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Modular Pivots: A Resource for Extending Turns at Talk

Steven E. Clayman and Chase Wesley Raymond

Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles

This article investigates a type of turn constructional pivot structurally different from and more common than those previously analyzed within the literature. Modular pivots are comprised of items of talk that (a) are linguistic adjuncts and hence syntactically optional, (b) routinely appear in both turn-initial and turn-final positions, and (c) are deployed to forge an overlapping or pivotal transition between otherwise discrete TCUs. In addition to identifying various linguistic candidates for use as modular pivots, this article reports the results of auditory and acoustic analysis of three such candidates (*now*, *I guess*, and *you know*) revealing the intonational and articulatory seamlessness of the pivot's junctures with prior and subsequent talk. It also furnishes evidence that the pivot itself facilitates the speaker's suppression of terminal intonation at both junctures and explains this outcome by reference to the pivot's impact on the speaker's experience of projected speech delivery. The conclusion addresses various broader implications for pivotal turn construction, the linguistic adjuncts that can serve as pivots, and the turn extensions that they enable. Data are drawn from American and British English language conversation.

Ever since Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) explicated conversational turn taking by reference to turn constructional units (TCUs) and transition relevance places (TRPs), researchers have sought to specify the various methods by which a current speaker can circumvent potential turn transfer and thus retain the floor beyond a projected transition relevance place. These include methods for compressing the transition space, such as rush-throughs and abrupt-joins (e.g., Local & Walker, 2004; Schegloff, 1982; Walker, 2010) and methods for obscuring the transition space, most notably through syntactically based turn constructional pivots (Schegloff, 1979; Walker, 2007; cf. Betz, 2008; Norén & Linell, 2013). This article contributes to the latter line of inquiry by exploring a type of turn constructional pivot that is structurally different from those predominantly analyzed within the literature and is substantially more commonplace in English language conversation.

Pivotal constructions, as originally characterized for English by Schegloff (1979) and elaborated by Walker (2007), consist of two syntactic TCUs, ordinarily sentences, with an overlapping component that is through-produced (i.e., prosodically continuous with no aspiration or silence separating the pivot from adjacent talk) and simultaneously completes the first unit and launches

the second. To illustrate, in the following excerpt¹ the phrase “the bone” (in boldface) both completes the prior sentence (“I’d love the bone”) and launches the next (“the bone was so beautiful”) and thus functions as a pivot between TCUs.

- (1) [NB IV.3: dress shopping]
 1 Emma: but I('d) love **the bone** was so:: beautif eh
 2 the pink was exquisite

The “pivot” label has also been used more broadly to refer to a range of methods for modifying turns and actions in progress, including self-repair, postpausal increments, and left and right dislocation (e.g., Betz, 2008, 2013; Hennoste, 2013; Norén, 2013; Norén & Linell, 2013; Pekarek Doehler & Horlacher, 2013). This broader usage, for which Norén and Linell (2013) recommend the qualified term “pivot-like constructions,” highlights certain commonalities among diverse turn constructional forms but risks losing the benefits of referential specificity—i.e., the term’s capacity to capture a very particular phenomenon of turn construction. In this study, we adhere to the original and more narrow usage, restricting the pivot category to prosodically continuous constructions with a component that simultaneously completes one TCU and launches the next.

Pivotal constructions are not “well-formed” when evaluated against normative rules of grammar, but they are recurrent and unproblematic in ordinary conversation, and they have a pragmatic utility enabling current speakers to extend the turn in progress beyond a syntactically projected transition space. Constructions of this sort retain a syntactic completion point at the pivot’s offset boundary but not at its onset boundary; e.g., in the previous example, “bone” completes a sentence (“I’d love the bone”). The relevance of turn transfer is nonetheless cancelled by continuative intonation and other phonetic/prosodic features (e.g., phonation, articulation, etc.) constitutive of a seamless transition into subsequent talk (Walker, 2007).

Against this backdrop, what we term *modular pivots* share all of the essential attributes of other turn constructional pivots but with syntactic completion points at *both* their onset *and* offset boundaries. Modular pivots are comprised of items of talk that (a) are linguistic adjuncts and hence optional components of syntactic units,² (b) routinely appear in both turn-initial and turn-final positions, and (c) are deployed to forge a prosodically continuous overlapping or pivotal transition between otherwise discrete TCUs.

