Polar answers and epistemic stance in Greek conversation

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This conversation analytic study examines the linguistic resources for indexing epistemic stance in second position in question sequences in Greek conversation. It targets three formats for providing affirming/confirming answers to polar questions: unmarked and marked positive response tokens, and repetitions. It is shown that the three formats display different functional distributions. Unmarked response tokens do 'simple' answering, marked response tokens provide overt confirmations, and repetitional answers assert the respondent's epistemic authority besides confirming the question's proposition. Unmarked and marked response tokens accept the questioner's epistemic stance, whereas repetitional answers may accept or resist the epistemic terms of the question, depending on the action being implemented by the question. This study sheds light on the organization of questioning and answering in Greek conversation and the role of epistemics in the design of polar answers.

Keywords: polar questions, answers, response tokens, repetition, epistemic stance, conversation analysis

1. Introduction

This paper examines epistemic stance taking in polar answers in Greek conversation. More specifically, the analysis targets three formats for providing affirming/confirming polar answers, namely unmarked response tokens, marked response tokens, and repetitions, and demonstrates that these formats convey the respondent's different positioning towards the questioner's epistemic stance and the proposition in question.

Epistemic stance refers to speaker's positioning towards an object related to knowledge. According to Ochs (1996, 422), epistemic stance includes "qualities of knowledge, such as degrees of certainty of knowledge as to the truth of a

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proposition and sources of knowledge". Stance taking is an interactional achievement (Du Bois 2007; Heritage 2012) that emerges across successive utterances, it is context dependent and inference based. Prior research (see e.g. Aikhenvald 2004; Biber and Finegan 1989; Chafe and Nichols 1986; Clift 2006; Fox 2001; Heritage 2012; Heritage and Sorjonen 2018; Kärkkäinen 2003; Kärkkäinen 2006; Wu 2004) has shown that epistemic stance taking is accomplished through various linguistic resources, such as grammaticalized evidentiality, verbs, adverbs, parentheticals, particles, prosody, and interrogative syntax. This study examines the linguistic resources that speakers use to index epistemic stance in second position in question sequences, namely response tokens and repeats. Unlike items such as *seem, evidently* or *I think* which are explicitly marked for epistemic stance, response tokens and repeats in polar answers convey an epistemic meaning as a result of their sequential position and the action performed. In this introduction, I offer some theoretical preliminaries on epistemic stance in polar question-answer sequences and I contextualize my research question within the broader framework of conversation analytic studies of epistemics and polar answers.

1.1 Questions and answers

Polar questions (also known as yes/no questions) "present whole propositions as hypotheses" to be affirmed/denied or confirmed/disconfirmed (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018, 224), and they are defined both formally and functionally (De Ruiter 2012, 2). That is, polar questions can be coded grammatically (e.g. via V-S inversion in English), morphosyntactically (e.g. via sentence-final particles in Lao, Enfield 2010) or prosodically (e.g. via final rising intonation in Greek, as discussed in Section 1.2). Also, polar questions are interpreted on what they accomplish in interaction, that is, requests for information or confirmation, depending on whether the questioner positions her/himself as wholly unknowing or partially knowing.

Interlocutors' epistemic status, that is, their relative access to some epistemic domain, is key in recognizing and interpreting questions. Heritage (2012, 4) considers "relative epistemic access to a domain or territory of information as stratified between interactants such that they occupy different positions on an epistemic gradient (more knowledgeable [K+] or less knowledgeable [K–]), which itself may vary in slope from shallow to deep". The moment-by-moment expression of epistemic status as managed through the design of turns at talk is described by Heritage (2012, 6) as epistemic stance. Polar questions indicate epistemic asymmetry between interlocutors, as questioners (K–) usually request information that falls into respondents' (K+) epistemic domain (Heritage 2012; Heritage and

Raymond 2012). The ways in which interlocutors express their epistemic status through the design of questions and answers are discussed below.

The depth of the K–/K+ epistemic gradient between questioner and respondent can be adjusted by means of the question design. For example, Heritage (2012, 6) observes that the English polar interrogative (i) *Are you married?* positions the questioner as less knowledgeable than the respondent, whereas the tag question (ii) *You're married, aren't you?* and the declarative question (iii) *You're married.* positions the questioner as somewhat more knowing, seeking confirmation for information that is already in play. Utterance (i) indexes "a deeply sloping epistemic gradient between an unknowing (K–) questioner and a knowing (K+) recipient", whereas utterances (ii) and (iii) index "increasingly shallow K– to K+ epistemic gradients" (Heritage 2012, 6). This is depicted in Figure 1.

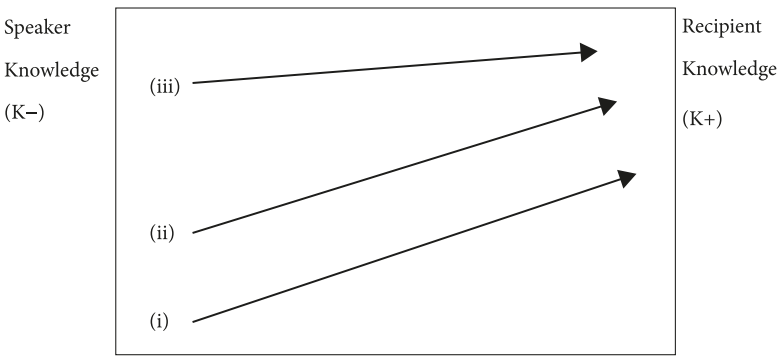

Figure 1. Epistemic stance of (i)–(iii) represented in terms of epistemic gradient (Heritage 2012, 7, adapted)

In all three utterances, the respondent is positioned as having primary epistemic rights over the information at issue. However, in (i) the questioner is positioned as having no epistemic rights, whereas in (ii) and (iii) the questioner claims more epistemic rights over the information at issue (for a thorough discussion see Heritage and Raymond 2005; Raymond and Heritage 2006).

