

# **Dialogic syntax and the emergence of topics in interaction – an initial exploration<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how speakers use and reuse linguistic constructions in the maintenance and development of topics in conversation. Although much study of topicality in linguistics has focused on particular constructions used at points of topical transition, it has also been shown that in ordinary conversations, there actually appears to be a preference for topical continuity, so that even new topics are preferably developed through ‘stepwise movement’ (Sacks, 1992; II: 300) or through ‘topic shading’ (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), and just seem to come up in the course of the conversation rather than being specifically introduced (for a particularly cogent discussion of the literature on the manifestation of topicality in interactive talk, see Mondada (1995: 2004). In this paper, I will show how speakers use the recycling of linguistic elements as a resource in maintaining topical continuity in conversational interaction.

The paper is organized as follows. After a brief discussion of the data the paper is based on, in section 3 I discuss the theoretical framework used in this study, the theory of Dialogic Syntax (Du Bois, 2001, 2003a, 2003b). The fourth section of the paper presents a sample analysis of an excerpt from a telephone conversation, using Dialogic Syntax, and section 5 explores the ways in which syntactic resonance is used as a resource by speakers in a multi-party conversation in introduction and maintenance of topics.

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Jack Du Bois and Elise Kärkkäinen, as well as the two anonymous Tranel reviewers, for their many valuable comments and observations regarding this article. I have not been able to incorporate all their suggestions, and the responsibility for the use I have made of their input, as well as the responsibility for all remaining mistakes and inaccuracies remains, of course, with me.

## 2. Data

The data discussed in this paper come from two different conversations. Example (1) comes from the collection of audio recordings and transcripts of the Department of Finnish at the University of Helsinki; it is a telephone call between a pastor and a member of his congregation. I have slightly modified this transcript to conform to the conventions of the system described in Du Bois et al. (1992; see Appendix 2)<sup>2</sup>. Examples (2-4) are all taken from a conversation among several women friends, audiotaped and transcribed by myself, using the conventions of Du Bois et al. (1992).

## 3. Theoretical background

In spite of claims about the essential novelty of each utterance produced by a speaker made by adherents to autonomous approaches to syntax (for a representative claim, see Pinker 1995: 22), it is well substantiated in both experimental and discourse-based research that speakers are actually strongly disposed to repeating and reproducing structural aspects of preceding utterances by themselves and other speakers (e.g. Bock, 1986; papers in Kelly & Travis, 2005). One emerging theory designed to address this characteristic of spoken discourse is Du Bois' (2001, 2003, 2005) Dialogic Syntax. In this theory, language is seen as 'a confrontation of particulars' or 'relational affinities', which arise when a speaker constructs an utterance based on the immediately copresent (previous or simultaneous) utterance of another (or the same) speaker. In such utterances, morphemes, words, syntactic structures and other linguistic resources are recycled; in other words, linguistic elements used or invoked by the first speaker are reused by the second, or the speaker recycles aspects of her previous utterance herself<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> There are some minor notational details distinguishing the Du Bois et al. (1992) transcription system and the one used in the original transcript from the University of Helsinki Finnish department collection (based on the system commonly used in conversation analytic work; for details, see Hakulinen 1989: 29-40), but the main difference lies in the greater emphasis on prosodic detail in the system used here. In this system, each transcribed line constitutes an intonation unit, a stretch of speech with a coherent prosodic gestalt, ending in a terminal pitch contour of some kind (see also Chafe 1994: 57-60, and the symbols in Appendix 2).

<sup>3</sup> In principle, resonance, defined by Du Bois (p.c.) as «activation of affinities across utterances», can be created on any level of linguistic structure from individual sounds and prosodic patterns to patterns of gesture or action. It remains to be shown which of the levels of turn out to be most fruitful for this type of analysis and most relevant for speakers.

In this approach, the selection and production processes on various levels in discourse are thus viewed simultaneously on both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axis (cf. Blanche-Benveniste, 1990), and across speakers' utterances, not just within utterances. This way of viewing discourse allows one to focus attention on the way in which multiple realizations of the same structures are built one upon the other to negotiate and express stance and to build meanings through repetition and reformulation (cf. Apothéloz & Reichler-Béguelin, 1995; Mondada & Dubois, 1995; Duvallon, 2003, to appear, Kärkkäinen, 2003). While not denying, and in fact requiring substantial existing structural representations in the mind of the speaker, which make it possible for speakers to selectively and meaningfully modify their reproductions of preceding linguistic elements, such an approach is also extremely compatible with a view of grammar as emergent from discourse (Hopper, 1987), and suggests that utterances in discourse are being built, structures emerge from, and eventually automatize as a result of, reflexive of, and resonating with structures built in prior utterances. Thus structure is seen as inherently dialogic, related to prior text, which could be just prior or even not copresent<sup>4</sup>. This is a dynamic model, in which meanings and actions are seen as emergent from juxtaposition of utterances, and it is in this sense quite compatible with an interactive view of language.

The following section presents an example analysis for the benefit of readers previously unfamiliar with the theory of Dialogic Syntax. After that, I will discuss the ways in which resonance is put to use by speakers for the maintenance and development of topics in interactive talk.

