

COMPROMISING PROGRESSIVITY: ‘NO’-PREFACING IN ESTONIAN¹

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Abstract

Negative polar particles have generally been characterized as items for expressing disagreement or responding negatively to polar questions. What has been lacking in these accounts is attention to embodied activities. This paper studies the usage of the Estonian negative particle *ei* as a preface in real-time activities, showing that it halts the ongoing action, often for the sake of achieving intersubjective understanding and establishing epistemic authority. The paper shows how other matters besides logic and truth-conditions define the meaning of the negative particle. Analysis of linguistic function demands transgressing the boundaries of language and scrutiny of co-present interaction in its temporal emergence. The paper argues that several discourse functions of *ei* are also more accurately described from the vantage point of its usage in multimodal face-to-face settings than from the logical properties that the item happens to display in limited sequential contexts after yes/no interrogatives.

Keywords: Interactional linguistics; Conversation analysis; Progressivity; Epistemic authority; Epistemic primacy; Negative polar particle; Estonian.

1. Introduction

Negative polar particles have generally been analyzed as responses to polar questions or as items for expressing disagreement or disconfirmation. They are usually considered the negative counterparts of words such as *yes* and *yeah*. This paper sets out to explore the hitherto less studied functions of the negative particle that do not occur in contexts where the positive particle would constitute an alternative answer (earlier examples of this approach include Ford 2001; Schegloff 2001; and Jefferson 2002). In contrast to a recent discourse marker account of the English *no* with a similar aim (Lee-Goldman 2011), the current study focuses on the temporal emergence of spoken language in embodied settings and argues for its primacy. The Estonian negative polar particle *ei* displays a number of specific functions that are revealed in sequences of social action, some of them in the verbal domain and some more clearly in face-to-face interactive settings.

The theoretical aim of the paper is to incorporate multimodal analysis of interaction into the study of a particle that would have traditionally been considered a discourse marker (cf. Lee-Goldman 2011). As will be shown below, the term *discourse marker* is problematic because a particle need not only orient to the domain of discourse but also to embodied facets of human behavior. Participants in interactional events

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perform auditory as well as visible actions and language can be employed in reaction to both of these. This paper demonstrates patterns ranging from haltings with *ei* in primarily verbal contexts, such as telephone calls, to markedly physical activity sequences in dance classes and other settings. The study thus moves away from the logocentric approaches to particles and incorporates multimodal aspects into the elucidation of linguistic function. It shows that a particle may accomplish similar tasks in the physical world and within verbal discourse. Furthermore, in discourse marker studies the emerging texts are treated as products to be “bracketed” (Schiffrin 1987; Lee-Goldman 2011) while this study scrutinizes the accomplishments of a word for the participants at a specific moment when they are in the middle of an ongoing interactional event. Focusing on the temporal aspect as well as what the social investments and consequences are for the interacting parties, the current account of the functions of a negative particle will be markedly different from, albeit not contradicting, the discourse marker approach.

Ei represents a group of words that have been described as *prefaces* in the interactional research tradition of conversation analysis, an empirical method of studying mundane interaction (e.g. Heritage 1984a). Prefaces are words that regularly occur at turn-beginnings introducing an upcoming utterance. The earliest work was carried out on *and*-prefacing of turns in English (Heritage and Sorjonen 1994), later studies have developed *and*-prefacing (Turk 2004; Bolden 2010), included *oh*-prefacing (Heritage 1984b, 1998), *no*-prefacing (Ford 2001; Ford, Fox and Hellermann 2004), *so*-prefacing (Bolden 2008), *look*-prefacing (Sidnell 2007), *eh*-prefacing in Japanese (Hayashi 2009), and *ani*-prefacing in Korean (which is also used as a negative particle) (Kim 2010). Turn-beginnings have in general been of great interest for students of human interaction, as in these positions the speakers display how their contribution is related to what other participants just did (e.g. Heritage 2002). Turn-beginnings thus constitute moments when intersubjectivity is crucially achieved.

The relationship of “nextness” between turns is one of the central organizational features of conversation, as this is what makes the turns interpretable in the first place. When interacting, speakers make sense of each others’ contributions in a sequential context, and provide own contributions in reaction to other’s actions. Talk adheres to progressivity when the speakers move from one element to a hearably next one with nothing intervening (Schegloff 2007: 15). If, however, something violates the contiguity between current and hearably next action, it will be heard as qualifying the progressivity of talk and examined by the participants for its import (ibid.). There are various ways of interfering with progressivity at different levels of talk, ranging from halted pronunciation to delayed answers. The Estonian *ei* interferes with progressivity in a variety of ways that will be illustrated below. As will be argued, the crucial reason for the interference is the speaker’s claimed need to inform, establish epistemic authority or primacy. Participants in social interaction regularly display concerns with who knows what how well and who knows more, as well as who has the right and obligation to know (Heritage 2002; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Stivers 2005; Stivers, Mondada and Steensig 2011a). Informing is among the central functions of language, which also reflects the social distribution of knowledge locally, as it is reinforced or contested in participants’ sequential actions. Speakers claim various degrees of knowledge and authority to knowledge. The paper shows how *ei* participates in this endeavor.

In earlier interactional studies on negative polar particles, Cecilia Ford has looked at turns where negation is followed by an elaboration and finds: “Broadly

speaking, the work of negative turn construction unit involves rejection, either rejection of an immediately prior proposition or the rejection and shifting away from a topic or sequence.” (Ford 2001: 60). The current study will build on that conclusion but also include patterns that do not involve rejection, merely initiating a change of action trajectory. Non-rejective usages have, for example, been registered in Korean, where the negation word *ani* can neutrally index that the previous turn was a preliminary to the current turn-in-progress (Kim 2010). It is clear, though, that a negative particle can be used to display a strong oppositional stance. Goodwin (1998: 30, 35-36) has shown that in the setting of kids playing hopscotch. The stance is enhanced by a high pitch on ‘no’. In general, *no*-prefaces have been found to be phonetically different from stand-alone ones (Ford, Fox and Hellermann 2004). They also function differently. A stand-alone *no* can, for instance, mark acknowledgement of other’s talk or even affiliation with it (Jefferson 2002), at least in English. (In Estonian, this usage is impossible.) Outlining all the cross-linguistic differences is not the aim of this study, even though some of the ‘no’-prefacing practices seem to occur in several languages.

The database of the study consists of about 550 instances of *ei* but not all the usage patterns will be included in the paper. Crucially, the numerous answers to yes/no questions (about half of the database) and to actions soliciting confirmation will not be included. These two are also the contexts where an affirmative particle is an alternative answer and where stand-alone *ei* mainly occurs. The data come from various sources and include both telephone calls and face-to-face events. The telephone call corpus consists of 324 calls of two types: Telemarketing calls from a daily newspaper and everyday calls. It includes more than ten hours of conversation. The face-to-face data come primarily from the social events of the Estonian exile community in Sweden. These data entail thirty six hours. In addition to this, a smaller amount of face-to-face data among Estonian Estonians involve a family Christmas dinner, a children’s play date, and a couple of dance classes. These amount to about seven hours in total. All the participants have consented to the recordings and they have been given invented names in the transcripts.

