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B-event statements as vehicles for two interactional practices in police interactions with suspects/witnesses

Discourse Studies

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journals.sagepub.com/home/dis**Marijana Cerović**

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Abstract

B-events are matters which are better known to listeners than to speakers. This paper studies the detectives' use of B-event statements in two different environments in their interactions with suspects/witnesses. The first type of environment are relatively co-operative sequences during which the aim is the reconstruction of events and constructing the record; here, B-event statements are realised as confirmation seeking questions. The second type of environment, a hostile interactional environment, is composed of argumentative sequences in which detectives aim to determine who are the perpetrators of crimes; in these sequences, the detectives' B-event statements are realised as accusations. While performing the two activities, the detectives signal different epistemic levels and stances at the turn level. Thus, the former B-event statements are mostly epistemically downgraded, while the latter are mostly upgraded, in order to facilitate undertaking these different activities during police questioning.

Keywords

Accusation, B-events, confirmation, conversation analysis, detectives, police interaction, Serbo-Croatian

Introduction

A number of scholarly disciplines and perspectives have dealt with 'the social organisation(s) of knowledge, and the manifestations of those organisations in language and in interaction' (Drew, 2018a). The matter of epistemics has so much engaged the interest of linguistic scholars that it has even produced debates on how important the

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claims and distributions of knowledge are in shaping interaction. Recently two opposing views have been established: those who downgrade the role of epistemics in interaction (Lindwall et al., 2016; Lynch and Macbeth, 2016; Lynch and Wong, 2016; Macbeth and Wong, 2016; Macbeth et al., 2016), and those who propose that epistemic fine-tuning is one of the most important interactional segments which largely shapes and motivates human communication (Bolden, 2018; Clift and Raymond, 2018; Drew, 2018a, 2018b; Heritage, 2018; Maynard and Clayman, 2018; Raymond, 2018).

Epistemicity has to do with how speakers express their state of and access to knowledge in relation to what they are speaking about. Each speaker ‘owns’, or can claim to own, a certain epistemic domain (Stivers and Rossano, 2010) – territories of knowledge which ‘embrace what is known, how it is known, and persons’ rights and responsibilities to know it’ (Heritage, 2012a: 5 and 6). Furthermore, the study of epistemics has yielded a distinction between epistemic status and epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012a, 2012b; Heritage and Raymond, 2005, 2012). Heritage (2012a: 6) states: ‘If epistemic status is conceived as a relatively enduring feature of social relationships vis a vis an epistemic domain, epistemic stance by contrast concerns the moment-by-moment expression of these relationships, as managed through the design of turns at talk’. About epistemic stance, Heritage and Raymond (2012) further propose the notion of an epistemic gradient which is the level of knowledge the speaker claims to possess at a certain point of sequential development. They explain that the epistemic gradient is most obvious in questioning in interaction; a speaker asking a question claims a lack-of-information, and is therefore proposing to be in a ‘not-knowing’ K- position. While doing so, he/she claims that the addressee has this information and that therefore he/she is positioned as K+. As Heritage (2012a) explains, epistemic stance is in English prominently expressed through different grammatical realisations of propositional content. Hence, three different forms: ‘Are you married?’, ‘You’re married, aren’t you?’ and ‘You’re married’ have the same propositional content, but embody different epistemic K-/K+ gradients, the first being most obviously K-, while the other two formats claim some knowledge on the part of the speaker. Given the variety of available epistemic resources, speakers constantly manage and negotiate their relative levels of knowledge so that the matter of primacy to knowledge is evidenced in their answers/responses to questions (Heritage and Raymond, 2012), as well as in their turn design (Heritage, 2012a). Speakers are also found to be opening interactional sequences when there is an imbalance of information and closing them when epistemic equilibrium is achieved (Heritage, 2012b).

Declaratives can also incorporate varying degrees of claimed knowledge. Labov and Fanshel classify statements according to the shared knowledge involved as:

A-events: known to A, but not to B.

B-events: known to B, but not to A.

AB events: known to both A and B.

O-events: known to everyone present.

D-events: known to be disputable.

(Labov and Fanshel, 1977: 100).

B-events are usually heard as requests for confirmation. Thus, in the following examples – ‘And he is a builder’ (Raymond, 2009: 94) and ‘And you never called the police’ (Labov and Fanshel, 1977: 101) ‘Y:up’ and a simple ‘No’ were produced to conform to the positive/negative polarity of the FPP declaratives. On both occasions the listeners treat the statements as confirmation-seeking requests. Pomerantz (1980) makes a similar distinction to that of Labov and Fanshel, contrasting Type 1 knowables which speakers have rights and obligations to know, with Type 2 knowables – ‘those that subject-actors are assumed to have access to by virtue of the knowings being occasioned’ (p.187), for instance for having heard/been told/found out.

A number of studies have explored these concepts of epistemicity, including investigating those interactional practices through which interlocutors enter their co-participants’ epistemic space. Heritage and Raymond (2005) and Raymond (2009) indicate that stating things about others is closely connected with the management of social relations. For instance, offering a first position assessment carries an implied claim that the speaker has rights to evaluate the matter assessed (Heritage and Raymond, 2005). So, while they are managing their socio-epistemic rights, the speakers formulate assessments as unmarked, downgraded or upgraded. Tag-questions, for instance, are used for downgrading assessments and indicating that the interlocutor has primary access to the matter discussed. Raymond (2009) shows how the so called Health Visitors whose job is to monitor the health of new mothers and babies display a constant observance of the socio-epistemic rights. They do so by ‘downgrading’ (by means of Y/N interrogatives, e.g. ‘Did you have (a) good pregnancy’.) and ‘upgrading’ (B-event statements, e.g. ‘You’re breast-feeding’) their claimed knowledge to fit their position of health professionals or those who at certain points dare not invade the personal space of their patients.