The modular pivot category includes *address terms*, which satisfy the conditions of syntactic optionality, turn-initial/turn-final positioning, and pivotal deployment. Their use as turn constructional pivots has been documented (Clayman 2012) and is illustrated in the following excerpt (arrowed). Notice that “You don’t look it Jen” is a possibly complete sentential unit, as is “Jen I must be honest,” and the address term pivots between them.

¹ Transcripts follow the conventions outlined in Jefferson (2004). All of the data excerpts used in this article are from previously published data sets, and in the case of the NB data, the speaker identifications have also been anonymized.

² Linguistic adjuncts are related to, but distinguishable from, increments—another turn extensional practice. Adjuncts are defined entirely by syntactic properties. Increments are often comprised of adjuncts but only those having additional prosodic features rendering them discontinuous with prior talk; increments are delivered after the speaker has come to a syntactic and prosodic completion point (see Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 2002).

- (2) [Rahman:A:2:JSA(9): Jenny's weight]
- 1 Jen: Oh: e-ye- ey list'n I:'m d<I went on the scale
- 2 yestee I'm ten stone now,
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 Ann: Well now y[ou don't look it]
- 5 Jen: [T e n s t o:]ne:.
- 6 Ann: -> Y'don't look it Jen ah must be honest.
- 7 Jen: Ah well ah mean t'gay when you consider that I should be
- 8 what izzit ei^ght'n a hahlf.=

In contrast to highly context-specific phrases (like “the bone”), pivots comprised of address terms have a “modular” quality in that the same pivotal item can be used to extend a wide range of sentential units beyond a syntactically projected completion point.

Beyond address terms, numerous other linguistic items share the properties of syntactic optionality, turn-initial/turn-final positioning, and pivotal deployment. These include lexical adjuncts such as *now* (Excerpt 3) and phrasal adjuncts such as *you know* (Excerpt 4).

- (3) [Virginia, p.2]
- 1 Mom: OH VUHginia, we('ve) been through this
- 2 -> befa[wh, you've got enough summa d[resses **now** I think you=
- 3 P?: [hhhh! ((laughter?)) |
- 4 V?: [uhhh! ((“pained” sound))
- 5 Mom: =just wait an' get- some'uh'the'new fa:ll stuff when it
- 6 comes in.
- (4) [NB.IV.13.R, Page 3]
- 1 Emm: ->hhhh HEY I B'N EAT'N A LO:TTA TURKEY YIHKNOW I DON'T
- 2 HAVE ONE: BITTA ITCHI:Ngk?

Such items contribute semantically and pragmatically to the talk with which they are associated, but our primary interest in this article is their import for turn taking and the extension of turns in progress.

In each case, the boldfaced item of talk might in principle be regarded as lying between two sentential units of talk. However, because the item (a) is not normally free-standing, (b) functions as a syntactic adjunct in both turn-initial and turn-final positions, and (c) is phonetically through-produced, it can be understood as both completing the prior TCU and launching the next and hence a constituent of both units of talk. This Janus-faced quality, which provides for the overlap of otherwise discreet syntactic units, is represented schematically in Figure 1. The ovals demarcate sentential units, with their intersection encompassing the pivotal overlap. The twin syntactic completions that are obscured by the pivot are denoted by dotted lines. Following Norén and Linell (2013), we use the term *pivotal construction* to refer to the overall utterance built from overlapping TCUs, and *pivot* to refer to the overlapping element within such a construction. And following Walker (2007), *onset* and *offset* reference the pivot's produced junctures with prior and subsequent talk respectively.

The special properties of modular pivots, distinguishing them from the pivots and pivotal constructions featured in previous research, have implications for their deployment and phonetic realization. Because they are syntactically optional additions to units in progress, they are less precisely fitted to the surrounding talk and hence more context-free and generically usable. This quality of modularity may in part explain why they also appear to be substantially more commonplace than the nonmodular pivots that have previously been the focus of attention.