2. *Ei* as a halting device

We will start by looking at instances of *ei*-prefacing in face-to-face settings where it is used to halt an action. The first excerpt comes from a dance class. In line 1 the teacher counts in the dance. Students start dancing during *pa dim pa dah* but after a couple of beats the teacher discontinues providing the rhythm for the dance and says *ei* ‘no’. This effectively stops the students’ dancing.

(1)

1 T: .hhh Ja viis kuus seitse. pa dim pa dah, ((clap))
 'And five six seven. Pa dim pa dah'
 [((dancing starts))]

2 ei, nii ei ole et ma ootan sin
 No like.this NEG be that I wait:1SG here
 'No, it's not like I'm waiting here'
 [((dancing stops))]

- 3 millal mul plaks lüüakse, /---/
 when I:ADS clap hit:IMS
 'until I get the clap'

After *ei* the teacher explains the mistake she had observed in the performance. Then the dance is re-launched. *Ei* thus constitutes an initial part of a corrective segment in the pedagogical context of a dance class. This is a typical usage of *ei* in a setting where other things besides talk are happening and relevant for the activity. *Ei* is here responsive to an embodied performance and indicates that the action so far is in some way flawed. The teacher's authority to stop the dance and evaluate the performance is among other things established by the *ei*-preface. Her subsequent talk provides a correction, after which the students can re-perform the dance, displaying a new understanding of how it should be done. The *ei*-preface is thus used for reinforcing the teacher's authority in the current activity.

Let us look at another case of *ei*-prefacing in co-present interaction. A number of people are sitting at a long table and sending around plates and bowls with food. A person receives a tray with bread, holds it in front of him and takes one. At the same time he talks about other matters (A in lines 1-2 in the transcript). The person to his other side who would conventionally be the next one to receive the bread tray produces an utterance prefaced by *ei* (line 3), adding an explanation why the tray should not continue moving in the current direction. Her turn results in A sending the tray back where it came from.

(2)

- 1 A: aitäh, ma vaatasin et kas kõikidel
 thanks I look:IMF:1SG that QUES everybody:PL:ADS
 'Thanks, I checked whether everybody'

- 2 on- on ruumi olemas.
 be:3SG be:3SG space:PRT be:SUP:INS
 'has space.'
 ((receives the tray from his right, takes a bread,
 holds the tray in front of him))

- 3 B: **ei** meil on si- said siin juba.=
 no we:ADS be:3SG breadroll:PL here already
 'No, we have breadrolls here already.'
 ((sits on A's left))

- 4 A: =ahah,
 'Oh'
 ((sends the tray back))

The *ei* is not done in response to an offer, neither verbal nor non-verbal, as B has not yet offered to pass the tray along. It is the expected tray movement that B's *ei* addresses. *Ei* thus alerts the co-participants to the fact that some ongoing embodied activity trajectory has to be halted. In a similar way, Goodwin (1998: 33-34) describes a case in Spanish-American from the kids' hopscotch game. One girl shouts "No cheater" to stop another one who has just done a foul, which in hopscotch is an embodied performance. In contrast to the hopscotch example, there has been nothing wrong about the tray moving

to this direction so far, as A has not yet taken the bread. Thus, the *ei*-preface in (2) does not contest or reject, it merely halts.

Ei may be followed by an account of why the halt is necessary, or an expansion. In excerpt (2) the need of sending around the bread tray is contingent upon whether the diners have had a chance to take a piece of bread or not. B's account preempts the need to continue. When doing this, she presents herself as an expert on the need for bread at her end of the table, and authoritatively declares her epistemic right to inform the unknowing participant A. This ultimately achieves a joint understanding of the matter, as evidenced by A's subsequent verbal and embodied behavior: He produces an information receipt *ahah* 'oh/okay' and sends the tray back.

In both of the excerpts above the polar particle is uttered in response to an activity that is non-verbal: Dance and passing the bread around. In earlier literature it has been discussed how linguistic items may be uttered in reaction to mishaps, surprising events, unfortunate moves in sports and other non-verbal activities. Goffman (1981: 78-122) has called these items *response cries*, presented as "mere expression" and "not recipient-directed, propositional-like statements" (Goffman 1981: 112). The range of response cries is linguistically and culturally limited in every society, comprising taboo words and conventionalized sounds to express disgust, surprise, and other matters. The 'no' discussed in the current study is different: It is not an impulsive blurted action but a word *par excellence* used in reaction to actions, often initially in longer speaker turns.

The actions reacted to with *ei* may, but need not, be verbal. In much of the following, cases of verbal activities will be discussed. But the first point to take away from the discussion is that the function of a linguistic item may have to be studied in relation to action in general rather than merely verbal discourse. A third excerpt from co-present interaction illustrates how the verbal-only focus would render the function of *ei* incomprehensible. Excerpt (3) is recorded in a kitchen where people are preparing a dinner. A visitor whose obligation is to make a cake asks the host about a cake plate she remembers (line 1). At the same time, she moves toward a cupboard and opens the cupboard door. The host's turn in line 2 is initiated with *ei*.

(3)

1 L: kule kas sul oli niuke
listen:IMP:2SG QUES you:ADS be:IMF:3SG such
'Listen, did(n't) you have a'

2 lame tordialus kunagi
flat cake.plate once
'flat cake plate once?'
((walks to the cupboard, opens the door))

3. E: **ei** oota oota selle toast saad
no wait:IMP:2SG wait:IMP:2SG this:GEN room:ELT get:2SG
'No wait wait, you'll find it in the (living) room.'

4 ((L closes the cupboard, leaves the kitchen and arrives after a while with a cake plate))

Even though there is a yes/no question in the prior turn, the *ei* is not a negative response to it. The host indeed has the cake plate L mentioned, which is evident in the

continuation of E's turn after the polar particle. The *ei* is instead a reaction to L's search in the wrong place. Also the rest of the answer deals with the place rather than the existence of the plate. In the *ei*-prefaced turn the host takes an epistemically authoritative stance, there are no hedges in the instructions on where the plate can be found. The informing leads L to an understanding how she should proceed with the search for plate, as is evidenced by her subsequent actions. The *ei*-prefaced turn thus prompts L to discontinue her current embodied activity, the search in the kitchen cupboard. Accordingly, if the aim were to elucidate the meaning of *ei*, the analysis of mere talk would in this case be misleading, because there would be no explanation why it was used in the first place (e.g. it could not have been used in this sequential position if the talk was on the phone). Also "wait wait" would be incomprehensible, even though the continuation of the turn ("you'll find it in the living room") could well have made sense in a mere audio recording of the event. Both *ei* and "wait wait" orient to L's embodied behavior, her engagement with the wrong cupboard, which is clear already before the rest of the turn emerges.