The statements regarding the matter which falls within the other’s epistemic domain are also reported as important tools for undertaking different actions in institutional settings. For instance, Tsuchia (2017) shows how AB-event assertions in Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) are used to manage the communication and other-select a next speaker during casual office lunch meetings. Ekström et al. (2019) indicate that stating knowledge about the clients’ circumstances is a resource in interviewing people seeking welfare benefits. Williams et al. (2019) report that Type 2 knowables can be used as a resource to prompt reminiscences in dementia patients, and so on. The current study builds on the body of research on the institutional use of statements about the matter which is in the interlocutors’ epistemic domain. More precisely, it explores detectives’ use of B-event statements as they perform their institutional tasks through verbal interaction.

B-events in the context of police interviews and interrogations

The matter of epistemics is particularly important when it comes to certain types of institutional work, such as the fulfilment of law enforcement and legal tasks. These are the contexts within which determining the truth is one of the principal institutional endeavours (see for instance Komter, 2003). At the outset of each police case, there is an epistemic divide (Kidwell, 2009) between the officers and the witnesses/suspects, so that filling in the epistemic gaps enables the completion of the initially set institutional goals.

However, if ‘searching for the truth’ is contrary to the interests of the questioned parties, the accomplishment of such institutional tasks may be met with substantial resistance, especially when there is not much other evidence, based on the fact that the participants in the illegal activity have first-hand experience and entitlement to knowledge of the case (Komter, 2003; White, 2019). In this process of determining who knows what, frequent claims of knowledge which contradict the suspects’ versions are also made by police officers (Carter, 2011). Another important knowledge-based phase in the completion of law enforcement/legal institutional tasks is the construction of police records which are the foundation of the success or failure of the criminal case (Komter, 2002). The police records represent a corpus of knowledge on which the council, prosecution and defence later base their institutional activities in court (see Drew, 1992; Maxwell and Drew, 1979). In sum, law enforcement/legal activities rely heavily on various epistemic layers which are inherent to these institutional settings.

In this paper I consider two interactional practices both of which utilise epistemic claims as vehicles in the completion of institutional police tasks. I study how the detectives’ B-event statements, claiming knowledge of certain events or state of affairs, are realised as different actions in two different environments in which they occur. The first type is a relatively co-operative environment, occurring for instance in cases where the suspect has already admitted the offence, or during record-composing phases of questioning. The second type is a hostile environment involving resistance on the part of the recipient/witness towards the epistemic claim made about his/her affairs. I also focus on the detectives’ signalling of knowledge at the turn level, and on how strong the claims of knowledge are in the two environments.

The following two extracts contain instances of the two practices. Extract 1 is taken from a case in which the suspect has previously admitted to the crime and the B-event statement is met with no resistance on the part of the suspect.

Extract 1
Euros_the_s_off_2008 (0.21)

| | | | | | |
|---|------|--|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Dt1: | ti, nijesi vidio,- | >nači | nijes’ | brojo novac.<= |
| | | you, didn’t see, - | >(it)means | (you)didn’t count | money.<= |
| | | <i>you didn’t see- so you didn’t count the money</i> | | | |

2 Sus: =ne
=no
no

3 Dt1: al si- otprilike si mogo znati.=
but AUX(you-) approximately AUX could know.=
but you could tell offhand

4 Dt1: = je li bila >novčanica od pesto< eura.
= AUX QP was >banknote of five-hundred< Euros.
was there a five-hundred-Euro banknote

5 Sus: jes:=
yes:=
yes

6 Dt1: = e.>nači, < oprilike: neku sumu(.) moram navesti.
 = e.>(it)means,< approximately: some sum(.) (I)have to report.
ok so some sum of money I have to report

This extract is taken from an interview with a suspect who has admitted to stealing money from an aggrieved party in his neighbourhood. The interview is conducted with an aim of putting the information on record. In line 1, the detective launches and then cuts off the first statement, following which he produces another one, a B-event statement, by means of which he states what kind of activity the suspect undertook following the theft. As the suspect has already admitted to the crime and both parties are in agreed K+ positions, the B-event statement is produced in order to seek confirmation in the process of reconstructing the course of events and putting them on record (see line 6). And as seen in line 2, the suspect affirms by producing a negative answer in order to fit the detective's negatively framed statement from line 1. Extract 1 illustrates therefore a co-operative interactional environment, one perceived by the person being questioned, the suspect, as non-threatening.

Another type of B-event are realised in a hostile environment, as direct accusations. In these situations the detective claims to be in K+ position concerning the suspect's activities, while the suspect also claims K+, but proposes an alternative and competing state of affairs.

Extract 2
 Pots_the_s_inf_2008 (36.31)

1 Dt2: teleVI:zor bolan, televizor >si odnio< otud.
 teleVI:sion sick, television >AUX(you) took < (from)there.
the TV set, you took the TV set from that place man

2 (.)