#### **4. An example analysis**

To illustrate some of the ways in which recycling of structures emerges from interaction, consider Example (1) below. It is excerpted from the beginning of a phone call placed by the pastor of a rural congregation, identified in the

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<sup>4</sup> Du Bois (2003a) presents an interesting example of an informal conversation among a group of American women from the time of president Clinton's impeachment trial containing several repetitions of the phrase 'high crimes and misdemeanours' from the U.S. Constitution; even at the first use of the phrase in the conversation, it was without a doubt highly resonant with other uses of this phrase in the media and everyday conversations at the time, as well as its original use in the Constitution; one of the speakers eventually reads the section aloud at one point in the conversation. Thus an utterance or a segment of prior text does not have to be copresent in the sense of having been uttered in the same conversation where the resonating utterance is made, in order for a speaker to resonate with it.

transcript as Jussi, to one of its members, Salme, regarding the upcoming birthday of Salme's sister<sup>5</sup>. In Finland, celebrations of one's major birthdays are normally important life events, with elaborate receptions often lasting an entire day, and it is customary for the pastor of a congregation to visit the celebrant, especially in rural communities. Therefore, Jussi is calling Salme to ask whether her sister, Irma, is planning to celebrate her upcoming birthday, in order to determine whether he needs to call on her on that day. The phone call is a delicate matter, first, because Jussi is essentially inviting himself to a party (even though it is appropriate for his institutional role), but also since Irma is apparently planning on celebrating quietly, with just her immediate family present, and thus Jussi's presence is not required. The excerpt starts right after the exchange of self-identifications and greetings, as Jussi, the caller, begins identifying the reason for the call (on the structure of Finnish landline telephone call openings, see Hakulinen, 1993). In this example, and in the ones which follow, resonating sequences are bolded.

Example 1.

- 5 Jussi: .. *rupesin soittelemaan* --  
 start-1SG call-FREQ-3INF-ILL  
 I'm calling (about) --
- 6 *semmosta* --  
 such-PRT  
 this --
- 7 *#e#nff*
- 8 *juttua kun m- (H) huamasin että,*  
 thing-PRT when notice COMP  
 thing because I noticed that,
- 9 *Ir=ma= .. täyttelish= .. vuasiah=.*  
 I. fill-FREQ-COND year-PL-PRT  
 Irma should be having a birthday.
- 10 *Ma- Mahdellin Ir=mah=.*  
 M-GEN I.  
 Irma Mahdell<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Etelämäki (to appear) provides an analysis of the same conversation, focusing on the use of demonstrative pronouns.

<sup>6</sup> There are two ways of expressing a first and last name in Finnish; simply FN LN as in English, or by reversing the order, with the last name in genitive, LN-GEN FN, as is done in line 10. The latter way implies greater familiarity with the person being named than the former (on names as recognitional forms, see Downing, 1996). Given that Irma is Salme's sister, this is the most likely way for the pastor to disambiguate between different Irmas the speaker and addressee might both know. The repeat of the fuller form of Irma's name in line 10 is probably still related to the fact that Salme does not immediately take a turn at the Transition Relevance Point at the end of line 9. This move on the part of Jussi is the first indication of some trouble in the conversation.

- 11 ..
- 12 Jussi: .hh
- 13 Salme: Joo.  
PTC  
Yeah.
- 14 Jussi: *Niin tota 'tiiäksä yhtään että 'onks hän 'paikan päällä ja,*  
PTC PTC know-2SG-Q at.all COMP be-Q 3SG place-GEN on and  
So do you know at all if she is around and,
- 15 .. **vietteleeköh.**  
celebrate-FREQ-Q  
is she celebrating (it).
- 16 ..
- 17 Jussi: hX
- 18 Salme: *No=[h hän ] on niinku,*  
PTC 3SG be PTC  
Well she has like,
- 19 Jussi: [(Vieläh.)]  
still  
Still.
- 20 Salme: **kutsunut 'siskot ja 'veljet on 'käskeny=,**  
invite-P.PPLE sister-PL and brother-PL be ask-P.PPLE  
(She) has invited (her) sisters and brothers has asked,
- 21 **mut ei [se sellast,**  
but NEG 3SG such-PL  
but she's not like,
- 22 Jussi: **[mut ei,**  
but NEG  
But not,
- 23 ..
- 24 Salme: 'Ni[i=.  
PTC  
Yeah.
- 25 Jussi: *[se nii että hän niinku viettää 'vähä sillai*  
3SG PTC COMP 3SG PTC celebrate little such-ADV  
So she is kind of celebrating it a little bit sort of
- 26 **'hiljasuu[dessa sitä. [(H)**  
silence-INE 3SGPRT  
quietly.
- 27 Salme: *[Nii. [mm=.*  
PTC  
That's right.
- 28 Jussi: Joo.  
PTC  
Yeah.
- 29 *Sitä mäki aattelin että tuota,*  
3SG-PRT 1SG-also think-PST-1SG COMP PTC  
That's what I was thinking too that um,
-

- 30 Salme: *[Joo.*  
PTC  
Yeah.
- 31 Jussi: *[(H) täytyy vähän ny (H) .. täytyy ny vähä niinku,*  
must a.little PTC must PTC a.little PTC  
(One) should a bit, should a little like,
- 32 *siskolta kysellä että tuota=,*  
sister-ABL ask-FREQ-1INF COMP PTC  
inquire from (her) sister that um,
- 33 Salme: *'Joo.*  
PTC  
Yeah.
- 34 Jussi: *(H) että= .. minkälainen= suunnitelma hänellä on että=,*  
COMP what.kind plan 3SG-ADE be COMP  
What kind of a plan she has so that,
- 35 *.. että tietää sitte.*  
COMP know-3SG then  
That (one) would know.
- 36 *Ju=st joo.*  
PTC PTC  
OK, yeah.
- 37 Salme: *Joo.*  
PTC  
Yeah.
- 38 Jussi: *No j-*  
PTC  
Well --
- 39 *.. (H) 'joo ni hän viettää sitte.*  
PTC PTC 3SG celebrate-3SG then  
I see, so she is celebrating then.
- 40 ..
- 41 Salme: *'Joo.*  
PTC  
Yes.
- 42 Jussi: *Mnt ihan [siinäh,*  
quite there  
Just there,
- 43 Salme: *[(--)*
- 44 *(0.8)*
- 45 Salme: *Juu eih se on tonne=,*  
PTC NEG 3SG be DEM.ADV  
Yeah no she has,
- 46 *(.) vaan kutsunuh (0.5) 'An-*  
only invite.P.PPLE  
just invited An--
- 47 *tonne mikä= se on nyt.*  
DEM.ADV what 3SG be now  
To that what is it now.
- 48 *(0.8) <A 'Anttilan Kestituvalle meitin A> siskot ja veljet*  
A-GEN K-ALL 1PL-GEN sister-PL and brother-PL
- 49 *käskeny sinne vaan.*  
ask-P.PPLE there only