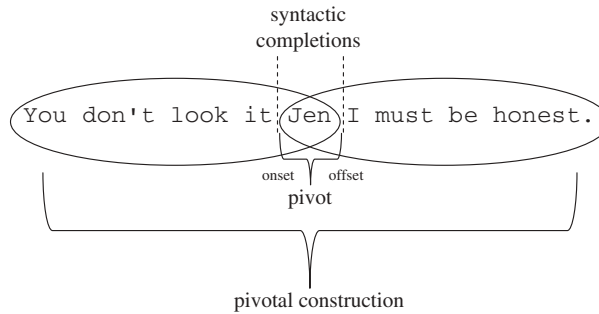


FIGURE 1 Modular pivot.

At the same time, because modular pivots retain syntactic completion points both prior to the pivotal item and upon its completion, they are vulnerable to interdiction at *both* their onset and offset boundaries. This makes prosodic and other phonetic features critical to cancelling the relevance of turn transition and realizing the extension of the turn in progress.

Data for this study were drawn from a large sample of British and American English language conversation. A collection of more than 350 modular pivot candidates was assembled, and the findings reported here are based on a comprehensive analysis of the collection. In addition to formally characterizing the modular pivot phenomenon and identifying various lexical and phrasal candidates for use in this way, this article reports the results of auditory and acoustic analysis of three such candidates in English (*now*, *I guess*, and *you know*) revealing the recurrent intonational and articulatory seamlessness of the pivot's junctures with prior and subsequent talk. It also furnishes evidence that the use of a modular pivot facilitates the speaker's suppression of terminal intonation at both junctures and develops a hypothetical explanation for why and how the pivot yields this continuative outcome. The conclusion addresses various broader implications for conceptions of pivotal turn construction, the turn extensions that they enable, the linguistic adjuncts that are mobilized for this purpose, and its relevance for turn construction in other languages.

MODULAR PIVOT CANDIDATES

A variety of linguistic adjuncts share the properties of syntactic optionality and both turn-initial and turn-final positioning and are thus *candidates* for use as modular turn constructional pivots. Following examination of English-language data, a nonexhaustive list of modular pivot candidates would include (a) lexical items such as *now*, *then*, *fortunately*, *unfortunately*, and address terms of various kinds (names, titles, and terms of endearment); and (b) phrasal items such as *I guess*, *I think*, *you know*, and quotatives³ (e.g., "I said" as in Excerpt 11, line 16).

³ See also Betz (2013) and Norén (2007) for analyses of quotatives in the context of turn extensions at syntactic completion points.

Notice that some particles (e.g., *oh*, *well*) are excluded from the category of modular pivot candidates because although they are syntactically optional, they are normally restricted to the turn-initial position in English (Heritage, 2013). Also excluded are connectors (e.g., *and*, *but*, *or*), which are not linguistic adjuncts, are not syntactically integral to either the prior or subsequent units, and thus have a different bearing on turn construction. Connectors operate to bridge and propose relationships between discrete syntactic units that retain identifiable and nonoverlapping boundaries. Modular pivots provide for an overlapping transition from one syntactic unit to the next that blurs the boundary between them.

Finally, one marginal case merits special attention. Tag questions are syntactically optional in only the turn-final position, but they may nonetheless be deployed to pivot past a grammatical completion point and into further talk and action. For instance, in the following, “don’t you think” is initially deployed as an expanded interrogative tag to the assessment “Oh it’s warm,” but this then becomes a launching pad for a subsequent and somewhat more fully formed sentential interrogative (“don’t you think it is”).

(5) [NB.I.6.R]
 1 Lot: 'n rained a:ll ni:ght.
 2 Emm: Ah'll be dā:rn.=We:ll: anyway ihz ihz not too cō::ld,
 3 Lot: -> Oh it's w:wā:rm don't^chu think it i[:s]?
 4 Emm: [Yeah. I thought maybe
 5 Earl wz out albacore fishin.