There is parallel evidence from English in regard to this pattern. Ford (2001: 64) describes an instance where a participant responds to a drawing with the negation plus correction format, rejecting it as a felicitous replication of somebody else's earlier drawing. In discussing the particular turn-format, Ford (*ibid.*) finds that the continuation of the turn after the polar particle "either provides an alternative to what has been rejected or offers an account for the rejection". Indeed, also in the Estonian excerpts (1) and (3) the speaker provides an alternative and in (2) she offers an account. Thus, the 'no'-prefaced turn-formats seem to be similar in English and in Estonian. Possibly, the general characterization "rejection" used by Ford would also make sense in the above examples, particularly in the case of defective dance performance. In the other two cases it might be better to characterize the action as something milder, such as halting the progress of an activity. The dance in excerpt (1) was corrected, but the bread tray in (2) simply has to go a different way (it has not yet gone the "wrong" way) and the search for the plate in (3) has to continue somewhere else. Thus, one of the connotations of *ei* in the cases presented above is that the ongoing activity has to be diverted, as judged by the speaker. The particle *ei* is thus among other things part of a practice of establishing epistemic primacy in interaction, it indicates that the current speaker takes the position of being more knowledgeable about the issue, more experienced in the task at hand, or morally entitled to provide her opinion. Epistemic primacy has been defined as "asymmetries in the depth, specificity or completeness" of knowledge among the participants (Stivers, Mondada and Steensig 2011b: 13). The continuation after *ei* provides other participants with information, aiming at establishing an intersubjective understanding of which actions should be halted or how they can be remedied. The *ei*-preface thus inherently deals with epistemic imbalance and relative authority among the participants. It interferes with the activity that is currently in progress and ultimately achieves an informed alternative.

At the same time, it is crucial to notice that the faulty or unnecessary activity is halted in real time in the physical world by the *ei*-preface in the above examples. The *ei*-preface interferes with the progressivity of action. So far the term *progressivity* has mainly been used for sequenced verbal actions (Stivers and Robinson 2006; Schegloff 2007). An example of a halt in verbal activities can be found in (4). It also comes from co-present interaction, the Christmas dinner preparation, and involves multiple

participants. Karin is M's mother and her question in line (1-2) is addressed to M. They are in a room adjacent to the kitchen where Liisa is preparing food.

(4)

1 Karin: kas sa oled küsind, kas tädi Liisal
 QUES you be:2SG ask:PPT QUES aunt NAME:ADS
 'Have you asked whether aunt Liisa'

2 on abi vaja.
 be:3SG help need
 'needs help?'

3 M: X[XX]

4 Liisa: [Ku]le **ei** praegu ei mahu Karin
 listen:IMP:2SG no now NEG have.space NAME
 'Listen no there is no space here, Karin,'

5 siia. [midagi]. Ma kardan.
 here:ILL nothing I be.afraid:1SG
 'at the moment. at all. I'm afraid.'

6 Karin: [okei.]
 'Okay.'

The progressivity of the question-answer sequence between the mother and the daughter is blocked by Liisa's *ei*-prefaced turn. It preempts the accusation in Karin's question that M should have offered help and thereby challenges the relevance of the entire sequence. The early initiation of the *ei*-prefaced turn in overlap with M's answer underlines the urgency of breaking into the ongoing verbal sequence before it is brought to completion. It halts the progressivity of action at the level of M's turn as well as the entire sequence between Karin and M. Simultaneously, it turns down the implicit offer of help and turning down offers is a well-known function of a negation particle. The current paper, however, focuses on the halting capacity of *ei* in participant time: Some verbal or non-verbal activity that has been projected to continue is stopped. It also argues that the preface is used from an authoritative position, as it is regularly uttered by the person who is in charge of an activity, such as preparing food, or relatively more knowledgeable on the topic at hand. It establishes a stronger epistemic status of the current speaker in relation to others. In example (4) Liisa is the one working in the kitchen and thus able to judge the available space there. She uses the lack of space as an account for refusing help. Other participants comply, displaying acceptance of her authority (Karin in line 6).

Importantly, in this usage *ei* does not constitute an alternative to the positive polar particle, *jaa/jah* 'yeah' in Estonian. Had *jaa/jah* occurred in turn-initial position in the above excerpts, the action import would not have been the opposite to what *ei* does, but entirely different (the functions of *jaa/jah* in business negotiations have been described in Kasterpalu (2005); and after yes/no interrogatives in Kevallik (2009)). The *jaa/jah*-preface should yet be studied in terms of social action and sequential consequences.

Human interaction evolves in time. Hindering its progress in the above excerpts is done to the benefit of informedness and as part of participant negotiations on whether an ongoing activity is to be continued and how. Crucially, in examples (1-3) the halted activity is embodied, not verbal, as is compliance with the halt: Students in a dance class stop dancing (1), the man at the table does not proceed with sending the plate to the anticipated direction (2), and the guest stops searching for the plate in the cupboard she had just opened (3). *Ei* in these instances relates to the non-verbal domain and achieves a change there, therefore necessitating a multimodal analysis. In addition, in all the examples other present participants comply with what the speaker of the *ei*-prefaced turn says. Thus, *ei*-prefacing reflects the local self-positioning of participants on the scales of relative authority and knowledge.

In the next section we will look at the more familiar practices of ‘no’-prefacing from the verbal domain, framing the analysis as interference in progressivity and reflecting epistemic concerns similar to the above examples.

3. *Ei*-prefacing of progressivity interference within turn and sequence

In a related but somewhat different incarnation, the negative polar particle accomplishes interference with the progressivity of the basic conversational sequence that evolves around adjacency pairs, as understood in Schegloff (2007). *Ei* marks that contiguity is being violated in the current turn and the turn or sequence will from now on not proceed the way it was projected. Contiguity is the relationship ”between some element and what is hearable as a/the next one due” (Schegloff 2007: 15). Regularly occurring in turn-initial positions, *ei* shows that there is an issue with the prior turn that makes progressivity to the next element problematic. Turn-internally, *ei* is a regular component of self-repair. We will now look at the specific types of progressivity interference, as *ei* does not implement just any disruption in progressivity. The common denominator of the patterns is that some prior matter is declared inadequate, while its correction implies the speaker’s (by now) superior epistemic status.

3.1. *Repair*

Repair is the mechanism of dealing with problems in speaking, hearing and understanding, including replacement of faulty words (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977; Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 1991, 1992, 1997). As repairing takes time, it temporarily halts the progressivity of talk until the problem has been solved. One of the implementation domains of the Estonian negative particle is in self-repairs (Hennoste 2000: 2704) in which the speaker herself corrects a flaw in her talk. Thus, similarly to the usage in the embodied excerpts described above, *ei* indicates that some prior course of activity is to be halted and changed. In particular, *ei* is used in replacement repair where a faulty item is later replaced with another one. This is illustrated in the following excerpt where the telemarketer informs about the coming subscription and replaces the wrong name of a weekday in line 2. *Ei* is the halting device, here working together with the cutoff.

(5)

1 M: e ühesõnaga ta de akkab teile siis tulema
 in.one.word it start:3SG you:PL:ALL then come:SUP
 'So it will start coming'

2 nagu iga:: hee reed- ei iga laupäeval.
 like every Fri- no every Saturday
 'like every Fri- no every Saturday.'