- To Anttila's Kestitupa just asked our sisters and brothers.
- 50 Jussi: *No= nii.*  
PTC PTC  
Well.
- 51 *Se[hän on ijha=,*  
3SG be quite  
That's quite a,
- 52 Salme: *[(M=m)]*
- 53 Jussi: *ihan hy[vä tapa] viettää,*  
quite good way celebrate-1INF  
quite a good way to celebrate,
- 54 Salme: *[Mm.]*
- 55 Jussi: *viettää päiväih.=*  
celebrate.1INF day-PL-PRT  
celebrate a birthday.

The pastor indexes the delicate nature of his call by several repetitions of verbal forms which contain the frequentative affix *-e/E-*; he uses it in lines 5, 9, 15 and again in line 32. The figure below shows the morphological alternations in the verbs used; in the first column, we see the infinitive forms of the verbs in question with glosses, in the second column, the verb forms used by Jussi as they would appear without the affix, and in the third column, the forms actually used by Jussi with the frequentative affix and glosses.

<i>Infinitive form</i>	<i>Form used without affix</i>	<i>Form used with affix</i>
<i>soittaa</i> 'call, ring'	<i>soittamaan</i> 3INF-ILL	<i>soittelemaan</i> 'to call'
<i>täyttää</i> 'fill'	<i>täyttäis</i> COND-3SG	<i>täyttelis</i> 'might have (a birthday)'
<i>viettää</i> 'spend; celebrate'	<i>viettäkö</i> 3SG-Q	<i>vietteleekö</i> 'celebrates-Q'
<i>kysyä</i> 'ask'	<i>kysyä</i> 1INF	<i>kysellä</i> 'to ask'

The repetitions are shown in Diagraph 1 below. In the diagraph, some of the prosodic detail shown in the original transcript has been removed, and the resonance is shown by having the resonating morphemes aligned vertically. The English diagraph below the Finnish one mirrors the order of the words and morphemes in the original Finnish and is not in all cases identical to either the morphological class or the free translation in the transcript above. The numbers on the left identify the line numbers from the example the diagraph is based on. Each line has a speaker label; the punctuation at the end of the line shows the final contour of the intonation unit on that line.

5 Jussi:	<i>rupesin</i>	<i>soittelemaan</i>	--
9 Jussi:	<i>Irma</i>	<i>täyttelish vuasiah</i>	.
15 Jussi:		<i>vietteleekö</i>	.
32 Jussi:	<i>siskolta</i>	<i>kysellä</i>	<i>että tuota</i> ,
5 Jussi:	I started	calling	--
9 Jussi:	Irma	might be having a birthday	.
15 Jussi:		is celebrating-Q	.
32 Jussi:	sister-from	inquire	that um ,

Diagraph 1. - *Jussi inquires*

The meaning of the frequentative affix might be compared to the present tense *be -ing* in English or the French imparfait in that it profiles an action as one that is extended or imperfective rather than punctual or perfective, but it also expresses aimlessness, tentativeness and uncertainty (Hakulinen, 1979: 261) or perhaps offhandedness or casualness (Elise Kärkkäinen p.c.). For that reason, it is appropriate for the delicate nature of the pastor's errand, and he repeats the affix four times on verbs having to do with his actions of calling (*soittelemaan* 'to call' in line 5) and asking (*kysellä* 'to ask' in line 32) and also his guesses and questions about Irma's activities (*täyttelis* 'might have a (birthday)', *vietteleekö* 'is (she) celebrating'<sup>7</sup>). However, when Jussi voices his interpretation of Salme's answers (25-26, 39) and takes a stance toward how he has interpreted Salme's description of the manner in which her sister plans to celebrate her birthday (53, 55), Jussi does not use the frequentative affix. Thus the resonating affix in Jussi's turns appears to serve interactional ends; he uses it for purposes of explaining the reason for his call and in wording his inquiry.

Salme, on the other hand, is also faced with a delicate task, as noted above. She needs to convey to Jussi, without saying it in so many words, that his presence at her sister's birthday celebration is not required, since Irma is having only a small party just for her siblings. Salme says this twice, first in lines 18 and 20 and again in lines 45-49. Her clause in lines 18 and 19 *hän on niinku kutsunut siskot ja veljet on käskeny* 'she has like invited (her) sisters and brothers has asked' is a syntactic blend, where the NP *siskot and veljet* 'sisters and brothers' is simultaneously functioning as a direct object of two different verbs, *kutsunut* 'invited' and *käskeny* 'asked, ordered'<sup>8</sup>. In lines 45-49, Salme repeats the exact same construction: *se on tonne=,(.) vaan kutsunuh (0.5) An- tonne mikä= se on nyt. (0.8) >Anttilan Kestituvalle meitin< siskot ja veljet käskeny sinne vaan* 'she has just invited to An- what is it now. To Anttilan Kestitupa just our sisters and brothers asked there.' In this construction as well, *(meitin) siskot ja veljet* '(our) sisters and brothers' has a double syntactic role as the object of the same two verbs as in lines 18 and

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<sup>7</sup> The addition of the frequentative affix to the verb *viettää* 'to celebrate' makes it identical to another verb; *vietellä* means 'to seduce'. It is possible the pastor intends this as a joke, perhaps a standard one with him. Note also that the frequentative affix is lexicalized in the verb *a(j)atella* 'to think', historically derived from the verb *ajaa* 'to chase, to drive', which Jussi also uses in line 29.