The modular pivot *candidates* enumerated may or may not function as *actual* pivots on any particular occasion of use. Even when appearing within multiunit turns at talk, any of the aforementioned items may be analyzable as positioned *either* within the initial TCU *or* within the subsequent TCU and hence adjacent to an intervening transition-relevance place (Clayman, 2012). Their status as turn constructional pivots, positioned within both TCUs and providing for their overlap, thus depends on how they are phonetically realized in relation to prior and subsequent talk.⁴

PRODUCING MODULAR PIVOTS: PROSODY AND ARTICULATION

Actual modular pivots are characterized by a number of recurrent phonetic features surrounding their onset and offset boundaries. First, there is no aspiration or silence separating the pivot from prior or subsequent talk. Second, there may be a continuation of voicing, and/or a merging or coalescence of speech sounds that would otherwise be separated by and constitutive of a juncture. Third, in the talk prior to both boundaries, the pitch trajectory (whether level, rising, or falling) is sustained across the boundary. Fourth, marked shifts in pitch (e.g., from low to high) or pitch trajectory (e.g., from falling to rising) are displaced from both boundaries, either embedded within the pivot or occurring at least one syllable after its completion. Taken together, these features phonetically affiliate the pivot with both prior and subsequent units of talk and are “continuative” in import.

⁴ For another type of boundary case, an instance of a modular pivot candidate that appears prosodically seamless on its offset but not its onset juncture, see the excerpt in Kitzinger (2000, pp. 182–183).

We shall exemplify these prosodic and articulatory features for three recurrent modular pivot types beyond the previously examined case of address terms: *now*, *I guess*, and *you know*.

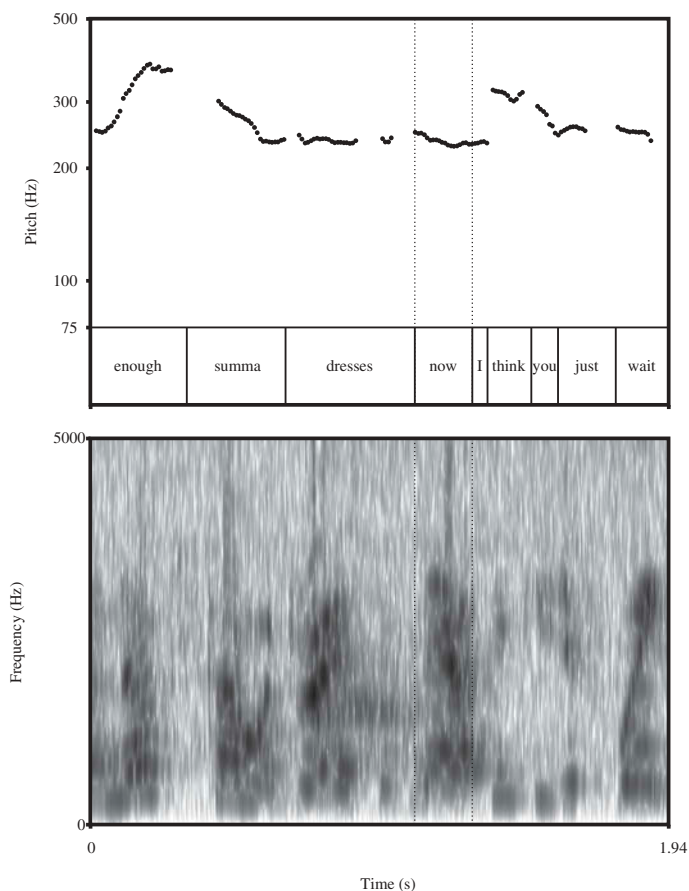
Now as a Modular Pivot

In the following excerpt, when Virginia's mother moves to reject her daughter's request for a new dress (lines 5–6), the word *now* simultaneously completes a sentential unit ("you've got enough summer dresses now") and initiates the next unit ("now I think you just wait and get some of the new fall stuff ..."). Here the modular pivot enables Mom to shift from merely rejecting the request, to offering a "consolation prize" of sorts, and it is noteworthy that this optimistic shift comes just after Virginia's "pained sound" during the rejection (line 8).