The repair is initiated with a cutoff on the first name of a weekday, Friday. *Ei* functions as a repair preface, which is the segment positioned between the repair initiation, if there is one, and the repair solution (Lerner and Kitzinger 2010). Relatedly, the Finnish particle *eiku* which has the historically identical negation word as its first component, is regularly used in self-repair (Sorjonen and Laakso 2005; Haakana and Visapää 2010). Lerner and Kitzinger show that each repair preface (*well, or, actually, sorry, I mean* in English) is employed to alert recipients of the specific relationship between the trouble source and the repair solution. In the case of Estonian *ei*, the relationship is that of an incorrect vs. correct lexical item. The incorrect one is "canceled" by *ei*. It is thus a relatively strong repair device, not merely projecting an alternative but indeed showing the necessity of replacement. This is probably why it is not among the most frequent self-repair prefaces in spoken Estonian. In any case, the *ei*-preface is in the service of providing correct information and achieving proper mutual understanding.

Relatedly, *ei* is usable in third position repair, as has also been described for English *no* (Schegloff 1992; Ford 2001: 63-64; Lee-Goldman 2011: 2638-2639). When a question has been misunderstood by its recipient the asker can initiate a repair in the turn after the answer. In the following excerpt (6), C asks about M's whereabouts in line 1, but since Estonian lacks future marking, the question is ambiguous in terms of the time frame. M answers the question as if it was about the current moment, which leads C to reformulate the question with a specific time formulation.

(6)

1 C: =ahah, .h aga: kas sa oled Püives vä.
 uhuh. but QUES you be:2SG NAME:INS QUES
 'Uhuh, but are you/will you be at Püve?'

2 M: ei ma olen siin töö juures. @
 No I be:1SG here work:GEN at
 'No, I'm here at work.'

3 C: ei kuidas su plaanid on õhtuks.
 no how you:GEN plan:PL be:3PL evening:TRA
 'No, what are your plans for the evening?'

The answer in line 2 is not ratified and the question is reformulated instead. The *ei* is always the first indication of trouble in this type of sequence, functioning as the repair initiator in third position repair. It is a device of halting the progress of the sequence, as the answer to the question is not acknowledged. In this position, the negation word can be reduplicated (but not repeated more than twice) and formats such as 'I mean', 'I meant' are common after it. In excerpt (7) the speakers have talked about R going away to lake Peipsi for a while. E's question in lines 1-2 concerns the trip, while R treats it as

a general inquiry, offering a name of a common acquaintance that has nothing to do with Peipsi.

(7)

1 E: no siis on ästi. kas kellelgi on
 NO then be:3SG good QUES somebody:ADS:GI be:3SG
 'That's good. Does anybody have'

2 Sünnipäev või midagi vä.
 birthday or something QUES
 'a birthday or something?'

3 R: Pilvil oli eile sünnipäev.
 NAME:ADS be:IMF:3SG yesterday birthday
 'Pilvi had a birthday yesterday.'

4 E: ei ei, ma mõtlen seal Peipsi ääres.
 No no I think:1SG there NAME:GEN at
 'No no, I mean at Peipsi.'

In the case of third position repair the prior answers are treated as irrelevant and the sequence cannot therefore proceed as projected in the answer, e.g. with receiving the news. The progressivity of talk is halted while the problem is being solved, eventually rendering an answer to the question as it was originally meant. In both cases of third person repair (examples 6, 7) the *ei*-preface shows that from the current speaker's point of view some prior segment has revealed a misunderstanding. As the author of the initial question, the current speaker can claim authority on its proper interpretation. This reflects some of the prime findings of early conversation analysts: Repair is organized in a socially sensitive way (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977). *Ei*-prefacing is a grammatical format for achieving joint understanding and for correcting discrepancies between the speakers that have become evident in prior talk. Alternatively, in self-repair the *ei*-preface shows that the speaker has by now achieved an improved epistemic status. The *ei*-preface marks that the prior should be discarded and replaced with something different to guarantee progressivity in talk as well as proper informing and mutual understanding between the participants.

3.2. *Correcting a statement*

Another practice that shows the involvement of *ei* in epistemically motivated progressivity halts is the initiation of a correction of a false statement, either in one's own talk or a prior speaker's talk. These are not technically repairs, as there is no orientation to producing, hearing, or understanding problems by the participants. Instead, they witness of a concern for the correctness of the produced information. Excerpt (8) shows a case in point, where T talks about his paintings. P has already received the information provided by T in lines 1-2 when T chooses to retrospectively adjust a fact in the claim, thereby not proceeding to a next action.

(8)

- 1 T: /---/ fakt on see et ee nende: tööde
 fact be:3SG this that these:GEN work:PL:GEN
 'The thing is that (I) have not'
- 2 puhul pole: ühtegi m@od@elli k@asutatud
 for NEG:be any model:PRT use:IMS:PPT
 'used any models for these works.'
- 3 P: aa:
 'Oh'
- 4 T: ei kurat valetan. ühe töö puhul on.
 no damned lie:1SG one:GEN work:GEN for be:3SG
 'No, damned, I'm lying. (I) have for one.'

An action that turns out to be flawed, this time a verbal statement, is corrected with the help of an *ei*-preface. *Ei* is the very first sign of something being in need of a remedy, while the specification of the remedy is provided after it. Progressivity is halted, as remedy takes time. Correction can also be accomplished across speakers, as shown in excerpt (9). The topic of discussion is the opening hours of banks. Already in line 1, E positions herself as the knowing party in regard to weekends and bank hours, implying that money withdrawal would be impossible on a Sunday. When P argues against this, E responds with an *ei*-prefaced statement, reestablishing herself as the one who knows better than her conversation partner.

(9)

- 1 E: no omme on pühapäev ju.
 NO tomorrow be:3SG Sunday JU
 'Well, tomorrow is Sunday, you know.'
- 2 P: mts aga midagi ikka lahti on.
 but something IKKA open be:3SG
 'But something will be open.'
- 3 E: ei ma ei usu.
 No I NEG believe
 'No, I don't think so.'

The turn in line 3 could be characterized as a disaligned answer to P's turn in which E disagrees with P. At the same time, P's turn is a reactive expression of hope, which also makes relevant a preferably aligning response. E's correction, albeit epistemically qualified, is an interference with progressivity, as the conversation does not proceed as projected by P in line 2, where she seeks acceptance, or at least an expression of mutual hope. In a parallel way, the Finnish *eiku* can be used as a preface in other-corrections, also together with epistemic modulations (Haakana and Kurhila 2009) similarly to the above 'I don't think so'. Participants obviously care about the truthfulness and correctness of the information produced, to the extent that they are prepared to compromise progressivity and spend time remedying informational errors and surfacing misunderstandings.

3.3. Correcting a presupposition

There are further types of sequences where some segment of talk by other becomes the subject of knowledge adjustment in an *ei*-prefaced turn. Excerpt (10) shows a case where E calls a friend without knowing that he has moved. The mother picks up the phone and the following conversation evolves.

(10)

1 E: .h e tere õhtust, ma palun Kaupot.
 hello evening I ask:1SG NAME:PRT
 'Good evening, I would like to talk to Kaupo.'