Also, the depth of the K–/K+ epistemic gradient between questioner and respondent can be adjusted by means of the derived action being implemented by the polar question. According to Schegloff (2007, 169), questions are turn types with a "double duty", that is, they enact their own action (questioning) and serve thereby "as the vehicle or instrument for another action." For example, a polar question implements a request for information, i.e. a vehicular action (Sidnell 2017, 325), which in turn may carry out a disagreement or confirming an allusion, i.e. a derived action (Sidnell 2017, 326). Disagreeing or confirming an allusion are actions that challenge the respondent's epistemic authority, that is, their "relative

rights to know about some state of affairs" (Stivers et al. 2011, 13), and imply the questioner's primary epistemic rights over the matter in question (Heritage and Raymond 2012; Schegloff 1996). As Heritage and Raymond (2012, 181) observe, "polar questions, while acknowledging the epistemic rights of respondents, also tend to restrict the exercise of those rights". The epistemic stance conveyed by the questioner has implications for the design of the respondent's turn.

Questions anticipate and receive responses from addressed recipients (Schegloff 2007, 78; see studies in Enfield et al. 2010). In their cross-linguistic study, Enfield et al. (2019) identified two main formats for delivering confirming polar answers: interjection-type answers, such as *yes, yeah* or *mm-hm*, which are generally preferred, and repetition-type answers that fully or partially repeat elements of the question. Enfield et al. (2019) showed that the two formats have different functional distributions. Interjection-type answers "represent a solution to the problem of how to answer a polar question and do nothing more than that" (p. 281), whereas repetition-type answers are pragmatically marked "relative to this simple function" (p. 282).

In American English conversation, speakers use interjection-type answers to "accept the terms of the question unconditionally, exerting no agency with respect to those terms, and thus acquiescing in them" (Heritage and Raymond 2012, 183; see also Raymond 2003). Marked or upgraded interjections, such as *of course, certainly* or *absolutely*, serve "to underscore the question recipient's acceptance of the terms of the question" and also display the respondent's problem "not with the question's design but with it having been posed to this recipient at all – a problem with the legitimacy of the action of requesting information, requesting confirmation, and so on" (Stivers 2019, 8; see also Stivers 2011). To resist or challenge the socioepistemic constraints of a polar question English speakers use repetition-type answers (see e.g. Heritage and Raymond 2012; Raymond 2003; Schegloff 1996; Stivers 2005) or transformative answers (Stivers and Hayashi 2010). On the one hand, respondents use repetition to assert their "epistemic and social entitlement in regard to the matter being addressed" and claim "more epistemic rights over the information required than the original polar question conceded" (Heritage and Raymond 2012, 188). On the other hand, speakers can design their answers in ways that transform the question's terms or agenda to resist the presuppositions of the questioner, the terms in which the question is being asked or what the questioner is trying to accomplish with the question (e.g. Question: He sold his place. Answer: Yeah I know) (Stivers and Hayashi 2010, 18).

Equivalent practices for designing polar answers are reported in other languages (see e.g. Lee 2015 and Kim 2015 on Korean, Keevallik 2010 on Estonian, Sorjonen 2001a, 2001b on Finnish, Steensig and Heinemann 2013 on Danish, Golato and Fagyal 2008 on German, Seuren and Huiskes 2017 on Dutch, Bolden

2009, 2016 on Russian, and Weidner 2018 on Polish). For example, Bolden (2016) reports that Russian speakers use the prosodically marked affirmative particle *da* to convey a congruent or incongruent evaluative stance towards an affectively charged question (e.g. to express affiliation or disaffiliation with the evaluative stance conveyed by a question that initiates repair and conveys the questioner's surprise). By contrast, repetitional answers convey the respondent's incongruent epistemic stance in confirming information as inferable from prior talk. In Finnish, repetitional answers may register the question as a request for information, confirm an allusion or offer an upgraded confirmation (Sorjonen 2001a, 2001b). Also, in Tzeltal, a language spoken in Chiapas, Mexico, repetitional answers are the default form for a minimal affirming response and display shared epistemic access and agency between interlocutors (Brown 2010; Enfield et al. 2019, 297–299). As Sorjonen (2018, 27) argues, "information on languages such as Estonian, Finnish, Japanese and Tzeltal indicates that there may be a division of labor between particle and repetition responses according to the sequential and activity context of the question, its epistemic assumptions and formal design".

To sum up, prior research on polar answers across different languages demonstrates universal preferences, as well as language- and context-specific variation. That is, in certain contexts interjections can be treated as non-aligning with the questioner's agenda (as in the transformative answer *Yeah I know* in English conversation), and in certain languages (e.g. Tzeltal) repetitional answers can be treated as non-resisting the constraints of the question. How does Greek fit in the overall picture? To date, there is a gap in the literature regarding polar answers and their communicative import in Greek conversation. This study aims to fill this gap partly by offering an empirical analysis of polar answers from a conversation analytic perspective. In the next section, I provide an overview of the forms and functions of polar questions in Greek.

1.2 Polar questions in Modern Greek

In Modern Greek a declarative (1a)–(b)[1] or subjunctive main clause (2a)–(b) can be turned into a positive or negative polar question through rising intonation towards the end of the utterance, as in (3a)–(b) and (4a)–(b):

(1) a. *ayórase* *kafé.*
buy.3SG.PST coffee(M).ACC.SG
'She bought coffee.'

1. Examples given in this section are invented.

b. *ðen ayórase kafé.*
NEG buy.3SG.PST coffee(M).ACC.SG
'She did not buy coffee.'

(2) a. *na ayorási kafé.*
SBJV buy.3SG.PFV coffee(M).ACC.SG
'She should buy coffee.'
b. *na min ayorási kafé.*
SBJV NEG buy.3SG.PFV coffee(M).ACC.SG
'She should not buy coffee.'

(3) a. *ayórase kafé?*
buy.3SG.PST coffee(M).ACC.SG
'Did she buy coffee?'
b. *ðen ayórase kafé?*
NEG buy.3SG.PST coffee(M).ACC.SG
'Didn't she buy coffee?'

(4) a. *na ayorási kafé?*
SBJV buy.3SG.PFV coffee(M).ACC.SG
'Should she buy coffee?'
b. *na min ayorási kafé?*
SBJV NEG buy.3SG.PFV coffee(M).ACC.SG
'Shouldn't she buy coffee?'

