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Some Uses of Head Nods in "Third Position" in Talk-in-Interaction

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Abstract

Previous research on the use of head nods in talk-in-interaction has demonstrated that they can be used for various interactional purposes by speakers and recipients in different sequential positions. In this report, I examine speakers' uses of nods in "third position," in the course of "minimal post-expansions" (Schegloff, 2007). I identify three possible distinct types of nods. The first of these can be used to register a prior utterance as news; the second appears to be designed to register receipt of a prior utterance without treating it as news; and the third embodies features of the first two types, and may be designed to register receipt and acknowledgment of "dispreferred" news. These findings are suggestive of rich complexities in the use of head movements in the production of actions-in-interaction, and of the importance of a fine-grained analytic approach for understanding their situated uses.

Key words: Head nods, talk-in-interaction, conversation analysis

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Introduction

Conversation analytic research has demonstrated that actions produced in conversational interactions are, in large part, constructed out of and organized through sequences of pairs of actions, known as "adjacency pairs" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 13). In their minimal form, adjacency pairs consist of two actions, which are ordered relative to one another. The first of these actions (called a "first pair part," and thus produced at "first position" in a sequence) initiates a trajectory of action, and the second (called a "second pair part," and thus produced at "second position") is responsive to the first (Schegloff, 2007, p. 13). First pair parts implement actions such as questions, requests, offers, announcements, and so on, while second pair parts implement pair-type related responses, such as answers (to questions), acceptances or declinations (of offers), acknowledgments (of announcements), and so on.

While these minimal pairs of actions form the basis for trajectories of action, they can be expanded considerably as a result of actions occurring before the production of the first pair part, between the first and second pair parts, or following the second pair part (Schegloff, 2007). Expansions occurring before the first pair part, known as "pre-expansions," can consist of actions such as "pre-invitations" (e.g., "Are you doing anything?"), "pre-announcements" ("Did you hear who's coming?"), and the like, which serve to foreshadow the upcoming production of a particular first pair part (see Schegloff, 2007, pp. 28-57). Expansions between the first and second pair parts, known as "insert expansions" can occur, for example, as a result of the production of a second pair part being contingent on the outcome of some other piece of interactional business (such as an additional question-answer pair), which is then inserted between the first and second pair

parts (see Schegloff, 2007, pp. 97-114). Finally, expansions following the second pair part (i.e., at "third position"), known as "post-expansions," may consist either of further adjacency pairs that continue the trajectory of action constituted by the preceding pair, or of "minimal post-expansions" or "sequence-closing thirds," which are "designed to move, or to propose, sequence closing (a move which may be aligned to by the recipient, or not)" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 118) (also see Heritage, 1984a; Jefferson & Schenkein, 1977; Schegloff, 2007, pp. 115-167).

Third position represents an important place at which a co-participant (A) can display that a prior speaker (B) has – or has not – adequately produced a second pair part made relevant by A's prior production of a first pair part (cf. Schegloff, 1992). For example, A can display in third position that B has adequately produced an answer (second pair part) to a question (first pair part) posed by A. As such, third position represents an important site for displays of intersubjective understandings, correction of misunderstandings (or breakdowns in intersubjectivity), and thus for the possibility of the moment-by-moment coordinated achievement of action-in-interaction (Heritage, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992).

In this paper, I draw on video recorded interactional data to examine some uses of head nods produced in third position. Previous research on the use of head nods in talk-in-interaction has demonstrated that they can be used for various interactional purposes by speakers and recipients in different sequential positions. For example, Heath (1992) examined the use of nods by speakers at first position as a means of eliciting recipient action during the course of the speaker's utterance, demonstrating speakers' use of nods to encourage recipients to respond in preferred ways. In addition, Heath (1992) showed that

recipients' subsequent production or withholding of nods foreshadows their alignment or disalignment with the speaker's utterance. The use of nods in second position has been described as a means of producing an affirmative or agreeing response to an initiating action, or as "continuers" through which recipients can display continuing recipiency (see Heath, 1992; McClave, 2000; Schegloff, 1987; Stivers, 2008). Similarly, Goodwin (1986) has shown that recipients can use nods as a way of displaying their continued orientation to a current speaker's talk, even when they are concurrently engaged in other embodied conduct (such as passing food) that might otherwise be treated as demonstrating a lack of recipiency (also see Szatrowski, 2003). Head nods thus constitute an important and pervasive (cf. Kendon, 2002) resource for the accomplishment of a range of actions-in-interaction, and a significant site for the investigation of the coordinated use of talk and bodily resources in face-to-face interactional environments. However, no research of which I am aware has specifically examined uses of head nods in third position.