2 M: Kaupot.
 NAME:PRT
 'Kaupo?'

3 E: jah,
 'Yeah'

4 M: .h ei aga: ee Kaupo: ei ole siin.
 no but NAME NEG be here
 'No but Kaupo is not here.'

It is impossible for the mother to grant E's request, and her turn in line 4 is an account for that. However, her turn is prefaced by *ei*, which immediately shows that there is a more serious problem with the request than merely the fact that Kaupo is temporarily unavailable. The request has not been formatted as a yes/no question, so the negative particle cannot constitute a "grammatical" response in this sequential position. At the same time, the presupposition in the request is that Kaupo still uses this very phone, which is not valid, as is made clear in the mother's *ei*-prefaced turn. *Ei* thus prefaces a remedy of a false presupposition expressed in a prior turn. It interferes with the contiguity of the two parts of the adjacency pair of request-granting, together with other delay-items, such as the repair sequence in lines 2-4, the hearable inbreath and sound stretches. Furthermore, *ei* indicates that a remedy is needed for some prior segment of action, thus blocking progressivity. In the *ei*-prefaced turn M informs E of the facts known to her and obviously not to E. This leads to E asking for Kaupo's current phone number, reflecting her new understanding of his living situation. Once again we see progressivity being violated by the speaker, who is in an epistemically authoritative position in regard to her son's living situation. The benefit of the progressivity halt is an adjustment in the information state of the recipient.

3.4. Correcting an action

In addition to prefacing utterances that declare statements or presuppositions problematic, the *ei*-preface can also initiate a remedied action, implying that the action that has been going on so far needs to be diverted. This was shown in examples (1-3) at

the beginning of the paper, where the instances involved halting embodied actions. However, also verbal actions can be redirected over time. In excerpt (11) from a phone call E is informing K about the costume he has to wear for a performance. It includes leggings and K (who is male) reacts with a surprise token in line 2. E then asks for his agreement in line 3 but almost immediately cancels the conditional relevance of an answer to the question. Instead, she informs K that he has no choice. The replacement action is initiated with *ei*.

(11)

1 E: ja siis ee retuusid.
and then leggings
'And leggings.'

2 K: tohoh,
'Oh my!'

3 E: oled nõus jalga panema.
be:2SG agreement leg:ILL put:SUP
'Will you agree to put them on?'

4 (0.5)

5 E: ei sul ei jää muud üle ka. tähendab. .hhh
No you:ADS NEG remain other:PRT ÜLE too mean:3SG
'No, you don't have a choice, I mean.'

6 K: arvad.
think:2SG
'You think so?'

7 E: ja: (.) jah, /---/
yeah yeah
'Yeah. (.) yeah.'

It is obviously risky for E to give K an option of a negative answer to the question in line 3, as this would undermine her idea of the appropriate costume. Also the pause in line 4 adumbrates a disaligning negative answer. E's *ei*, however, is not a polar answer to her own question but a preface to the upcoming replacement action. It orients to her prior action, showing it to have been less than perfectly designed, which is why the progress of the sequence should be halted. The question never receives an answer. Instead, K reacts to E's next turn as an informing by simply asking for reconfirmation (line 6). E confirms and goes on to describe the rest of his costume (data not shown).

Another phone-call excerpt (12) shows a different angle of the action-diversion pattern, where the next speaker preempts an ongoing action. The extract starts with P's pre-request to visit a shop addressed to M, who will soon arrive at P's place. The response to the pre-request is heavily delayed by pauses, a sound stretch, and an outbreath. In the end, M can be heard to initiate some kind of an account (line 4). Before he gets anywhere with it, P cuts in with the request itself, prefaced by *ei*, literally halting the progress of M's turn.

(12)

1 P: kuule kui: sa tuled, sa tuled
listen:IMP:2SG when you come:2SG you come:2SG
'Listen, when you come, maybe you can'

2 mingist poest äkki läbi.
some:PRT shop:ELT ÄKKI LÄBI
'visit a shop.'

3 (0.9)

4 M: ööö hh jah (.) aga – v aga aga [(vaata)]
yeah but but but see:IMP:2SG
'Yeah (.) but but but see-'

5 P: [ei]
'No,'

6 kas sa tood mulle <@ piima. @> hh .h=
QUES you bring:2SG I:ALL milk:PRT
'will you bring me some milk?'

7 M: =ku ma tulen siis jah.
When I come:1SG then yeah
'Yeah, when I come.'

8 P: mhmh, ma maksan s@ulle p@ärast välja.
uhuh I pay:1SG you:ALL afterwards back
'Uhuh, I'll pay you back afterwards.'

As M has basically invited himself to P's house and there is a shop right in front of it, the delay of his answer to the pre-request (pauses, sound stretches, repetitions in lines (3-4)) is unlikely to display inability. P's interpretation of the delay seems to be that M is expecting her upcoming request to be considerable, troublesome, or perhaps expensive. P's *ei* halts the progress of M's upcoming reservation or excuse. In the continuation she quickly formulates the request itself, which actually contributes to the progress of the request sequence. The target of the request, milk, is produced with a smiling voice, marking it as a laughable matter in comparison with other things one can purchase at a shop. In fact, she continues to reassure M that she will pay for the milk even after his final compliance with the request in line (7). She thus uses the *ei*-prefaced informing to preempt M's projected objections to the request.

The *ei*-preface once again accomplishes a halt. It is used to secure the intersubjective understanding of the action sequence and in this particular case, to ensure the joint knowledge of the calibration of the request. With the *ei*-prefaced turn P corrects M's displayed understanding that the request will be considerable as well as her own prior action. A pre-request was probably not necessary for such a minor request. *Ei* is a device of retrospective correction and redirection of the sequence, establishing its utterer as the one with the right to do that. As P is the one who has adumbrated a request in the pre-sequence, she is also the authority on its content.

3.5. Correcting epistemic primacy

The last and possibly strongest piece of evidence of *ei* being a device in the interpersonal epistemics domain comes from sequences where the main concern in the *ei*-prefaced turn is to set the record straight on who knows best. Earlier research has shown how next speakers use subtle devices, such as modified repeats in English, to establish their primary epistemic rights on a matter (Stivers 2005). Similarly, in the *ei*-prefaced turn the speaker can repeat what was just said by another speaker, showing that the knowledge of the current speaker is superior as compared to the prior speaker, who actually formulated the news first. In excerpt (13) K announces a piece of news but instead of receiving it, P repeats it *verbatim*, merely adding the time notion “for a long time already”. This repetition with an addition is prefaced by *ei*, which again does not negate or disconfirm. Rather, it establishes the current speaker as more knowledgeable on the matter and with the authoritative right on the topic. It challenges the prior speaker as to the quality of her knowledge as well as the novelty of the information. The continuation of the turn provides evidential support for P’s implicit claim that her knowledge is more precise and, furthermore, acquired prior to K’s.