As evident on the pitch track that follows this excerpt, the pitch trajectory prior to the pivot is level and remains so across the pivot's onset boundary, throughout the pivot itself, and slightly beyond its offset boundary. There is a substantial rise in pitch later in the turn, but this pitch shift occurs after the pivot's offset boundary. The first syllable after the pivot ("I") is spoken at the same pitch level as the pivot itself. It is also phonetically merged with the last sound of the pivot (the resulting merger sounds like "No(w)ah"), with no break in voicing. In addition, there is no glottal release at the onset of "I" as might otherwise be expected in TCU-initial contexts. Thus the pivot's junctures with both prior and subsequent talk are phonetically seamless, and the subsequent rise in pitch does not occur until the second syllable following the pivot ("think").

The subsequent pitch rise also helps to demarcate the pivotal component's parameters within the larger utterance. Notice that the phrase following "now"—"I think"—is also a modular pivot candidate; as noted earlier, *I think* is a linguistic adjunct in both turn-initial and turn-final positions. In principle, then, the entire phrase *now I think* could have been deployed as a modular pivot. However, in this particular case, the step-up on "think" phonetically disaffiliates that phrase from what came before and affiliates it with the somewhat higher-pitched talk that follows ("I think you just wait ..."), making it hearable as belonging exclusively to the ensuing syntactic unit. Only the lexical item "now" is phonetically delivered in a way that makes it hearable as contributing to both prior and subsequent units of talk.

```
(6) [Virginia]
1 VIR:      Can I please get that dre:ss, please mom?
2          Lemme glet that-
3 MOM:      [Dreh(ss)-?
4 VIR:      >You know that [one-<
5 MOM:      [OH VUHginia, we('ve) been through this
6          -> befa[wh, you've got enough summa d[resses now I think you=
7 P???:    [hhh! ((laughter?))
8 VR?:      [uhhh! (("pained" sound))
9 MOM:      =just wait an' get- some'uh'the'new fa:ll stuff when it
10          comes in.
11 VIR:     tch!