I begin my examination of the use of nods in third position by demonstrating the way in which a particular, expansive type of nod can be used to register a prior utterance as news. I then contrast this first type of third position nod with a second type, which appears to be designed to register receipt of a prior utterance without treating it as news. Finally, I examine the possibility of a third type of nod that embodies features of the first two types, and may be designed to register receipt and acknowledgment of "dispreferred" news. In addition to contributing to the abovementioned literature on head nods, this work contributes to investigations of the connections between different variations of body behaviors and specific types of action in talk (cf. Kendon, 2002).

Data

The data presented in the following sections are drawn from a corpus of video-recorded interactions collected under the auspices of the Language Use in Social Interaction (LUSI) project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. This corpus includes recordings of interactions in a range of settings, including institutional (e.g., workplace) and ordinary conversational (e.g., mealtime or other informal) interactions. The specific data included in the present paper are drawn from two recordings in particular. The first ("Game Night") is a recording of a social gathering convened for the purposes of playing board games, while the second ("SARI 3") is a recording of a mealtime conversation among students enrolled in a research capacity building program. Although the findings illustrated by these particular data sources appear to be quite robust across other recordings in the corpus, it should be noted that analytic claims made about visible actions (such as those I make in the following sections) will frequently necessarily be weaker or less definitive than claims made about talk, as a result of the less explicit forms of evidence available with respect to visible actions.

All data excerpts were transcribed using the conversation analytic conventions developed primarily by Gail Jefferson and shown in Jefferson (2004). Additional transcription symbols used to represent the head nods and other relevant body behaviors in the excerpts examined below are shown in the Appendix. However, note that (because the analytic focus of the present paper is on head nods in third position in particular, and the purpose of the transcription of nods is to aid in this analysis) I have not produced detailed transcriptions of nods occurring at other sequential positions. Instead, such nods (as, for example, in Excerpt 5 below) are merely briefly described or glossed on the transcripts.

Head nods and news receipt: "Change-of-state" nods

The particle "oh," which Heritage (1984a) refers to as a "change-of-state" token, is frequently produced at third position (Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 2007). This token serves to register a change in a speaker's state of knowledge, thus treating a prior utterance as news (Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 2007). Excerpt 1 illustrates the way in which nods can be produced in conjunction with the change-of-state token "oh" in third position to register a prior utterance as news.

(1) [Game Night, 15, 13:44-14:08]

1 Abbie: My mother just- (.) spa:zzes 'bout holidays, (.) and my

2 dad's going to Norway.

3 (.)

4 Maureen: Hmm (.) why,

5 Terry: Just him huh?

6 Abbie: Yea:h, well [they- (>thuh- thuh-<)]

7 Terry: [His parents live there.]

8 Abbie: Right. His parents live in: Oslo.

Maureen: ↑↑↑↑↑↑↑{↑↑↑↑↑= ((0.8 seconds))

Maureen: {*Opens mouth in "O" shape*

9 Maureen: Oh:::.

Maureen: ↓↓↓↓↓↓ ((0.7 sec.))

The sequence in which this nod occurs begins with a question produced by Maureen in line 4. Here, following Abbie's announcement that her father is going to Norway for the holiday

season, Maureen questions why her father is taking this trip. In doing so, Maureen treats Abbie's father's actions as accountable, apparently as a result of the time of year at which he is taking the trip, as well as Abbie's revelation that her mother "spazzes out 'bout holidays" (line 1). Before Abbie answers this question, Terry asks a second question (line 5), which Abbie answers ("Yeah," line 6), before begining to answer Maureen's question. Terry then speaks in overlap with Abbie to produce a candidate answer to Maureen's question (line 7), which Abbie confirms (line 8), partially repeating it, while giving a more specific location ("Oslo") of her father's parents. Abbie thus completes the adjacency pair initiated by Maureen's question in line 4, thus providing an account for why her father would be going to Norway. As she does so, Maureen begins a expansive nod with an upward movement of her head (line 8). This head nod is expansive with respect to the extent of its movement away from "home position" (Sacks & Schegloff, 2002), as well as in the amount of time it takes to complete, relative to the less expansive nods I examine later in this paper.

Shortly after beginning this expansive upward head movement, Maureen opens her mouth in an "O" shape, before beginning the downward component of her nod, and producing the change of state token "Oh" (line 9), thus registering Abbie's utterance as news. It thus appears that the nod produced by Maureen in this excerpt serves to foreshadow and underline her receipt of Abbie's response to her question as news, while displaying her uptake of it as an account for her father's trip to Norway.

It is further noteworthy that the timing of this nod by Maureen is precisely coordinated with the ongoing talk in the sequence in which it occurs in several respects. First, the onset of the nod occurs at what Jefferson (1973, 1984) refers to as the

"recognition point" of Abbie's response to her question, i.e., it begins at the point in Abbie's unfolding utterance at which Maureen can recognize the action being performed by the utterance. This is consistent with Heath's (1992) finding that responsive nods frequently occur in such positions. Second, the downward component of the nod begins at the precise point at which Abbie reaches possible completion of a turn constructional unit, [2] which is the same point at which Maureen begins to produce the particle "oh." Finally, the particle is stretched in such a way that Maureen completes the downward component of her nod just as she finishes producing her utterance.