Tags are added after statements with normal declarative (falling) intonation and turn them into questions. Tags are delivered with final rising intonation and include the particle *e*, the phrases *étsi ðen íne/ðen íne étsi*, and clauses negating the main verb of the clause, as in (5a)–(b):

(5) a. *ayórase kafé. étsi ðen íne?*
buy.3SG.PST coffee(M).ACC.SG SO NEG COP.3SG.PRS
'She bought coffee. Didn't she?'
b. *ayórase kafé. ðen ayórase?*
buy.3SG.PST coffee(M).ACC.SG NEG buy.3SG.PST
'She bought coffee. Didn't she?'

Polar questions in Greek are less routinely delivered with final falling intonation (Alvanoudi 2018) and acquire their interrogative meaning because they are statements about a domain on which the respondent is an authority (Levinson 2012, 27).

Prior research on polar questions in Greek conversation (Alvanoudi 2018; Alvanoudi 2019b; Bella and Mozer 2015; Bella and Mozer 2018; Pavlidou 1986;

Pavlidou 1991; and studies in Pavlidou 2018) demonstrates the multifunctionality of polar questions. For example, Greek speakers use polar questions to carry out impromptu invitations (Bella and Mozer 2015; Bella and Mozer 2018), requests for information or confirmation and other initiation of repair (Alvanoudi 2018), and implement requests to say/do something (Pavlidou 1991) and secure multi-unit turns in interaction (Alvanoudi 2019b). A preliminary attempt to map out the forms and functions of yes/no answers to polar questions in Greek conversation was undertaken by Alvanoudi (2019a), drawing on approximately 22 hours of audio-recorded conversations. The present study is based on the same and additional data, and focuses exclusively on affirming/confirming answers and epistemic stance. My research aim is to examine how respondents position themselves towards the questioner's epistemic stance and the proposition in question through the design of their polar answers. Analytic methods for coding data are presented in Section 2. Findings are discussed in Section 3. Concluding remarks are in Section 4.

2. Data and method

Data analyzed in this study come from approximately 27 hours of 40 audio-recorded everyday conversations and 30 audio-recorded telephone calls among friends and relatives from the Corpus of Spoken Greek (Institute of Modern Greek Studies). A detailed description of the features of the corpus (e.g. data collection, size, etc.) is in Pavlidou (2016, 41–59) (more information is available under http://ins.web.auth.gr/index.php?lang=en&Itemid=251). Conversations have been fully transcribed according to the standard conversation analytic conventions (cf. Jefferson 2004; an abbreviated representation of transcription conventions following Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018: 606–607 is in Appendix B).

Following Stivers and Enfield's (2010) coding scheme for question-answer sequences in conversation, in order for a polar question and answer to be coded, the following criteria had to be met:

a. A question had to be either a formal question (i.e. via prosodic marking) or a functional question (i.e. requesting information, confirmation or seeking agreement).
b. Newsmarks and tags were coded as functional questions because they seek confirmation.
c. Questions in reported speech were not coded as questions.
d. Answers directly dealt with the question as put and they were verbal (given that data were audio-recorded). In line with Thompson et al. (2015, 3), polar

answers are understood as responsive actions, that is, actions that "take up the action of an initiating action" and "are 'typed', that is, they are specific to a particular type of initiating action that they are understood to address (Schegloff 2007)." For example, confirming or disconfirming is a typed-responsive action to an information-seeking initiating action and agreeing or disagreeing is a typed-responsive action to an assessing initiating action. I provide a quantitative description of the data in the following section.

2.1 Quantitative data

Utterances with final rising intonation are the dominant polar question type, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of polar questions by type

Polar question type	**Percent/*n***
Final rising intonation	94% (*n* = 784)
Declarative	1% (*n* = 12)
Tag	5% (*n* = 40)
Total	**100% (*n* = 836)**

In line with Stivers and Enfield's (2010) coding scheme, questions were coded as Requests for Information if "it seemed that there was no other primary action to be coded" (p. 2623) and getting new information was the only job the question was doing. Questions were coded as Requests for Confirmation if the questioner appeared to assume that the proposition raised by the question was probably true. Questions were coded as Other Initiations of Repair if they were dealing with a problem of hearing or understanding the prior turn. Questions that implement requests for action, suggestions, proposals and offers were coded in a single category. Other actions as well as questions that carried out more than one action were coded as Other. We can observe in Table 2 that requests for information and confirmation are the most common actions being implemented by polar questions.

Following Thompson et al. (2015, 4), the first turn constructional unit (TCU) of a next turn was coded as a response. Table 3 shows that 85% of questions received a response.

I collected 709 instances of answers to polar questions. The following answer types were identified: (a) *interjection-type answers* or *response tokens* (henceforth response tokens), that is, particles or adverbial items; (b) *repetitions*, that is, answers that involve a modified replication of a question through addition or

Table 2. Distribution of social actions being implemented by polar questions

Social action	Percent/*n*
Request for information	30% (*n* = 250)
Request for confirmation	33% (*n* = 271)
Other initiation of repair	9% (*n* = 77)
Proposal/offer/request	11% (*n* = 96)
Other (pre-announcement, disagreement, etc.)	17% (*n* = 142)
Total	**100% (*n* = 836)**

Table 3. Distribution of response types

Responses	Percent/*n*
Answer	85% (*n* = 709)
No response	15% (*n* = 127)
Total	**100% (*n* = 836)**

omission; (c) *combination answers* that consist of response tokens followed by repeats, and (d) *transformations*, that is, answers that change the terms or the agenda of the question.

Table 4. Distribution of polar answers by type

Polar answer type	Percent/*n*
Positive response token	41% (*n* = 294)
Positive response token-repetition combination	1% (*n* = 5)
Repetition	15% (*n* = 104)
Transformation	22% (*n* = 156)
Denial/disconfirmation/non-answers (*I don't know*)	21% (*n* = 150)
Total	**100% (*n* = 709)**

As shown in Table 4, 57% of polar questions received an affirmation/confirmation, 22% of polar questions were responded to with a transformation, and 21% of polar questions received a disconfirming response or a non-answer. That is, in Greek there is a preference for affirming or confirming answers, as observed in other languages (Stivers et al. 2009). Moreover, in designing affirming/confirming polar answers Greek speakers rely most on response tokens. This finding aligns with the cross-linguistic preference for the use of interjections in polar answers reported by Enfield et al. (2019).