<sup>8</sup> In Finnish, direct objects can either precede or follow their verb; thus either one of the resulting constructions, *on kutsunut siskot ja veljet* and '(on) siskot ja veljet käskeny' would be well-formed. *Käskeä* has the literal meaning 'to order', but it is used in the meaning 'to invite' in many spoken varieties of Finnish in addition to the verb *kutsua* which means 'to call (toward oneself), to beckon, to invite'.

20, *kutsunuh* 'invited' and *käskeny* 'asked, ordered', coming in the same order, with the verb *kutsunuh* produced prenominally and *käskeny* postnominally. Without the earlier syntactic blend construction in lines 18-19, one might be tempted to attribute the blend to the dysfluency in lines 46-47, having to do with the word search. But as a redo of the earlier construction, and with the added two uses of the adverb *vaan* 'just, only' and the two locative adverbs *tonne* and *sinne* 'thereto', which flank the construction, and the addition of the possessive pronoun *meitin* 'our' as a determiner on the NP *siskot ja veljet* 'sisters and brothers', as well as the specification of the venue of the party, the repeat serves here to redo and therefore reinforce Salme's message that her sister's celebration is only a small affair, limited to the immediate family.

Diagraph (2) below, with the dysfluency and prosodic detail removed, shows how Salme's utterance in 45-49 resonates with her earlier utterance in lines 18-19, and in fact is a reinforced and more specific version of it<sup>9</sup>. On the level of action, her utterance functions to correct Jussi's interpretation of her earlier description of the party.

18-19 S: <i>hän on niinku</i>	<i>kutsunut</i>	<i>siskot ja veljet on</i>	<i>käskeny</i>
45-49 S: <i>se on</i>	<i>tonne vaan kutsunuh [A.K:lle] meitin</i>	<i>siskot ja veljet</i>	<i>käskeny sinne vaan</i>
18-19 S: she has like	invited	sisters and brothers has	asked
45-49 S: she has	there just invited [to A.K.] our	sisters and brothers	asked there only

Diagraph 2. - **Invited sisters and brothers**

The repeat is produced after Jussi's turns in lines 22-36, a sequence during which Jussi accounts for and expands on his understanding of Salme's response to his inquiry of her sister's plans, and Salme produces response particles only. This sequence begins with closely resonating utterances produced by Salme and Jussi, where in line 21 Salme, immediately after the syntactic blend construction, produces a negative construction *mut ei se*

<sup>9</sup> Salme also makes what can be interpreted as a slight footing change in the second utterance: she has used the pronoun *hän* to refer to Irma in line 18, while she uses *se* in line 46. *Hän* is a logophoric pronoun in many varieties of spoken Finnish; it refers to the original speaker of a quoted utterance (Laitinen 2002; to appear), although in written standard Finnish, the pronoun is used for human referents. *Se* is the all-purpose third person singular pronoun for both human and non-human referents in spoken colloquial varieties of Finnish, while it is used for non-human referents in written standard Finnish. Thus Salme's original construction in lines 18-19 could be viewed as a quote of what she has heard from her sister, while the second version of the same construction is presented more as a report of what Salme knows about Irma's plans. On the other hand, Salme's *hän* in line 18 could also just be influenced by Jussi's pronoun choice, since he uses *hän* consistently to refer to Irma. This still doesn't explain why Salme switches to *se* in line 46.

*sellast* ‘but it/she’s not like’ followed immediately by a parallel negative construction *mut ei* ‘but not’ produced by Jussi in line 22, followed in line 24 by Salme’s use of *nii*, a particle which expresses agreement and affiliation and receives information that the speaker of the particle already has access to (Sorjonen 2001:58-72; 247). The exact interpretation of the utterances in lines 21-22 is not entirely unambiguous due both to the pronoun *se*, which could refer either to Irma or the planned celebration, and the lack of a lexical verb – the negation verb *ei* leaves it open what exactly is being negated. In any case, at this point, it appears that Salme and Jussi have reached an understanding of the nature of Irma’s party. The negations produced by both of the participants can be viewed as negations of the unexpressed but presumably well understood prospect of Irma’s having a big celebration, and thus ultimately Jussi’s duty of visiting Irma on her birthday, the main reason for the call. Irma’s *nii* in line 24 confirms the convergence of stance at this point.

21 Salme:	<i>mut</i>	<i>ei</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>sellast</i>	,
22 Jussi:	<i>mut</i>	<i>ei</i>			,
21 Salme:	but	not	it/she	like	,
22 Jussi:	but	not			,

Diagraph 3. - **But she / it’s not (like)**

The nascent agreement and coordination of stance expressed through the resonance of these utterances is followed by two explicit statements by Jussi regarding the nature of Irma’s party. The first statement, in line 25-26, *hän niinku viettää vähä sillai hiljasuudessa sitä* ‘she is kind of celebrating it a little bit sort of quietly’ displays Jussi’s understanding of the upshot of the information supplied by Salme in lines 18-19, suggesting that Irma is celebrating with her immediate family only. It is produced immediately after the *mut ei se* construction shown above in Diagraph 3, and is received with the particle *nii* by Salme in line 27, through which she confirms and affiliates with Jussi’s expressed understanding of the nature of the party, as well as indexing the information is already shared, in the sense that she already knows this (Sorjonen 2001). This is followed by further talk by Jussi, explaining why he called Salme. This talk is received by Salme with three repeats of the particle *joo* (lines 30, 33, and 37), which, in contrast with *nii*, claims understanding of the previous utterance without affiliating with it, and also marks the information expressed by the other participant as new, previously unshared (Sorjonen 2001). In line 39, Jussi produces another characterization of the nature of Irma’s party *joo ni hän viettää sitte* ‘I see, so she is celebrating then’. This is a more nonspecific one than the one produced in lines 25-26; here, Jussi only notes that Irma is in fact celebrating her birthday. Unlike the earlier characterization, this one is received by Salme with the non-affiliating particle *joo*, acknowledging understanding of Jussi’s utterance but also marking it as new information. This is followed by a short utterance by Jussi, which is met by a 0.8 second silence, which may indicate some trouble in the conversation.