A similar case is shown in Excerpt 2, which is drawn from a mealtime conversation between three students.

(2) [SARI 3 (Camera 2), 12:30–12:53]

1 Rosie: Wh- what school are you gonna (.) apply to? Like
2 (0.2) ((Jenny produces downward pointing gesture))
3 Rosie: Here?
4 Jenny: Mm hm.
5 Rosie: You wanna come here?
6 Jenny: Mm hm. Here, Berkeley, and then about (0.2) five schools
7 out of state.
8 (1.7) ((Rosie sips drink))
9 Rosie: You like (.) the program here? The graduate program?
10 Jenny: Yeah, the one in the Department of Education is really

[2] Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) describe turn constructional units (or TCUs) as the units out of which turns at talk are built. The points at which TCUs are possibly complete constitute transition relevance places (or TRPs), which are places at which transition to a next speaker may occur (Sacks et al., 1974).

11 good.

12 (-----)

Rosie: ↑↑=

13 Rosie: O:h, okay.

Rosie: =↑↓↓↓ ((0.7 sec.))

14 (0.5)

15 Jenny: For counseling psychology.

16 Lily: Mm hm.

Following Rosie's question to Jenny about which schools she plans to apply to for graduate school (line 1), and Jenny's gestured response and verbal confirmation that she plans to apply to the school they are currently attending (lines 2-4), Rosie again asks, "You wanna come here?" (line 5). Given that Jenny has already confirmed her desire to attend this school, this question by Rosie may be designed as a challenge to Jenny's preference in this regard, thereby questioning *why* she wants to attend this school rather than just *whether* she wants to. In response, however, Jenny shows no apparent orientation to the possible challenging character of Rosie's question, instead re-confirming her desire to attend the school, before stating which other schools she will be applying to (lines 6-7). Rosie then produces another potentially challenging question, asking Jenny whether she likes the graduate program at that school, and thereby displaying a presupposition that it is at least questionable whether she would have a favorable opinion of the program, and possibly suggesting that she (Rosie) does not have such a favorable opinion. This is particularly so given that Rosie only raises this question with regard to this specific school, and not any of the others that Jenny has just mentioned. In response, Jenny produces a positive assessment

of "the one in the Department of Education," thereby tacitly revealing that the program she plans to apply to is in a different department from the one (Psychology) they are currently students in.[3] Following a slight pause Rosie begins to produce an expansive nod (line 12), continuing it while producing the change-of-state token "oh" (line 13). While the nod Rosie produces here is less expansive (in amplitude and duration) than the one produced by Maureen in Excerpt 1, it is still markedly more expansive than other nods produced by Rosie just a few seconds earlier (see line 8).

Rosie's treatment of Jenny's action at lines 10-11 as news through this change-of-state token is consistent with the possibility that her questions at lines 3 and 5 were designed to question why Jenny would want to apply to this school. That is, by treating Jenny's positive assessment of the program in the Department of Education as news, Rosie displays that she was either not aware of the quality of this program, or she was not aware that it was the program Jenny was applying to (or both) – thus retrospectively treating her prior questions as having been based on incorrect presuppositions. Her subsequent production of the word "okay" (line 13) following the change-of-state token and nod is also consistent with this analysis, displaying her acceptance of Jenny's assessment of the

[3] The subsequent increment ("For counseling psychology," line 15) produced by Jenny may be further evidence of an orientation on her part to the potentially challenging character of Rosie's earlier questions. That is, it serves to specify the particular graduate program she has just previously assessed as "really good," thereby leaving open the possibility that other programs in the same department are not as good. In addition, Lily's (line 16) agreement tokens display her alignment with Jenny's positive assessment of this program – a display that she produced only after Jenny's specification of the program at line 15, despite having at least one earlier possible opportunity (during the short pause at line 12) to do so.

program, and possibly also of her decision to apply to it (cf. Beach, 1993), in contrast with her possible questioning of it in lines 3 and 5. Thus, as in Excerpt 1, the nod produced by the speaker in this case appears to contribute towards her treatment, in third position, of a response to her prior question as news.

Excerpt 3 shows that nods of the sort shown in Excerpts 1 and 2 can also be produced in the absence of a verbal change-of-state token, and that in such cases they can still be treated by the second position speaker as an adequate display of receipt of the news they have just delivered.