The present study focuses on affirming/confirming polar answers.[2] Following Stivers' (2019) typology, positive response tokens were divided into: (a) *unmarked response tokens,* that include the prosodically unmarked particle *ne* ('yes'), the monosyllabic particle *m* and the bisyllabic particle *m(h)m*, and (b) *marked response tokens*, that include upgraded and downgraded tokens. Upgraded tokens include particles, which are prosodically marked with higher pitch or increased loudness, such as *ne* ('yes'), repeats, such as *ne ne ne*, and semantically emphatic adverbs, such as *vévea* ('of course') and *enoíte* ('absolutely'). Downgraded tokens, such as *málon* ('maybe, probably'), carry positive or negative valence and are less common in the data. We can observe in Tables 5 and 6 that 61% of positive response tokens are unmarked and 39% are marked. Most marked tokens are upgraded. Prosodically marked tokens are the most common ones, followed by semantically emphatic adverbs and repeats.

Table 5. Distribution of positive response tokens by type

Positive response token type	**Percent/*n***
Unmarked positive response token	61% (*n* = 179)
Marked positive response token	39% (*n* = 115)
Total	**100% (*n* = 294)**

Table 6. Distribution of marked positive response tokens by type

Marked positive response token type	**Percent/*n***
Upgraded positive response token	
Prosodically marked response token	46% (*n* = 53)
Repeat of response token	21% (*n* = 24)
Semantically emphatic adverb	31% (*n* = 36)
Downgraded positive response token	2% (*n* = 2)
Total	100% (*n* = 115)

This study examines (a) positive response tokens (Sections 3.1 and 3.2), and (b) repetitional answers (Section 3.3). As for (a), the study focuses on unmarked positive response tokens (Section 3.1), and marked upgraded tokens (Section 3.2).

2. Answers to polar questions that carry out directive and commissive acts, such as requests for action, offers or proposals were not included in the final analysis, given that these responsive actions are shaped by deontic stance rather than epistemic stance (cf. Thompson et al. 2015, 264–267).

3. Analysis

3.1 Unmarked positive response tokens

Speakers use unmarked positive response tokens to answer polar questions that request information, as shown in Extract (1). The exchange comes from a conversation among four friends, two females, Magdalini and Yota, and two males, Spiros and Grigoris. Magdalini has informed her interlocutors that uncle Nikos just called her.

(1)
1 Spi: =*Apó pú ín aftós.*
 from where COP.3SG.PRS this.M.SG
 =Where is he from.
2 (0.9)
3 Yot: *Ap tin Aθína:.=*
 from DEF Athens
 From Athe:ns.=
4 Gri: -> *=.h Ap to sói tu babá sas ítan?=*
 from DEF family DEF.GEN dad.GEN your.PL COP.3SG.PST
 =.h Was he from your dad's side?=
5 Yot: => ***=Ne.***
 yes
 =Yes.
6 (1.1)
7 Gri: *ʝaftó ðen don [°(gzérume).]*
 for this NEG him know.1PL
 That's why we don't [°(know) him.]
8 Spi: *[ʝaftó- aftó] °θa leγa.*
 for this this FUT say.1SG
 [That's why- that's] what °I was gonna say.

In line 1, Spyros uses a wh-question to elicit information about the uncle's origin, and Yota provides the information in line 3. The wh-question positions the recipient as having [K+] status and expresses a steep epistemic gradient as it "advances no hypothesis for confirmation" and claims no knowledge over the information at issue (Heritage and Raymond 2012, 181). The recipient accepts the [K+] status by providing a response to the wh-question, and thus demonstrating that she has the information the questioner is seeking. The wh-question-answer sequence is followed by a polar question-answer sequence in lines 4–5, in which Grigoris uses a declarative clause with final rising intonation to request additional information about the uncle ('Was he from your dad's side?', line 4), and Yota provides the affirming answer *ne* ('yes', line 5). The polar question positions the same recipient as the party "with epistemic rights with respect to the knowledge domain being addressed" (Heritage and Raymond 2012, 181). This domain is a Type 1 knowable (Pomerantz 1980), which speakers have rights and obligations to know from firsthand experience. The polar question is the second question in a row of questions about the same person that treats the recipient as having knowledge about the person being talked about. The polar question positions the questioner as unknowing [K–] and implements a request for information. Yota provides the

information via the simple positive response token *ne* that comes with no delay or further elaboration, and simply affirms the question's proposition. Yota's response fully acquiesces to the terms of the question, not taking issue with the questioner's epistemic positioning.

Also, speakers use unmarked positive response tokens to answer polar questions that request simple confirmation, as in Extract (2).

(2)
```
1  Fot:     >Prospaθúsa na  káno  káti      állo  vasiká.< =
            ((laughing.....................................))
            try.1SG.PST  SBJV do.1SG something else actually
            >Actually I was trying to do something else.< =
2  Art: ->  =Pcos in       aftós.    jaɲótis      íne?
             who  COP.3SG.PRS this.M.SG Yanniotis(M).SG COP.3SG.PRS
            =Who is he. Is he from Ioannina?
3  Chr: =>  M:.=
            PARTICLE
            Mm:.=
```

Artemis' turn in line 2 consists of two TCUs requesting information. In the first TCU, the speaker uses a wh-question ('Who is he.') that claims no knowledge at all and seeks a single, specific piece of information (Specifying Question, Thompson et al. 2015, 20). In the second TCU, the speaker uses a polar question ('Is he from Ioannina?') to offer a candidate answer (Pomerantz 1988) that demonstrates the speaker's implied knowledge of the proposition in question. According to Pomerantz (1988, 369), "in putting forth a candidate answer, a speaker recognizably offers the candidate answer as a likely possibility. The particular choice of candidate answer is treated as a display of the speaker's knowledge of, and familiarity with, the situation." Thus, the polar question in line 2 positions the respondent as [K+] and construes the questioner as "somewhat knowledgeable even while seeking information" (Pomerantz 1988, 370). In line 3, Chrysi responds to Artemi's polar question delivered in the second TCU (given the preference for contiguity in interaction, Schegloff 2007) via the particle *m* with final falling intonation. The respondent confirms the candidate answer as a likely possibility and demonstrates that she treats herself as [K+].