This is followed by Irma's more specific statement of the nature of the party, shown in the second line of Diagraph 2, preceded by the affirmative particle *juu* and the negative *ei*.

25-26 J:	<i>nii että</i>	<i>hän niinku</i>	<i>viettää</i>	<i>vähä sillai</i>	<i>hiljasuudessa sitä.</i>
39 J:joo	<i>ni</i>	<i>hän</i>	<i>viettää sitte</i>	.	.
25-26 J:	so that	she like	celebrates	a bit sort of	quietly it .
39 J:yeah	so	she	celebrates then	.	.

Diagraph 4. - ***She's celebrating***

In summary, what we see in this excerpt is a tentatively worded request for information by Jussi (Diagraph 1), a response by Salme (the first line of Diagraph 2), followed by a resonating exchange, where the syntactic match iconically indexes that the participants have arrived at common understanding (Diagraph 3). Jussi then accounts for his interpretation of Salme's response to his question, followed with an expansion which again displays his understanding, which resonates with the previous one both lexically and syntactically, but omits the crucial element of the quiet nature of the celebration, as well as some of the hedges present in the earlier description (Diagraph 4). This is followed by another description by Salme, resonating with her own earlier description, but making it more emphatic and specific (Diagraph 2).

Thus, through sequences syntactically matched with earlier sequences by the same speaker and the other speaker, the participants display their developing, partly convergent and partly divergent understanding of the topic under discussion, the nature of Irma's birthday party. In this conversation, at least some of the sequences which accomplish self-repeats express stances which increasingly diverge from the stances taken by the other participant (Salme's turns in lines 18-19 and 46-47, Diagraph 2, and Jussi's turns in lines 25-26 and 39, Diagraph 4), while the sequences which accomplish other-repetition express convergent stances (Salme's and Jussi's turns in lines 21-22, Diagraph 3). At the same time, the resonating sequences can be seen as accomplishing the same task, in the sense that the later sequence does the same action accomplished by the the earlier sequence with which it resonates. In this way, the similarity in syntactic structure can be seen as iconically reflecting similarity in action accomplished, but at the same time, indexing either convergence or divergence with stances expressed by the other participant. In this example, syntactic resonance with the other participant's utterance (shown in Diagraph 3) indexes and thus accomplishes convergence ('agreement'), while resonance with one's own utterance (shown in Diagraphs 2 and 4) indexes and thus accomplishes divergence from the other speaker's

stance, or simply builds on and develops one's own previous stance (Diagraph 1)<sup>10</sup>.

In this section of the paper, I have shown how syntactic resonance can be used as a resource in interaction. The next section will illustrate this further, specifically focusing on the development of topics in interactive conversation.

## 5. Dialogic syntax and topic development through negotiation

In this section, I will focus on the development and maintenance of topics in interactive conversation. I hope to show that resonance is a significant resource to participants for topic management in interactive talk. In my data, resonance is a characteristic of sequences of talk on a particular topic in which participants negotiate a point or express their respective stance toward some referent, event or situation. However, resonance can also be put to use by speakers at points of topic shift, as they fit their contributions thematically to what has gone on just prior, in order to manage a stepwise transition of topics instead of an abrupt change.

The data discussed in this section of the paper come from a multi-party conversation among several women friends, who have gathered at the home of one of the participants for a monthly meeting of their 'sewing society'<sup>11</sup>. At the point in the conversation which interests us, the participants are eating mushroom pizza prepared by the hostess, M. The first excerpt begins at the point where one of the participants, speaker K, asks M where she picked the mushrooms she is serving, guessing that they come from the forests near M's childhood home on the nearby island of Hirvensalo. Consider Example (2) below; in this example, and the ones which follow, resonating sequences are again bolded.

### Example 2.

1K: ...**(2.5) Nää on varmaa Hirvensalon,**  
       these be certainly H-GEN  
       These must be Hirvensalo,

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that resonance with another speaker's turn does not always index agreement or convergence, however. It is perfectly possible to provide a resonant sequence which negates an earlier positive; see Du Bois (2001) for an example.

<sup>11</sup> A sewing society (F. *ompeluseura*) is a group of usually female friends who gather together on regular intervals to dine and chat, usually rotating hostess duties among the participants. Originally, these societies may have been centered around sewing projects; however, the modern sewing societies I am familiar with are centered around cultivating of friendships and eating.

- 2     ... **sieniä**.  
       mushroom-PL-PRT  
       mushrooms (These mushrooms must come from H.)
- 3M:   .. *M=m*.
- 4L:   ... (2.2) **Vai onks**,  
       PTC be-Q-CLT  
       Or are
- 5     .. **Astan mökiltä osa**.  
       A-GEN cottage-ABL part  
       some of them from Asta's cottage.
- 6M:   .. *No=*,  
       PTC  
       Well,
- 7     .. *mm=*,
- 8     .. *ehkä*,  
       PTC  
       maybe
- 9     ... *en minä muista nyt*,  
       NEG-1SG 1SG remember now  
       I can't remember now,
- 10    .. **mut enimmäkseen Hirvensalon**.  
       but mostly H.-GEN  
       But mostly from Hirvensalo.
- 11    .. *Ei oo paljon muissa X*.  
       NEG be much other.PL-INE  
       (!?) haven't (picked?) at that many other (places?).
- 12    ... (3.9) **Ellei sitte tuolta Velkuan**,  
       If-NEG then there-ABL V-GEN  
       Unless maybe from Velkua,
- 13X:  *Mm*.
- 14M:  **Velkuan maalta kun**,  
       V-GEN land-ABL because  
       From around Velkua because,

