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Affiliating in second position: Response tokens with rising pitch in Danish

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the use of the Danish response tokens ja ‘yes’ and nej ‘no’ with rising pitch in everyday interaction in Danish. Ja and nej do more than (dis)confirmation, and the analysis shows that the tokens with rising pitch achieve affiliation in second position in sequences containing displays of affective stance, which is shown to be contrastive with the tokens with level pitch that instead disaffiliate in the same sequences. Turns eliciting the tokens are also often marked with a wide pitch span, but sometimes other prosodic features than pitch are employed to perform a display of affective stance. Eliciting turns often request reconfirmation, but can also implement other actions that make ja or nej a relevant response. The affiliation achieved is shown to be similar across both ja and nej when doing a range of actions, such as (dis)confirmation, acceptance or agreement. Data are in Danish.

“Simple answers are rarely simple”, concludes Bolden (2016, p. 55). One variable of complexity is prosody, and a growing number of studies document prosodic variation in syntactically simple one-word-constructions, e.g. in studies of English oh (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009; Local, 1996; Reber, 2012), so (Local & Walker, 2005) and German jaja (Barth-Weingarten, 2011; Golato & Fagyal, 2008). Prosodic features are often used for the display of affect or affiliation (Ogden, 2006; Stivers, 2008). Interjections can be seen as organized according to the management of social relations (Stivers, 2019). Response tokens are organized and complex in form, and this matters for understanding their full potential in interaction beyond e.g. “confirmation”.

This study investigates the specific words ja ‘yes’ and nej ‘no’ with rising pitch in Danish as a systematic resource for achieving affiliation in second position. In contrast, level pitch in the same contexts does not affiliate. I argue that pitch can specify a subfunction related to the display of stance, but this function is not a straightforward subcategory of either action or lexis. The words ja and nej are the type-conforming responses for polar interrogatives in Danish (Heinemann, 2010; Raymond, 2003) and are indeed sometimes “neutral” (Steensig & Sørensen, 2019), but this study shows how certain prosodic shapes can be contrastive and orient to the prosody of the previous turn, and how this works within a specific set of words, here ja and nej.

Excerpt (1) contains occurrences of ja that confirm in a sequence without any display of affect. Four people are playing a card game. They were discussing matters not related to the game until Liv (LIV) urged them to resume the game, which she is accounting for in line 1:

(1) AULing:board-game-coffee1:ja_034+ja_090+ja_057
At this point, it is Margrete’s (MAR) turn in the game, which she orients to in line 2 by looking at her cards. However, she asks whether she and Svend (SVE), whom she turns her gaze to during the production of the turn, are the only players left. The other people at the table confirm her understanding with ja at almost the same time. The instances of ja are all delivered with a level pitch (as shown by the lack of a symbol for final pitch contour).

After all the instances of ja, Margrete turns her gaze down to her cards again, saying nothing. The others also stay silent and allow her to consider her next move based on the information she just received through the question. The orientation towards the next move treats her question as answered. The ensuing pause and Torben’s (TOR) comment in line 9 are also treating the answer as finished, in that Margrete is seemingly thinking and not engaging with the talk. The comment treats ja as also closing the sequence, in contrast to the possibility of further engagement with the fact that they are the remaining players.

This example shows that ja and nej can perform a minimal non-affiliative job of responding (Jefferson, 1993) in second position after a request for confirmation. This mirrors the description of ja and nej as neutral (i.e. with no stance) receipts in third position (Steensig & Sørensen, 2019).

Excerpt (1) is in contrast to (2), in which a variant of ja with rising pitch is used in response to a new piece of information. Astrid (AST) and Britt (BRI) have talked about someone they both know having had long hair.
In lines 1-3, Britt initiates a new topic about Liam’s previously long hair. Astrid initiates repair on the reference to Liam (line 5), since she believes that Britt might have meant someone else that she knows had long hair (see excerpt 7 for this sequence). After the repair, Astrid resumes talk on Liam’s hair in line 6. She repeats Britt’s formulation from line 3, but with interrogative syntax. Britt confirms the statement and thereby accepts the topic with a ja with rising pitch (line 7), and then Astrid whispers what the fuck as a receipt in third position, and they continue discussing Liam’s hair.

In contrast to (1), in this instance, the participants continue to discuss the subject at hand and the participants engage in stancetaking. By initiating repair, Astrid reveals that the information is new and counter to her previous knowledge, and the relevance of dealing with this is re-occasioned by the repeat (line 6) that also supports the stancetaking (Nissen, 2015; Svennevig, 2004). Her exclamative what the fuck (line 9) after the ja also performs disbelief. By continuing her stancetaking, she treats the ja as accepting the stance as a relevant contribution, and Britt and Astrid affiliates. The sequence is not immediately closed after the ja.

Another difference from (1) is the marked prosody. The ja itself has a rising pitch of 8.5 semitones, while the preceding turn (line 6) also has a wide pitch span of 10.2 semitones with upwards movement on liam and rise-fall on the last word hår ‘hair’, which is also prolonged. The difference between (1) and (2) suggests that prosodic features are important for understanding the interactional contribution by response tokens.

In this article, I argue that achieving affiliation is the function of ja and nej with rising pitch in Danish and that it occurs in certain prosodic and sequential contexts and is contrastive with ja and nej with level pitch. This case illustrates how prosody functions in affiliative sequences in relation to actions done with the response tokens ja and nej. After providing a background to response tokens, affective stances and affiliation, and prosodic features, I analyze the affiliation of the tokens in contexts with displays of affective stance. This is first shown for reconfirmation sequences where the speaker of the token has elicited a display of affective stance, and those are
then contrasted to instances of tokens with level intonation in comparable sequences. The third analytical section widens the description of actions that *ja* and *nej* do while affiliating.