(13)

- 1 K: a: ja sattusin Taavi otsa, kes
but and happen:IMF:1SG name:GEN at who
‘But I happened to meet Taavi who’
- 2 ütles et Maret on maal üleüld[se].
say:IMF:2SG that NAME is country:ADS totally
‘said that Maret is in the countryside.’
- 3 P: [h]
- 4 **ei** Maret on ammu juba maal. h
no NAME is long already country:ADS
‘No, Maret has been in the countryside for a long’
- 5 või ku mina viimati Taavit nägin, sis e
or when I last NAME:PRT see:IMF:1SG then
‘time already. Or when I last saw Taavi,’
- 6 ütsin et ma t:ahaks M:areti juurde
say:IMF:1SG that I want:COND NAME:GEN to
‘I said that I would like to come to cut my hair’
- 7 juuksurisse tulla, s Taavi üt
hair:salon:ILL come:INF then NAME say:IMF:3SG
‘at Maret’s place. He said’
- 8 et, .hh <Q no:h siis mine Märjamaale,
that NOH then go:IMP:2SG NAME:ALL
‘well, travel to Märjamaa’

- 9 Või oota kevadeni. Q>
 or wait:IMP:2SG spring:TER
 'or wait until the spring.'

In summary, interpersonal epistemic concerns of authority and knowledge primacy sometimes override the general social orientation towards progressivity and contiguity in interaction. The corrective-diverting *ei*-preface regularly intervenes with contiguity and halts the ongoing action. *Ei* is usable as a halt sign after which the turn continues with a remedied version of a word, statement or action, or with an explanation of a problem. An *ei*-preface is implemented from the position of relative epistemic strength and authority, and the turn initiated by it ultimately establishes mutual understanding of the matter talked about.

4. *Ei*-prefacing of transitions

Ei-prefaces can also accomplish halts across or between longer sequences of talk as well as index that the tone of the talk will from now on be different. An *ei*-preface shows that some aspect, either the tenor or the content of what was just said, is not going to be pursued from now on, sometimes defining the immediately prior contribution as less important than what follows. The trajectory changes accomplished by *ei* and outlined below are quite specific. In contrast to the prior section, the cases here have less to do with matters of mutual epistemics and more with halting the action. We will start by looking at a phenomenon that was the first of its kind to receive attention in Schegloff (2001).

4.1. *From joke to serious*

Similarly to what has been described for English *no* (Schegloff 2001), the Estonian negation word can be used to mark a transition from jocular to serious talk. It defeats the assumption that what follows will bear the same non-serious tone as what came before (Schegloff 2001: 1954). In excerpt (14) mother E is asking her grown-up daughter whose call she is waiting for. The daughter first declines to answer by jokingly asking her mother not to inquire about her private life, her tone of voice is playful in lines 2 and 4, and they both laugh. She then, however, offers a serious answer. The transition from the joking reprimand to the answer is marked by an *ei*-preface.

(14)

- 1 E: kelle elinat sa ootad.
 whose calling:PRT you wait:2SG
 'Whose call are you waiting for?'
- 2 P: <Q noo mis sa uurid, Q> @=
 NOO what you inquire:2SG
 'Well, why are you inquiring?'
- 3 E: =@@@

- 4 P: <Q ära uuri elu, Q>
 ÄRA inquire life:PRT
 'Don't inquire about life!'
- 5 E: aiaiiai,=
- 6 P: =ei tegelt ootan Kaire kõnet. h=
 no actually wait:1SG NAME:GEN call:PRT
 'No, actually I'm waiting for a call from Kaire.'
- 7 E: =ah,
 'Oh'

In this excerpt P provides two consecutive responses to the same question. The first one is not literally rejected or disagreed with, as the joking has obviously had a social function in the exchange, but the *ei* marks the halt of the joking tone and a transition to a serious action. It accomplishes a return to the sequence that was initiated by mother's question in line 1. After *ei* the question receives a proper answer, providing in a sense an alternative action (as argued for the English *no*-prefaces by Ford 2001: 67) to the reprimand. Cases like this thereby resemble the action-diverting ones described in Section 3.4. but they do not halt the entire projected trajectory of action. They only provide an alternative after the prior sequence has come to a close.

4.2. Transition to irony

There are other transitions besides joke-to-serious that are similarly accomplished by the *ei*-preface. One of them seems to be the direct counterpart of the pattern described by Schegloff (2001), namely a transition from serious to non-serious talk. In this use, however, the ongoing action trajectory is halted. In excerpt (15) K has asked her sister (M) to pick up her child at the daycare and M has agreed to do so. K goes on to explain the details of the picking up in lines 1-2. M first responds with the double *jaa jaa* 'of course', indicating that the information was self-evident². When the sister pursues further confirmation, M does not do the projected action but instead initiates an ironic description of what else she could do with the child. This disaligning turn in lines 5-6 is prefaced by *ei*.

(15)

- 1 K: a ma mõtlen et siis nimodi kohe
 but I mean:1SG that then like.this at.once
 'But I mean that (you would) take him'
- 2 taga koju minna ja.
 he:COM home:ILL go:INF and
 'home at once.'

² Even though one should be cautious about transferring results across languages, similar claims have been made for double *jaja* in German (Golato and Fagyal 2008), double and trippel *ja* in Danish (Heinemann 2009), and multiple repetitions of *yeah* in English (Stivers 2004: 268-269). From these, German comes closest with regard to the intonation pattern used in the current case, i.e. prominence on the second item implies self-evidence (Golato and Fagyal 2008).

- 3 M: jaa jaa.
yeah yeah
'Of course.'
- 4 K: sobiks see.=
suit:COND it
'Would that be okay?'
- 5 M: =ei ma lähen vaatan teda korra
no I go:1SG look:1SG he:PRT second
'No, I'll go and look at him for a second'
- 6 lasteaias, ja siis lähen minema.
daycare:INS and then go:1SG away
'at the daycare and then leave.'

With the *ei* in line 5 M halts the trajectory of actions projected by K in the prior turn. It is not an answer to the immediately prior yes/no question. Instead, the *ei* prefaces non-serious talk, an ironic utterance that amounts to declaring K's concern redundant. M thereby establishes herself as the authority who can treat K's confirmation request as irrelevant, or having a self-evident answer, thus not worth asking. She thereby claims appropriate judgment of her own in regard to the topic discussed (getting the child from the daycare). Besides halting the sequence, *ei* accomplishes a transition to a different tone, the ironic one. It breaks the sequential mold of an answer by not providing an answer. Instead, the preface relates to the entire trajectory of actions initiated by K and discards the confirmation request as irrelevant. One of the functions of the *ei*-preface is thus to discard the relevance and consequentiality of the immediately prior talk, which is also characteristic of the next transition pattern.

4.3. *Skip-connecting*

Skip-connecting characterizes a situation where a "speaker produces an utterance which is indeed related to some prior utterance, but it is not related to the directly prior utterance" (Sacks 1995: 349). Thus, the directly prior utterance is "skipped", disregarded by the current speaker. *Ei*-preface is one instrument for treating the immediately prior utterance as irrelevant and marking a return to an earlier segment of talk. The following excerpt (16) comes from a telemarketing call offering newspaper subscriptions, and starts with a formulation of the special offer by the client (lines 1-2). After the telemarketer has explained further options in lines 5-7, the client responds with an *ei*-initiated turn.

(16)

- 1 K: ee ühesõnaga kui ma seda kaks kuud
in.one.word if I it:PRT two month:PRT
'You mean, if I subscribe for two months'
- 2 tellin, siis maksan nagu ühe jah,=
subscribe:1SG then pay:1SG like one:GEN QUES

'then I pay for one, right?'

