a new 'panel.

KMB: ... *jo*,
because we see that the incentives we have used until 'now,
they haven't given good enough results,
(Radio debate, SANDVIK, in prep.)

Here the particle marks a strengthened affective commitment by the speaker to the proposition expressed. This has the effect of making the answer seem reasonable, or even obvious.

Very often, *jo* introduces responses to requests for evaluation of some sort. In these cases, the assessment in the answer is always "positive", that is, not face threatening:

- (14) I-er: hvordan syns di det var å bli intervjuet,
IO: ... *jo*= det var- *jo* åläreit,
I-er: ...har di blitt intervjuet før
I-er: how did you like being interviewed,
I-ee: ...*jo*= that was all right,

I-er: ...have you been interviewed before
(Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS)

- (15) I-er: hvordan va- forholder mellom elev og lærere den gangen,
IO: ... *jo*= vi i= jæ tro- vi va- veldig godt fornøyd med vår læring,
... e= gjennomgående alle sammen tro- jæ.

I-er: how were the relations between pupils and teachers at that time,
I-ee: ... *jo*= we e= I think we were very satisfied with our teacher,
... e= each and every one I believe.
(Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS)

In the first instance, the speaker tells the interviewer that the interview has not been unpleasant to him. This assessment is clearly not threatening and constitutes a preferred response. The assessment in the next excerpt bears less relevance for the face of the interlocutor, but at least it draws a harmonic and positive picture of the past and hence does not raise distressing matters. These assessments also have other characteristics of preferred turn shapes: they are short, unhedged, and direct.

As noted, the use of pragmatic particles in the beginning of a turn is associated with dispreferred responses. It may therefore seem paradoxical that the particle *jo* is associated with preferred responses. Why use an initial particle at all? Why not just produce the assessment immediately?

The answer to this question, I believe, lies in the constraints of on-line, real-time production of spoken utterances. Speakers are required to plan the content and the form of their utterances as the conversation proceeds. However, if they pause or hesitate too much before producing their assessment, the hesitation itself will potentially signal that a dispreferred, negative assessment is forthcoming. Thus, after a request for evaluation, speakers are drawn between two opposing demands: First, the need to plan what to say, and second, the need to say something quickly so as not to induce wrongly a belief in the hearer that a negative assessment is coming up. I suggest that the production of the particle *jo* is a conventional solution to this dilemma. It is a place *proxy* for the preferred response which is in preparation and thus gives the speaker some more time for planning. The particle gives the speaker the opportunity of avoiding silence and instead projecting that a preferred turn is under way.

Another environment where *jo* occurs is after requests for substantiation. Such requests are realized by questions such as "på hvilken måte da?" – "in which way?", "hvordan da?" – "how?", "hvorfør det (da)?" – "how come?" etc. Such questions are occasioned by the prior discourse. Moreover, they are oriented backwards, in that they seek an explanation or motivation for what was said in the prior turn. The Norwegian questions recurrently include the final particle *da*, which has been noted to occur precisely in follow-up questions (LIND 1994:195).

- (16) IO: ja for -ønm likte mæ veldig disse lærera.
fo- jæ erta dom så mye,

I-er: ... hvordan da, (latter)
 IO: ... *jo*, ((LATTER))

... vi hadde en som ... e=
 kunne si vi kalt -n for sjemekkem,
 ((FORTSETTER MED HISTORIE))

I-ee: yeah cause they liked me a lot these teachers.
 cause I teased them so much,

I-er: ...in what way, (laughter)

I-ee: ...*jo*, ((LAUGHTER))
 ...we had a guy who ... e=
 you could say we called- him the star watcher,

((CONTINUES WITH STORY))
 ((Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS))

In these cases the particle once again seems to signal a forthcoming preferred response, here a substantiation. Though it may take time to plan a more elaborate response, the particle signals a willingness and readiness to engage in the endeavor.