**Background**
This section introduces the necessary terminology to understand what tokens with rising pitch as the *ja* in (2) do. I will first introduce the category of response tokens, to which the investigated tokens – *ja* and *nej* – belong, and then the terminology around stance and affiliation. In the last section, I tie these together with studies on prosody and pitch.

**Response tokens**
The term *response token* (Heinemann, 2015, p. 39) captures the positional nature of some words that do various kinds of responsive actions (Gardner, 2001, p. 14; Thompson et al., 2015). Danish has a number of response tokens such as *ja* ‘yes’, *nej* ‘no’, *nå* ‘oh’, *okay* and *mm* (Steensig & Sørensen, 2019).

*Ja* and *nej* constitute a special pair as the type-confirming answers to polar interrogatives in Danish (Heinemann, 2010), and they display sensitivity to grammatical polarity. Matching the polarity of a previous turn allows *nej* to perform the same actions as *ja* (Heinemann, 2015), such as confirming or agreeing. Matching *nej* may also perform the same stance (or lack thereof) as *ja* in such contexts (Steensig & Sørensen, 2019). Matching polarity is found in other languages too, but the strict system in Danish is different from the use of *no* in English as described by Jefferson (2002), since matching *nej* does not do more affiliative work (see also Heinemann, 2005 for further details). The role of pitch in this system is investigated in this article.

While Steensig & Sørensen (2019) call *ja* and *nej* ‘sufficient confirmation’ particles in third position, this article shows that confirmation (or agreement or disconfirmation) may be delivered in a way that goes beyond just being sufficient.

**Display of affect and affiliation**
First pair parts are routinely designed to elicit certain actions, but they may also seek responses that are more involved. Participants can deliver the elicited action and align minimally with the ongoing project, but some contexts are designed for affiliative responses that claim understanding of the previous speaker’s stance (Stivers, 2008).

The concept of stance has been used to refer to displays of an affective nature (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009; Goodwin et al., 2012; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006). A display of affect can belong to a specific type, such as *disappointment* vs. *irritation* (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012) or be positive or negative (Maynard & Freese, 2012). However, such “categories” of affect can be unclear (Ruuusuvuori, 2013) when folk labels for affects are used by the participants (Local & Walker, 2008; T. Walker, 2014, p. 11), and they are always negotiable (Kjaerbeck & Asmuß, 2005; Selting, 2010). I refer to turns that do or seek more than alignment as performing displays of affective stance.

Displays of affective stance are not actions in themselves, but an “overlay” (Couper-Kuhlen, 2009) and are sometimes even seen as “off-record” (Levinson, 2013) because their consequenti-
ality for the interaction is not always clear. This is because the stance is not the only thing accomplished by such turns, since they may be doing (dis)confirmation or other actions while being overlaid with a display of affective stance.

Affiliation can then be seen as cases where one display of affective stance is followed by another, congruent display of affective stance. Affiliation can make further displays of affective stance relevant (Jefferson, 1988), and is often found that way. Disaffiliation is then achieved when a display of affective stance is met by a non-congruent or neutral action. Non-affiliative resources are appropriate in sequences where affiliation is not relevant, but will be disaffiliative when used in response to displays of affective stance that make affiliation relevant.

**Prosody and pitch**

Prosody is a resource known to be used for the display of affective stance (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006) and for marking functions of response tokens (Steensig et al., 2013). There is a range of prosodic features such as creaky voice (Grivičić & Nilep, 2004), pitch and duration that may be used for interactional purposes. The use of prosodic features in interaction must be understood in relation to the sequence it occurs in (T. Walker, 2014), but also how the prosodic form relates to the form of preceding or other turns. Prosodic orientation and different types of matching is used to accomplish a variety of functions in interaction (Szczepek Reed, 2006). Ogden (2006) describes the role of phonetic features of first and second assessments in (dis)agreeing and how a second assessment can be prosodically upgraded by having a wider pitch span, among other features.

Some studies attach a basic meaning to the use of rising pitch without a description of the sequential context. O’Connor & Arnold describe no with rising pitch as “reserving judgment” (1961, p. 49), while Cruttenden (1997, p. 115) states about yes with rising pitch that the “meaning may be loosely glossed as ‘involvement’”. However, studies of pitch in sequential contexts contribute with a more concrete description of functions in interaction (Persson, 2018; T. Walker, 2014).

This study contributes with a sequential understanding of how rising pitch on response tokens may accomplish a function related to affiliation. This illustrates how prosodic features with the example of pitch work together with action and sequence to implement (sub)functions (T. Walker, 2014). I argue that the subfunction specified with rising pitch on ja and nej is not strictly tied to a certain action accomplished by these tokens, but specific to the tokens in second position doing different second position actions.

**Method and data**

The data for this study consist of four conversations with a total runtime of two and a half hours, from the AULing collection (Samtalegrammatik.dk, 2019) and Samtalebanken, the Danish part of TalkBank (MacWhinney & Wagner, 2010). All participants have given informed consent and are presented in anonymized form.

I have registered 539 instances of ja (379) and nej (160) in this data. Following previous research and as illustrated in (1), many are neutral and purely align in non-affiliative environments. This
The study is based on a subset of the above, a collection of instances of audibly rising and freestanding *ja* and *nej*, consisting of 50 instances of *ja* (32) and *nej* (18) with rising pitch.