In this brief negotiation sequence regarding the provenance of the mushrooms, the locally relevant and salient, though highly topical mushrooms go largely unexpressed. What is expressed and under negotiation is the location where they might have been picked. The topic is interactionally sensitive, since the knowledge of places where mushrooms grow is valuable; although it is legal for any Finn to pick mushrooms in the forest regardless of ownership of the land, people guard their knowledge of spots rather carefully, especially close to towns. The guest, K, politely supposes that the mushrooms came from a location where M has 'ownership' rights, since she has picked them there since she was a young child. M gives a vaguely affirmative response, using the particle *mm* (Kangasharju, 1998). However, after a pause slightly longer than 2 seconds, speaker L, M's sister, takes a turn which is explicitly interrogative, asking whether the mushrooms might have come from the area around the summer cottage owned by M's and L's cousin, Asta. Together, K's turn in lines 1-2 and L's turn in lines 4-5 constitute a co-constructed questioning move coinciding with the co-construction of a

conversational theme, presenting a pair of alternatives from which the addressed recipient, M, can choose<sup>12</sup>. That is, while K's turn is not in interrogative form, it is clear that it is addressed to M, who acknowledges this by giving a minimal response. L's turn maintains the theme, and it is in interrogative form. It resonates with K's earlier turn, and it also essentially ignores M's answer and continues the questioning move started by K (cf. Mondada, 2003, who identifies questions as typical first speaker techniques for topic introduction). M responds to the question by equivocating, claiming forgetfulness, perhaps for interactional reasons (Goodwin 1987). M first guesses that most of the mushrooms might come from Hirvensalo, but then suggests that they might come from the area around Velkua, where one of the participants, A, has a home. This is significant because M has recently visited A's home and picked some mushrooms there, and thus owes a debt of gratitude to her, especially if she is now serving the mushrooms to her guests, including A. Claiming forgetfulness and leaving the provenance of the mushrooms open gives A an opening to tell a story about M's visit to her home, which she does right after this exchange. The negotiation of the place where the mushrooms come from contains quite a bit of repetition of syntactic structures, as shown in Diagraph 5 below.

1 K:	<i>Nää on varmaa Hirvensalo -n</i>							
2 K:								<i>sieniä</i>
4 L:	<i>vai onks</i>							
5 L:		<i>Asta -n möki -ltä osa</i>						
10 M:	<i>mut</i>	<i>Hirvensalo -n</i>						<i>{enimmäkseen}</i>
14 M:		<i>Velkua -n maa -lta</i>						
1K:	These are probably	Hirvensalo	's					
2								mushrooms
4L	or	be-Q						
5L		Asta	's	cottage	-from	part		
10M	but	Hirvensalo	's			{mostly}		
14M:		Velkua	's	land	-from			

Diagraph 5. - *Hirvensalon sieninä*

In this sequence, the resonating structures relate to the issue under negotiation; namely, the oblique noun phrases expressing locations from where the mushrooms might have been picked (*mökiltä, maalta*), and the identifying genitive proper names (*Hirvensalon, Astan, Velkuan*), where the case marking (both the ablative *-lta* 'from' and the genitive *-n*) index the mapping of M's answer to K's and L's questions even in the absence of any

<sup>12</sup> I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for extremely useful comments on this exchange, which greatly improved my analysis of the interactional nature of the sequence.

verbal element in M's turn. Thus the resonance created serves to index L's question as a collaborative continuation or completion of K's questioning move, and M's turn as an answer to the co-constructed question, as well as serving to maintain the topic, while it also highlights the shifting stances of the participants toward the matter under negotiation.

In addition to the locally prominent mushrooms, what goes unexpressed is the relevant action of picking mushrooms, which is nevertheless implied in the ablative (-*ltA* 'from') cases in the oblique NPs. The implication is made overt by two short narratives having to do with mushroom picking, which immediately follow. The first of these is A's narrative about M's mushroom picking visit to A's home. The second of these concerns a co-worker of speaker L who is reported to have recently gathered a large crop of mushrooms, which her husband had remained at home to clean when she went to work.

Example 3.

49 L: ... <Q **Eikka jäi niit nys sitte perkaa** Q>.  
E. stay-PST they-PRT now then clean.3INF.ILL  
Eikka stayed at home to clean them now.

50 .. **Ku hän lähti** <X töihi X>.  
when 3SG.LG leave-PST work-PL-ILL  
when she left to come to work.

51 M: **Se on hyvä ku on semmone Eikka,**  
3SG be good when be such E.  
It's good to have such an Eikka,

52 **sielä perkaamassa.**  
there clean-3INF-INE  
there cleaning (them).