Questions for substantiation that follow negative statements inherit their negative polarity and in turn engender a negative particle in preferred responses:

(17) IO: personlig forsøke-*jæ* å snakke riksmål,
 ... men *jæ* æ fullstendig klar over at det= ... ikke alltid lykkes,

I-er: ... hvorfor ikke,

IO: ... *nei*, fordi jeg gjør feil,
 ... asså man bli *jo* veldig påvirket a det sprog man ti daglig hører=
 ... og det æ *jo*-kke alltid riksmål man hører=

IO: personally I try to speak Riksmål,
 ... but I am fully aware that I= ... don't always succeed,

I-er: ... why not,

IO: ... *nei*, because I make mistakes,
 ... that is you get very influenced by the language you hear daily=
 ... and what you hear isn't always Riksmål=
 (Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS)

Here the negative statement "I don't always succeed" is followed by a request for substantiation, also with negative polarity: "why not". What follows is a preferred response, a prompt and direct granting of the request. However, the initiating particle is *nei*. Since the response in other respects resembles those initiated by *jo*, the reason can only be the negative polarity of the preceding question.

As for the preference organization of responses, we may thus distinguish a pattern making *nei* and *jo* opposites: *nei* is a marker of dispreferred responses and *jo* is a

marker of preferred responses. When the polarity is negative, however, the pattern is inverted:

	Preferred response	Dispreferred response
Positive polarity	<i>jo</i>	<i>nei</i>
Negative polarity	<i>nei</i>	<i>jo</i>

Table 3: *Jo* and *nei* as preference markers in response to questions with positive and negative polarity

4. *Ja* as a turn-taking marker

The particle *ja* has several functions, but common to them is that they regulate the conversational interaction between the interlocutors. They signal such things as delay of the answer, that the answer will take the form of a multi-unit turn, or that the speaker needs time to reflect before answering. These functions can be called *turn-taking* functions.

4.1 *Ja* projecting a delayed answer

A recurrent use of *ja* is to project that the forthcoming answer is delayed, that is, that there will be an answer, but that it is contingent on something that has to be presented first. What is interpolated between the particle and the answer itself may be reservations on the validity or on the adequacy of the answer, or it may be background information leading up to the answer. Let us first look at a reservation:

(18) MJ: Cathrine Læchstøer du er forsker nå på Universitetet i Oslo
 e= vi trenger litt hukommelsesoppriskning her

e= hva er grunnen til at denne situasjonen nå er ... så spent ?
 CL: *ja* (KREMT) den er komplisert og mangfoldig selvfølgelig,
 men i enkelte trekk er bakgrunnen at e= Algerie for tre år siden
 gjennomførte sitt første demokratiske valg på ny nasjonalforsamling,
 og det valget foregikk etter en fransk modell,
 som betyr at man velger i to omganger.

MJ: Cathrine Læchstøer, you are a researcher now at the University of Oslo
 e= we need to fresh up our memory a bit here

e= what is the reason that this situation now is ... so tense?
 CL: *ja* (CLEARS THROAT) it is complicated and manifold of course,
 but in rough outline the background is that e= three years ago Algeria

carried out its first democratic elections for a new parliament, and those elections were organized after a French model, which means that you vote in two rounds. (Radio interview, KARSTENSEN 1998)

Before going on to answering the question, Cahtrine Løchstøer presents a reservation, namely that the situation is complicated and manifold, implying that there is no short and simple answer to the question. This analysis is supported by the fact that in the following she presents her account of the situation as a "rough outline".

But *ja* may also be used to start the response with a presentation of background information that is related to the answer.

- (19) I-er: hva var det dere kalte måltidene.
 IO: ... **ja a==e=e**= foreldra mine æ-jo fra landet,
 så vi spiste jo måmmat og og= og frokost og middag og eftasvøl og
 aftens vi ((LATTER))

I-er: what did you call the meals.

- I-ee: ... **ja a==e=e**= my parents come from the countryside,
 so we ate a morning meal and and= and breakfast and dinner and
 afternoon snack and supper ((LATTER))
 (Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS)

Here the answer is preceded by a piece of information about the speaker's parents, and this serves as an account, explaining why they had the meals they had. Another example is after a request for evaluation:

- (20) I-er: da va- vi ferdig... hvordan syns De det var å bli intervjua.
 IO: ... ((LATTER)) **ja=**((LATTER)) **ja=**
 jæ ha- gått og studert på detta herre siden jæ fikk detta brevet= men=
 ((LATTER)) men jeg=... ((LATTER)) det va- jo -kke så ille
 allikevel.

