Accomplishing continuity across sequences and encounters: No(h)-prefaced initiations in Estonian

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Abstract
Initiating actions, such as the introduction of a topic or the initiation of a sequence in a conversation, are social accomplishments. The study focuses on the Estonian *no(h)*-preface in turns that initiate action sequences and often also a locally new topic in a human encounter. It argues that these *no(h)*-prefaced turns accomplish continuity beyond the current event and thereby index a long-term involvement between the participants. By marking the turn as warranted by an earlier action trajectory, the *no(h)*-preface contributes to achieving continuity of action across intervening sequences and encounters. The data come from 70 hours of recordings primarily of phone calls.

1. Introduction
Topic initiations are social accomplishments that are regularly negotiated among the participants. While determining the precise topic of a segment of talk is a futile endeavor, speakers are obviously concerned with how to stay on topic or implement transitions between them (Button and Casey, 1984; Jefferson, 1984; Drew and Holt, 1998; Holt and Drew, 2005). At transition points between topics, turns are regularly constructed in ways that display their function of establishing a topic boundary. In particular, misplacement markers (e.g. *by the way*, *listen*) may be deployed at the beginnings of turns (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973:319-320). Turn-beginnings may also project longer action trajectories. They sometimes involve specific linguistic formats (e.g. Hakulinen et al. 2003; Keevallik, 2003a; Bolden, 2008, 2009) and strategically positioned vocal material such as *uh(m)* (Schegloff, 2010). In addition, they may be produced with high prosodic onsets signaling initiation of longer topical sequences, among them presenting reasons-for-the-call (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001). The current study focuses on the Estonian *no(h)*-preface in turns that initiate the very first or a new topic/sequence in an encounter. It argues that social relations, as reflected in continuing action trajectories, are regularly dealt with at the beginning of topic-initiating turns to secure local cooperation and carry on with business across longer periods of time.

In an earlier study on phone call openings, it was proposed that as a preface to greetings, the Estonian non-lexical particle *no(h)* marks familiarity with the recipient as well as a continuity of activities across consecutive phone calls (Rääbis, 2009). In general, the particle has been notoriously difficult to analyze, since it occurs in a multitude of sequential and turn positions (e.g. EKS, Hennoste, 2000:1802-1803, 2001:189-190) and it is also extremely frequent: *no* and *noh* individually place as the 10th - 25th most frequent word in everyday as well as institutional interaction (Hennoste et al., 2000). The current paper looks closely at one specific sequential position and thereby starts to elucidate, one function at a time, what exactly *no(h)* contributes to the turn and social action within a sequence. This nevertheless implies a

symbiotic relationship between the particle *per se* and its context, as specified below.

The three particles or particle variants *no*, *noh,* and *noo* (with the same mid-high back round vowel but long[1]) occur interchangeably in initiating actions. Therefore, they will be treated as the same in the current paper, referring to all three with the shortcut format *no(h)*, as *noo* is least frequent in this position (and *no* is most frequent). There are no large articulatory differences between the items, as speakers can easily lengthen the vowel of *no* into *noo* or alternatively open their vocal cords but let the airflow continue, which results in the syllable-final fricative *h*. The main difference is that the short *no* has to be incorporated into the upcoming prosodic unit while *noo* and *noh* can be produced with independent prosodic contours and can therefore constitute turn constructional units on their own. In terms of historical development, none of the variants have emerged within the Estonian language from any lexical source. They have always exclusively functioned as pragmatic particles and not, for example, as conjunctions or adverbs.

The original impetus of the paper lies in the observation that *no(h)* occurs as a preface in initiating actions, but only in certain kinds of contexts. Importantly, it is almost lacking in the institutional calls of the current corpus (occurring just once), even though there are no general restrictions to its use in other positions in institutional settings. The institutional calls are almost without exception single task events with no consecutive return calls. At the same time, 102 cases of initiating *no(h)* have been found come from calls between people who are continuously involved with each other, either privately or at workplaces.

The data include both telephone calls and face-to-face events. The primary database of the study, the telephone call corpus, consists of 324 calls of two types: telemarketing calls from a daily newspaper and everyday calls between family members, relatives, friends, and colleagues. The corpus includes more than ten hours of conversation. Additionally, searches have been made for examples of face-to-face interaction in a video recording of the preparation of a Christmas dinner (2 hours) and in the publicly available Tartu corpus of Spoken Estonian (http://www.cl.ut.ee/suuline/Korpus.php), which includes shorter excerpts of talk from a wide variety of situations. Besides everyday phone calls and events it includes calls to a travel agent, auto repair shop and an information line. The Tartu corpus is constantly growing and the version used for this study included about thirty hours of talk. As it turned out, *no(h)*-preface was almost lacking in initiating actions in the face-to-face settings, which may have to do with the abundance of non-verbal options of indexing interactional trajectories and social relationships in these contexts. Therefore, the examples below come exclusively from phone calls.

The paper will systematically look at the different patterns of *no(h)*-prefacing of action and topic initiations, and discuss the role of the preface in them. The overview starts with *no(h)*-prefaced actions that promote an earlier business and thus accomplish human relationships across single interactional episodes. It will then move to cases where the action sequence is managed more locally, within a single event.

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[1]   As length constitutes a regular phonological difference in Estonian, and long sounds are marked with double letters, there is a convention for keeping *no* and *noo* apart in writing. They also have separate dictionary entries (EKS).