The count of 50 was arrived at after excluding 9 cases of *ja* as continuers and 7 cases of *nej* doing disbelief, as this is already described in Heinemann (2015, p. 126). The remaining 50 cases occur in second position, except a few cases where no good description of their position can be made.

The criterial features for the inclusion of an instance of *ja* or *nej* in the collection were that the tokens must have rising pitch that can be clearly identified auditorily, and be freestanding. This means that unclear instances and instances with other phonetic features, such as prolongation, creak or whisper, were excluded if it was judged that they were doing other work (see for example Lindström, 1999 on prolonged *ja* in Swedish). Instances with falling pitch also seem to do different work and will not be investigated here. Varieties of *ja* in the collection includes *jaer* and *a*. Whether a token was freestanding was also determined auditorily based the token’s delivery as joint (in one intonation phrase and turn construction unit) or not with the following talk. Instances have been identified auditorily informed by acoustic measurements with Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2019) when possible. Since the study focusses on forms relevant to the participants, the auditory judgement was the deciding factor for inclusion, and is based on the repeated listening of the instances (T. Walker, 2014, p. 12). The average rising pitch is 7.9 ST, ranging from 2.5 ST to 14.9 ST, calculated from the 42 cases that give a reliable pitch trace. In terms of loudness, the instances of tokens with rising pitch range from loud to medium, only rarely being slightly soft.

Excerpts are transcribed according to Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson, 2004) as commonly used for Danish where underlining marks stress (Samtalegrammatik.dk, 2020) and symbols for final intonation contours refer strictly to their form. Multi-modal conduct is transcribed according to conventions by Mondada (2019).

Measurements of the fundamental frequency of the turns under investigation are shown in Praat pictures within an estimate of the pitch range of the speaker in question. Speakers’ pitch ranges have been measured on the basis of one minute of speech by the speaker and the median in that sample is considered the mid of the range, following Walker (2017). In that minute, overlapping, creaky and unvoiced turns were excluded, as was parodied reported speech. The measurement of the rise on each word is made from the lowest to the highest point within the word and not the earliest and latest point, because *nej* has stød, which is a phonological feature of the syllable. Stød is realized in different ways across varieties of Danish, including glottal stops, creaky voice or glottalization, but (in the Danish spoken in the data) usually leads to a fall in the pitch contour (Fischer-Jørgensen, 1989) that is not to mistake as falling pitch by itself. Measurements are made in semitones (henceforth ST).

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1 Pictures have been made with a script by Gareth Walker available at [http://gareth-walker.staff.shef.ac.uk/praat/vireps/](http://gareth-walker.staff.shef.ac.uk/praat/vireps/) and code provided by a reviewer, for which I am thankful.
The instances are analyzed using the method of Conversation Analysis (Sacks et al., 1974; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013) by considering the interactional context and how the participants in the conversation orient towards each other and display understandings of the phenomena under investigation. The study is also informed by Interactional Linguistics (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018) and takes into account the description of linguistic structures, especially the phonetic and prosodic features of the tokens and preceding turns.

Analysis

Tokens with rising pitch in reconfirmation sequences

This section investigates *ja* and *nej* with rising pitch in their most frequent context: second position in post-expansion reconfirmation sequences (Schegloff 2007) where affiliation was made relevant by the speaker of the token. The affective stance is often related to the implications of new information. These sequences consist of minimally three turns: an elicitation of affect, a display of affective stance, and then a *ja* or *nej* with rising pitch.

The elicitation can be done by the speaker of the token with rising pitch in various ways and is often achieved over several turns (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006).

The display of affective stance is carried out by e.g. partial repeats (in the sense of Jefferson, 1981 including pro-forms) with a rise or rise-fall displaying ritualized disbelief or other heightened involvement (Heritage, 1984; Thompson et al., 2015) or other turns that can be (sometimes only partially) marked with extra pitch movement, stress or duration.

The tokens then confirm or disconfirm in second position in reconfirmation sequences. The token affiliates with a display of affective stance by functioning as a receipt of an elicited response (i.e. equivalent to “confirmation” in Wilkinson & Kitzinger 2006). The speakers orient to tokens with rising pitch as making further displays of affective stance relevant, treating them as affiliative.

A partial repeat is shown in (3), line 6. Astrid and Britt have been discussing the women that Flæsk (a nickname), a third person they both know, might share classes with. Britt initiated this topic by asking Astrid if she believes that the women are ‘juicy’, which she answers in line 1:

(3) AULing:sofasladder:ja_082
01 AST: "a" det tror jeg sån <nogen: ↑ unipiger>i
  yes I think it's such uni(versity)-girls
02   (0.5)
03 BRI: *mt er de* t- hva-
  is it what
04   (0.4)
05 AST: det universitet?=
  it's university
06 BRI: =er det+isi=
  is it
  ast +smiles-->
07 → AST: =a:?
The assessment of the classmates continues in the first line, as Astrid describes the imagined classmates as sán <nogen: ↑unipiger> → ‘such uni-girls’. In response, Britt starts producing what could become a question as evident from the interrogative syntax (Heinemann, 2010) and interrogative pronoun hva ‘what’ (Jørgensen, 2015), but cuts off. Astrid treats it as repair initiation by clarifying her reference through det universitet ‘it’s university’. Where unipiger using an informal, short term seems to assume some pre-existing knowledge or assessment of Flæsk’s university enrollment, the full form universitet now treats Britt’s unfinished talk in line 3 as displaying a lack of knowledge. Britt delivers a request for reconfirmation as a partial repeat in line 6, with a repeat of the pronoun det ‘it’ from the previous turn, and the copula verb er ‘is’. Astrid reconfirms with an a: (a slightly lengthened ja without the initial glide [j]) in line 7, reconfirming her previous statement. Britt receipts the reconfirmation in third position with the exclamative gud ‘God’ that is commonly used as a receipt of surprising information. She thereby treats the ja with rising pitch as marking out her display of a stance (in line 6) as appropriate, meaning that the ja made a further display of affective stance relevant in third position.