I-er: now we're finished. ... how did you like to be interviewed,

- I-ee: ... ((LATTER)) **ja=**((LATTER)) **ja=**
 I've been thinking about this since I got this letter= but=
 ((LATTER)) but I= ... ((LATTER)) it wasn't so bad after all.
 (Sociolinguistic interview, TAUS)

After the question we here get the particle *ja* and an introductory comment. Thus, what follows the request for evaluation is not the assessment itself, but a comment on the procedure of the interview. Only eventually is the assessment produced.

I suggest, then, that the particle serves to signal such an introductory comment preceding the answer to the question. Second pair parts of adjacency pairs are expected to be produced immediately following the first pair part (SCHLEGELF / SACKS 1974). If the

speaker of the first pair part does not get signals to the contrary, he or she will expect the first following contribution to be the second pair part of the adjacency pair. *Ja* is just such a signal that projects that this will not be the case. This provides for the comprehensibility of the introductory comments. The particle signals that they do not replace, but lead up to the actual answer to the question.

In addition to the particle, these responses include another pragmatic particle marking the boundary between the introductory, prefatory part of the response and the answer proper. This discourse marker is most frequently *men* ("but"), as in examples (18) and (20) (repeated below), but may also include others, such as *så* ("so") in (19).

- (18) CL: **ja** (KREMT) den er komplisert og mangfoldig selvfølgelig,
 men i enkle trekk er bakgrunnen at [...]
 CL: **ja** (COUGH) it is complicated and manifold of course,
 but in rough outline the background is that [...]

- (19) IO: **ja a==e=e**= foreldra mine æ-jo fra landet,
 så vi spiste jo måmmat [...]
 I-ee: **ja a==e=e**= my parents come from the countryside,
 so we ate a morning meal [...]

- (20) IO: ... ((LATTER)) **ja=**((LATTER)) **ja=**
 jæ ha- gått og studert på detta herre siden jæ fikk detta brevet= **men=**
 ((LATTER)) **men** jeg=... ((LATTER)) det va- jo -kke så ille allikevel.
 I-ee: ((LATTER)) **ja=**((LATTER)) **ja=**
 I've been thinking about this since I got this letter= **but=**
 ((LATTER)) **but** I= ... ((LATTER)) it wasn't so bad after all.

Usually *but* is used after reservations, as in (18), and so after background comments, as in (19). However, there are also examples of other distributions, for instance example (20).

4.2 *Ja* projecting a multi-unit response

A context of *ja*-responses which is somewhat related to the prior case is preceding multi-unit responses. The common trait is that in neither types of responses does the first turn constructional unit constitute the answer to the question. In the previous type the answer was delayed; here the answer is complex, so that a single clause will not be sufficient to answer the question. Here is an example:

- (21) MC: hva har du gjort i dag da?
 .. unnt - -

SS: ja i dag har jeg hatt møter .. og så har jeg skrevet litt på denne forskningen og så har jeg hatt forelesning- den - da dere ringte var jeg nettopp ferdig med forelesning for sykepleiere

MC: what have you been doing today?

.. cxc- --

SS: ja today I have had meetings .. and then I have written a bit on this research and then I have had a lecture- that - when you called I was just finished with a lecture for nurses

(Radio interview, KARSTENSEN 1998)

Here the answer to the question consists of a whole list of activities. The particle *ja* may be seen as preparing the interlocutor for such a complex response. If such a signal were not given, the interlocutor might be led to think that the answer is complete after the first clause ("i dag har jeg hatt møter" - "today I have had meetings") and proceed to take the next turn. The particle thus has a turn-taking function in that it claims the right to an extended turn by the speaker. The hearer is thus informed that a multi-unit turn is underway and will thus not take the first completed clause as an opportunity space for speaker shift, a transition relevance place.

The types of multi-unit responses are several. They may take the form of a list (such as above) or a narrative, such as here:

(22) I-er: hvor gikk du på skoli'n.

IO: ja. ... jeg bjynte på Grav folkeskole,

... og der gikk jæ i tre år,

... så ble det bygd ny skole på Eiksmarka i forbindelse me utbygging a- det området der oppe,

... og da bodde jeg asså like langt fra Grav skole som fra Eiksmarka,

og så ble vi som bodde i det område der hvo- jeg bor,

... vi blei overflytta til Eiksmarka.