3 Sus: ea- e ni:sam. ne mogu reć da jesam,
 b- but NOT(I)AUX NOT(I)can say that (I)AUX,
b- but I didn't I can't say that I did

4 kad nisam [()]
 when(I)NOT AUX[()]
when I didn't

5 Dt2: [pa COO Company.]
 [so COO Company.]
then the COO Company

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 6 | Coo Company >kad ste< provalili |
|---|---------------------------------|

Coo Company >when AUX(you)< (in)broke
when you broke in the Coo Company

(0.1)

7 Sus: vid- nisam ja bio u Coo Company.
 se- NOT(I)AUXI was in Coo Company.
 lo- I wasn't at the Coo Company

The suspect has previously admitted to having committed several petty thefts, but denies several others to which the detectives are linking him, including the break-in that is the subject of questioning here, when the detective states that the suspect stole a TV set from a specific location (line 1). This is again a B-event which in the argumentative environment of determining the yet unknown culprit is realised as an accusation. A similar B-event statement is launched in line 6 via a subordinate temporal clause. Each of the statements is countered by the suspect with denials, in lines 3/4 and 7, respectively. The suspect opposes the damaging statements about his own affairs from the position whereby he is the one who has primary access to his own past actions.

This paper further explores the two interactional practices presented above and the activities accomplished thereby. I first identify the questioning environments for each of the activities, following which I focus on the turn organisation of the detectives' FPP B-event statements. For each type of the statements I then study the turn elements through which speakers signal their epistemic levels and stances. Finally, I focus on the interlocutors' treatment of B-events in the two interactional environments.

Data and methodology

The data – police interactions with suspects and witnesses – were collected at a local police station in Montenegro in 2008. The language is a Slavic language spoken in Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia (the official name of the language in Montenegro is Montenegrin-Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian). The language is also referred to as Serbo-Croatian in the Western linguistics and this name will be used for the purposes of this study. The research method used is Conversation Analysis (CA). The data set consists of 24 interviews with suspects and witnesses, ranging in length from 2:28 to 61:01 minutes, giving a total of 6 hours and 51 minutes of recorded conversations. They are frequently multi-party events, including, when required by law, a lawyer and often there is more than one detective in the office. In most of these interviews/interrogations, detectives first talk informally to the suspects/witnesses without composing the records. After this phase, questioning covers the same ground but this time questioning is conducted more formally, and the official record is typed up by a typist or typed/written down by a detective. The 'informal' and 'official' modes of the interviews were particularly useful for tracking information mentioned for the second or third time and thus for studying the speakers' epistemic signalling of information already given in prior talk.

Detectives' FPP B-event statements in non-hostile, cooperative sequences

Heritage and Raymond (2005) demonstrate how in various types of interaction people display sensitivity as to when to claim or cede epistemic rights while performing their activity of evaluating the matter at hand. They indicate that this management of who has the right to state certain matters involves a complex face-work which is displayed through constant upgrading and downgrading of assessments. In the context of police inquiry the management of epistemic rights and responsibilities is heavily affected by the fact that this type of interaction has a pre-allocated turn-taking system (Komter, 2005) where it is the detectives' right to 'ask' questions which suspects and witnesses are obliged to 'answer'. In this context of institutional asymmetry (Chevalier and Moore, 2015), the detectives make epistemic claims more frequently than suspects. Additionally, in their

bid to complete their institutional tasks, their epistemic claims may not always accord with their epistemic status.

When making statements about suspects/witnesses' affairs, detectives can index their epistemic levels both by downgrading and upgrading elements. As I will show, the epistemic indexing at the turn level is closely connected with the nature of the forwarded action. Thus, detectives' statements about suspects' actions in admitted cases and non-hostile, co-operative sequences are overwhelmingly downgraded, ceding epistemic rights to the suspect/witness. Therefore, they are mainly realised as questions which seek confirmation of the detectives' understanding of the interlocutors' activities or a particular course of events.

Extract 3 provides an example of a detective's downgraded statement about a witness's affairs. The extract is taken from an interview with a witness who was allegedly persuaded by an acquaintance to be a guarantor for his bank loan. The loan-taker subsequently failed to repay the loan, so that a substantial part of it was deducted from the guarantor's salary in monthly instalments. In this extract Dt1 is trying to establish the exact amount of money the witness had to pay back to the bank.

Extract 3

Gipsy_forg_w_off_2008 (20.18)

- 1 Dt1: ne može bit DVIje godine.=
not can be Two years.=
it can't be two years
- 2 Wtn: =dvije[godine]
=two [years]
two years
- 3 Dt1: [kad je] KREdit podignut u: maju 2006.
[when AUX] CREdit raised in: may 2006.
when the loan was taken in May 2006
- 4 (0.3)
- 5 Wtn: °ne znam bogomi° računa j drugi mjesec
°not (I)know by gOD° (you)count second month
I don't know by God count that this is the second month
- 6 što mi se ne odBIJA, (.)dosad mi se odbijo.
what me REFL not deduct, (.) (by)now(to)me REFL (it)deducted.
that the deductions stopped it's been deducted from me by now
- 7 (0.1)
- 8 Wtn: samo DVA >mjeseca< mi se nije od[bijo]
only TWO >months< (to)me REFL not de[deducted]
it's been only two months that the deductions stopped
- 9 Dt1: [nači¹]
[(it)means]
so

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----|--------|---------|----|----|-------|----------|-----|------|
| 10 | oko | dviije | hiljade | ti | je | ne() | odbijeno | °je | li°= |
|----|-----|--------|---------|----|----|-------|----------|-----|------|
- around two thousand (to)you AUX so() deducted °AUX QP°=
around two thousand has been ()deducted from you is it²
- 11 Wtn: = e tu neđe bogami. ne znam ti BRAtē
 =yes there somewhere by god. not(I)know (to)you BROther
yes something like that by God I don't know man
- 12 (0.1) eto bogomi
 (0.1) there by god
there by God