The partial repeat is delivered with a wide, rising-falling pitch. During er, the pitch rises 13.4 ST and falls 14 ST on det:; giving the turn a total pitch span of 16.8 ST (Figure 1). The following a: is delivered with pitch rising 9.5 ST (Figure 2).
Figure 1. Pitch trace of *er det* in (3), line 6.
In (3), the token with rising pitch is positioned after a display of affective stance prompted by new information. The speakers affiliate by treating each other’s displays of affective stance as appropriate.

In (4), two tokens occur, one in response to a request for confirmation and another to a partial repeat, also followed by a continued display of affect. However, in this case the tokens are instances of *nej*, indicating that the phenomenon is not specific to *ja* or confirmation. Britt has been talking about an event at a local music venue that she has been regularly attending. In lines 1-4, she proposes that Astrid should join her:

```
(4) AULing:sofasladder:nej_094+nej_071
  01 BRI: vi ska "alt"så snart derned=
         we should PRT soon go there
  02 ?:   = (mhr)
  03 (0.4)
  04 BRI: ’mt [hvjs] du har lys[t det megahyggeligt]
         if you feel like it It’s super cozy
  05 AST: [↑ja ] [koster det penge? h]
         yes   does it cost money
  06 → BRI: & nej? -h& [huh
         no
  07 AST:             [gør det ikkk?
         doesn’t It
         bri &headshake&
  08 → BRI: ne+j?: [he .h
         no
  09 AST:             [åh:::,
         ooh:
         ast +jazz hands-->>
```

The proposal is upgraded in line 4 with a positive assessment of the event as *megahyggeligt* ‘super cozy’. In overlap with this, Astrid asks whether the event costs money in line 5. This prompts the first *nej* in line 6, which provides new information by disconfirming. The new information however is positive in furthering the project of going to the event together, since it cancels the threat implied in Astrid’s question.

Astrid receipts the disconfirmation by initiating a reconfirmation sequence with a partial repeat in line 7. The partial repeat *gør det ikk* ‘doesn’t it’ contains a negation matching the disconfirming *nej*. Her initiation of this sequence suggests that she may have expected otherwise, treating the information as counter to expectation, as in the previous instance. Reconfirmation comes
with the second *nej* in line 8, which Astrid receipts with a prolonged *åh* ‘ooh’ and raised arms and open palms.

Figure 3. Pitch trace of *nej* in (4), line 6.

The first *nej* in line 6 is delivered with a rising pitch of 11.5 ST. It moves from the middle of her range to the top (Figure 3). A slight fall at the end is visible, but this is a reflex of the stød on *nej* and not audible; the same is the case for all other instances of *nej*. The partial repeat is delivered with a rising pitch of 8.6 ST, and possibly even more because the lowest part, i.e. the word *gør* ‘does’, is in overlap and does not have a full pitch trace before *det* ‘it’ (Figure 4). The second *nej* rises 14.9 ST (Figure 5) and happens to be the highest point in the estimate of Britt’s range. It is prosodically upgraded from the previous *nej* by having a steeper rising pitch and being slightly louder.
Figure 4. Pitch trace of *gør det ikk* in (4), line 7.
Figure 5. Pitch trace of *nej* in (4), line 8.

The social and thus affiliative nature of the sequence is somewhat upgraded by the first *nej* as the free entry is presented as new information. The piece of information is counter to expectation, as Astrid orients to it as such by requesting a reconfirmation. With the partial repeat, she picks up on the social and affective implication of the fact in this context and displays a stance of heightened affective involvement (Thompson et al., 2015, p. 104). Britt aligns with the sequence by confirming, but also affiliates with Astrid’s stance, in the sense of treating it as appropriate. Astrid treats it as having affiliated in line 9, which is apparent since åh ‘ooh’ is not a common third position receipt (Steensig & Sørensen 2019), has marked prolongation and co-occurs with embodied conduct. In this case, the affective stance is related to the social implications of new information in the discussion of a proposal. Note that while both instances of *nej* are affiliative, one disconfirms while the other confirms.

In (5), the token is used during the negotiation of the point of a story-telling activity. Benjamin (BEN) has been telling about negative aspects of Michael Jackson’s life. David (DAV) starts a second story about the life of Buddha:

(5) Samtalebanken: fyrene: ja_041

01 DAV: det: præcis lissom buddha da det var han var
    it’s exactly like Buddha when it was that he was
02 <prins> åæh efter >det var han< var blevet fø:dt ikk?
    ((a)) prince and uhh after it was that he was born, right
03 (0.3)
04 så: blev han jo bare forkælet ;he:le sit liv.
    then he was just spoiled his whole life
05 (.)
06 å så pludselig kom han ud fra: g:h paladset
    and then suddenly he came out from u:h the palace
07 hvor han så: sygdom å alt sånoget.
    where he saw disease and all such
08 BEN: a:men mi[chael jackson har jo ikk- ]
    yes but Michael Jackson has PRT not-
09 CHR: [sammenligner du lige michael] j(h)a[ckson
    are you straight up comparing Michael Jackson
10 ERI: [*jaer*]
    yeah
11 CHR: [med buddh(h)a hHhh [hh ]f
    with Buddha
12 ERI: [ghrh hh hh
13 → DAV: [ja?]
    yes
14 (0.5)
15 ERI: det: det k_H man godt.
    that that is possible
16 (.)
17 DAV: det k_H man godt. (*xxx*)
David is telling about Buddha discovering negative aspects of life and delivers the punchline of the story in lines 6-7, as marked through ‘then suddenly’, and as picked up by both Benjamin and Chresten (CHR). Punchlines or story climaxes generally make a response relevant that picks up an aspect of the story (Selting 2010, Kjaerbeck and Asmuß 2005). This is not exactly what Chresten does in line 9, where he instead asks whether David is comparing Michael Jackson and Buddha. The turn is requesting confirmation of Chresten’s understanding of the point of David’s story, and questioning it is a display of affective stance in the sense of mockingly being skeptical of the activity of another speaker. The turn is delivered with smiley voice, some laughter tokens and ends with a slight laugh, which can be seen as pushing the stance in a direction of seeing the activity as laughable.

![Pitch Trace of 'ja'](image)

Figure 6. Pitch trace of *ja* in (5), line 13.

The stance taken in lines 9-11 is then possibly not the one the story is designed to get, however it comes in a sequential environment in which it is relevant to display a stance as part of negotiating the punchline or “mood” of a story (Kjaerbeck & Asmuß, 2005). David confirms this understanding with a *ja* rising 14.9 ST (Figure 6). Erik (ERI) claims that such a comparison is possible, thus treating the *ja* as an acceptance of Chresten’s potential ridicule of David’s activity. Erik can thereby be seen as arguing against the stance displayed by Chresten, but in any case treating a negotiation of the punchline as the current activity accepted by the *ja* with rising pitch.
This instance is different in that there is no previous assertion being reconfirmed, but instead confirmation of a formulation of another person’s activity (David’s storytelling). The nature of story-telling is not neutral and affiliating with each other’s viewpoints is still at issue.

In (6), the stance is elicited by an assessment constructed with an incomplete utterance. Astrid is talking with Britt about a conflict with her boyfriend about spending time with other people:

(6)  
AULing:sofasladder:ja_070
01  AST: han har aldrig været sammen med Rikke alene.  
    he has never been together with Rikke alone
    +palm up--->
02  ()
03  BRI: m-
04  (0.3)+
    ast --+->
05  AST: +så det sån lidt, du ved,=
    så it's a bit you know
    ast +hands circling-----+
06  BRI: ="jaer hvor°for° ska de lige pludselig d+et
    yeah why will they just suddenly ((do)) that
    bri +light nodding--------------------------&
    ast +hands tow. BRI-->
07  [å sånoget°
    and such
08  AST: [JÅ?]+
    yes
    ast --+palm on face-->
09  BRI: jaer [-he
    yeah
    he
10  AST: [årh:: å det det han ikk+ forstår:
    argh and that's what he doesn’t understand
    ast --+->+

In line 1, Astrid is making the point that her boyfriend has never spent time alone with Rikke before now, which is in contrast to Astrid’s relation to another young man, and Britt acknowledges this with m-. In line 5, Astrid starts producing an assessment through an incomplete utterance without an assessment term (Park & Kline, 2020), only creating the slot for it through sån lidt ‘a bit’ and proposing that this could be enough to reach agreement through du ved ‘you know’ (Asmuß, 2011). Britt immediately agrees, first claiming it through jaer ‘yeah’ and then expanding with a formulation of Astrid’s thoughts as reported speech in the form of a why-question taking the stance that Astrid’s boyfriend’s behavior is “unwarranted” (Bolden & Robinson, 2011). Astrid confirms this formulation with ja in line 8. Astrid continues talking about the conflict with her boyfriend and refers back to Britt’s formulation as what the boyfriend does not understand. This shows that Astrid’s ja affiliated with Britt’s assessment, since it was appropriate for Astrid to build on in her description of the conflict.

In contrast to previous cases, the turn in line 6-7 before the token does not have a wide pitch span or steep pitch movement, but is produced in a soft voice, and whispered on the second syllable of hvorfor ‘why’. The ja itself has a rising pitch of 9 ST (Figure 7).
In this section, we have seen how the speakers of tokens with rising pitch have made it relevant to display a stance over several turns. Most cases (2-4) made the turn eliciting a token with rising pitch relevant through new information provoking ritualized disbelief through e.g. a partial repeat (Heritage, 1984), but it was also done through storytelling (5) and assessing (6). The tokens included both confirming ja (3, 5-6) and confirming and disconfirming nej (4). Several turns preceding the tokens have a wide pitch span (3-4) as part of displaying an affective stance, but (6) did not clearly have this and instead displayed a stance with other prosodic features.

![Pitch trace of ja in (6), line 8.](image)

**Tokens with level pitch do not affiliate**

The examples in the previous section show that ja and nej with rising pitch affiliate with displays of affective stance in specific contexts. As illustrated in (1), a level ja is used in other, non-affiliative contexts. This section investigates instances of ja with level pitch that occur in affiliative contexts like those in (2-6) and shows that they do not affiliate with the affective stance, meaning that there is a contrast between rising pitch and level pitch on tokens. In these sequential contexts, there is a contrast between rising pitch affiliating and level pitch achieving disaffiliation.