A similar case is in Extract (3). Ourania has informed Chrysanthi that the name Ourania is common in Corfu and in the Peloponnese. The question of interest is in line 4.

(3)
```
1  Chr:     =Éxo    tin edíposi   ómos  óti  polí Cerciréi
            have.1SG DEF impression but  that many Corfu residents
            =But I think that many residents of Corfu
2            íne   Pelop- (.) ts,    ðilaðí   éxune   kataɣoɟí p-
            COP.3PL Pelop-     click  that is  have.3PL origin
            are from the Pelop- (.) ts, that is they come
3            a:p  tin Belopóniso.=
            from DEF  Peloponnese
            fro:m the Peloponnese.=
4  Our: ->  =Alíθça  e?=
             really  PARTICLE
            =Really eh?=
```

```
5  Chr: =>  =°Ne.
              yes
            =°Yes.
```

In lines 1–3, Chrysanthi delivers an informing about the origin of many residents of Corfu, assuming that the recipient does not know and should know (Heritage 1984). In line 4, Ourania confirms the informativeness of the information provided by Chrysanthi with a newsmark ('Really eh?') that consists of a tag (i.e. the particle *e*). The newsmark highlights Ourania's turn as newsworthy and seeks confirmation, encouraging more talk on the matter. The tag question positions the respondent as [K+] but "construes the questioner as partly in the know", as "the information provided in the response is not treated as wholly new" for the questioner (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018, 238). In line 5, Chrysanthi confirms with the token *ne* ('yes'). Her answer is latched onto Ourania's question, without any inter-turn gap or turn initial delay that disrupts the contiguity between the first and second pair part of the adjacency pair. Chrysanthi provides a simple confirming response and assumes an epistemically [K+] position.

In the above segments, speakers use unmarked positive response tokens to answer polar questions that request information or simple confirmation, and accept the epistemic terms of the question. The communicative import of marked response tokens is analyzed in the next section.

3.2 Marked positive response tokens

Greek speakers use marked positive response tokens to answer polar questions that implement 'surprised' repair initiation. One example is visible in Extract (4):

(4)
```
1  Our:    = <Emís páli ti k- ti   fáyame?>
              we   ADV   what  what eat.1PL.PST
           = <We what- what did we eat?>
2  Vag:    =A  ne.  [xθes     to vráði.]
            ah yes  yesterday DEF night
           =Oh yes. [Last night.]
3  Our:            [.h Emís     fáyame]
                       we       eat.1PL.PST
                   [.h We ate]
4          <maɟirítsa  °xtes     to vráði.>
            magirítsa  yesterday DEF night
           <magirítsa soup °last night.>
5  ?       .hh=
6  Our:    =.h[h fáyame      maɟirí]tsa,
               eat.1PL.PST  magirítsa
           =.h[h We ate magirí]tsa,
7  Mar:      [Ti   to  kalítero.]
              what DEF best
             [It's the best.]
8  Our:    tin ésti[le     i  mána]  mu:
           it  send.3SG.PST DEF mother my
           my: [mother sent] it to me
9  Vag:           [>E     vévea.<]
                    eh    of course
                  [>Eh of course.<]
```

```
10 Our:     me   ðéma,  .h=
            with package(N).ACC.SG
            in a package, .h=
11 Mar: ->  =((laugh)) me   ðéma?=
                       with package(N).ACC.SG
                       In a package?=
12 Our: =>  =↑NE:[::.  ]=
             ((laughing))
            yes
            =↑YE:[::S.]=
13 Vag:          [Íirθe,]=
                 arrive.3SG.PST
                 [It arrived,]=
14 Mar:     =Kalá, pos re     pe[ðjá.]
             well  how PARTICLE guys
            =Well, gu[ys] how is this possible?'
15 Our:                       [Apó ] Cércira.
                               from  Corfu
                              [From] Corfu.
```

Ourania informs her interlocutors that last night she ate a soup that her mum posted to her in a package (lines 3, 4, 6, 8, 10). In line 11, Maria initiates repair ('In a package?') using a partial questioning repeat of Ourania's turn (Robinson 2013). The repair initiation is a polar question that seeks confirmation and positions the respondent as [K+]. Moreover, the question displays speaker's surprise, as shown by the prosodic realization (higher pitch) of the turn and speaker's laughter (Selting 1996; Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006). Maria has initiated a repair to address a problem of expectation rather than a problem of hearing or understanding (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2018, 188), and conveys that what Ourania said in her prior turn is in contradiction to Maria's knowledge or expectations about what is true or acceptable. In line 12, Ourania emphatically confirms with the marked particle ↑*NE*::: ('yes'), delivered contiguously, with higher pitch, loudness, duration and in laughing mode. The polar answer provides the confirmation requested and demonstrates that the respondent treats herself as [K+] and the questioner as [K–]. That is, the polar answer accepts the epistemic terms of the question. At the same time, the marked response token embraces the surprise expressed by the questioner. The respondent mobilizes prosodic resources, such as higher pitch, loudness and duration, to convey a congruent evaluative stance. Compare for example the intonation contour in Figure 2, the unmarked token *ne* in Extract (1), with the intonation contour in Figure 3, the marked token *ne* in Extract (4).

In these examples, prosodic variation of the same response token serves to convey the respondent's different evaluative/affective stance towards the question. In Extract (1), the unmarked response token does 'simple' and neutral answering, whereas in Extract (4), the prosodically marked response token does 'affectively charged' answering (for the role of prosody in conveying stance see e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 2009; Golato and Fagyal 2008; Selting 1996; Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006; Ward 2019, among other).