2. *No(h)*-prefacing in the reason-for-the-call turns

Topics have to be regularly initiated at the beginning of phone calls, insofar as the caller is normatively obliged to present a reason for having called. Occasionally, the reason-for-the-call turns are prefaced by *no(h)*. These turns regularly reveal prior involvement between the current participants, as they re-evoke an action trajectory. Example (1) shows a typical instance of the *no(h)*-preface in a reason-for-the-call turn. After a self-presentation sequence in lines 2 and 3 the caller immediately asks about a letter in a manner that presupposes its recognizability as well as prior knowledge about it being on its way to the call-taker (line 4). The speaker uses the generic word 'letter' as a reference to a specific item without any further explanation as well as the verb 'receive' that presupposes it having been on its way. As revealed in the response, the initiation is entirely comprehensible for the recipient of the turn, while it remains obscure to the analyst. The continuation of the conversation shows that the current participants share considerable knowledge about the letter and its relevance for the call-taker's life plans.

The focused turns are in bold, the particle *no(h)* in the English translation is rendered as pronounced in the original.

(1)
```
           Phone rings

1  V:      halo
           'Hello.'

2  H:      kule            Indrek siin.
           listen:IMP:2SG NAME    here
           'Listen, it's Indrek.'

3  V:      jaa?
           'Yeah?'

4  H:      .hh noh said       kirja      kätte    ve.
               NOH get:IMF:2SG letter:GEN hand:ILL QUES
             'NOH did you receive the letter?'

5  V:      jaa?
           'Yeah?²'

6  H:      no mis  öeldi.
           NO what tell:IMS:IMF
           'NO what did (it) say?'

7  V:      e:i: ei  nagu ei  lähe kuhugile.
           NEG  NEG like NEG go   anywhere
           'No, no, (I'm) not going anywhere.'
```

No(h)-preface is very frequent in reason-for-the-call turns, covering 43 cases out of the total of 103 in the database³. In inquiries such as above the *no(h)*-prefaced turn clearly indexes a shared topical basis, the speaker's presumed warrant for accomplishing the current action of asking a question concerning a change in a state-

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² Note that rising intonation is not question intonation in Estonian. On responses it displays an expectation that the prior speaker will continue (Keevallik 2003).

³   Similar usage of *nu*-initiated topic initiations occurs in Russian, which Bolden (2011) describes as "urgent inquiries" about something "that has been on the agenda for a while".

of-affairs, as well as an expectation that the other will get involved in the topic. These turns fit within "a course of action", "an interactional line" or "a thematic thread" characterized by Schegloff (2007:244-250) as practices of sequence construction beyond the adjacency pair and not necessarily in consecutive sequences. *No(h)*-prefaced turns build on an earlier trajectory or topical thread, implying that the current encounter is but one in a series between these two people.

In a couple of cases the earlier trajectory that the current *no(h)*-prefaced turn builds on, is also available in the database. Example (2) shows a call with the aim to wake up P. The arrangements for the wake-up call were made in an earlier call between these two people and it is included in the database. This enables empirical tracing of the origin of the warrant for the current action. The beginning of the call is shaped as follows.

```
(2)
            Phone rings

1  E:       -vä
             QUES
            'or?'

2  P:       e jaa:, h
             'Yeah,'

3  E:       noo, k:ell on        kümme,
            NOO  clock be:3SG ten
            'NOO it's ten o'clock.'

4  P:       ahah,
            'Okay.'
```

Unfortunately the very first turns of the call are not hearable in the recording but it is evident from the turn-final question particle *vä* in line 1 that the caller is checking the identity of the call-taker (this is a landline and P lives with her landlord). P confirms and an announcement by the caller, E follows, prefaced by *noo*. This announcement of the current time presumes the recognizability of the action and can only be interpreted by an informed recipient on the basis of the joint interactional history of the participants, by invoking mutual knowledge about what P is supposed to do at this time of the day. P's response reveals that she does not have any trouble in understanding it, since she simply receives the news in line 4. The initiation involving a *no(h)*-preface can thus be grounded in an explicit contract between the participants. The current announcement fulfills a promise that has been issued in a prior call and as such it is a legitimate continuation of an action trajectory that has been initiated in an earlier event. These are two successive parts of a trajectory, where the next sequence "implements a next step or stage in a course of action" (Schegloff, 2007:213-215). Schegloff describes this phenomenon for adjacent sequences within a single conversation but the idea here is to propose that a next step can also be initiated at a next event.

More generally, we begin to see here that the *no(h)*-prefaced initiations have a business-as-usual character, these initiations are not disruptive in a sequence, they are not occasioned by noticings of out-of-the-ordinary matters, and do not come out of the blue. The preface thereby implies routine rather than surprise, and continuation rather than disruption. In contrast, when an unexpected matter has to be given priority in the opening of a call, the initiations are not prefaced with *no(h)*. In example (3) the first

question of the caller is occasioned by the call-taker's voice quality in line (1). It is not, and in fact cannot be, prefaced with *no(h)* because it is not part of the "business" of the call.

(3)
```
          Phone rings

1  P:     jaa. h
          'Yeah.'

2  R:     kas  sa  magasid.
          QUES you sleep:IMF:2SG
          'Were you asleep?'

3  P:     ei hh m- =
          no    I
          'No I-'

4  R:     =jumal tänatud.
          'Thank God.'
```

Also, when the next action is not carried out in the way it was projected or promised, these out-of-routine cases are not prefaced with *no(h)*. Example (4) can be compared with (2) where the mother called to wake up her daughter. In the current case, when a similar arrangement has been made between the same participants, she has missed the time and therefore does not simply produce the announcement. The continuity of actions between the promise and its unsatisfactory fulfillment is here interfered by the excuse 'I forgot'. Furthermore, her informing about not having fulfilled her promise lacks the *no(h)*-preface that would imply that the upcoming action is produced as expected, business as usual.