- 3 M: =jaa.
'Yeah'
- 4 K: öö=
- 5 M: =kui kolm kuud sis kahe kuu eest,
if three month:PRT then two month:GEN for
'If (you subscribe) for three months, then (you'
- 6 ja kui neli kuud sis kolme kuu
and if four month:PRT then three:GEN month:GEN
'pay) for two, for four months (you pay) for'
- 7 eest, ja [nii ed]asi.
for and so on
'three and so on.'
- 8 K: [ahah]
'Okay.'
- 9 K: ei mul see: esimene variant sobiks küll.
no I:ADS this first option suit:COND KÜLL
'No, the first option would be fine.'

In the continuation of the turn after *ei* the speaker explicitly makes a connection to an earlier segment of talk by referring to 'the first option' that the telemarketer explained earlier. It is only after the continuation of the *ei*-prefaced turn that the other participant can interpret the *ei*, which does not reject the entire offer but merely the most recently presented versions of it. *Ei* is thus a device of structuring discourse, marking the intermediate talk as divergent or irrelevant (comp. Ford 2001: 65-66; Lee-Goldman 2011: 2632-2633). A similar function of return to the main agenda has been described for the Finnish word *eiku* (Haakana and Visapää 2010). The Estonian *ei* simultaneously establishes the current speaker as an authority who can judge what information is relevant and what is less so. Indeed, the client is here the one to decide on the value of different subscription offers for him.

When skip-connecting, *ei* can also be used for repeating an already established matter across intervening talk, rendering the latter inconsequential. Excerpt (17) comes from a call where K has invited M to her birthday party and asked for curlers as a present. In line 1, M agrees to the request. K, however, goes on to justify the request by talking about her hair problems, leading M to repeat the agreement. The *ei*-preface of the second agreement indicates that a) this is not the first instantiation of the agreement, and b) that the intervening talk has not changed her prior stance and has thus been of little informative import. Again, it marks that the immediately prior segment may be skipped.

(17)

- 1 M: a kui sul vaja on jah,
but if you:ADS necessary be:3SG yeah

'If you need them, sure.'

2 K: üks koht on mingisugune niukene väga
 one place be:3SG kind.of like very
 'One place is like really'

3 koledakenekene.
 ugly:DIM:DIM
 'ugly.'

4 M: jah,
 'Yeah'

5 K: vot, h.h @ [@ @ @]@
 VOT
 'Yeah'

6 M: [ei ma vaatan.]
 no I check.out:1SG
 'No, I'll see (what I can do).'

Ei-prefaced utterances are thus used for skip-connecting to earlier talk, either simply redoing a prior action (excerpt 17) or providing a continuation of the previously initiated action sequence (excerpt 16).

In summary, the *ei*-preface shows that the current contribution will not follow the trajectory of what went on immediately before it. There is no disagreement involved, nor downright rejection, and the transitions need not be socially problematic. *Ei* functions as a skip-connecting disjunction marker, halting the progressivity of what was just projected, in case something was projected. In (16) acceptance of the last offer and in (17) reciprocity of information would have been projected actions, in place of which the *ei*-prefaced turn was used.

4.4. *Misplaced action*

In the case when the *ei*-prefaced turn continues a trajectory initiated in the not-prior turn, the action ends up being misplaced in its local context. In excerpt (16) above, the proper sequential position for accepting the offer would have been in line 4. The *ei*-preface thus also marks the action as locally misplaced, not aligned with what was done just before it. In addition, such an *ei*-prefaced action may be done as a replacement for an earlier less fortunate one. In the following excerpt (18), A offers a costume to E for a Christmas show on Bible stories in lines 1-2.

(18)

1 A: /---/ mul on olemas see siidihommikumantel.
 I:ADS be:3SG be:SUP:INS this silk.morning.gown
 'I have a silk morning gown,'

2 niisugune must ja punaste servadega.
 such black and red:PL:GEN edge:PL:COM

'black and with red edges.'

- 3 E: draakoniga vä.
dragon:COM QUES
'With a dragon?'
- 4 A: jah,
'Yeah'
- 5 E: ähäh, (.) ei see on <@ normaalne. @>
uhuh no this be:3SG okay
'Uhuh. (.) no, that's okay.'
- 6 A: see sobib täiesti normaalselt, sest draakon
it suit:3SG quite okay since dragon
'It would be quite okay since the dragon'
- 7 on selja taga see ei paista välja.
be:3SG back:GEN behind it NEG show out
'is on the back, it doesn't show.'

E's question in line 3 could easily be heard as critique, since embroidered dragons are not characteristic of the era and geographical location of Bible stories. Repair initiations by others, as in line 3, are furthermore typical harbingers of disaligned responses (Schegloff 2007: 102). The implication of critique is ultimately proved by A's later reassurance of the placement of the dragon (lines 6-7). She addresses the problem that was implicit in E's repair initiation.

However, after receiving A's confirming answer about the dragon, E produces an *ei*-prefaced positive evaluation of the gown in line 5. By using the *ei*-preface, the speaker indicates that the immediately prior sequence will not be pursued, thereby downplaying the social import of the question-answer sequence. It is overshadowed by the following positive assessment, the first appropriate place for which would have been the sequential position immediately after A's proposal. The *ei*-preface marks the action as misplaced in its current position. The turn is hearable as an acceptance of the proposal but simultaneously also initiates an assessment sequence that receives a response. The *ei*-preface thus not only abandons the prior sequence but also initiates a new one.

This is yet another transition with *ei* that shows the capacity to downplay or disregard the immediately prior action (sequence), treating it as less important or bearing infelicitous connotations. Importantly, with the *ei*-prefaced assessment E reinforces her epistemic right to judge the costume. Indeed, she is the director of the play. We can thus see that the *ei*-prefaced utterances regularly establish the speaker as having a relatively higher degree of authority in the current event or owning the judging rights on the matter at hand, be it a costume, subscription offer, or dancing. An *ei*-preface is among other things a powerful social instrument.

In summary, the range of *ei*-prefaces presented in this section has a common denominator in that they instantiate a transition, marking a halt of what has been going on. The transition is often to talk that is different from what was projected in the immediately prior contribution. The *ei*-preface may cancel or downplay the prior contribution, showing that what just happened will not be considered from now on, or

that the tone will be radically different. The negative polar particle structures discourse, skip-connecting to an earlier-than-prior turn or sequence, which may or may not be finished. It also has an interpersonal facet, showing that matters expressed in the just prior talk are self-evident, redundant, a joke, or simply not worth further discussion. The particle thereby establishes an intersubjective understanding of the hierarchy of knowings in the current activity: The information provided in an immediately prior section of talk is suppressed and ranked as secondary in relation to what is already known or, in the case of joke-to-serious usage, what will be provided now. With the *ei*-preface the current speaker establishes herself as an authority on the setting of the agenda in the immediate future.