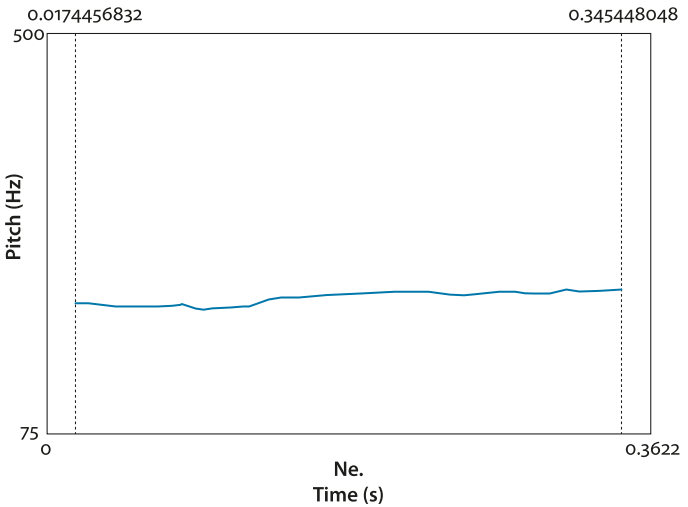

Figure 2. Intonation contour of *ne* in (1) extracted with PRAAT

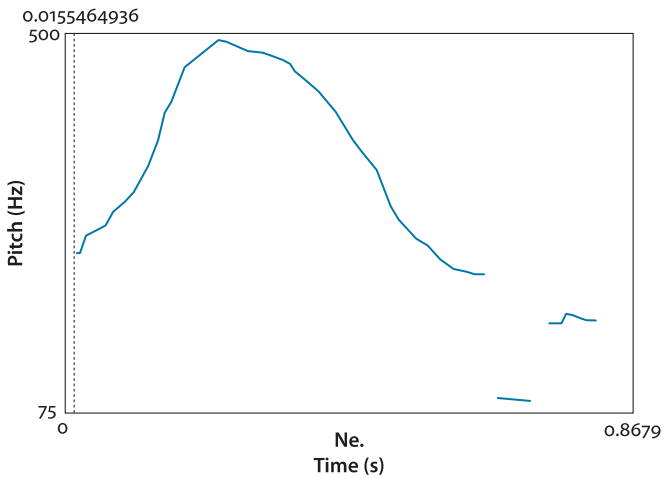

Figure 3. Intonation contour of *ne* in (4) extracted with PRAAT

Another example is in Extract (5). Chrysanthi has informed Ourania and Athina about changes in how domestic calls are made, and she mentions that callers need to dial zero with no extra charges.

(5) 1 Ath: -> *ðilaɬðí:, θa bor- θa: ʝa na páro eɣó apó:*
that is FUT can FUT to SBJV call.1SG I from
That ɬi:s, can- wi:ll in order to call o:n
2 -> *kartotiléfono eséna sto staθeró su*
pre-paid phone you.SG to landline your.SG
your landline fro:m a pre-paid phone

```
3        ->  θa  pérno   miðén triáda  éna <miðén?> =
             FUT call.1SG zero  thirty  one zero
             do I need to dial zero thirty one <zero?> =
4   Chr: =>  = <Ne  ne  ne.> =
                yes yes yes
             = <Yes yes yes.> =
5   Our: =>  =Ne.
              yes
             =Yes.
```

After intervening talk and a gap, Athina initiates repair to check understanding of the information provided at a distance from the repair (Benjamin 2012). In lines 1–3, the speaker offers a candidate understanding (inference) of the trouble source ('in order to call o:n your landline fro:m a pre-paid phone do I need to dial zero thirty one <zero?>'). The repair initiator is a polar question that seeks confirmation and positions the questioner as [K–]. In lines 4–5, Chrysanthi and Ourania overtly confirm the questioner's understanding with the marked response tokens <*Ne ne ne*.> ('yes yes yes.') and *Ne* ('yes'), and demonstrate that they treat themselves as [K+]. Respondents answer immediately, without providing any further explanation or information in understanding the trouble source. That is, they treat the questioner's candidate understanding as an affiliative move that does not create a serious obstacle to the progressivity of talk (e.g. because the questioner claims that she knows better) (Antaki 2012). Respondents mobilize prosodic resources, such as slowed speech rate and higher pitch, and repetition to emphatically confirm information that has been accurately inferred from prior talk, and affectively align with the questioner's proffering of a candidate understanding.

Extract (6) comes from a telephone call between Dimitra and her granddaughter, Zina. After the greeting sequence, Zina initiates a new topic about the Easter holiday in lines 1–2, and Dimitra replies that they had a barbeque with Yorgakis and the kids in lines 3–4, 7. The question of interest is in line 9.

(6)
```
1   Zin:  °Ne:.° to Pásxa ↑pos ta pé:rases?
          yes   DEF Easter how PN pass.2SG
          °Yes.° ↑How wa:s Easter?
2         írθe:    o:  θíos?
          come.3SG DEF uncle
          Did uncle come:?
3   Dim:  Ne. ↑í:rθe  o  Yoryá:cis, (.) me  ta  peðjá: óli,
          yes come.3SG DEF Yorgakis(M)    with DEF kids   all.M
          Yes. Yorga:kis ↑ca:me, (.) with the ki:ds all of
          them,
4         psísame   eðó:, fáyane, to  vrá:ði fíyane.
          grill.1PL  here  eat.3PL  DEF night  leave.3PL
          we had a barberque here:, they ate, in the
          eve:ning they left.
5         (0.5)
6   Zin:  A: [(óli-)]
          ah   all.M
          O:h [(all-)]
7   Dim:     [(Oréa)] perásame. polí kalá.
               well   pass.1PL  very  well
             We had [(a good time).] Very good.
8         (0.6)
```

```
9   Zin: ->  Ítan      ce  ta   peðjá:?
             COP.3PL.PST and DEF  kids
             Did the ki:ds come as well?
10           (.)
11  Dim: =>  >Vévea.< ó:li  ítane.
             of course all.M COP.3PL.PST
             >Of course.< They all came.
12  Zin:     °M.°   o  Éksarxos   ti   ká:ni.
             PARTICLE DEF Eksarxos(M) what do.3SG
             'Mm. How is Eksarxos?'
```

After a gap (line 8), Zina launches a new sequence in line 9. She uses a polar question to ask whether the kids joined the barbeque, that is, to request information that Dimitra has already provided in line 3. After a micro-pause that indicates trouble (line 10), Dimitra confirms via the semantically emphatic adverb >*vévea*< ('of course') in line 11. The polar answer treats the questioner as [K–] and highlights the obviousness of the answer. In the next TCU, the respondent provides further explanation ('they all came'), repeating information from her prior turn with emphasis, and, thus, she displays her problem with the necessity of the question. Zina closes down the sequence via the neutral information receipt token *m* in line 12.