In excerpt (7), Astrid and Britt are discussing who had long hair: Liam or Flæsk, both known by Astrid and Britt, and Astrid expected that Britt knew Flæsk also had long hair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(7) AULing:sofasladder:ja_016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Britt has mentioned that Liam used to have long hair (see excerpt 2). In line 1, Astrid requests confirmation of her impression that Britt must be talking about Flæsk, since he also used to have long hair. After Britt disconfirms that she was talking about Flæsk, Astrid asserts that Flæsk also used to have long hair (line 5). Britt responds to this in line 6 with a request for reconfirmation in the shape of a partial repeat. The partial repeat has a rising-falling pitch with a wide pitch span of 10.3 ST for the whole utterance (Figure 8), just like excerpts (3-4). As in the other cases of partial repeats, the new information can be said to elicit heightened involvement.

Astrid confirms with a *ja* in line 7. In contrast to the tokens analyzed above, this *ja* has level instead of a clearly rising pitch. The *ja* has a measurable rising pitch of only 1.8 ST (Figure 9). For
reference, the average rising pitch of the affiliating cases is 7.9 ST with the smallest being 2.5 ST. In this case then, the *ja* is not matching the preceding turn’s wide pitch span.

![Figure 8. Pitch trace of *har han* in (7), line 6.](image_url)
Astrid continues with **har du ikk set det** ‘haven’t you seen it’ (line 9). This request for confirmation formulates that Britt has not seen it, as evident from the preceding context, and disaffiliates by treating Britt’s lack of knowledge as problematic. As a negative interrogative, it implies that she should have seen it (Heritage, 2002). Asking a question preferring a response that is in contrast to the immediately preceding context is also disaffiliative (Heinemann, 2008). The question would make it relevant for Britt to account for her lack of knowledge if they did not return to the topic of Liam’s hair and it shows that Astrid was expecting Britt to know. By asking this way, Astrid disaffiliated with Britt’s lack of knowledge. This instance illustrates *ja* with level pitch in a context where *ja* with rising pitch could be delivered, after which the token-speaker expanded to disaffiliate with the other speaker’s stance.

In (8), a level *ja* is used as part of resisting the elicitation of further talk on a subject with a partial repeat. Thomas (THO) tells Preben (PRE) that he lives just next to a prison (line 2):

(8)  Samtalebanken:preben_og_thomas:ja_015
01   PRE: [ehhe hhe        ]
02   THO: [a jeg bor lige v]ed siden af fængslet faktisk. 
        *yes I live just next to the prison actually*
03   PRE: (hhnnn) (. ) gør du _det?_
        *do you*
04 → THO: _ja=_
        *yes*
Preben utters a partial repeat in response in line 3, here functioning as a newsmark (Jefferson, 1981) eliciting further talk on this subject. This is a display of affective stance of heightened interest, which would make it relevant for Thomas to tell more about living next to a prison. Thomas minimally reconfirms this with *ja* that Preben receipts in third position with *okay* with rising pitch, which also displays an expectation of more talk on the subject (Sørensen & Steensig, in press). The half-second pause also suggests that Preben is awaiting elaboration. Thomas does initiate talk about life close to prison, but marks it with *men* ‘but’ as not properly fit to the preceding context of Preben’s display of affective stance towards it, and Thomas may be seen as transforming the *ja* into *jamen* ‘yes but’ (Steensig & Asmuß, 2005). He also explicitly describes the subject as ‘something they don’t notice any more” (line 7), displaying lack of affective stance towards or interest in the subject matter.

Figure 10. Pitch trace of *gør du det* in (8), line 3.
Like the previous partial repeats, the partial repeat in line 3 has a wide pitch span, being 5.1 ST (Figure 10). Thomas's *ja* has a pitch that rises less than 1.8 ST (Figure 11). This rise is not as high as the affiliating instances of *ja* and not as wide as the preceding request for reconfirmation. Thomas can be said to use *ja* with level pitch as part of resisting Preben’s pursuit of elaboration, instead of delivering a *ja* with rising pitch and telling a story, thus disaffiliating with Preben’s display of affective stance towards the subject.

![Figure 11. Pitch trace of *ja* in (8), line 4.](image)

In this section, the analysis showed that in affiliative contexts, *ja* with level or only slightly rising pitch (usually less than 2 ST), especially in comparison to the previous turn, achieves disaffiliation or is used as part of it. This means that participants treat tokens with level pitch differently from tokens with rising pitch when affective stance is relevant. Following (1), *ja* with level pitch can then be described as *non-affiliative*, which in non-affiliative contexts such as (1) is perfectly appropriate, but in affiliative contexts will disaffiliate.

*Further illustrations of contexts where tokens with rising pitch affiliate*

This section further illustrates the use of *ja* and *nej* with rising pitch in a number of other contexts than the previous sequences, but they will be shown to affiliate in these contexts too. Rising pitch affiliates not only when used together with confirmation, but also with assessing and accepting.
In (9), a ja with rising pitch is used to accept a proposal and affiliate with the positive social implications of it. Astrid and Britt are attending a future event together and discussing how late they can stay because Astrid has to work the next day.