(4)
```
          Phone rings

1  P:     jaa, h
          'Yeah,'

2  E:     tere ommikust.=
          'Good morning.'

3  P:     =tere, h
          'Hi,'

4  E:     ma unustasin ära, juba kell on pool kümme.
          I  forget:IMF:1SG ÄRA already clock is half ten
          'I forgot, it's half past nine already.'

5  P:     oioioi. hh läheb  kiireks.
          oh          go:3SG rush:TRA
          'Oh, it will be a rush.'
```

This contributes to the argument that the *no(h)*-preface is not a misplacement marker but, on the contrary, it indexes the turn as an expected next action. Depending on their common history, the initiations can be very concrete and immediately place the participants within a joint frame of ongoing business, or they may be vague, yet index the mutual right to involvement. One frequent context for the particle is at the beginning of *topic initial elicitors* that function to generate further talk and typically take the form of inquiries "what's new?" (Button and Casey, 1984:174). One common position for the topic initial elicitors is after the sequential closure of a previous topic,

which will be discussed below, and another one is at the very beginning of phone calls in reason-for-the-call turns (Button and Casey, 1984). Topic initial elicitors are common at the beginning of phone calls, as shown in (5). C is the caller.

(5)

```
          Phone rings

1  V:     jaa?
          'Yeah?'

2  C:     tere?
          'Hi!'

3  V:     tere?
          'Hi!'

4  C:     noo? mis  teed?
          NOO  what do:2SG
          'NOO what are you doing?'

5         (0.5)

6  V:     aa, sina. eine- einestan.
          oh  you   ea-   eat:1SG
          'Oh, (it's) you. I'm eating.'
```

As Rääbis has claimed, in reason-for-the-call turns the *no(h)*-preface marks a connection to an earlier conversation (Rääbis, 2009:115,118,121). However, she did not analyze the phenomenon beyond these intuitive interpretations. As we can see in the current example (5), even the very first turns reveal that the participants are well known to each other, since there are no identifications besides the voice sample. In addition, the content of the reason-for-the-call turn indicates that the engagement of the participants extends across a series of encounters. The question "what are you doing?" is addressed to an intimate. It does not use the polite plural address form and inquires about an entirely personal matter, as the call-taker is answering a stationary phone at his own home. The non-hedged format of the question reflects the caller's right to ask for such an update. The close relationship between the participants is furthermore underlined by V's recognition in the following turn "oh, it's you", and by his unproblematic answer to the potentially invasive inquiry.

It is also important to notice that the question here does not function as the initiation of a pre-sequence but simply as a social inquiry. Indeed, the *no(h)*-preface seems to block the hearing of the question as a prefatory action (Rääbis, 2003:243), which is in line with its connotation of being routine business and accomplishing the next action in a series. It seems that calls initiated with prefaced turns such as (5) regularly develop into keeping-in-touch calls without an official agenda, as described in Drew and Chilton (2000) for the British context. In contrast, there are other turn-prefaces that indicate unexpectedness in reason-for-the-call turns, primarily the prefaces *ku(u)le* 'listen' and *tead* 'y'know' (Keevallik 2003b). In addition, there are calls initiated by questions of the type "what are you doing" that lead to a request or a proposal, but these initiations cannot be prefaced by *no(h)*. The preface thus seems to mark the current action itself as constituting the base first pair part (i.e., topic initial elicitor), not a preliminary to some other action in a larger sequence.

In addition to other-attentive matters shown above, the *no(h)*-preface can easily be

used in announcements and reports that serve the speaker's own interests[4], as shown in (6). The example is taken from a series of calls where O has asked M for a favor on behalf his son and a friend of his. The favor entails help with a computer program at M's office. O has called several times to postpone the meeting and is now finally reporting the arrival of the son and his friend. As this is a continuation of an activity across several calls during the same evening, the informing is designed with the *no(h)*-preface.

```
(6)
1  M:      halloo,
           'Hello.'

2  O:      .hh Merilin, no need  härrased     peaksid ee vv
              NAME     NO these gentleman:PL must:COND:3PL
            'Merilin, NO these gentlemen should'

3          lähema kümne   minuti     jooksul laekuma.
           close  ten:GEN minute:GEN during  arrive:SUP
           'arrive within ten minutes from now.'

4  M:      no selge.
           NO clear
           'Okay.'
```

The current section showed how a *no(h)*-prefaced reason-for-the-call turn places the participants right in the middle of the business-in-progress, accomplishing an imminent action in a trajectory that has its origins beyond the just-initiated encounter. The preface is used in the case of continuous interactional involvement of the participants. Interestingly, the time-frame can be a single evening (as in 6) or consecutive days (as in 2), but it can also be considerably longer (as is possible in 5), granted the close nature of the relationship. As expressed by Mazeland (2011) discussing the possibly related Dutch particle *nou* as a turn preface, this kind of reason for the call "places the current conversation in a series of activities, locating it as a next in a larger structure". In the case of the Estonian turn-initial *no(h)*, the larger structure seems to be the continuous social engagement of the participants (a friend inquiring about specific news, a mother fulfilling a promise to her daughter, a colleague postponing a meeting) that stretches over longer periods of time and consecutive encounters, which ultimately constitute human relationships, such as friendship, parenthood, and collegiality. This analysis relates closely to the observations in several sources on Finnish and Estonian phone call openings that the *no/noo*-preface in greetings "does intimacy work" (Hakulinen, 1993:164; Arminen and Leinonen, 2006:347), "indicates identification and intimacy, or that the participants have recently met or talked" (Rääbis, 2009:66,80). On the basis of the above, the *no(h)*-preface could be seen as one means of indexing an involvement of the current participants across several interactive encounters and at the same time marking the routine next or warranted nature of the action as a next in a series. It is thus an intricate device of social significance.

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[4] This makes the Estonian *no(h)*-preface different from the English *so* that can be deployed in similar contexts but is dedicated to doing other-attentiveness (Bolden 2009).