(3) [Game Night, 14, 12:58-13:25]

1 Maureen: Does your mother live here in town?
2 Abbie: Ye:s.
3 Terry: They live close to here.
4 Abbie: They live very close to you guys >they live< in: walking
5 distance to you guys.
6 Terry: Umhm:,
7 (-----)
Maureen: ↑↑↑↑↓=
8 Abbie: Yeah.
Maureen: =↓↓↓↓ ((0.4 sec.))
9 Maureen: Where,
10 Terry: Yea:h.
11 (.)
12 Abbie: Over by- (.) uh- (.) Thornton Elementary school,
13 (1.5)

14 Abbie: (See didn't) [that mean a] lot?
15 Maureen: [°Where's tha:t.°]
16 (1.1)
17 Abbie: On Kalamatha Drive:.
18 Maureen: Did you [go] tuh Thornton El[ementary] School?
19 Abbie: [°yeah.°] [m: h:mm]

In this case, the sequence in which the nod occurs is initiated by Maureen asking Abbie whether her "mother live[s] here in town" (line 1). This question projects "yes" as a response (cf. Raymond, 2003), thus suggesting that a "yes" response would not be treatable as news, and indeed, when Abbie produces this response (line 2), Maureen initially does not treat it as news. However, following Abbie's response, Terry proposes that her parents "live close to here" (line 3), and Abbie responds by upgrading this proposal first to "very close" (with strong emphasis on "very"), and then to "in walking distance" (line 4). Abbie thus produces an "extreme case formulation" (Pomerantz, 1986) of how close her mother lives. This may be a way of pursuing uptake of her mother's residence location as news, which (following a confirmation of Abbie's formulation by Terry in line 6) Maureen subsequently produces through a nod similar to those shown in the above cases with respect to its expansiveness, and in consisting of a single upward and a single downward component.

Unlike the instances shown in Excerpts 1 and 2, this nod by Maureen is not accompanied by a change-of-state token. Instead, it occurs during a 0.5-second pause (line 7), which suggests that the absence of a verbal token is not a result of Maureen avoiding speaking in overlap with Abbie or Terry. Following the onset of this nod (and concurrently

with the downward component of its production), Abbie produces the agreement token, "Yeah" (Schegloff, 2007), which, by virtue of not adding anything new that would serve to expand the sequence, seems to be a move toward closing the sequence (cf. Schegloff, 2007). This is evidence that Abbie has treated Maureen's nod as adequate uptake of the news that she was apparently previously pursuing uptake of, and thus that the nod is treated by Abbie as a marker of a change-of-state, even in the absence of a verbal token. Further evidence of this orientation on Abbie's part is demonstrated later in this same excerpt, as Maureen (following the completion of her nod) asks a second question (line 9), which Abbie responds to in line 12 by noting the proximity of her mother's house to a local elementary school. Following a 1.5-second pause, during which Maureen produces no verbal or embodied uptake of this location, Abbie treats Maureen's lack of uptake as evidence of lack of recognition of her response to the question (see line 14), and Maureen subsequently confirms her lack of understanding by inquiring as to the location of the school (line 15). Thus, while Maureen's nod in lines 7-8 was treated as an adequate display of news receipt, the absence of a nod (or some other form of uptake) in line 13 is treated as evidence of a lack of understanding, and thus as relevantly absent.

Excerpt 4 shows a further instance of a speaker's production of this type of nod in the absence of a verbal token. In this case, the speaker begins to take a sip of her drink shortly after asking a question, and then marks her receipt of the response to her question with a nod while simultaneously completing the sip she has just taken. Just prior to the excerpt, Lily has reported that a friend of her and Julie's is planning on having a party on the weekend, and Rosie has inquired about the identity of the friend and (following Lily's response) claimed a lack of familiarity with him.

(4) [SARI 3 (Camera 2), 9:03–9:15]

1 Rosie: And he’s having a party where?
Rosie: Raises drink to her mouth
2 (0.2)
Rosie: Inserts drink straw into her mouth
3 Lily: DT? ((Abbreviation of a street name))
Lily: Shifts gaze towards Rosie
Rosie: Continues to sip drink
4 (0.7)
Rosie: Continues to sip drink
5 (----------)
Rosie: {↑↑↑↑↓↓↓↓↑↑↑↓↓
Rosie: {*Withdraws straw and moves cup away from her mouth*
6 Lily: I think he was havi- he- he: was gonna have a ba:nd or
7 something?
8 Jenny: Yeah a band was s’posed to give him two pe- two kegs to
9 let [‘em play at his party.
10 Lily: [Ye::ah.