... så gikk jæ på Eiksmarka i to år,

... og da var det sn- da ble Eiksmarka sprengt,

... og da var det snakk om at ... di eldste ... skulle da flyttes over ti- en tredje skole som hette- Fossum,

I-er: where did you go to school.

I-ee: ja. ... I started at Grav primary school,

... and was there for three years,

... then a new school was built at Eiksmarka in connection with the development in that area,

... and then I lived in equal distance from Grav school and Eiksmarka,

and then we who lived in the area where I live,

... we were transferred to Eiksmarka.

... then I went to Eiksmarka for two years,

... and then it was sn- then Eiksmarka was outgrown,
... and then the plans were ... to move the oldest ... over to a third school called Fossum,

(Sociolinguistic interview, TALUS)

Here the response includes three different schools that the interviewee attended. He thus cannot give a simple answer to the question, and instead he shapes his answer as a narrative about how he was moved from one school to another.

The two uses of *ja* analyzed so far thus have a common function in signalling that the first potentially complete (turn constructional) unit should not to be taken as a complete answer. In both cases *ja* thus signals a complex answer, and thus the need for an extended turn.

Usually *ja*-initiated responses follow so-called open-ended questions, that is, questions introduced by the interrogative pronoun *what* or the interrogative adverbs *how* and *why* (STENSTRÖM 1984:155). In 23 of the 29 *ja*-responses that initiate multi-unit turns the questions are open-ended. Open-ended questions contrast with *specifying questions*, which are introduced by the interrogative pronouns *which* and *who* and the adverbs *when* and *where*. Open-ended questions give the addressee a larger range of response options, whereas specifying questions restrict the response to a larger extent: "the specifying Qs [...] ask for exact, limited information, whereas the open-ended Qs [...] invite exhaustive accounts." (STENSTRÖM 1984:191).

It may seem that there is a general tendency that the more open the question, the more frequently the answer is prefaced by pragmatic particles. SCHIFFRIN (1987:105) found that the particle *well* was much more common following wh-questions than following yes/no-questions. She argues that this is because wh-questions present a larger range of response options.

In example (22) the response is elicited by a specifying question and not an open-ended question. The interrogative adverb is *where*. However, the use of the particle here may be seen as motivated by the fact that the answer does not provide just one, but several specifications of the information requested. It involves an "exhaustive account".

4.3 *Ja* signalling a need for more processing

Another environment where *ja* is found is preceding echo questions and other displays of on-going processing. Let us first look at an echo-question:

(23) I-er: hvor gamle=... var di da, ...

IO: ja= hvor gamle var di da,

sånn=... ti tolv år vil jeg tro,

I-er: how old=... were they then, ...

I-ee: ja= how old were they then,

like ten or twelve years I suppose,
(Sociolinguistic interview, TAU5)

Before answering the question, the speaker here inserts an elongated *ja* followed by an echo question. The echo question displays a memory search and gives time for the speaker to find an answer. In addition to the echo question, the answer itself displays that the speaker does not have a precise answer at hand. It is only an approximate specification of the age: "sånn ti tolv år" ("like ten or twelve years"), and the epistemic commitment is modified by a hedging clause: "vil jeg tro" ("I suppose").

Other initial displays of on-going processing include partial repetitions of the question:

(24) I-er: hva pleide dere å gjøre i feriene.

IO: ja feriene ... om sommerferien --

... di va- alltid lengre enn nå husse- jæ.

... det husse- jæ godt.

... og så= ... men e= jæ husker når jæ -- det tiliste --

jæ har e- tante i Danmark og i Horsens,

... og så har fætern kjemner noen i på Nordjylland,

... så det var et par år vi var i Danmark husker jæ.

I-er: what did you use to do on vacations.

IO: ja the vacations ... in the summer vacations --

... they were always longer than now I recall.

... I remember that well.

... and then= ... but e= I remember when I the earliest --

I have an aunt in Denmark and in Horsens,

... and then dad knows someone in at Nordjylland,

... so for a couple of years we were in Denmark I recall.