In lines 1 and 3 the detective expresses his doubts about the 2000 Euros the witness claims to have paid off. He marks the suspect's claim as impossible by quoting the month and the year in which the loan was taken out. In response, the witness clarifies the timeline of deductions by stating that the deductions stopped 2 months prior (lines 5–8); the detective realises that the witness's estimate of a 2-year long payment is about right. In order to reconfirm the established facts, the detective formulates his turn in lines 9 and 10 as a statement regarding the witness's payments, doing so by prefacing his statement by 'nači', literally '(it) means' (translated here as 'so' due to its anaphoric cohesive feature and a tendency to 'summarise and evaluate the interviewee's previous responses in a way that expects or assumes agreement', Johnson, 2002). Thus, the detective uses 'nači' to signal a sum-up mode and then summarises the prior witness's claim in a statement 'oko dviije hiljade ti je ne () odbijeno' (*around two thousand has been () deducted from you*) to which he appends a confirmation seeking 'je li' (*is it*). The detective's B-event statement is both prefaced and finalised by downgrading elements, that is, the sum-up element indicates the introduction of already given information (as seen from prior turns), while 'je li' seeks confirmation of the matter which is in the witness's epistemic domain. In line 11 the witness complies as he latches his affirmation, following which he elaborates, obviously because he has not calculated the exact sum he had paid off. Following their mutual agreement, the detective goes on to write down the established information (not included in the extract above).

Detectives may formulate their statements in similarly epistemically downgraded ways, though without one of the downgrading initial and final elements featured above. A case in point is Extract 4 below, taken from a conversation related to a factory theft case. A substantial number of copper parts were stolen from a local factory; the detective here is talking to a factory guard in order to reconstruct the course of events and the workers' activity prior to the theft.

Extract 4

Guard_fthe_s_inf_2008 (4.00)

- 1 Dt2: a sa ti mene reci,(0.2) spo- jesi ti vidio da sa spoljne
 and now you (to)me tell,(0.2) out- AUX you saw that from out
and now tell me out- did you see if there was
- 2 strane, da je žica bila.
 side, that AUX wire was.
wire on the outside

3 (0.1)

4 Sus: >°jesam° <
>°(I)did°<
I did

5 (0.3)

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-----------|
| 6 Dt2: >nači | čitavo vrijeme u | [tvojoj] | smjeni<,- |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-----------|

>(it)means all time in [your] shift <,-
so all the time in your shift

7 Sus: [da]ovako žica (bila)
[yes]like this wire (was)
yes the wire was like this

| | | | |
|--------------|------|---------------|-----------|
| 8 Dt2: znači | niko | nije mogao da | [uđe:,] |
|--------------|------|---------------|-----------|

(it) means no one not could to [come in:,]
so no one could come in

9 Sus: [ne]
[no]
no

In line 1 Dt2 begins to establish the facts about the state of the entrance to the factory hall prior to the theft; via a polar interrogative, he seeks the guard's confirmation of the proposition that he visually perceived the factory hall door was closed. The guard indicates his agency in seeing, by means of a verb repetition – 'jesam' (*I did*). Subsequently, Dt2 prefaces his turn in line 6 by 'nači' (*so*), thereby beginning summing up about the door being closed, additionally intensified by 'čitavo vrijeme' (*all the time*). In overlap with the detective's formulation, the guard re-affirms (line 7), and by a partial repetition together with the added element 'ovako' (*like this*) claims his primary epistemic access to the state of the entrance. Following this, in line 8, Dt2 seeks another confirmation by means of a statement which incorporates the inference – if the door was closed, then nobody could enter the factory. One can note that 'znači' (*so*) again fronts the statement 'niko nije mogao da uđe:' (*no one could come in*) and points back at the premise based on which the inference is drawn. The statement in line 8 is negatively framed and the guard provides a well-fitted affirmation by means of a 'ne' (*no*) in line 9, again in an overlap with Dt2's ending turn. The witness's treatment of the statements about activities which are in his epistemic domain indicate clearly his primary access to the matter (his response in line 7), though without treating the detective's questions as threatening (his prompt, aligning responses).

The detectives' statements about the interviewee's affairs in non-hostile sequences are sometimes formulated without the downgrading TCUs, but the interviewee nevertheless treats these statements as confirmation seeking and non-hostile. Extract 5 below, from the 'official' interview with the same guard, contains an instance of a 'statement' which is not epistemically downgraded, at least lexically.

Extract 5
Guard_fthe_s_off_2008 (5.50)

| | | | |
|---|------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Dt1: | ti u TO:m VREmenu bivaš | cijelo vrijeme, [u-] |
| | | you in THA:t Time (you)are being all | time, [in-] |
| | | during that time you are being all the time at- | |

2 Sus: [da]
[yes]
yes
((squeak))

| | | |
|---|------|---------------------------|
| 3 | Dt1: | >na stražarskom mjestu.<= |
| | | >on guard place.<= |
| | | at the guard post |

4 Sus: =da:
=yes:
yes

Dt1 is trying to determine the timeline of events that took place prior to the factory theft, and in order to do so, he double checks the information with the guard before putting it on record. At the beginning of the turn in line 1, Dt1 covers the time of the guard's shift by 'u TO:m vremenu' (during that time) following which he produces a B-event statement in the narrative present –'bivaš cijelo vrijeme na stražarskom mjestu' (*you are being all the time at the guard post*) . He produces the statement about the suspect's activity during his shift without a preface or appendage, however, the absence of a downgrade is not perceived as intimidating by the suspect which is apparent from his prompt overlapping affirmation in line 2 and the latched one in line 4. The sequence has already been set up as a reconstruction of events, and the suspect treats the statement as a confirmation seeking question. Moreover, and crucially, whilst the detective's turn takes the grammatical form of a declarative, it is nevertheless an interrogative construction, so it embodies some degree of epistemic downgrading. It seems that a crucial aspect of declarative questions is that they are based on 'evidence' though not (usually) the speaker's first-hand experience. Hence, they cede epistemic primacy to the other.