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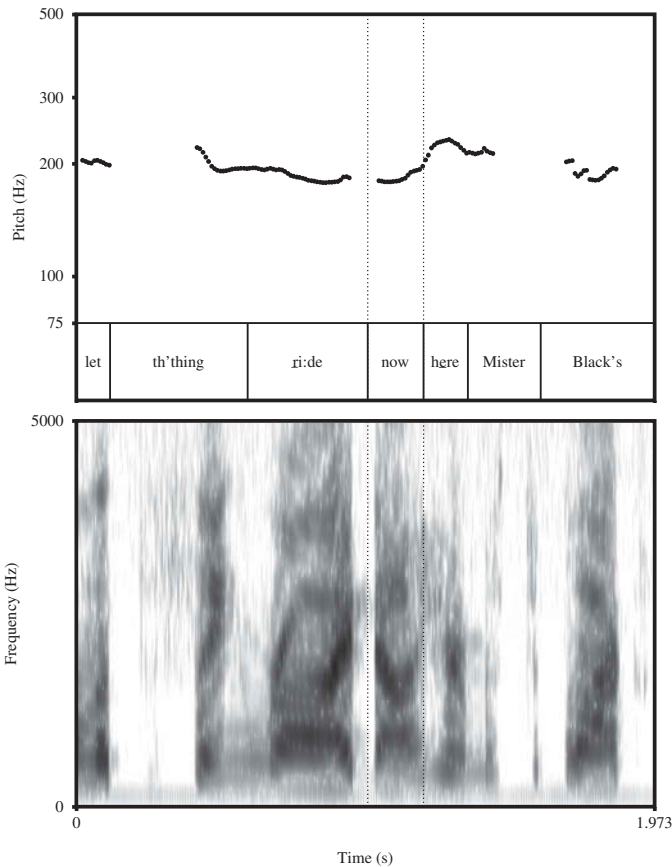


Beyond the phonetic realization of this case, there appears to be a semantic shift in the meaning of *now* as it pivots from one TCU to the next. When construed as integral to the prior unit (“You’ve got enough summer dresses now”), *now* is hearable as an adverbial temporal reference targeting the present moment in time. When construed as integral to the future-oriented subsequent unit (“Now I think you just wait . . .”), it is hearable as a more semantically bleached discourse marker projecting a shift in the course of action. Previous research (e.g., Schiffrin, 1987) has noted both the temporal and shift-implicative dimensions of *now* and their association with different contexts of use. The present case illustrates how both dimensions may be recruited within a single pivotal deployment, yielding a semantic pivot at the lexical level that both parallels and facilitates a pivot at the level of turn construction and action implementation.

A second example of a pivotal *now* appears in the following excerpt (line 6) in which Emma is commiserating with her sister about recent discord between Emma and her husband. Emma expresses the intention to just “let the thing ride” (i.e., take no action; line 6), and then references various other difficulties surrounding her daughter’s family (lines 7–8), implicating reasons why

the daughter may be too preoccupied to intervene. In the focal utterance, *now* simultaneously completes the sentence “I’m just gonna let the thing ride now” and begins “Now here Mister Black’s in the hospital ...” In this case the modular pivot enables Emma to shift from talking about *her own* decision to back off from the conflict to accounting for *her daughter’s* apparent inability to intervene.

(7) [NB.IV.10.R, Page 5]
 1 Emm: [.t.hhh.hhhhh (.) SO LOTTIE?hh I wen'over tuh Bill's 'n
 2 they been so ni:ce en I: sid Bill I don'know what the
 3 he:ll:
 4 (0.3)
 5 Lot: [khhhhhhhh]
 6 Emm: -> [uh:, hu-I'm I'm jus g'nna let th'thing ri:de now here
 7 Mister Black's in the ho:spit'l en I know Hugh wanssuh
 8 be with 'is mother, (.) I KNQ:W THA:T,
 9 Lot: Yeah,