5. A synthesis of verbal and bodily progressivity halts

As was already argued at the beginning of the paper, many instances of *ei*-prefacing in co-present interaction necessitate multimodal analysis, since the preface may also orient to non-verbal activities. Several of these patterns are nevertheless closely related to the ones occurring in the verbal-only domain. Halts of embodied action illustrated in examples (1-3) bear resemblance to verbal other-correction described in 3.2-3.3. An instance of self-correction of an embodied action can be seen in excerpt (19) where H is among a group of people cleaning up after a party. She stretches her hand after some candles on the table but after briefly touching them utters the following comment.

(19)

1 H: *ei* see- see peab ära anguma –
 no this this must:3SG stiffen:SUP
 ‘No this has yet to stiffen.’

The *ei* orients to her trying to pick up the candles, a non-verbal activity, and the alternative course of action is expressed in words. At the end of the utterance she also lifts her gaze to her fellow cleaners, achieving an instruction to them from the position of a knowledgeable person whose authority originates from hands-on experience. Once again, the preface does not strictly speaking reject that the candles have to be picked up; it merely marks that the action will be diverted at this moment. The continuation after *ei* offers an account for her decision.

Excerpt (20) demonstrates a third position repair done in response to an embodied demonstration. The dance teacher receives a question from a student (S1) and initiates a demonstration as a response (lines 7-8). However, her demonstration is stopped by three students saying *ei* almost simultaneously (lines 9-11), claiming that the “answer” is dissatisfactory and the question was misunderstood.

(20)

1 S1: see:: üksasi mis on see:, [shows] mis on
 this one.thing that be:3SG this that be:3SG
 ‘There’s this one thing that [shows] that is’

2 selle vahepeal, see jalgade vahetus.
 this:GEN in.between this foot:PL:GEN change
 ‘in between there, this change of feet.’

- 3 [XX]
- 4 T: [teɪ]ne salm, (.) või kolmas salm mõtled. (0.2)
 second verse or third verse think:2SG
 ‘second verse, (.) or do you mean the third?’
- 5 millist jalgadevahetust.
 which:PRT foot:PL:GEN.change
 ‘which change of feet?’
- 6 (0.3)
 ((S1 looks down))
- 7 kaheksa üks kaks kolm neli
 ‘eight one two three four’
 ((the teacher starts to dance))
- 8 [kick]-
 ‘kick’
- 9 S1: [ei].
 ‘no’
- 10 S2: e::i [ei].
 ‘no no’
- 11 S3: [ei] [sa mõtled] tahaastumisest.
 no you mean:2SG back.steps:ELT
 ‘no you mean from the back step?’
- 12 S1: [XXX]

Crucially, the students do not object to the words coming out of the teacher’s mouth, as identical rhythm counting could as well have accompanied the step sequence they wanted to see re-demonstrated. The *eis* orient to the embodied performance and halt it. The progressivity of the entire question-answer sequence is thereby halted until the participants jointly work out the relevant spot in the dance (discussions start in line 11, data not shown). Only after that the teacher can provide an embodied answer to the original question and advance the sequence to its closure.

Thus, the sequences can be quite similar across verbal and bodily activities. A joint analysis of *ei*-prefaces in phone calls as well as co-present embodied interaction has pointed to their general halting function, be it halting a bodily action or a conversational sequence. An *ei*-preface hinders the progressivity of whatever is happening at that very moment, specified by its precise sequential-temporal position, larger activity context, and the upcoming extension of the turn. Its very essence and meaning is grounded in the temporal nature of the emerging human action.

5. Conclusion

The paper shows a number of interactive functions of the Estonian negation word, apart from the “prototypical” ones of answering, (dis)confirming and (dis)agreeing. It argues that the *ei*-preface is used to halt an ongoing action and mark a transition to something different, often but not always a remedy of some kind. It interferes with the progressivity of talk and human action, reflecting the crucial importance of real-time analysis of language.

The particle is shown to have a coherent function across its usages in the embodied and verbal activities. One of the main theoretical points of the paper is that the boundary often drawn between discourse and non-verbal context is artificial, as participants make use of multiple modalities in interaction. For speakers uttering an *ei*-preface there seems to be not much difference whether it is done in reaction to verbal or embodied behavior. Accordingly, singling out words from the rest of human behavior may lead to misconceptions in the analysis. In contrast, taking into account the whole variety of human action helps us to see the halting pattern in its entirety.

Another facet that turned out to be coherent across many of the studied *ei*-prefacing patterns is that of establishing epistemic authority over the matter at hand. The preface is used by the participants to launch a correction, remedy misconceptions, organize the agenda, accomplish a digression, and occasionally merely to show that the current speaker is more knowledgeable on the topic than a prior speaker. Progressivity halts and other transitions are implemented to take charge, define what is relevant and what is to be regarded as secondary, or simply accomplish a change of tone. In this way, the *ei*-preface is a powerful social device regulating the relationship between the participants in regard to their relative knowledge states and rights to intervene.

What the paper did not aim to accomplish, is to interrelate all the various usages of the negative particle in Estonian across different sequential and turn-positions. The truth-conditional usage of *ei* as a negating, (dis)confirming and (dis)agreeing response is most probably related to the patterns outlined in the current study, but not necessarily in a straightforward manner. Different languages tend to display somewhat different functions for the negative particle (e.g. Kim 2010), witnessing of the fact that the usage patterns are to some extent arbitrary. Various paths of development of the negative particle across languages would be a very interesting topic on its own.

More generally, the current work suggests that other particles, most notably the positive polar particle could be studied in a similar way, taking into account its role in action sequences besides the verbal ones. That implies taking seriously the temporal nature of human interaction and the emergence of language in real time. In fact, it is not at all clear that the best characterization of *ei* is polarity, at least not in the preface position. In the functions described above it cannot be contrasted with the positive particle and should thus be treated as an interactional item *per se*. Scrutinizing other items with “self-evident” meaning could result in an equally complex understanding of their interactional and interpersonal significance.

Transcription conventions

<u>underlining</u>	– emphasis
-	– truncation
[]	– overlaps; timing of embodied action
=	– latching of turns
(0.5)	– pause length in tenths of a second
(.)	– micropause
:	– lengthening of a sound
@	– a laughter syllable
<@ smile @>	– smiling quality
.h	– breathing in
h	– breathing out
((dancing))	– transcriber's comments
/---/	– the rest of the turn not shown
boldface	– the focused item in the excerpt
.	– pitch fall at the end of an intonation unit
?	– pitch rise at the end of an intonation unit
,	– level pitch at the end of an intonation unit
-	– unfinished intonation unit
(not in Estonian)	– the part is not expressed in the Estonian version
/	– alternative translations
X	– the words cannot be heard

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	– person
ADS	– adessive
ALL	– allative
COM	– comitative
COND	– conditional
DIM	– diminutive
ELT	– elative
GEN	– genitive
GI	– clitic <i>-gi</i> (a phonological variant of the clitic <i>-ki/-gi</i>)
ILL	– illative
IMP	– imperative
IMS	– impersonal
IMF	– imperfect
INF	– infinitive
INS	– inessive
NAME	– name
NEG	– negation (particles <i>ei, ära</i>)
PL	– plural
PPT	– past participle

PRT – partitive
QUES – question particle
SG – singular
SUP – supinum
TRA – translative
Other capital letters – an untranslatable particle

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