Treatment of detectives' B-event statements in non-hostile, co-operative sequences

Entering somebody's epistemic space by stating things which are in his/her epistemic domain may be expected to be invasive, an invasiveness that is oriented to and thereby visible in the recipient's response. However, in the non-hostile sort of sequences considered here, the co-participants do not seem to mind or resist the invasion of their epistemic space. This is visible in the suspects'/witnesses' treatment of the detectives' statements, answering mostly 'yes' or 'no', depending on the polarity of the FPPs. Figure 1 shows the ways in which the detectives' FPP B-event statements are treated by the suspects/witnesses and their frequency.

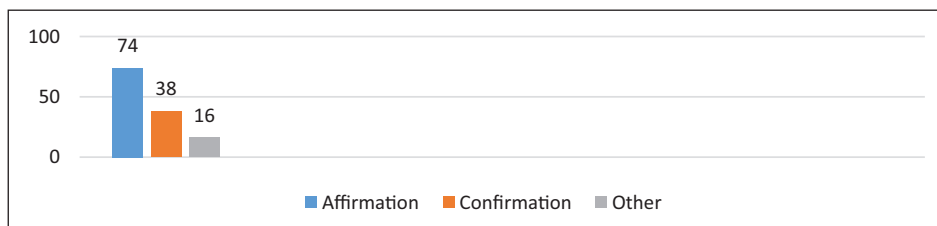


Figure 1. Treatment of detectives' declarative FPPs in non-hostile sequences.

The first bar represents the suspects'/witnesses' type-conforming answers (Raymond, 2003), that is, those which consist of or are fronted by 'yes' or 'no'. By means of such answers the suspects and witnesses affirm the propositions offered for validation through the detectives' statements. These are usually brief answers which are produced in accordance with the polarity of FPPs, as shown by Extracts 6 and 7. The suspect's answer to a positive statement with a tag in Extract 6 is simply 'da'(yes), while another suspect's answer to a negatively framed statement in Extract 7 is 'ne ne' (no no). Such answers are mostly unelaborated and short, and indicate that the suspects/witnesses accept the terms of the detectives' FPPs (i.e. questions).

Extract 6

Guard_fthe_s_off_2008 (30.33)

1 Dt1: poTO:M odla:ziš kući: jel?
 thE:N (you)g:o home: AUX QP?
then you go home is it?

((click))

2 Sus: da
 yes
 yes

Extract 7

Medo_fthe_s_inf_2008 (23.52)

1 Dt4: nači .hhh nači ni:je skinut svaki redom?
 (it)means .hhh (it)means notAUX removed every in turn?
so they were not removed in turn

2 (0.1)

| |
|--|
| 3 Sus: ne hh ne hh no hh no hh no no |
|--|

Somewhat less frequent are answers which do not contain overt 'yes' or 'no' items (represented by the second bar), but instead involve repetition. As reported by Heritage and Raymond (2012: 185), 'repetitional responses, in contrast to their type-conforming y/n counterparts, assert the respondent's epistemic and social entitlement in regard to the matter

being addressed and do so by ‘confirming’ rather than ‘affirming’ the proposition raised by the questioner’. In Extract 8 below the suspect treats the detective’s statement (downgraded by ‘je’l’) that the suspect was at home at a certain time as a confirmation-seeking question. The suspect confirms by twice producing the verb initially used by the detective – ‘bio bio’ (*I was I was*), following which he adds another indication of his primary epistemic access ‘kući kod mene’ (*at my home*). (On which occasions the suspects will claim their epistemic rights is a question which needs additional consideration elsewhere.)

Extract 8

Euros_the_s_off_2008 (8.16)

Dtl: >ti s BIO u kuću, < tada. jel=
>you AUX WAS in house,<then. AUX QP=
you were at home then is it

| | |
|------|-------------------------------|
| Sus: | =bio bio kući kod mene |
| | =was was home by me |
| | <i>I was I was at my home</i> |

A few instances of the detectives’ confirmation-seeking b-event statements in the corpus are not treated as affirmation/confirmation seeking. Instead, they are realised as no-uptake, negations + explanations, continuations and in two cases as avoidances to confirm.

Detectives’ B-event statements in non-hostile sequences: Activity

In sum, the B-events so far discussed occur in those sequences managed for the reconstruction of events, and therefore with the aim to establish a mutual understanding regarding those events. This is frequently done in service of the project of composing the official record (see e.g. Extracts 1, 3, 8 etc.). These ‘co-operative’ sequences often involve restating information which is already a part of the common ground. The detectives formulate these turns as grammatical declaratives which state things about the suspects/witnesses. As such, their formulations have a ‘shallow’ epistemic gradient (Heritage and Raymond, 2012) and claim speakers’ K+. Although they claim K+ positions, the detectives frequently downgrade these turns to cede epistemic rights or indicate a prior mention of information. These downgrading elements may contribute to the fact that the suspects/witnesses do not find them challenging. Instead, they treat them as confirmation seeking questions whose propositions they sometimes affirm by type-conforming y/n answers which indicate that the suspects/witnesses accept the terms of FPPs. Less frequently, they take up a more agentive role and confirm by repeating bits of the detectives’ FPPs.