3. *No(h)*-prefacing of mid-conversation initiations

The prior section discussed instances of initiation in connection with a natural "boundary", that of a new phone call and thus a clearly delimited new event in the participants' lives. However, new initiations are not limited to these kinds of boundaries and the current section focuses on initiations during ongoing events. Even in mid-conversation the *no(h)*-prefaced initiating turns reveal knowledge about the conversation partner or her concerns beyond the current event. These turns make it evident that the participants share a common history and can sometimes be heard as continuing a thematic thread not from the immediately prior sequence but from an earlier encounter. In fact, since there is not always evidence in the current database that they have actually talked about the very same topic, it is more adequate to analyze the turns as simply revealing familiarity with the recipient's life, such as knowledge about her current studies or recent orders of furniture. After all, people acquire information about each other in various complex ways.

The *no(h)*-preface is typically used at the beginning of topic-proffering turns that index knowledge about the recipient's life situation. Example (7) comes from a conversation between two sisters who now live in different countries. The phone call can be characterized as a relationship maintenance call where topics are initiated and elicited freely without a pre-determined agenda (though the official reason for the call has been K's birthday). At the beginning of the example K claims not to have any more news. After a short pause in line 3, E asks a *noh*-prefaced question that reveals knowledge about her sister's current preoccupation: she is a student and therefore likely to take tests and exams at this time of the year. The turn initiates a new topic and a new sequence in the current event. As it happens, the sister resists the category of "tests" (that are graded as pass/fail), replacing it with "exams" (graded on a finer scale), but accepts other aspects of the suggestion, witnessing that E came quite close to reality in her guess.

```
(7)
1 K:      mts .hh ah  nii. m nojah,(.) mul   on –
                AH  NII    NOJAH    I:ADS be:3SG
               'Oh right. Well, I have-'

2         .h mul   ei  ole ka  midagi  uudist.
             I:ADS NEG be  too nothing news:PRT
             'I don't have any news either.'

3         (0.3)

4 E:      noh, sa teed  arvestusi     vä.
          NOH  you do:2SG test:PL:PRT QUES
          'NOH, you're doing tests or?'

5 K:      no meil   ei  ole arvestusi.   mul   on
          NO we:ADS NEG be  prelim:PL:PRT I:ADS be:3SG
          'Well, we don't have tests. I have'

6         esmaspäev üks eksam. mul   on    aint neli
          Monday    one exam  I:ADS be:3SG only four
          'an exam on Monday. I only have four'

7         eksamit. ja  kõik.
          exam:PRT and all.
          'exams and that's it.'
```

The turn in line (4) together with its preface accomplishes a transition to an entirely new topic in the current conversation. Like above, the *no(h)*-preface typically occurs in topic initiations that are grounded in a longer shared history[5] and relatively updated knowledge about what is going on in the other's life. Example (8) shows a case where a daughter who is studying abroad asks her mother about a table delivery, revealing quite detailed knowledge about her current life at home. Similarly to example (7) the prior topic (about the mother's possible visit) has come to an end when the daughter initiates the new one in lines 6-7.

```
(8)
1 H:       et tule          siis ise        siia.
           ET come:IMP:2SG then yourself here
           'Come here yourself then!'

2 E:       oh ei: kuu:le          [mine nüüd]. h <0 ei 0>
           OH no  listen:IMP:2SG no way            no
           'Oh no, no way. No.'

3 H:                               [ @ @      ]

4 E:       .hh ei ma akka  tulema. hh
              NEG I start come:SUP
              'I won't do that.'

5          (0.2)

6 H:       no muidu     mis, e saite      oma  laua
           NO otherwise what  get:IMF:2PL your table:GEN
           'NO what else, did you receive'

7          kätte    vä.=
           hand:ILL QUES
           'your table yet?'

8 E:       laua       saime      kätte,  aga issand jumal
           table:GEN get:IMF:1PL hand:ILL but master god
           'We did receive the table, but good god'

9          tead e ke- täitsa  pakkides /---/
           know:2SG   totally package:PL:INS
           'y'know, totally packed /---/'
```

The turn in line 6 where the new topic is introduced, is initially formatted as a general inquiry 'what else?' but immediately proceeds to a confirmation question about table

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[5]   Bolden (2009) has analyzed the English preface *so* in similar actions and argued that these topics "emerge from incipiency". The *so*-preface may enact pending agendas as well as be used constitutively to characterize courses of actions as having been pending. This is functionally very close to the usage of Estonian *no(h)*-preface in example (4), as these topics do not contingently emerge from the immediately prior turn (see especially Bolden, 2009:992-994). However, there are also differences, such as the *no(h)*-prefaced actions not being perceived as delayed (cf. Bolden, 2009:977), and the interactional agendas not being left pending earlier, as is common in cases where the *so*-preface is used for resumption (Bolden, 2009:981-988). Also, in phone call openings the *so*-preface is deployed to manage non-routine movement from the opening to the first topic (Bolden, 2008) while the Estonian *no(h)*-preface is routinely used in reason-for-the-call turns between acquaintances, as will be shown below.

delivery. After a confirming answer, the mother launches into a longer telling about the assembly of the table.

The calls where topics are initiated on the basis of a longer shared history are all informal; they often have the maintenance of the relationship as their agenda, and therefore no pre-determined length either. Importantly, topic proffers claim the right to expect the other participant's engagement in the conversation beyond the current moment (even though they can of course be turned down). The participants in a social call always have a choice to terminate the call and every new topic initiation performs the opposite: it initiates a new sequence and displays the expectation that the other will cooperate. Among other things this indexes the right of the topic initiator to do so in the relationship between the current conversation partners. Displaying pre-existing and up-to-date knowledge about the other's life further re-enforces this assumption.