In sum, speakers use marked positive response tokens to provide overt confirmations to polar questions. These overt confirmations accept the epistemic terms of the question and also address aspects of the derived action being implemented via the question, namely they convey a congruent evaluative stance towards 'surprised' repair initiation, affectively align with the proffering of a candidate understanding or highlight the obviousness of the answer.

3.3 Repetition

When respondents seek to resist the questioner's epistemic positioning and assert their own epistemic authority, they deploy repetition. This pattern is visible in (7):

(7)
```
1   Our:     Ce >ksérete  ti    skéftome?< óti  an válo    ce
             and know.2PL  what think.1SG   that if put.1SG and
             And >do you know what I'm thinking?< That if I
             also use
2            staθeró, (.)   e:: (0.7) ðen gzéro:,
             landline phone eh       NEG  know.1SG
             a landline phone, (.) u::h (0.7) I don't kno:w,
3            θa: íne        pára polí ce  to  pájio.
             FUT  COP.3SG.PRS very much and DEF  fixed rate
             the fixed rate wi:ll be very high as well.
4            ðilaðí  >to [pájio]    eména sto   Réθimno
             that is  DEF fixed rate PN    in DEF Rethymno
             That is >in Rethymno the [fixed rate]
5   Ath:                [°Ne. ]
                          yes
                        [°Yes.]
6   Our:     erxótan  oxtó  çiλáðes¿< =
             come.3SG eight thousand
             costed eight thousand¿< =
```

```
7   Ath:    =Ks- [póso.    eyó   páli      (íç-)]
                  how much I     ADV
             =How [much. I also (had-)]
8   Our:         [°(To ðímino.)° ENO BORO  [NA]    pérno]
                    DEF two months but can.1SG SBJV    call.1SG
                 [°(For two months).° BUT I CAN [call]
9   Chr:                                    [°Ise  sɨɣuri?]
                                             COP.2SG.PRS sure.F.SG
                                            [°Are you sure?]
10  Our:    °ne. pá[ɟio.]
            yes  fixed rate
            °Yes. Fixed [rate.]
11  Chr: ->      [ °Se] staθeró?=
                    PREP  landline.N.ACC.SG
                 [°For] a landline phone?=
12  Our: =>  =↑Se staθeró.=
             PREP  landline.N.ACC.SG
             =↑For a landline phone.=
13  Chr:     =Ti   lé[te ]  re    peðɟá
              what say.2PL  PARTICLE guys
             =Hey guys, sa[y] what?
14  Our:           [°Ne.]
                    yes
                  [°Yes.]
15  Chr:     ce  ðe mu éçi     érθi loɣarɟazmós   akómi.=
                 ((laughing.............................))
             and NEG PN have.3SG come bill           yet
             and I still haven't received the bill.=
```

In lines 1–4 and 6, Ourania informs her interlocutors of landline phone charges, and in lines 9 and 11, Chrysanthi challenges Ourania's claim via a series of polar questions. Ourania responds to Chrysanthi's first disagreement ('Are you sure?) with the unmarked token *ne* ('yes') in line 10. Chrysanthi treats the response as non-conforming with the exigencies of the question and delivers another disagreement ('For a landline phone?'). Ourania responds with a modified repeat in line 12: she repeats the phrase *se staθeró* with sharp intonation rise and final falling intonation. The derived actions implemented by the polar questions in this exchange challenge the respondent's epistemic authority and imply the questioner's primary epistemic rights over the information at issue. The respondent uses repetition to confirm the proposition raised by the question and assert her epistemic authority with respect to the knowledge domain being addressed. That is, the repetitional answer resists the epistemic terms of the question.

A similar case is in Extract (8). The segment is from a conversation among three male friends, Yorgos, Manos, and Dimosthenis. In the lines preceding this segment, Yorgos has quoted Milan Kundera's claim that men do not conquer women anymore. Manos has prompted Yorgos to elaborate, and Yorgos provides more information in lines 1–2. The question of interest is in line 4.

(8)

```
1   Yor:    [ðen a]ɣonízode   as    púme     ɟa  káti.
            NEG   fight.3PL    so to speak.1PL for something
            [They do not f]ight for anything so to speak.
2           °ðen ganun  káti.
            NEG   do.3PL something
            °They do nothing.
```

```
3          (0.7)
4  Dim: -> Aftó          enoí?
           this.N.ACC.SG mean.3SG.PRS
           Is this what he means?
5  Yor: => Af[tó         enoí.]
           this.N.ACC.SG mean.3SG.PRS
           Th[is is what he means.]
6  Man:      [Ti           ðilaði?]
             what          that is
             [That is?]
```

Dimosthenis delivers a polar question with emphasis ('Is this what he means?') that challenges Yorgos' understanding of Kundera's claim, indexes a shallow K– to K+ epistemic gradient, and implies the questioner's primary epistemic rights over the information at issue. In line 5, Yorgos responds with a modified repeat of the question: he replicates the phrase *aftó enoí* ('This is what he means.') with final falling intonation and no emphasis. The repetitional answer confirms the question's proposition and asserts the respondent's epistemic authority over the matter in question.