Detectives’ FPP B-event statements in accusatory and hostile sequences

Detectives’ direct accusations are designed as statements about suspects’ actions. However, their turn design is somewhat different from the previously discussed confirmation-seeking statements. They may be prefaced by contrast or disagreement particles,

but almost never by the sum-up indicator ‘znači’³ (*so*). As a result, they are not so often downgrades, but are very frequently designed as K+ claims, as claims to knowledge. This suggests that attributing primary epistemic rights to the recipient, to the witness or even referring to information as mutually known, are not utilised or effective in hostile sequences, for example when accusing a suspect of wrongdoing.

Extract 9 takes us back to the factory theft and the questioning of the mechanic who the detectives believe was an accessory to the crime. The following six turns occur in an already established argumentative environment in which several detectives press the suspect to admit to the crime. Dt1’s opening turn (lines 1–3) is directly accusatory.

Extract 9

Suspect_fthe_s_inf_2008 (23.07)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|------|-----|-----|------------|-------|------|-----------|--|
| 1 | Dt1: | ma | TI: | si | ga | zadrŽA:VA: | doKLE | su, | odRA:dila | ekiPA:, |
| | | but | YOU: | AUX | him | keP:T: | unTIL | AUX, | woR:KE:d | off team:, |
| | | | | | | | | | | <i>but you were distracting him until the team completed</i> |

2 Sus: pa .hh a ka-[ka-]
well .hh and ho-[ho-]
well ho-

| | | |
|---|------|----------------|
| 3 | Dt1: | [POS]a:. |
| | | [JO]b:. |
| | | <i>the job</i> |

4 (.)

5 Sus: kako- znate li ljudi da je to moralo,
how- (you)know QP people that AUX that had to,
how- do you know people that it had to

6 (.)>se radit dva tri< sata.
(.)>REFL do two three< hours.
be done two to three hours

The detective’s turn in lines 1–3 is initiated by a particle ‘ma’ (approximately meaning *but*), by means of which the detective already signals opposition to something in the suspect’s prior talk. Following the marker ‘ma’, the detective produces a statement, certain parts of which he pronounces with stress and increased loudness, thereby creating an air of intimidation. By stating ‘TI:si ga zadrŽA:VA:’ (*you were distracting him*), Dt1 claims to know the exact role of the suspect in the criminal activity, i.e. the suspect was distracting the guard, enabling the theft to be carried out. As in confirmation seeking statements, Dt1 here enters the suspect’s epistemic space. However, he does not produce any downgrading elements to cede epistemic rights to the suspect; instead, his statement firmly claims his epistemic access to the event. He puts forward a proposition, the confirmation of which would incriminate the suspect, to which the suspect reacts as a violation of his epistemic space (*how do you know*). He first expresses ‘shock’ in line 2 visible in his dispreffering aspirated ‘pa’ (*well*) and his difficulty formulating his turn, finally constructed as a contra-argument based on his epistemic domain, that is, his knowledge about the

factory jobs (the dismantling of factory parts is a job which takes several hours) (lines 5 and 6) – thereby contesting the detective’s allegation about his complicity in the crime.

Another epistemically interesting feature of the accusatory B-event statements is that they are often linked to explicit statements of knowledge. As it is generally difficult to know what the actual epistemic status of speakers is, particularly in the context of police interrogations, what we can analyse here is rather detectives’ claimed epistemic stance (Arminen, 2005). In extract 10 below the detectives are trying to elicit the confession of a suspect who they believe broke into a local man’s home, stole some of his pots and sold them at a junkyard.

Extract 10

Pots_the_s_inf_2008 (1.15)

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|--------------|--------|
| 1 | Dt2: | nije | TA: | n | druGE | šerpe.>njegove | si | prodavo< | tamo. |
| | | notAUX | THAT: | but | othER | pots. >his | AUX(you) | sold< | there. |
| | | <i>not that one</i> | | <i>but other</i> | <i>pots you were</i> | <i>selling his</i> | | <i>there</i> | |
| | | (.) | | | | | | | |
-
- | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------|------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|----------|-------|
| 2 | slu:po | si | ih | zna:m | s | kim | si | bio. |
| | bro:ke | AUX(you) | them | (I)kno:w | with | who | AUX(you) | were. |
| | <i>you smashed</i> | <i>them</i> | | <i>I know</i> | <i>who you were</i> | <i>with</i> | | |
| | (.) | | | | | | | |
-
- | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------------|-------------|----------|--------|
| 3 | znam | s | kim | si | BIo.= |
| | (I)know | with | who | AUX(you) | WERe.= |
| | <i>I know</i> | <i>who you were</i> | <i>with</i> | | |
-
- | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------------------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| 4 | Dt1: | =jes | [prodo | to | Milo] |
| | | =AUX(you) | [sold | that | Milo] |
| | | <i>did you sell</i> | <i>it</i> | <i>Milo</i> | |
-
- | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|------|
| 5 | Dt2: | [TAMo | kad | te] | če-[ćuti |] |
| | | [THERe | when | you] | wai-[shut | up] |
| | | <i>when there</i> | <i>wai-</i> | <i>shut up</i> | | |
-
- | | | | | |
|---|------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| 6 | Sus: | [to | je | iz]Trading |
| | | [that | is | from]Trading |
| | | <i>it is from</i> | <i>Trading</i> | |
-
- | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| 7 | [| nijesam]prodo- |
| | [not | (I)AUX]sold- |
| | <i>I didn't</i> | <i>sell-</i> |
-
- | | | | |
|---|------|----------------|------|
| 8 | Dt2: | [ćuti |] |
| | | [shut | up] |
| | | <i>shut up</i> | |

Having first indicated that a certain set of stolen pots are not included in the allegation against him, Dt2 launches his accusations via two statements ‘>njegove si prodavo< tamo’ (*you were selling his there*) and ‘slu:po si ih’ (*you smashed them*) (lines 1–2).