In contrast, topic initiations that are expected to be out of the blue and surprising for the recipient are designed with different prefaces, such as *kule*, approx. 'listen' (Keevallik 2003b: 53-74). These turns do not reveal shared knowledge. Example (9) shows a case where the *no(h)*-preface would not fit. This is a call between childhood friends who have not seen each other for more than ten years. Similar to examples (7) and (8), a sequence is coming to an end before the new initiation in lines (1-3) where E is resisting an inquiry by K about her current studies. After a very short pause, she instead asks a question that appears to be completely new in the context: what does K look like these days. In contrast to example (8), the question is formulated so as to not reveal any up-to-date knowledge of the recipient. Quite the contrary, it is asked from the position of an unknowing participant who lacks access to the current appearance of the question recipient. While both *no(h)* and *kule* occur as prefaces in new initiations, the former is used in actions within ongoing trajectories and continuous relationships, whereas *kule* does not.

(9, from Keevallik, 2003b:64)

```
1 E:      ei  räägi.
          NEG tell
          '(I) won't tell.'

2 K:      @@ <@ miks sa     ei  räägi. @>
               why  you:SG NEG tell
               'Why won't you tell?'

3 E:      mkmm. (.) .h kule          kas sa     oled
          no           hear:IMP:2SG QUES you:SG are:2SG
          'No. (.) listen, do you look'

4         umbes samasugune vä. kui ma sind
          about same       VÄ  if  I  you:SG:PRT
          'about the same? If I met you'

5         tänaval   näeks   s    ma tunneks      ära vä.
          street:ADS see:COND then I  recognize:COND ÄRA VÄ
          'in the street, would I recognize you?'
```

Besides turns whose contents reveal a joint history and shared knowledge, the *no(h)*-preface can be used in topic initial elicitors (Button and Casey, 1984) or topic proffers (Schegloff, 2007:169-171) among recurrent conversation partners. The elicitors constitute a slightly different but related kind of new initiations in conversation. Similar to all the above *no(h)*-prefaced cases, the preface here is the very first item in

the initiation of a new sequence, but it is the design of the entire turn that implies the expectation of the speaker that the other will comply with the elicitation or the proffer. The preface itself indicates that the following will in some sense follow a trajectory of accomplishing a routine across sequences, in contrast with others (such as *kule* 'listen' and *tead sa mis* 'you know what'; Keevallik, 2003) that would signal novelty or digression. Example (10) shows a case in point and is taken from the same call between the two sisters as (7). E has told about her birthday presents and the sequence comes to a close in lines 3 and 4. After that, K elicits a next topic, prefacing it with *no*.

```
(10)
1  K:      =<0 ausalt   jah 0> ja: sobis         ja  nii ja.=
                honestly yeah   and suit:IMF:3SG and so  and
                'Really, and it suited (you) and so.'

2  E:      jaa.=
                'Yeah.'

3  K:      =mhmh, [noo ] nii.
                'Uhuh, okay.'

4  E:             [mhmh]
                'Uhuh'

5  K:      .hh no mis  veel uudist   on      siis. räägi.
                NO what else news:PRT be:3SG SIIS  tell:IMP:2SG
                'NO what else is new? Tell (me).'

6  E:      .hhh kule midagi  erilist         ei  ole uudist, (.)
                KULE nothing particular:PRT NEG be  news:PRT
                'Well, there's no particular news.'

7          [m]a sain         oma grupi     käest e .hh ka,
            I   get:IMF:1SG own group:GEN from        too
            'I got a flower/plant from'

8  K:      [m]

9  E:      (.) ühe      lille,
                one:GEN flower:GEN
                'my group too.'
```

The question in line 1 concerns underwear that E received as a present. After a confirmation that they fit well, the sequence is closed. The following generic topic intitial elicitor in line 5 is prefaced by *no*. E complies after initial resistance ("no particular news"), and goes on to inform her sister about how her course-mates celebrated her birthday. Being the very first item in these kinds of turns, the *no(h)*-preface in a way accomplishes a transition to a new initiating action and possible sequence before the rest of the turn is produced.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the preface is redundant, as the question on its own in this position would have accomplished an identical action. The problem is actually a much broader one in linguistics, as this is similar to how several common conjunctions in language work. Even though 'and' is logically redundant in many contexts, we can define its coordinating function based on these very contexts and this is customarily done in grammars. Similar reasoning can be used for the analysis of particles such as *no(h)*. By scrutinizing the contexts where the particle is recurrent we can start to discover what it accomplishes. Preceding and especially following segments of talk and their relationship are reflected in the grammatical conjunctions

as well as discourse connectives and conversational particles. At the same time, it is not necessarily the case that the omission of a particle would render the action entirely different. Just like adding or omitting an 'and' between two sentences need not change our understanding of the relationship between them. Therefore, contrastive analyses of cases with and without the particle are not always helpful for elucidating the function of 'and' and *no(h)*. Instead, we should primarily locate contexts, sequence positions, and turn types where they never occur as opposed to where they are recurrent. Thereby we can reveal how they are involved in the design of certain kinds of conversational moves, but not necessarily changing them.

In summary, the frequent occurrence of cases such as (7),(8) and (10) show that *no(h)*-prefaced initiations imply an action trajectory that can be treated as not terminated, thereby accomplishing a continuing relationship between the current participants. *No(h)*-prefaced initiations also reflect the speaker's expectation that she can take up a recipient's time by continuing or initiating a longer trajectory of actions. In particular, the topic elicitation pattern demonstrates that the *no(h)*-preface is not specifically in the service of relating to prior action trajectories but instead it indexes continuity more generally. Thereby it implicitly characterizes a certain kind of human relationship where a longer social engagement beyond the current event entitles the participants to local involvement in each other's lives.