53 **Se on aika,**  
3SG be fairly  
It's pretty,

54 ... (1.2) **tylsää työtä se,**  
dull-PRT work-PRT 3SG  
boring work that/the,

55 K: ... *Mm.*

L frames line 49 as a direct quote from her coworker by changing her voice quality and also by using a nickname for the husband<sup>13</sup>, whom (at least all of) her listeners presumably do not personally know. The quote functions as a coda to L's narrative, and it is followed by an evaluative turn by M in lines 51-54; M's turn, unlike L's description of an actual event, is a generic statement of the desirability of such husbands, followed by a characterization of the boring

<sup>13</sup> *Eikka* is a familiar nickname version of the Finnish male name *Eino*.

nature of such work<sup>14</sup>. In that sense, it could be viewed as a typical recasting of the point of a narrative by a recipient (Polanyi 1985). At the same time, M's turn resonates lexically and grammatically with L's utterance in line 49, as shown in Diagraph 6 below; both *perkaa* and *perkaamassa* are case forms of the third infinitive, and the husband's proper name is repeated. M's turn is syntactically highly complex and has elements of both a right dislocation and a cleft. In some sense, the pronoun *se* 'it' in first position in line 51 is coreferential with the adverbial *kun*-clause which follows. The sequence *ku on semmone Eikka siellä perkaamassa on hyvä* 'when you have such an Eikka there cleaning mushrooms (it) is good' seems intuitively highly unlikely to occur, although it is not completely ungrammatical. However, it is not semantically or pragmatically entirely equivalent to 51-52, in that 51-52 expresses the desirability of a state of affairs while the rewrite above might mean something like 'having an Eikka cleaning mushrooms makes one feel good'. At the same time, 51-52 has characteristics of a cleft or a presentative in that *siellä perkaamassa* 'there cleaning' functions almost like a relative clause, for which *Eikka*, the complement of the existential *on* '(there) is', functions as a head. However, *perkaamassa*, of course, is not finite. The ambiguous syntactic nature of M's utterance may explain why it appears to thematize both Eikka and the cleaning<sup>15</sup>.

49 L:		<i>Eikka jäi niit nys sitte perkaa</i>	.
51 M:	<i>Se on hyvä</i>		&
M:ku	<i>on</i>	<i>semmone Eikka</i>	,
52 M:		<i>siellä</i>	<i>perkaa-ma-ssa</i> .
53 M:	<i>Se on aika</i>		,
54 M:	<i>tylsää työtä se</i>		<b>[perkaa-minen]</b> ,
49 L:		Eikka stayed	them now then clean-3INF.ILL
51 M:	it is good		
	When is	such an	Eikka
52 M:			there clean-3INF-INE
53 M:	it is pretty		
54 M:	boring work that		[clean-NOM]

Diagraph 6. - ***Eikka jäi perkaa***

<sup>14</sup> L shifts footing immediately in line 50, by changing her voice quality and by choosing a third person pronoun to refer to her co-worker. However, her choice of pronoun to refer to her co-worker, *hän*, indexes the speech act role of the coworker in the reported utterance; *hän* is logophoric in most varieties of spoken Finnish (see Laitinen, 2002, to appear).

<sup>15</sup> I thank the TRANEL anonymous referee for highly inspiring comments on the syntactic and thematic nature of M's turn. Thanks are also due to Marja-Liisa Helasvuo for discussing this example with me.

On the one hand, M's utterance, which resonates lexically and grammatically as well as topically with L's, brings the topic of cleaning to the generic level by adding the determiner *semme* 'such' to *Eikka* and, in line 55, entirely nominalizing the action of cleaning by producing *se* 'it' which either refers to cleaning anaphorically, as an entity (rather than the activity which the infinitives still imply), or is planned as a determiner for the nominalized verbal form *perkaaminen* 'cleaning'. In any case, it further nominalizes the activity, moving even further away from actual eventhood into generic 'entity-hood'. Note also that *se* in line 55 is a right dislocated NP; typically for such constructions, the referent of this NP is at this point a highly accessible one (Lambrecht 1987). M's turn also functions as an evaluation, both of types of husbands and the task of cleaning mushrooms<sup>16</sup>. Thus she manages both to make her turn topically coherent with the preceding (which is desirable; speakers generally attempt to make their turns topically coherent with what precedes; Sacks 1992), while moving the conversation to the generic level, and thus shifting the topic. The other participants react to this shift in topic and level of specificity with a series of strongly resonating evaluative turns, expanding the topic, and at the same time coordinating their activity with that of M in lines 54-55, as shown below in Example (4).

Example 4.

56 M: ... **Must poimimine on pal haus Kempaa.**  
 1SG-ELA pick-NOM be much fun-CMP-PRT  
 I think picking is much more fun.

57 A: O%.  
 be  
 Yes it is.

58 X: *Niin [onki joo].*  
 so is PTC  
 Yeah, it is.

59 A: .. **[Huomattava]sti.**  
 noticeably  
 Definitely.

60 X: *Mm.*

61 T: .. *Nii.*

62 K: ... **Kaikkein s--**  
 all-PL-GEN  
 The most --

63 M: **Ja löytä[mine].**  
 and find-NOM  
 And finding (them).

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<sup>16</sup> Horlacher & Müller (2004) note that in their French conversational corpus, right dislocations often had an evaluative function, while Mondada (2003) notes that evaluations are typical second speaker strategies for topic maintenance.



- 82 A: ... (1.0) *Mut kyl se sienie,*  
but PTCL 3SG mushroom-PL  
But still the mushroom,
- 83 ***sienien keittämisen ja paistamisen tuoksu niinku,***  
mushroom-PL-GEN boil-NOM-GEN and fry-NOM-GEN scent PTC  
the scent of the cooking and frying of mushrooms like,
- 84 ... *kyl [must,*  
PTC 1SG-ELA  
I do think,
- 85 M: [*<X Ottaaks joku vielä -- X>*]  
take-Q-CLT someone still  
Would someone still like –
- 86 A: ... *jotain puuttuis elä]mästä,*  
something miss-COND life-ELA  
Something would be missing from life,
- 87 M: [*Nii=*],  
PTC  
Yeah,
- 88 A: [*jos sitä] ei [sais] kokee.*  
if 3SG-PRT NEG be.allowed-COND experience  
If you couldn't experience that.
- 89 M: [*Joo.*]  
PTC  
Yeah.