Neither of these statements contains downgrading elements, so by designing them in such a way, Dt2 strongly claims his knowledge of what the suspect did with the pots. Dt2 subsequently backs up his claimed epistemic stance with an explicit statement of knowledge, 'zna:m s kim si bio'. (*I know who you were with*) (line 2). Dt2 reinforces this claimed epistemic stance through stating that he knows who the suspect was with during the illicit activity. This explicit display of epistemic status may also imply that the suspect's accomplice was the source of the information about the theft. Anyway, Dt2's strong epistemic claim prompts Dt1's information seeking query about whether the suspect actually committed the act of selling (line 4). Dt2 continues his line of questioning in overlap in line 5 and, anticipating that the suspect is about to produce a dispreffering response, he produces a blocking move ('*shut up*', line 8). Simultaneously, the suspect denies Dt2's accusations by claiming a different origin of the pots in question (a local company rather than the man's home) and further in line 7 answers Dt1's question from line 4 (he did not sell it). Examples 9 and 10 display the epistemically upgraded statements in the service of accusatory questions. However, as I will show further on, these are not the only devices used for the purpose of designing accusatory turns.

Heritage and Raymond (2005) report the use of evidentials to mark a mediated access to information, for example when, from what the other has said, a speaker says *that sounds so good*, 'sounds' is the evidence through which the knowledge is mediated. On several occasions in my corpus detectives use evidentials in accusatory direct statements about suspects' wrongdoings, as in the detective's use of 'seem' in this next example. This is a part of the sequence in which the detective expresses his opinion that the factory guards did not do their job properly at the time the theft took place. The focus is here on the detective's statement in his opening turn here (lines 1 and 3).

Extract 11
Guard_fthe_s_inf_2008 (11.03)

| | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|-----|------|-----------|---|
| 1 | Dt1: | VI | ste | SAmo | izGLE:da: | <dolaZI:li:>= |
| | | YOU | AUX | ONLY | (it) | seE:Ms: |
| | | | | | | <coMI:ng:>= |
| | | | | | | <i>it seems that you were only coming</i> |

2 Sus: =šta [će-]
=what[will-]
what ()-

3 Dt1: [da]uzME:TE: platu.
[to]tA:KE: salary.
to get a salary

4 (0.4)

5 Sus: ŠTA ću JA:[:()]
WHAT will I:[:()]
what can I ()

6 Dt1: [po]MOME mišlje:nju
[by]MY opini:on
I think

Suggesting that the guard and his colleagues came to work only to get a salary, Dt1 implies that the guards did not do their job properly. In this turn, Dt1 first signals his stance by means of the adverb ‘samo’ (*only*), an extreme case formulation which as Pomerantz (1986) notes, can be used for achieving an adversarial stance. Another indicator of the detective’s epistemic status is his use of evidential ‘it seems’, by means of which he marks the matter as not belonging to his epistemic domain. In the interaction prior to this extract, it is clear that the detective’s assessment of the guards’ performance is based on the previously revealed evidence of their unprofessional behaviour. This explains the use of the evidential: the detective based his assessment on the reported evidence and not on his first-hand experience. It seems that the damaging force of this turn is compositionally achieved, that is, it is based on the content of the proposition, an extreme case formulation and an epistemic stance based on reported evidence. In sum, it is evident that different levels of epistemic display and claimed sources of information have an important role in the formulation of accusatory turns.

Suspects’ treatment of detectives’ B-event statements in accusatory and hostile sequences

The dataset shows that in the already established argumentative environments, suspects may perceive detectives’ statements about their (suspects’) affairs as damaging. This becomes visible in the suspects’ responses. Figure 2 shows the distribution of suspects’ responses to the detectives’ B-event statements in hostile accusatory sequences.

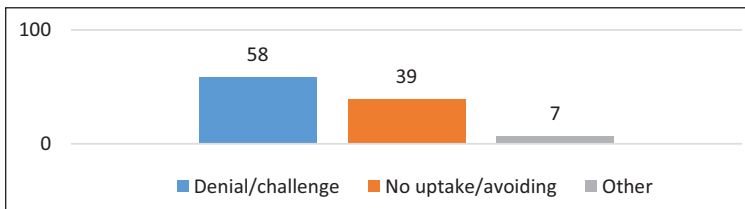


Figure 2. Treatment of detectives’ declarative FPPs in accusatory and hostile sequences. This shows that in argumentative sequences, suspects usually perceive detectives’ FPP (questioning) statements about their business as accusations, and they formulate their SPPs (responses) as denials of the stated or challenges. In the following extract we can see that the suspect produces both a challenge and a denial following Dt1’s B-event statement produced in lines 1 and 2.

Extract 12
 Suspect_fthe_s_inf_2008 (40.10)

1 Dt1 a ti si reKA:, VIdi Neđo,
 and you AUX saID:, LOkk Nedjo,
 and you said, look Nedjo

2 nemoj sluČAJno da me uzME:Š u u:sta.
 don’t by chANCE to me taK:E in mo:uth.
 don’t you dare mention me

3 (.)

| | | |
|---|------|--------------------|
| 4 | Sus: | (pa) JA:>to reko.< |
|---|------|--------------------|

(pa) I: >that said.<
(but) I said that

5 (.)