4. *No(h)*-prefacing in trajectory retrievals

Explicit marking of a connection with some prior event or turn by means of *no(h)* appears to be useful in the case of delay or potential ambiguity; in other words, problematic contexts where the connection may otherwise be jeopardized, such as across a distance. A similar argument has been made for the English *and* in conversation (Turk 2004), showing that interactional data may reveal why an explicit marking of a structural or topical relation with connectives/particles is sometimes socially warranted. In the two first sections of the paper we saw how the *no(h)*-preface is used in turns that index continuity of action across phone calls. The current section deals with a shorter time-span, when a topic and action trajectory is re-opened during a single call. The *no(h)*-preface again marks the shared basis for the upcoming action as well as defines it as warranted, but in these cases the continuity is achieved across intervening segments of talk.

Example (11) is a case in point. At the beginning of the phone call, P invites T to join her to go ice-skating, as shown in lines 1-6. This has occasioned an extremely long persuasion sequence where T has strongly resisted the idea, after which the two speakers have discussed an entirely different matter of cooking fish. This topic comes to an end in lines 9-12, where T explains that even if P had called him about the fish he would not have been available. After a long pause in line 15 P continues the earlier topic of ice-skating by asking for T's final decision. The question is prefaced by *noo*.

```
(11)
1  P:      <@ =vau   lähme   uisutama. @> @@=
               wow go:1PL skating
               'Wow, let's go skating.'

2  T:      =ää ei kaant. hhh kaant. hh
               no can't       can't
```

```
                            '(I) can't, (I) can't' ((mock English))

3  P:        <@ mis tähendab. @>
                what mean:3SG
                'What does that mean?'

4  T:        ei oska.
             NEG be.able
             '(I)'m not able to.'

5  P:        <@ äh õpetame. @>
                ÄH teach:1PL
                'Argh, we'll teach you.'

6  T:        ei saa h
             NEG can
             'Not possible.'

((27 lines of peruasion + the story of the fish omitted))

7  P:        =ja s   ma läksin     oopis  Mareti
              and then I  go:IMF:1SG instead NAME:GEN
             'And then I went to Maret's place instead'

8            juurde teda  küpsetama.
             at:ILL it:PRT cook:SUP
             'to cook it.'

9  T:        kurat jah, a:  noh, täendab vaet
             damned yeah but NOH  mean:3SG difference:PRT
             'Damn yeah, well, I mean it wouldn't have'

10           poleks      ond.  ku sa oeks    elistand ka,
             NEG:be:COND be:PPT if you be:COND call:PPT too
             'made any difference if you'd called.'

11           täendab  mul  oli       telefon teises
             mean:3SG I:ADS be:IMF:3SG phone   other:INS
             'I mean, I had the phone in another'

12           toas,   ma poeks         kuulnud (mida[gi].]
             room:INS I  NEG:be:COND hear:PPT nothing
             'room, I wouldn't have heard (anything).'

13 P:                                            [aa::].
                                                  'Ohh.

14           h jajaja.
             'yeah yeah yeah.'

15           (1.7)

16 P:        ↑noo:, mis  sa  otsustad  sis.=
              NOO   what you decide:2SG SIS
             'NOO, what's your decision?'

17 T:        =prprprrrr. hhh kurat e mm ma ei seisa
                             damned    I NEG stand
                            'Damn, I can't stand'

18           püsti  ma räägin. mai suuda siukest asja.=
             upright I tell:1SG I:NEG can  this   thing:PRT
             'upright, I'm telling (you). I can't do things like that.'
```

Since it comes after a long pause, line 16 could potentially have initiated the closure of the call. Here P chooses to retrieve an earlier trajectory that has implications for a possible future meeting between the two participants. This continuation across

distance is based on the shared understanding of ice-skating having been an earlier topic. Skating is not even mentioned in the current turn in line 16 and yet T is able to interpret the question and its agenda: he does not hear it as being about cooking the fish, he understands it to be about the reason for the call, the invitation to go ice-skating, as is evidenced in his turn in 17 and 18. This is an argument for characterizing *no(h)* as initiating a next relevant action in an earlier trajectory[6] and at the same time claiming reciprocal availability of a warrant for this particular action[7]. However, it is crucial to note that T does not necessarily share P's understanding that the topic has not yet been terminated. It is P who treats it as if she had not yet received a definitive refusal for the proposal, while the design of T's response, especially 'I'm telling you' underlines his different standpoint on the matter. Thus, the return to a prior topic does not have to be a joint project or one of mutual interest, even though T is then expected to cooperate in responding to the initiating action in the newly opened sequence. The topic has been retrieved and the action sequence re-topicalized.

At the same time, the *no(h)*-preface in example (11) also instantiates a break from the immediately prior turn and locally accomplishes a transition from one sequence to another, from talk about cooking the fish back to ice-skating. The *no(h)*-preface as the very first item in the turn may therefore also be claimed to display a disjunctive character. This is similar to what has been described for the Dutch resumption marker *maar* 'but' in Mazeland and Huiskes (2001). However, in the case of *maar* the return to a telling is problematic and can therefore be characterized as a *resumption*, while the *no(h)*-prefaced question in example (11) is formatted as a simple *continuation* of the earlier topic (cf. the differentiation made by Jefferson, 1972:319). According to Jefferson, in a resumption the speaker explicitly marks that there is a problem in accomplishing a return by using attention getters or misplacement markers, while continuations are directed to covering up the problem of non-contiguity. In the current case, the question in line 16 is not contiguous with the earlier talk on ice-skating but it is designed as a continuation of that topic.