In line 1, Rosie asks about the location of the planned party, and (following a short pause at line 2) Lily responds (line 3) with an abbreviation of the street on which the party is due to take place. Given that Rosie has just displayed her lack of familiarity with Lily’s friend, thereby implicitly displaying a lack of knowledge about the party, Lily’s response to Rosie’s question is treatable as news for Rosie. However, having taken a sip of her drink

just after asking her question, and still having the straw (and possibly also the sip of drink) in her mouth, it may be difficult at this moment for Rosie to produce a verbal change-of-state-token marking Lily's response as news. This is particularly so given the brevity of Lily's response resulting from her unelaborated naming of the abbreviated form of the street on which the party was to be located, whereas a longer response would have afforded Rosie more time in which to finish sipping her drink and produce an uptake of Lily's response in third position. In this regard it is also worth noting the questioning intonation in Lily's response, which makes some kind of display of recognition of the response by Rosie relevant. In this sequential context, the two expansive nods subsequently produced by Rosie (see line 5) seem to fulfill a similar function to those described above, apparently (as in Excerpt 3 in particular) marking Lily's response as news without being accompanied by a verbal token. Moreover, the gaze shift by Lily preceding the nods in this case (see line 3), which suggests she is monitoring Rosie for a possible non-verbal display of uptake, is evidence for an orientation on the part of a recipient to the potential use of body behaviors as markers of news receipt. This suggests that nods can serve as resources for producing news receipts in cases in which producing verbal responses would be difficult or impossible, and that co-participants may visually monitor each other for this type of conduct in sequential positions of this sort.

The data I have examined in this section thus demonstrate that, when deployed in third position, following responses to questions, nods can mark the receipt of a prior utterance as news, and can do so either concurrently (and finely coordinated) with verbal change-of-state tokens, or in the absence of a verbal token. I turn now to an examination of the use of head nods in cases where a response to a question is not treatable as news.

Specifically, I consider the way in which nods of a less expansive sort than the ones shown in this section can be used to register receipt of a response to a question without treating that response as news.

Marking receipt of an utterance without treating it as news: Acknowledgment nods

In Excerpt 5, Maureen asks a question that strongly projects a particular answer. This question relates to the identity of a non-present person that Abbie has referred to in the course of telling a story (see line 4), and, line 7 Maureen seeks confirmation that the person Abbie is referring to is the same person she knows (or knows of). Maureen's question thus takes the form of a reference term, different from the one used by Abbie, but proposed by Maureen to be an alternative way of referring to the same person referred to by Abbie (cf. Schegloff, 1996).

(5) [Game Night, 17, 15:36-15:52]

1 Abbie: Okay. which I just started, sort of, (.) talking to them
2 about. ˙hh And we were talking about (.) idea:as fo:r
3 (1.5) for re↑po:rts, and one of them, (.) >somebody had<
4 brought up, talking to Nancy Allison Gerry cuz apparently
5 she's a really spiritual person >w'a lot of<
6 spirituality and stuff like ↑this.˙hh
7 Maureen: N-A? ((slight nod))
8 (0.5)
9 Abbie: Hm:::?
10 Terry: Mm:h[m:], ((nods))

```
11    Maureen:      [Is] that N-A? ((nods))
12                ( -- )  ((T continues nodding))
      Maureen:    ↑↓↑↓=
13    Maureen:  M:m.
      Maureen: =↑↓↑↓= ((0.5 sec.))
14                (-----)
      Maureen:  =↓↓
15    Abbie:    An:d U::m (2.0) ((continues))
```

By producing this question as a confirmable (thus proposing a candidate answer in asking the question), Maureen strongly projects "yes" as an answer (cf. Heritage, 1984b; Raymond, 2003, p. 944, footnote 5). Moreover, Maureen further underlines this projected affirmative answer by nodding slightly as she produces the question (cf. Heath, 1992). Although Terry responds to this question (line 10), Abbie has already initiated repair on it (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977) in line 9, and Maureen repeats the question in a slightly elaborated form (line 11), while still strongly projecting a "yes" answer through the form of the question and by nodding as she produces it. Having projected a "yes" answer in this way, it would thus not be appropriate for Maureen to treat such an answer as news upon its delivery, and Maureen's response confirms this analysis as, following her repeat of the question, she registers Terry's earlier affirmative response to it with a weak acknowledgment token, "Mm" (Gardner, 1997; also see Jefferson, 1985; Schegloff, 2007). In this way, Maureen registers her receipt of Terry's answer without treating it as news, and as she does so, she produces a series of nods.

The "acknowledgment nods" produced by Maureen here differ in two main ways from those I examined in the prior section. First, they are markedly less expansive in terms of their amplitude and total duration (cf. Kendon, 2002). Second, rather than producing a single (i.e., consisting of a single upward and a single downward component, as in Excerpts 1-3) or double (as in Excerpt 4) nod, in this case Maureen produces four complete nods (four upward components and four downward components). Like the nods shown in Excerpts 1 and 2, however, the nods in Excerpt 5 begin before Maureen begins to produce the verbal token that accompanies them (see lines 12-13). The nods produced in this excerpt thus serve to foreshadow Maureen's receipt of a response to her question before she displays this receipt verbally. Moreover, the differences between these nods and those shown in the prior section provide further evidence those shown in the prior section were specifically designed as change-of-state tokens, in addition to registering receipt of a response.