(Sociolinguistic interview, TAU5)

Here the speaker repeats the last word of the question, thus gaining time to plan what to say. When she finally engages in answering the question, her utterances are characterized by hesitation and self-editing, such as restarts and filled pauses. She also makes ample reference to her process of recalling these events from the past: in this short extract there are in all four instances of the verb *huske* ("remember/recall").

In other cases, the display of on-line processing occurs in the answer itself. For instance, *ja* often co-occurs with the medial particle *vel*, which signals uncertainty.

(25) I-er: hvor gammel var di da, ...

IO: ja= ... da var jeg vel åtte år.

... for jeg gikk i aanklasse på folkeskolen.

I-er: how old were you then, ...

IO: ja= ... then I was (vel) eight years old.

... cause I was in the second grade of primary school.
(Sociolinguistic interview, TAU5)

The particle *vel* here signals that the answer is not certain, but rather based on inference. This is confirmed by the subsequent account, which presents the premiss for the inference: "for jeg gikk i annenklasse på folkeskolen" ("cause I was in the second grade of primary school").

Note also that the interviewee answers with a complete sentence. The question is a specifying question and could have been answered correctly by just a noun phrase ("eight years"). In general, specifying questions are most often answered by grammatically incomplete sentences, whereas open-ended questions most often are answered by complete sentences (STENSTRÖM 1984:188). One reason that the speaker produces a complete sentence here might be the extra time this provides for processing the specifying element, which comes at the end of the utterance.

In this context it seems that the particle displays hearing and understanding of the question and a commitment to trying to give an answer. The speaker claims the floor but displays simultaneously that the answer itself is not ready to be delivered. In addition to the overt displays of processing, the responses include several features that may be interpreted as symptoms of on-going processing, such as elongation of the particle, self-editing and pausing.

The particle does not seem to project that there will be an answer or what type of answer is possibly forthcoming. The speaker may fail to find an answer, such as here:

(26) IO: jeg kan også huske= ... ganske svakt= ... et avisbud=

... hvor jeg pleide å løpe ut= ... spørre er du gutt eller pike,

I-er: ... hvorfor det,

IO: ... ja= hvorfor det ... det husker jæ ikke.

I-ee: I can also recall= ... rather vaguely= ... a news paper delivery boy=

... where I used to run out= ... ask are you a boy or a girl,

I-er: ... how come,

I-ee: ... ja= how come ... I don't remember.

(Sociolinguistic interview, TAU5)

Here we have a request for substantiation. The response is initiated by *ja* and an echo question, but the memory search does not succeed, and the response ends with a re-nouncement.

5. Conclusion

The uses of the particles attested here may be divided into "interactional" and "interpersonal functions". Interactional functions are those that regulate the conversational interaction between the participants, such as turn taking, sequence organization

etc. The interpersonal functions are those that regulate the interpersonal relationship between the participants, that is, their relations of power and solidarity, intimacy and distance.

In regulating the interaction between the participants, the particles function both as reactions to the prior turn, and as projections of the forthcoming turn. They are thus oriented both backwards and forwards. As reactive moves, they seem to acknowledge receipt of the question, that is, to claim hearing and understanding of it. None of the responses prefaced by the particles initiate repair. As proactive moves, the particles project various features of the forthcoming response, such as delay of the answer proper, the need for an extended turn, etc. It is the particle *ja* which has the clearest function as a turn-taking marker.

The interpersonal functions of the particles are connected to their use as hedges and upgraders. As we have seen, one of the uses of *nei* has the function of downgrading the speaker's affective or epistemic commitment to the response, and *jo* functions as an upgrader.

The functions of the particles described here are to some extent reflected in their prosodic features. The particles that have as their major function to provide time for processing and planning are stressed and produced in a separate intonation unit. Often they are also elongated. We find these features in the upgrading function of *jo*, and in the use of *ja* to signal the need for additional processing. In addition, these prosodic features are also characteristic of the functions as dispreference markers. This concerns the uses of *nei* to project a renouncement or a refutation of a presupposition. The particles having other functions are usually short and unstressed. This goes for the functions that are mainly related to the turn-taking system, such as *ja* projecting delayed answers and complex turns and the hedging function of *nei*.

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