Following this distinction, the *no(h)*-preface accomplishes an unproblematic continuation and specifically marks the turn as a relevant and warranted next action. It is thereby similar to conjunctions (such as *and* in English, Jefferson, 1972:319; Heritage and Sorjonen, 1994; Turk, 2004) and dissimilar from misplacement markers (such as *by the way* or *listen* in English, Jefferson, 1972:319; Sidnell, 2007 or *ota* in Estonian, Keevallik, 2003b: 126-140). The *no(h)*-preface is a straightforward connective that does not necessarily mark continuity with the immediately prior turn, or just some prior event. In example (10) the *no(h)*-prefaced turn accomplishes a continuation of a trajectory across an intervening sequence, and in (1,2,6) and (7,8) across different encounters. It instantiates a local transition while at the same time accomplishing topic and action continuity at another level. Out-of-the-blue questions and announcements cannot be prefaced by *no(h)*. Crucially, a transition with the *no(h)*-preface is not competitive. It is not used for breaking into ongoing turns or action trajectories, as many misplacement markers do. Instead, it is typically used after the immediately prior topic has been closed down, and often also after an ensuing pause, as was evident in example (11). By considering its usage across longer sequences we have been able to carve out these more specific details of function.

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[6]   In comparison, a return to the main business or earlier topic after a pause has also been registered among the functions of the Finnish *no*-preface (Raevaara, 1989:150).

[7]   The author is grateful to Harrie Mazeland for this point.

5. Initiating a next action as warranted in a sequence

Finally, the *no(h)*-preface can be used in questions that emerge topically from the immediately prior turn. In this sequential position it initiates an action that is one of the possible or relevant next actions. The whole turn topicalizes some content and marks it as a talkable. Crucially, this pattern seems to provide a final clue to the function of turn-initial *no(h)* in initiating actions, that is, its ability to unproblematically and routinely tie the impending action to a prior action and mark the upcoming action as warranted. All of the above examples demonstrating the use of the preface reflect variations on this basic function. The examples in this section concern short-distance transitions.

In example (12) the *no(h)*-prefaced question is based on the immediately prior turn. A is talking to his adult son and inquiring about his family life. The son offers some information about their day in lines 5 through 8 and A reacts to the news provided in the first part of the report - that the son's family had been looking for wallpaper. As the reaction token *ahhaa* in line (9) shows, this information was new and even surprising to him (Keevallik, 1999; Kasterpalu and Keevallik, 2010). In overlap with *ahhaa*, H continues to provide additional information about their day.

```
(12)
1 A:     mis e (.) su       pere   ei̱la     tegi      sis.
         what      you:GEN family yesterday do:IMF:3SG SIS
         'What did your family do yesterday?'

2 H:     kule          ei̱le     ei̱le     oota.
         listen:IMP:2SG yesterday yesterday wait:IMP:2SG
         'Well yesterday, yesterday. Wait,'

3        mi̱s  me eile     tegime.
         what we yesterday do:IMF:1PL
         'What did we do yesterday.'

4 A:     no ma e̱listasin:, keegi  ei  võtt va̱sta.
         NO I  call:IMF:1SG nobody NEG answer
         'Well, I called, nobody answered.'

5 H:     aa õ̱ige, pä̱eval käisime    se̱da
         oh right day:ADS go:IMF:1PL this:PRT
         'Oh right, during the day we were looking'

6        (0.3)

7 H:     tape̱eti       otsimas      endal.
         wallpaper:PRT look:SUP:INS own:ALL
         'for wallpaper for ourselves.'

8        [ja  õhtu    käi]sime   kü̱las.
          and evening go:IMF:1PL visit:INS
         'and in the evening we visited (friends).'

9 A:     [ahha̱a.          ]
         'Oh!'

10 A:    noh saite       ka̱  sis ve.
         NOH get:IMF:2PL too SIS QUES
         'NOH did you find (any)?'
```

```
11 H:        kule:,     e v ei saandki.
             listen:IMP:2PL NEG get:PPT:KI
             'Well, no we didn't.'
```

The *noh*-prefaced question is produced after the termination of H's turn but it locates a particular earlier piece of information in it as newsworthy. It is not contiguous with the relevant segment of the narrative, which may be part of the reason for the preface use; it marks continuity across some other matters. Crucially, A builds his question formally on a specific part of the prior turn, it can only be understood in relation to the statement about the search for wallpaper. As shown in line 11, H hears it just like that.

Questions that organically arise from some prior claim are a typical position for the *no(h)*-preface. The *no(h)*-preface is usable when there is a shared basis for the upcoming question, such as the newly shared information on the son's family having been looking for wallpaper. By treating the prior turn as news like this, which warrants further interest from the recipient, and as part of assessing and elaborating on the news, clarification questions can be asked (Maynard 1997: 115-117). The *no(h)*-prefaced elaboration question did not emerge out of the blue. It was action-wise as well as topically and formally built on a prior statement, among other things via the implied grammatical object. At a more general level, this suggests that the *no(h)*-preface indexes joint interactional history between the current participants, which frames the impending action as warranted. The focused question in (12) promotes the ongoing activity and accomplishes a next relevant action. Simultaneously, it initiates a new question-answer sequence. We have seen a similar topical/activity continuation function combined with a sequential initiation in the above sections of the paper.

Finally, example (13) illustrates that the *no(h)*-prefaced turn after a news delivery need not be an elaboration question but can be any type of warranted action. In (13) the announcement about new clothes (in lines 1 and 2) occasions an invitation for a visit, which is prefaced by *no(h)*. An invitation is yet another type of initiative action that makes relevant a different response. The focus turn, the response to the news delivery starts with a newsmarker *aa* 'oh' and continues immediately with a *no(h)*-prefaced invitation.