A second instance of this type of nod, this time produced without any accompanying verbal tokens, is shown below in Excerpt 6. Prior to this excerpt, the participants have been discussing possible places to go camping. In lines 1 and 3, Jenny asks a question about a possible place in a specific location ("farther up north"). In response, Lily offers a candidate location (line 5), which Jenny rejects on the basis of it not being in the geographical area she had specified (line 7). Jenny thus displays through her question and her rejection of Lily's response that she is pursuing confirmation of the existence of a place in a specific location, and then further reinforces this through her response (line 11) to the candidate place names offered by Rosie (line 8) and Lily (line 9).

(6) [SARI 3 (Camera 2), 7:07-7:30]

1 Jenny: Isn't there one farther up north?

2 (0.8)

3 Jenny: Not Cachuma but another one?

4 (1.8)

5 Lily: Up in the hills in Irvine?

6 (.)

7 Jenny: No, up north more.

8 Rosie: (De[cimiento?)

9 Lily: [El Capitan.

10 (0.8)

11 Jenny: I dunno something (up there >where you can go<) camping.

12 Lily: Mm hm.

Jenny: Raises French fry and puts it in her mouth

13 (----------)

Jenny: ↑↑↓↓↑↓↑↓↑=

Jenny: Chews French fry

14 Lily: I heard El Capitan up north, (.) I dunno how much (.)

Jenny: =↓↓↑↑↓↓↓ ((0.3 sec.))

Jenny: Continues to chew French fry

15 Lily: farther,

16 (- - - -)

Jenny: ↑↓↑↓↑↓

17 Lily: tch maybe like twenny minutes,

18 (--------------------)

Jenny: ↓↓↑↓↑↓↓↑↓

Jenny: Continues to chew French fry

19 Rosie: I dunno.

By pursuing confirmation of this specific type of place, Jenny displays that she already has prior knowledge of the place, and thus that an answer to her question would not constitute news for her. Lily then provides this confirmation (in line 12, at the same time as Jenny places a French fry in her mouth), and Jenny acknowledges it with a series of rapid nods while chewing the French fry (line 13). Like the nods shown in Excerpt 5, the nods produced by Jenny in this case are less expansive in terms of amplitude and duration than those described in the previous section, and consist of several complete upward and downward head movements, in contrast to the maximum of two complete nods produced by the participants in Excerpts 1-4.

Lily then elaborates her response, specifying the name of the place and its distance from their current location (lines 14-15), and Jenny produces additional series' of rapid acknowledgement nods (see lines 16 and 18). These nods thus appear to be designed to display acknowledgment of Lily's confirmation of the presuppositions of Jenny's questions.[4] In addition (and as shown in the above excerpts), the timing of these nods appears to be finely coordinated with Lily's ongoing talk, as each series of nods begins slightly after the possible completion of a turn constructional unit by Lily (see lines 13, 15 and 17).

[4] Although many acknowledgment tokens can be produced with a closed mouth, and could thus be produced concurrently with an activity such as chewing, it is possible that the nods Jenny produces here are a substitute for the type of verbal displays of acknowledgment that would be more difficult to produce while chewing.

An examination of Excerpt 7 further illuminates the distinct uses of the two types of nods I have discussed thus far, while also further demonstrating the fine-grained coordination of nods and co-participants' talk shown in the above cases.

(7) [Game Night, 14, 3:16–3:36]

1 Maureen: Was he lookin at a picture when 'e did that?=
2 Terry: =↑I d[on't kno:w.
3 Maureen: [(How could) he reme:mber it.
4 Stacy: [They must'a been stu:dying (Toulouse [Lautrec.)
5 Terry: [They were-
6 Oh yeah they- they studied them, they did a unit on.
7 (----------)
Maureen: ↑{↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↓=
Maureen: {*Opens mouth in "O" shape*
8 Maureen: O:[:h
Maureen: =↓↓↓↓↓= ((0.9 sec.))
9 Terry: [On: (-) >well they did a whole art unit.
Maureen: =↓↓↓↓↓↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓= ((1.8 sec.))
10 Terry: But that's just one of the artists< they-
Maureen: =↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↓↓{↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↑↑↑↑↑= ((1.4 sec.))
Maureen: {*Raises eyebrows*
11 Terry: they [(they- they did several.)]
Maureen: =↑↑↑↑↑{↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↓↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↓↓↓↓↓= ((2.0 sec.))
Maureen: {*Lowers eyebrows*
11 Stacy: [But still to be able to pr-]
12 reproduce it like [that,

Maureen: =↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑ ((0.7 sec.))

13 Maureen: [(W[o::w.)

14 Terry: [It was (good/cool). We were very

15 Terry: impressed. He's an artistic little guy.

16 (.)