In lines 1-2, Astrid proposes that she may be able to get the following day off, which would let her stay late at the event, socializing more. That this is positive in this context is also shown through her smile towards the end of her turn. However, in line 6 she utters a sudden and loud æ:j, approx. ‘hey’, that acts as a misplacement marker (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973), cancelling her previous proposal. Astrid points at Britt and follows up with another proposal that allows her to stay late – sleeping at Britt’s place. The social implications and pointing display a positive affective stance towards the proposal. The way the plan is framed places both Astrid and Britt as beneficiaries (Clayman & Heritage, 2014), which also contributes to make affiliation relevant. The proposal as a directive type of action makes it relevant for Britt to accept the proposal (and possibly move on with the practical details) or reject it altogether. Britt seems to accept with ja with rising pitch in line 9.
This *ja* rises 6.8 ST from the mid of Britt’s range to high (Figure 12). The affective stance of the *ja* is evident in the later *f Satan* ‘f(or) satan’, which is a common, upgrading expletive following *ja*. Astrid’s next turn requests that they decide whether they will actually do it, and is initiated in overlap with *f Satan*. This move treats the *ja* as not having fully agreed and committed – also following from the fact that it is not a full-clause response (Steensig & Heinemann, 2014) – but as having ‘approved’ the proposal for further discussion or later planning. This means that Astrid treats the affiliation, and not the acceptance, as the primary achievement of the token. This instance shows that the practice is also used in proposal sequences.

![Pitch trace of *ja* in (9), line 9.](image)

In (10), a *nej* with rising pitch is used in response to a topic introduction, agreeing with the assessment therein. Britt and Astrid are finishing talk in lines 1-2 about a conversation they recently had, after which a pause occurs:

(10) **AULing:sofasladder:nej_006**

01 BRI: "du" &kommer bare hh (.) & -he
  you just come
  bri &waves tow. herself&
02 AST: "yes" +
  ast +fists hands, lifts them slightly+
03 + (1.1)
  ast +hands above head, ties hair-->
04 AST: det havde jeg fandme ikk troet da jeg startede,
  I had damn not Thought it when I started
05 (0.3)
In line 4, Astrid is describing a past event as counter to her expectation when she started at the school, and in line 6, this is expanded with stating the past event and the object of the assessment: that Astrid and Britt would become good friends. This is somewhat related to the previous talk since it was about the possibility of moving together if Astrid were to have problems living where she currently is, but it is not sequentially related and initiates a new sequence with an assessment. Besides the affiliative potential in talking about friendship itself, the turn in line 6 formulates this explicitly with the phrase *gode venner* ‘good friends’, which is also displaying a stance through smiley voice, followed by slight laughter bursts at the end. Britt utters a *nej* with rising pitch in line 7, overlapping with some of the laughter, and follows this with some slight laughter. The *nej* agrees with the assessment as it includes a negation (*ikk* ‘not’ in line 4). Due to the overlap it is not possible to get a reliable pitch measurement, but the rise is larger than 4 ST. Astrid then starts telling about the time when they met. In this way, she treats the *nej* as having accepted the relevance of this topic through an agreement with the assessment of it. This instance illustrates *nej* with rising pitch used in place of a second assessment, affiliating and making relevant more talk on an affective subject.

In (11), the *ja* with rising pitch and the preceding turn is part of a game, and the stance of the preceding turn is only potential until the *ja* is delivered. Four people are playing a game called Love Letter where each player has one card. A card in the game allows its holder to guess another player’s card, and if the guess is correct, then the guessed player is out of the game. At this point in the interaction, Liv has repeatedly lost by someone guessing that she has a Net Troll, and here it happens again:

### (11)  

AULing:board-game-coffee1:ja_032  

01 SVE: er &DU &en net troll.  
  are you a Net Troll  
  sve &head forward$  
02 → LIV: gi$gi ∆[JA?  
  yes  
03 TOR: [vis [lige kortet. ]  
  show PRT the card  
04 MAR: [ JA DU ∆[ER] HELE [$&TID[EN.  
  yes you are all the time  
05 LIV: [uhhh [ha [ha ha ha.$  
06 SVE: [nåja [nåja  
  FRT  
  tor $points tow. Svend-------------$
Svend’s guess er du en net troll ‘are you a Net Troll’ (line 1) is delivered with extra stress, including a rise (Figure 13), and loudness on du ‘you’, potentially pointing towards the unlikelihood that his guess about Liv is right yet again. Liv confirms Svend’s guess in line 2 by saying gigi JA with a loud ja with rising pitch, thereby losing the round again. What is here transcribed as gigi is not a separate word or preface, but sounds like an approximation of the initial [j] of the ja and can be seen as a sort of hesitation, in the context of her losing as she does the confirmation. The ja itself rises 7.1 ST (see Figure 14).

Right after Liv’s ja and thus in overlap with Torben’s request, Margrete reconfirms or receipts Liv’s answer (line 4). The whole turn is delivered loudly to the point of almost screaming. She does so through ja du er hele tiden ‘yes you are all the time’. The ja itself can confirm, but is here delivered as a unit in ja du er ‘yes you are’. The addition of hele tiden ‘all the time’ turns it into an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) and takes the stance that this situation is laughable and incredible due to its unlikelihood.

Liv follows up on this by ‘admitting’ to be a Net Troll in line 10, confirming Margrete’s understanding as appropriate. This is followed by people teasing Liv, as Margrete concludes that Liv (outside of the game) must be a Net Troll, and Svend calling Liv a trold ‘troll’.