(13)
```
1  M:       ema      ostis       mulle pluusi?    püksid
            mother buy:IMF:3SG I:ALL shirt:GEN trousers
            'Mother bought me a shirt, a pair of trousers'

2           ja: vesti,
            and waistcoat
            'and a waistcoat.'

3  P:       aa. no tule       eputama.
            oh  NO come:IMP show.off:SUP
            'Oh! NO come and show off (then)?'

4  M:       noo ma peaks      jah,
            NOO I  must:COND yeah
            'Well, I should, yeah.'
```

In the last two examples the relevant action trajectory for the *no(h)*-prefaced turn had just been launched between the speakers, in contrast with earlier cases showing action development across longer distances. In the current examples, one of the speakers provided the other with new information that could be used to promote the

conversation, and the other marked it as a talkable matter, explicitly tying a next relevant action to the prior one with the preface *no(h)*. A *no(h)*-preface is recurrent in initiating actions that build on news deliveries, where further interest-implying action is warranted. We can thus see a systematicity of the preface use in cases where a participant treats a prior action trajectory as not terminated and worth developing. The preface is especially useful in instances when the continuity of an action trajectory is otherwise jeopardized, such as across segments of talk on other topics, over longer periods of time, and especially across encounters.

What the current section aimed to show is that the *no(h)*-prefaced turns are indeed contingent on the interactional trajectories so far. Here we had immediate access to these earlier trajectories since the *no(h)*-prefaced turns were almost adjacent to them. In cases like (12) and (13), it is the default assumption that upcoming turns build on what has just happened and that they are warranted by the ongoing trajectories. However, the capacity of the *no(h)*-prefaced turns to mark the contingency of action can also be implemented across longer distances, including separate encounters, as was shown in sections 2 and 3. It is in these cases that the turn design with *no(h)* realizes its full potential in accomplishing the impending action as warranted by an earlier action trajectory. The *no(h)*-prefaced turns contribute to the progression of the conversation by initiating a sequence and at the same time grounding it in the continuous relationship where the events of engagement constitute a longer succession and build larger trajectories of action.

6. Conclusion

The paper argued that in addition to arranging sequential matters or marking a relationship with the just prior turn, turn-beginnings can be used to accomplish action trajectories across encounters. It discussed the turn-initial particle *no(h)* in Estonian and its role in sequence initiations in phone calls. In this sequentially limited position, the particle was shown to be involved in accomplishing topic and sequence development beyond the current event and thereby indexing a continuing relationship between the participants. The proof for this was found in the design, action type and content of the turns, where a large amount of shared knowledge was assumed or revealed, even in phone call openings. The *no(h)*-preface is extensively used in cases where the participants have an ongoing engagement with each other, so that initiating turns are designed as continuing earlier business, indicating that the current phone call is but one in a series of encounters.

As is common to conjunctions, connectives, and particles, their functional analysis was based on the context, as well as preceding and subsequent talk. Particles and their contexts are in a symbiotic relationship; they make larger linguistic-conversational structures salient but do not necessarily change them. These kinds of items can nevertheless be routine parts of actions and accomplish specific sequential structures, so that participants recognize them as doing exactly that and deploy them in a regular manner, avoiding other contexts. Proof of this was supplied by the lack of *no(h)*-prefaced initiations in single-event institutional encounters, but also by their absence in out-of-routine actions and out-of-the-blue topic initiations.

The aim of the paper was not to scrutinize all the different functions of the particle in

various turn-positions and sequential environments, which abound and most of which have yet to be analyzed. Interestingly, a number of other languages display phonologically similar particles, including the genetically related Finnish, but also others (Dutch, Hebrew, Russian), only some of which have historically been in any major contact with Estonian. However, it is remarkable for Estonian that an item that has never functioned as a conjunction or adverb can be used as a turn-initial connective within and across human encounters. Functionally somewhat similar conversational particles reported in the literature include the Dutch 'but' (Mazeland and Huiskes, 2001), the English 'and' (Heritage and Sorjonen, 1994), 'so' (Bolden, 2008, 2009), 'anyway' (Lenk, 1998:53-100), and the Korean 'but, and, so' (Park, 1999). All of them are usable in a grammatically conjunctive or adverbial function in the respective languages, while the Estonian *no(h)* has always only functioned as a pragmatic particle.

To summarize its function in initiating actions, the *no(h)*-preface is a component of turn-design that is used to index the relationship to the current interlocutor as continuous and to show that the participants are in the middle of an ongoing action trajectory or a relationship which legitimizes the impending actions, inquiries and elicitations. The *no(h)*-preface signals that the upcoming action is a warranted next in an action trajectory that is thereby defined as not terminated. It claims an informed relationship between the participants and the speaker's right to expect recipient involvement in the locally upcoming conversational sequence as part of their continued long-term engagement. The Estonian *no(h)*-preface thereby works for the continuity of human activities and relationships across time.

Transcription conventions

<u>underlining</u>	– emphasis
-	– truncation
[ ]	– overlaps; timing of embodied action
<0 0>	– sotto voce
=	– latching of turns
(0.5)	– pause length in tenths of a second
(.)	– micropause
:	– lengthening of a sound
@	– a laughter syllable
.h	– breathing in
(m)h	– breathing out
boldface	– the focused turn in the excerpt
.	– pitch fall at the end of an intonation unit
?	– pitch rise at the end of an intonation unit
,	– level pitch at the end of an intonation unit
-	– unfinished intonation unit
↑	– sharp rise in tone
(not in Estonian)	– the part is not expressed in the Estonian version
/---/	– continuation of the turn left out

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	– person

ADS	– adessive
ALL	– allative
COMP	– comparative
COND	– conditional
ELT	– elative
ESS	– essive
GEN	– genitive
ILL	– illative
IMP	– imperative
IMS	– impersonal
IMF	– imperfect
INS	– inessive
KI	– clitic
NAME	– name
NEG	– negation
PL	– plural
PPT	– past participle
PRT	– partitive
QUES	– question particle
SG	– singular
SUP	– supinum
TER	– terminative
TRA	– translative
Other capital letters, e.g. SIS, ÄH	– an untranslatable particle

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