17 Maureen: I should say so:.

In this case, Maureen asks a question about whether a non-present party's nephew had been "looking at a picture" (line 1) when he produced a drawing they had been discussing. Following a claim by Terry (whose partner, Pam, is the boy's aunt) of insufficient knowledge (cf. Beach & Metzger, 1997) to answer the question (line 2), and Stacy's speculative answer that he "must'a been studying Toulouse Lautrec [the artist who produced the picture that Pam's nephew had copied]" (line 4), Terry confirms that Pam's nephew had indeed studied the artists in question at school ("they studied them, they did a unit on," line 6). In response, Maureen's initially produces a change-of-state nod similar to those described above, accompanied by the verbal change-of-state token "oh" (lines 7-9). Terry then continues with her response, slightly overlapping with Maureen's stretched production of the change-of-state token in repeating the word "on" before repairing and stating that "they did a whole art unit" (line 9). As Terry continues, Maureen follows her initial change-of-state nod with a series of less prominent nods, much like those shown in Excerpt 5. She continues these nods as Terry elaborates her response by beginning a new turn constructional unit (see line 10), during which Maureen produces what appears to be a second change-of-state nod.

Maureen produces this second change-of-state nod just as Terry reaches the recognition point of her new turn constructional unit (after the word "one," line 10), converting what appeared to be headed toward a nod of approximately the same amplitude as the ones she had just produced into a more expansive one, shifting her gaze and moving her head slightly towards Terry as she does so. As Maureen does this, she also raises her eyebrows, thus displaying surprise (see, for e.g., Ekman, 1976, 1979), and further showing that she is treating Terry's just-produced utterance as news. She then produces a further series of less expansive nods, lowering her eyebrows as she begins the first of them.

It thus appears that Maureen adjusts her head movements in mid-course in order to move from displaying simple receipt and acknowledgment of Terry's ongoing action (i.e., without treating it as news) to registering Terry's new turn constructional unit as news (without the use of a verbal change-of-state token), before returning to displaying simple receipt and acknowledgment. This demonstrates the sensitivity of the deployment of the two types of nods I have examined to the details of the unfolding interaction in which they occur.

I now turn in the final section to the consideration of a possible third distinct use of nods in third position, which seems to be designed to register receipt of an utterance as news, and acknowledge its action import, while marking it as in some way "dispreferred."

An ambiguous case: Head nods in response to "dispreferred" news

A number of conversation analytic studies have shown that, in cases where an initiating action makes relevant more than one possible responding action, the alternative possibilities are asymmetrical, with one being "preferred," while the other(s) are "dispreferred"; for

example, for invitations, requests and offers, acceptance is preferred over rejection, while for assessments, agreement is preferred over disagreement (see Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987; Schegloff, 2007). Excerpt 8 demonstrates the use of a nod in third position, following a dispreferred action, in the form of the rejection by Abbie of a suggestion proposed by Maureen.

(8) [Game Night, 6-7, 6:32-7:03]

1 Abbie: She's trying to decide if sh[e wants to spend thirty]
2 Maureen: [she has a lot of shee:p.]
3 Abbie: five=dollars on her da:d for Christmas.
4 Maureen: O:h.
5 (.)
6 Abbie: And she really doesn't. (.) But- (.) the gift that she
7 thought of was thirty-five dollars and she can't find
8 °anything (interesting.)°
9 Maureen: (M)o::[h.
10 Abbie: [So.
11 Maureen: Has she tried Chickadee De:pot,
12 (.)
13 Abbie: We went to Chickadee Depot fir:st, (.) and then went to
14 Wi:ld Bi:rds.
15 (-)
Maureen: ↑=
16 Maureen: Hmm.
Maureen: ↑↑↑↓= ((0.5 sec.))
17 (----------)

Maureen: =↓↓↓↑↑↑↑↓↓

18 Maureen: .tch What about uhm:, (.) Mou:nds.

19 (2.1)

20 Abbie: Haven't tried Mounds. (.) (we'll) probly ca:ll Mounds

21 instead of=(uh) (---------) hi:king. (.) but, yeah. (.)

Maureen: ↓↓↑↑↑↑↑↓↓↓↓↓↑↑↓↓↑↑↓↓↑↑↓↓↑↑↑↓↓↑↑↓↓↑↑ ((1.8 sec.))

22 Abbie: We'll see:: I don't know.

In this excerpt, Abbie describes the difficulty Pam (who is currently engaged in a telephone conversation in an adjacent room) is having in finding an affordable gift for her father (lines 1, 6 and 7). Following Maureen's treatment of Pam's difficulty in this regard as news (lines 4 and 9), she produces a suggestion of a store where Pam might find a less expensive alternative gift, in the form of a question about whether she has tried that store (line 11). Abbie's response to this question-suggestion (line 13) is a dispreferred one, serving to reject the suggestion as a viable solution to Pam's problem on the grounds that Abbie and Pam had already visited the store in question.[5] This response is also delivered in a dispreferred format, following a brief pause after Maureen has produced the suggestion (cf. Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). As Abbie reaches possible completion of her response, Maureen begins to produce a nod and, shortly after beginning this nod, produces a verbal token, "Hmm" (lines 15-16).