In this case, the ja creates a jocular situation and is followed by several ways of treating the situation as a laughable one. Margrete’s reconfirmation treats it as pointing out the absurdity of the situation happening once again, and Liv treats this as appropriate. Liv also laughs in overlap with Margrete’s turn, orienting to the situation as laughable and laughing as a currently relevant activity. Margrete and Svend also tease Liv in lines 12-15, treating joking as a relevant activity.
The laughable situation may already be pointed to in Svend’s question in line 1, but it is only after the confirmation and ja with rising pitch that people treat it as laughable. The ja with rising pitch confirms, as ja regularly does in this position, and thus creates but also affiliates with the potential ‘joke’ that the initial question only hints at through its prosodic packaging, which is treated as making other displays of affective stance relevant.

These examples show how a token with rising pitch picks up on a stance in a preceding turn other than a request for reconfirmation, and how the token is treated as affiliative by next speakers that continue displays of stance. The displays of stance were initiated through an upgraded proposal (9), topic initiation with assessment (10) and a request for confirmation as performed as part of a game (11). These types of preceding turns are not partial repeats, but can also display affective stance through prosodic resources, such as smiley voice (10) and extra stress including pitch movement (11), but also embodied conduct (9). While the sequences are different from those where the token reconfirms previous information, the affiliation achieved is similar.

Figure 13. Pitch trace of er du en net troll in (11), line 1.
Conclusion

In this study I have shown that the response tokens *ja* ‘yes’ and *nej* ‘no’ with rising pitch in Danish affiliate in second position in a context where an affective stance has been displayed, while still doing the relevant action of confirming, agreeing, accepting or disconfirming. The rising pitch thus adds a subfunction of affiliation to the various actions that both *ja* and *nej* may do. Achieving affiliation is however not independent of the action, and the study illustrates how the functions of action and stance interact with the functions of prosody.

The exact affective stance displayed varies, but includes displays of intimacy, laughability and reactions to new information. The token with rising pitch does not differ in relation to these types of stance, but most instances display some positive valence in the affective stance, at least in the sense that achieving affiliation is positive. The rising pitch is also comparable to the prosodic features of “good news” as described in Maynard & Freese (2012) as they include high pitch, rising pitch and wide pitch spans. The tokens are understood to make further displays of stance relevant as projected in the local sequences.

Tokens with rising pitch are used in second position, often in a reconfirmation sequence within another sequence. The sequence types vary and include both information and proposal sequences. The tokens often occur in contexts where the producer of the token with rising pitch has sought to elicit a display of affective stance. Many tokens with rising pitch are used in response to a prosodically marked partial repeat displaying heightened involvement. The partial repeat is a minimal clausal format (Thompson et al., 2015) and is formatted with interrogative word order.
and pro-forms, and can also include negation or a pronoun as an object. They have a wide pitch span, either through a rise or rise-fall over the whole utterance, and work as requests for reconfirmation, which the token provides while affiliating with the stance expressed by the partial repeat. Other preceding turns also often have a wide pitch span either with a rise or rise-fall, but not all preceding turns perform a display of affective stance with pitch. The resources are often prosodic in nature however.

The analysis shows also how prosodic and sequential features come together and must be understood in relation to each other to determine the exact nature of the achievements of rising pitch on specific words. This description suggests that rising pitch on the tokens is a specific prosodic pattern used for a specific purpose and in contrast to level pitch in second position. The rising pitch starts around the mid of a speaker’s pitch range rising to high, but for \textit{nej} mediated through the realization of stød. \textit{Ja} most frequently takes the common form \textit{ja} instead of \textit{a} or \textit{jaer} or other variants. The tokens often respond to turns with a wide pitch span, comparable to the use of pitch in second assessments to match or surpass the pitch width of first assessments (Ogden, 2006), but tokens with rising pitch do not seem to be systematically higher or wider than the preceding turn. It can be seen as a different type of prosodic orientation that is not prototypical (Szczepk Reed, 2006). There are also instances where the preceding turn does not have a pitch span that can be considered wide, but where the affective stance is marked through other, often still prosodic, resources, such as whisper (6) and smiley voice (10). Rising pitch on \textit{ja} and \textit{nej} can then be said to have a specific purpose in specific sequential and prosodic contexts and to have a regular function and not be an instance of a possible wide pitch span matching a previous turn. There is a local contrast in the sense of Persson (2018) between rising and level pitch in specific sequences made relevant with prosodic resources. Walker (2014) formulates prosodic features as being able to specify subfunctions of other functions such as repair. This case will then be an affiliative subfunction. However, there is not one specific action that is further specified, since the rising pitch is used for at least acceptance, assessment and confirmation as well as disconfirmation. The subfunction is also achieved across the two words \textit{ja} and \textit{nej}. This suggests that functions of stance and affiliation may be a function just like the terms for actions.

Since these tokens are highly frequent and occur in many contexts, they exist in other shapes, positions and usages as well, and we should expect many resources to perform affective involvement in various ways. However, the point has been to show how affective involvement is expressed with rising pitch on \textit{ja} and \textit{nej} as a linguistic resource in Danish, and that ‘confirmation’ is not straightforward even if done with a one-word-construction. So far it seems that \textit{ja} and \textit{nej} with rising pitch achieve the same type of affiliation, and has the same stance in the same positions, following previous research that treats the two words as a set with shared features (Heinemann, 2015; Steensig & Sørensen, 2019). This study shows how response tokens do a range of various functions, and the complex relationship between these functions, such as action and stance, and the prosodic and sequential contexts. Future studies may be able to further examine how other prosodic and phonetic features occur with (or without) rising pitch on tokens or other material, and how tokens with rising pitch are related to other types of tokens e.g. with a falling pitch.
References