Here again, pitch trajectories are sustained across both junctures, although in this case a shift in trajectory (from level to rising) is embedded within the pivot. The trajectory preceding the pivot is level, and this trajectory is sustained across the onset boundary (the break on the pitch track reflects a slight devoicing of the *d* consonant) and through much of the ensuing pivot. This continuity in pitch trajectory is reinforced by continuity of place of articulation, given that both the *d* of *ride* and the *n* of *now* are alveolar consonants; note the similar pattern in the spectrogram surrounding the pivot's onset. The pitch begins to rise near the end of the pivot, and this rising trajectory is sustained across the offset boundary into the first syllable following that boundary.

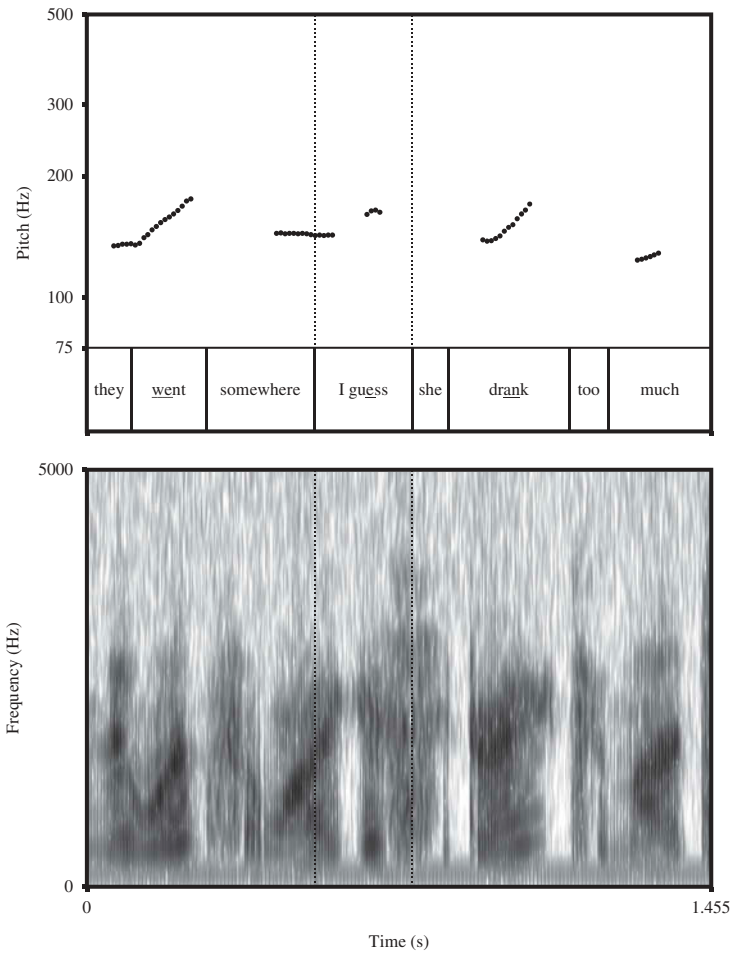
I Guess as a Modular Pivot

Pivotal deployments of *I guess* have similar prosodic and articulatory features. In Excerpt 8, this phrasal item both optionally completes the sentential unit “apparently she always made such a scene every time they went somewhere I guess” and begins the sentence “I guess she drank too much.” Here the modular pivot facilitates the subsequent unpacking of what “making such a scene” might consist of.

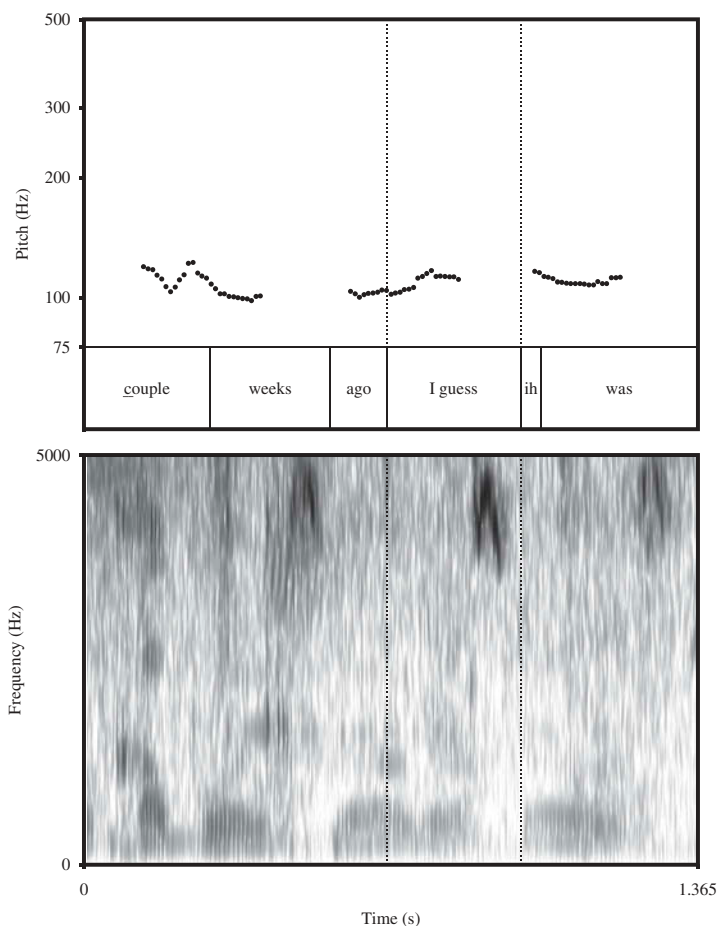
Pitch trajectories are relatively level across both of the pivot's junctures with adjacent talk. This is easier to see for the onset than the offset boundary because the unvoiced sibilants (*s*) surrounding the latter create a gap in the pitch track. Nonetheless, on either side of this gap the pitch levels are at least roughly aligned. Moreover, auditory and acoustic analyses reveal articulatory interlacing of these unvoiced sibilants at the offset juncture. Specifically, the alveolar *s* sound at the end of the pivotal “I guess” is elided in favor of the palato-alveolar *sh* sound at the onset of “she” (i.e., “gueshe”). In the spectrogram, this is evident in the dark shading at lower frequency sustained across the offset (cf., the higher-frequency shading for the alveolar [s] on “somewhere”).