[5] Indeed, Abbie notes that it was the *first* store they went to, which serves to further underline the inadequacy of Maureen's suggestion as something they may not have thought of yet, and Abbie goes on to mention a second store that they also visited, thus pre-emptively ruling out a second possible suggestion on Maureen's part.

The nods Maureen produces in this case have features of both of the types of nods I have examined in the preceding sections. Specifically, Maureen begins with a somewhat expansive nod, similar in its form to the change-of-state nods described above, although somewhat less expansive in its amplitude.[6] She then follows this initial nod with a less prominent nod, similar in its form to the acknowledgment nods described above, but being produced as only a single complete nod in addition to the initial nod, rather than as a series of nods, as seen in the above cases. It thus appears to be the case that the initial, more expansive, nod Maureen produces here is designed to register Abbie's response as news, while embodying in its somewhat subdued character (relative to other instances of change-of-state nods) the dispreferred nature of Abbie's response. The second nod, on the other hand, seems to be designed to register Maureen's acknowledgment and acceptance of the inadequacy of her proposed solution, while again displaying the dispreferred nature of Abbie's response (and thus Maureen's reluctance to readily accept it) in consisting of only a single nod, rather than the multiple nods seen in the above cases.

Although no research that I'm aware of has studied the use of the token "Hmm" as a third position action, the action performed through Maureen's use of this token appears to be consistent with the analysis of the nods I am proposing. Additional evidence for this analysis appears later in Excerpt 9, following a subsequent suggestion (also in the form of a question) of another store that Pam might try (line 18). In this case, although Abbie produces her response only after a significant pause (line 19), the response is preferred,

[6] This is reflected on the transcript by the use of underlining the arrows representing this head nod, while not using the boldface that was used to represent the change-of-state head nods shown in the above excerpts.

treating Maureen's suggestion as a viable one by noting that they haven't yet tried the store she suggested (line 20). Abbie then goes on to further ratify Maureen's suggestion by proposing that they would probably call before going there (line 20-21), and hence implying that they would follow up on Maureen's suggestion. As she reaches recognition point of this action, Maureen begins a series of acknowledgment nods, which appear to be designed to accept Abbie's proposal as to how best to pursue Maureen's suggestion (while also displaying her knowledge of why they would call before visiting the store even before Abbie uses the store's distant location as an account). In contrast to the two nods Maureen produced following Abbie's earlier dispreferred response, she produces a prolonged series consisting of seven complete nods following Abbie's preferred response, thus providing further evidence that the earlier nods were specifically fitted to the character of the second pair part they were responsive to. This case thus provides evidence both for the use of a distinctive combination of nods as a third position response to dispreferred news, as well as providing a possible account of the action performed by the token "hmm" when it is deployed in such a sequential position.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have demonstrated that distinct types of head nods can be used to perform different actions in third position in sequences of talk-in-interaction. While expansive nods appear to be used to register a prior utterance as news, less expansive nods can be used to register receipt of a prior utterance without treating it as news. It also appears to be the case that these distinct forms of nods can be treated as conveying particular meanings even in the absence of accompanying verbal tokens. Moreover, as the final section of this paper

demonstrates, there may be other finer distinctions between these different types of nods, and these may interact not only with the type of action the nods are being used to perform in response to a prior (responding) action, but also to their treatment of that action as either preferred or dispreferred.

It is important to note that these findings should not be seen as providing an exhaustive typology of all possible different uses of nods in this type of sequential position, but rather as a description of some systematic ways in which they *can* be used. As such, these findings are suggestive of some rich complexities in the use of head movements in conjunction with, and as constitutive features of, actions-in-interaction. In particular, they suggest the potential importance of head nods for the display and maintenance of intersubjective understandings, and thus for the interactional co-production of sequences of action. Moreover, the precise coordination of these nods with the talk-in-interaction with which they are produced demonstrates some ways in which verbal and non-verbal resources may operate in close relationship to one another, both separately and in concert, in contributing towards the production of particular actions (cf. Heath, 1992). This illustrates the value of a fine-grained analytic approach for understanding the organization of talk and other embodied actions in sequences of action-in-interaction.

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Appendix: Transcription symbols for body behaviors

Italicized speaker designation and text	Body behavior produced by participant
Up arrow ↑	Upward head movement*
Down arrow ↓	Downward head movement*
Bold, underlined up/down arrows ↑↓	Markedly expansive upward or downward head movement
Equal signs =	Continuation of head movement from one line of transcript to the next
Dashes in parentheses (– – – – –)	One tenth of a second silence for each dash (silences concurrent with body behaviors)
Curley parentheses {	Onset of overlap between distinct body behaviors

* Note that multiple arrows represent the ongoing production of an upward or downward head movement concurrently with the utterances or silences with which the arrows are aligned on the transcripts.