In this lengthy, highly resonant segment of conversation, the speakers collaborate both in displaying their expertise in the different phases of the mushroom picking tradition as well as evaluating their desirability. Here, too, as in Example (3), we can see evaluation and stance-taking as an activity in which resonance functions as a significant resource for and a morphosyntactic manifestation of topic continuity; the speakers can be seen as 'doing the same thing' both interactionally and syntactically, as they develop their mutual stance toward the topic under discussion, finding a considerable degree of agreement.

Consider Diagraph (7) below.

56 M:	<i>Must</i>	<b><i>poimi-mine</i></b>	<i>on</i>	<i>pal</i>	<i>hauske-mpa-a</i>	.
57 A:			<i>O%</i>			.
59 A:	<i>Niin</i>		<i>on</i>	<i>huomattavasti</i>		.
60 M:	<i>Niin</i>		<i>on</i>			.
63 M: <i>Ja</i>		<i>löytä-mine</i>				.
66 R:		<b><i>Perkaa-minen</i></b>				&
66 R: <i>ja</i>		<b><i>säilö-minen</i></b>	<i>on sitte ihan</i>		<i>tylsä-ä</i>	.
68 L:	<i>Nii</i>			<i>kaikkein</i>	<i>hausk-in-ta</i>	.
69 M: <i>Ja</i>		<b><i>syö-minen</i></b>	<i>on</i>			-
72 M:		<i>Syö-minen</i>				&
72 M: <i>ja</i>		<i>löytä-minen</i>				.
82 A: <i>mut kyl se sienie</i>						.
83 A:	<i>sienien</i>	<i>keittä-mise-n</i>				&
83 A: <i>ja</i>		<i>paista-mise-n tuoksu</i>				&



'recoverability' of the referent as well as topicalization or highlighting of a referent about to be promoted to the status of a topic (e.g. Gelyukens, 1992). In this context, the idea of the smell of the cooking and frying of mushrooms is indeed recoverable from the context, since it is closely related to and evoked by the idea of preparing and eating mushrooms just previously expressed. At the same time, the turn forms a contrast with what has gone before, both in the sense of expressing a stance different from the foregoing, and at the same time accomplishing a reorientation on the thematic level (see Pekarek Doehler 2001 for discussion of such uses of left dislocations). The topic of the smell of cooking mushrooms is taken up immediately after A's turn by speaker M, who launches into a narrative about an incident involving such a smell and its evocative power, which occurred in her childhood home on the island of Hirvensalo, discussed in Example (2) above. Thus the left dislocation, while resonating thematically and lexically with the preceding, also initiates a new episode in the conversation and in the turntaking pattern (cf. Pekarek Doehler, 2001).

Note also that the turn produced by A is entirely coherent topically in what has preceded it, and the contrast formed is on the level of stance and interaction, in that A takes a stance which is different from that expressed earlier by the other speakers, an interactionally dispreferred action, which is then followed by a monologic narrative, and thus a shift in the participation framework (Goffman, 1981). Pekarek Doehler (2001) argues that the use of left dislocations in conversation cannot be fully accounted for in terms of thematic organization of discourse, and that interactional factors, in particular preference organization in turn taking, need to be taken into account in order to understand how this construction functions in interactive talk. This example illustrates why this is the case.

## 6. Conclusion

What I hope to have shown above is that in multiparty conversation, recycling of preceding lexical, morphological and syntactic elements is a resource to the participants in negotiating points and in expressing stance, and in maintaining as well as shifting topics, and I hope thereby also to have demonstrated the applicability of the theory of Dialogic Syntax to the study of topics and topicality in everyday talk.

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points out, the terminology is questionable, since it is hard to see how something could have been dislocated from a clause that has not even been produced yet.

Highly resonant sequences in my data were found in the most interactive segments of conversation, in which the participants coordinated their activities; syntactically resonating segments occurred in segments of conversation in which participants were ‘doing the same thing’ as the other participants (such as evaluating something), or redoing an earlier action of their own (such as a statement about a sister’s plans). Such sequences were related to and occasioned by contextually relevant, concrete referents (such as the mushrooms being eaten) and culturally shared experiences (such as the stages in the process of using wild mushrooms for nutrition), and highly relevant for structuring the activities of the participants and their negotiations on a variety of topics (such as the plans for an upcoming birthday celebration). In the data from a multi-party conversation, the resonant, interactive segments were preceded and/or followed by monologic, often narrative segments by single speakers, whose topics were related to or inspired by, or themselves directly inspired, the topics which were negotiated and developed in the resonant segments.

### 6.1. *Morphological glosses*

The nominative case, present tense, and active voice have been treated as unmarked and have not been indicated in the morphological glosses. Person in pronominal and verbal morphemes has been marked with a numeral, for example, 1SG for first person singular, and so on. The different Finnish infinitive forms are marked in the same fashion, so that 1INF stands for first infinitive, and so on.

INF	infinitive
ABL	ablative
ADE	adessive
ALL	allative
ACC	accusative
CLTC	clitic
COND	conditional
COMP	complementizer
CMP	comparative
DET	determiner
ELA	elative
ESS	essive
FREQ	frequentative
GEN	genitive
ILL	illative
IMP	imperative
INE	inessive
LOC	locative
NEG	negation
NOM	nominalizer
PRT	partitive
PL	plural
PTC	particle
P.PPLE	past participle

PST	past
SUP	superlative
WH	question word or relativizer
Q	interrogative clitic

## 6.2. *Transcription symbols*

The transcriptions have been done using a somewhat simplified version of the system described in Du Bois et al. 1993.

{new line}	Intonation unit boundary
--	Truncated intonation unit
-	Truncated word
[word(s)]	Speech overlap
.	Final intonation contour
,	Continuing intonation contour
^	Primary accent
... (N)	Long pause (>0.7 seconds)
...	Medium pause (.3-.6 seconds)
..	Short pause (.2 seconds or less)
%	Glottalization
@	Laughter
((COMMENT))	Transcriber's comment

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