6 Dt1: SIGUran [budi.]
SUre [be.]
be sure

| | | |
|---|------|---------------------|
| 7 | Sus: | [nije:-]NIJE:sa:m= |
|---|------|---------------------|

[not:]NOT:AUX(I) =
not- I didn't

Prior to this extract, Dt1 revealed some details from a third party's statement which indicate that the suspect was involved in witness intimidation. In lines 1 and 2, Dt1 reports (in direct reported speech) the suspect's 'verbatim' first person threat made towards a witness – '*don't you dare mention me*'. The claim to have access to the exact wording of the suspect's threat is an intrusion, as it were, into the suspect's epistemic space, and the suspect responds accordingly. In line 4, the suspect's dispreferred response is signalled by what was probably going to be a dispreferring 'pa' (not clearly audible). The suspect then produces a stretched and stressed challenging repeat, 'I said that', by means of which he highlights the part of the detective's prior turn which he finds problematic. Dt1 confirms in a non-preferring way 'SIGUran budi'. (*be sure*), which in turn motivates the suspect to produce a denial in line 7.

The second bar in the histogram (Figure 2) above shows that a considerable number of responses to accusatory B-event statements are realised as 'no uptake'. This is because the detectives sometimes continue their talk and do not leave the interlocutors any space to respond. Sometimes, however, suspects withhold responding or avoid responding directly.

In seven cases (r/h bar)suspects responded by requesting clarification, explaining or correcting, all of which might be regarded as defensive responses.

Detectives' B-event statements in hostile sequences: Activity

To sum up, the second type of B-event statements in the dataset occur in those interactional sequences in which the detectives aim was to elicit an admission and complete the interview. The detectives formulate these turns as grammatical declaratives, stating things about the suspect's conduct. These statements are mostly unmarked or upgraded by explicit mention of knowledge. As such, they firmly claim the detectives' K+, in spite of the fact that the detectives do not have first-hand experience of the matter in question. In some of the cases, the detectives achieve an adversarial stance by means of disagreement particles or by designing their turns as extreme case formulations. In essence, confirming the detectives' propositions, expressed via these statements, would inevitably lead the suspect to incriminate himself/herself. Therefore, based on their primary epistemic rights to their own affairs, the suspects mostly deny or challenge the detectives'

strong epistemic claims or display no-uptake. It can be said that these accusatory sequences heavily rely on the speakers' K+ claims.

Conclusion

This paper reports detectives' use of B-event statements in two different environments in their interactions (interviews) with suspects/witnesses. Detectives' turns are realised as confirmation seeking questions, in co-operative environments, sequences are managed for the purpose of reconstructing certain events, or, where the suspect has previously confessed in the interview, detectives are composing the official record. In the other type of environment, detectives are trying to elicit suspects' admissions or are forwarding an activity in some way damaging for the witness or suspect; in this hostile interactional environment, detectives' B-event statements are realised as accusations. The different circumstances under which the two practices are used trigger the selection of different epistemic signals which fit the sort of the activity they are facilitating. While in both of the practices the detectives' statements indicate K+ about matters that are in the suspects'/witnesses' epistemic domain, detectives tend to downgrade their statements when indicating a prior mention and/or seeking confirmation of something which is primarily in the interlocutors' epistemic domain. Perceiving no damaging implications in such statements, suspects mostly respond by affirming/confirming. The interlocutors thus cooperatively verify facts which serve the completion of an institutional procedure. In hostile environments, sequences are characterised by interactional tension between questioners (detectives) and the questioned (witnesses and suspects), and by accusations and denials, and generally resistance by witnesses and suspects to detectives' accounts of what witnesses/suspects conduct. Detectives, who do not have first-hand experience of the matter in question, frequently indicate strong K+ position by unmarked statements or statements reinforced by explicit mention of (claims to) knowledge. They may use the strong K+ claims as a prompt seeking verification of their K+ position and eventually for closing the sequence in such a way as to damage the witness's/suspect's account. However, based on their primary epistemic rights to their own affairs, and due to the fact that by verifying the detectives' K+ they may incriminate themselves, witnesses/suspects mostly deny or challenge the detectives' epistemic claims or else display no-uptake.

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Notes

1. ‘Znači’ is the actual form of the word, but in spoken language it is frequently pronounced as ‘nači’ without the initial ‘z’ sound. As Serbo-Croatian has a phonetic spelling system, all pronunciation variations are marked in writing.
2. ‘Je li’ is a positive tag in SC which in this context seeks affirmation/confirmation. Due to the fact that in English both positive and negative tags can be used following a positive statement, there was a dilemma of whether it would be more appropriate to translate the SC tag into English as a negative or a positive tag. Eventually, I made a decision to stay true to the source language and translate these as positive tags.
3. There are only three instances in which tentative accusations were fronted by ‘znači’, but due to the lack of space, they have not been included in the analysis

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Appendix

Symbols used in the literal translations:

| | |
|------|-------------------|
| SING | Singular |
| PL | Plural |
| QP | Question particle |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| AUX | Auxiliary verb |
| (he, etc.)AUX | Auxiliary verb inflected for person |
| REFL | Reflexive |
| (I, etc.) + verb | Verb inflected for person, personal pronoun omitted |
| (to)me | The meaning of the preposition is built into the case form |

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