In Extracts (7) and (8), repetitional answers resist the questioner's epistemic stance. A slightly different pattern is visible in Extract (9):

(9)
```
1  Pol: -> =Aléka θimáse          pos íxame       érθi
            Aleka remember.2SG.PRS how have.1PL.PST come.PFV
           =Aleka do you remember how we came
2           eðó  péra mna forá?=
            here over one time
            here once?=
3  Ale: => =To  θi↑máme.         aftó θimíθika       [tóra.]
            it  remember.1SG.PRS this remember.1SG.PST  now
            =I re↑member. I [just] remembered it.
4  Pol:                                               [Me ti]::
                                                       with DEF
                                                       The::
5           fialticí  istoría  °me   taftocínito?
            nightmare story    with  DEF car
            nightmare story °with the car?
6           (0.5)
7  Nas:     Ti:? ↑ti  éɟine.
           what what happen.3SG.PST
           Wha:t? ↑What happened?
```

In lines 1–2, Polychronis uses a polar question ('Aleka do you remember how we came here once?') to initiate an assisted story telling and implement a 'reminiscence recognition solicit' (Lerner 1992). This kind of preface forecasts a possible story but does "not indicate who is meant to deliver it" (Lerner 1992, 255). In line 3, Aleka responds with recognition: she repeats the verb *θi↑máme* in first person singular, with emphasis and final falling intonation, and adds the anaphoric pronoun *to*. Polychronis adds an increment to his question (lines 4–5), Aleka does not step in as the storyteller (there is a gap in line 6) and Nasos uses a wh-question to express his acceptance of the prior speakers telling the story. In the lines following (omitted for space considerations), Polychronis begins the delivery of the

story and Aleka ends up as a story consociate who actively participates in the story delivery. The assisted story preface delivered by Polychronis demonstrates shared knowledge with Aleka and positions the questioner as knowledgeable. Aleka uses repetition to confirm her capacity to know some element of information due to experience. In this segment, the question's derived action makes the respondent's epistemic authority interactionally relevant and invites the respondent to display shared epistemic access and agency. The respondent uses repetition to bring her authority over the particular information to focused attention and takes no issue with the questioner's epistemic positioning.

To recapitulate, speakers use repetition to confirm the question's proposition and assert their epistemic authority. Repetitional answers can be treated as resisting or non-resisting the questioner's epistemic stance, depending on whether the action carried out by the question challenges or not the respondent's primary epistemic rights with respect to the knowledge domain being addressed. Conclusions are in the next section.

4. Concluding remarks

Data analysis demonstrates that unmarked and marked positive response tokens, and repetitional answers are not randomly distributed in second position in polar question sequences in Greek conversation. The three formats are "alternative ways of filling" the same sequential position or slot (Couper Kuhlen and Selting 2018, 544), as they carry different communicative import. Unmarked and marked response tokens accept the questioner's epistemic stance in subtly different ways. Unmarked response tokens do 'simple' answering, whereas marked response tokens provide overt confirmations. By contrast, repetitional answers assert the respondent's epistemic authority and are treated as resisting the questioner's epistemic stance, if the action carried out by the question challenges the respondent's primary epistemic rights over the matter in question. To sum up, the three formats convey the respondent's different epistemic positioning towards the question and the action it implements.

Epistemic stance taking in polar answers in Greek conversation is shown to be a public interactional joint achievement, as the respondent reacts to the stance conveyed by the questioner in their prior turn. Moreover, epistemic stance taking is shown to be context-dependent and inference-based, as it emerges from the recurrent use of specific linguistic (lexical and prosodic) resources in responsive position.

How are patterns found in polar answers in Greek conversation similar to or different from patterns observed in other languages? As mentioned in Section 1.1,

cross-linguistically interjections or response tokens simply answer polar questions, whereas repetitions do more than simple answering (Enfield et al. 2019). The analysis of the Greek data provides further evidence for this universal pattern. Greek speakers use response tokens to affirm or confirm the question's proposition, and they use repeats to do more than simply affirming or confirming. Yet, the communicative import of polar answers is shown to be context-specific.

Similar to Russian and English (see e.g. Bolden 2016 and Stivers 2019, Section 1.1), in Greek conversation, speakers use upgraded response tokens to confirm information that is expected to be known by the questioner, and respond to surprised repair initiation. Marked response tokens accept the questioner's epistemic stance but they also serve to highlight the obviousness of the answer or convey a congruent affective stance. Also, similar to English (see e.g. Heritage and Raymond 2012, Section 1.1), repetitional answers in Greek conversation assert the respondents' epistemic authority and are heard as resisting the epistemic terms of the question. However, Greek repetitional answers are not always competitive, as in certain contexts they display shared epistemic access and agency and acquiesce to the epistemic terms of the question (a similar pattern is observed in Tzeltal, Enfield et al. 2019, 297–299, Section 1.1).

This paper has analyzed affirming/confirming polar answers delivered via positive response tokens and repeats, and has demonstrated that epistemic stance is a central component of polar answers in Greek conversation. Further research on other types of polar answer, such as downgraded tokens, combination and transformative answers, will enhance our understanding of the epistemic work that speakers do with different linguistic resources in responsive position in question sequences in Greek conversation.

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Appendix A. Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ACC	accusative
ADV	adverb
COP	copula
DEF	definite
FUT	future
M	masculine
N	neuter
NEG	negation
PARTICLE	particle
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PN	pronoun
PREP	preposition
PRS	present
PST	past
SG	singular
SBJV	subjunctive

Appendix B. Transcription conventions

[	point of onset of overlap
]	point of end of overlap
=	latching
(0.8)	silence in tenths of a second
(.)	micro-pause (less than 0.5 second)
.	falling/final intonation
?	rising intonation

¿	rise stronger than a comma but weaker than question mark
,	continuing/non-final intonation
: ::	sound prolongation or stretching; the more colons, the longer the stretching
word	underlining is used to indicate some form of emphasis, either by increased loudness or higher pitch
°	following talk markedly quiet or soft
-	after a word or part of a word: cut-off or interruption
↑	sharp intonation rise
> <	talk between the 'more than' and 'less than' symbols is compressed or rushed
< >	talk between the 'less than' and 'more than' symbols is markedly slowed or drawn out
h	hearable aspiration; its repetition indicates longer duration
.hh	inhalation
(( ))	transcriber's description of events
(word)	uncertain transcription
(…)	unidentified syllables or segments

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