In the subsequent case (Excerpt 9), from a discussion of auto racing, “I guess” pivots between “He got a first down at uh Bowling Green last week, er, oh a couple weeks ago I guess,” and “I guess it was.” Here again, pitch trajectories are relatively level across both the onset and offset junctures, with a similar gap in the pitch track at the offset caused by the voiceless *s* of “I guess.” While data quality yielded a largely uninformative spectrogram, auditory analysis reveals some phonetic merging of the vowel sounds surrounding the onset. Within the pivot, there is a slight upshift on the initial vocalized part of “guess,” but this slightly higher level is maintained into the first syllable following the pivot.

- (8) [NB.II.4.R, Page 10]
- 1 Nan: A::n HeLen hed tɔl'me about this:: bitchy wife
 2 thet'e'ed həd fer so lo:ŋ en appərently
 3 sh'alwəys mæd sʌtʃ ə sçen evrɪ tɪm ðeɪ
 4 -> wɛnt sʌmweə I gʌɛs she drʌŋk tu: mʌtʃ,h
 5 [.hɦɦɦ
 6 Emm: [°M m : [h m:°
 7 Nan: [En appərently he jus' sɪmplɪ hezn't. bɛn: (.)
 8 ɪntrestɪd [ɪn::]
 9 Emm: [M m:] h m[:
 10 Nan: [dɔ:ŋ (.) ə lɔt'v dæ:ŋɪŋ? en



- (9) [Auto Discussion 855-867]
 1 CUR: I heard Little wz makin um, was makin frames'n sendin
 2 'm t'California.
 3 GAR: *(mn he might be, [()].
 4 CUR: [*(Is he:: w-)
 5 GAR: He's got 'is one furse:ll, (1.0) en 'is new one: uh,
 6 he took t'the- he gotta first down et uh, (1.0)
 7 Bowling Green last week er, oh a couple weeks ago
 8 -> I guess ih was, inna car show,
 9 CUR: Hm.
 10 GAR: Enna, place from Nashville Tennessee offered him a
 11 hunner do:llars a da:y, (0.8) to bring it down tuh
 12 Nashville tuh show it.

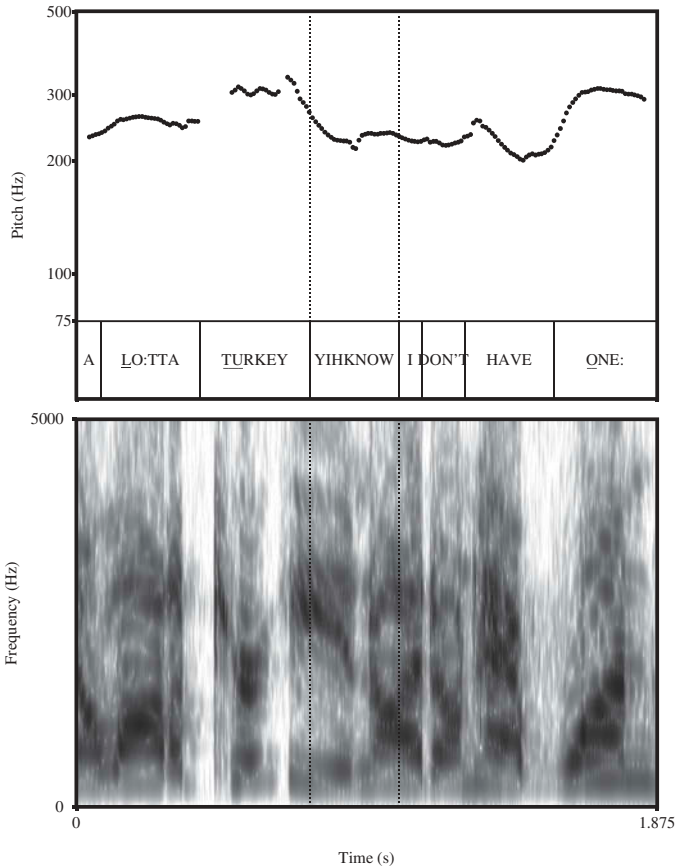


You Know as a Modular Pivot

The final modular pivot type we will consider is *you know*. While considerable research has been conducted on the semantics and pragmatics of *you know* (e.g., Erman, 2001; Fox Tree & Schrock, 2002; Schiffrin, 1987), here we focus on its turn constructional import as a resource for pivotal turn extensions beyond a syntactically projected completion point. It bears emphasis that *you know* is by far the most frequent and commonplace type of modular pivot that we have observed.

For instance, in launching a discussion of medicinal folk remedies, *you know* pivots between the sentential units “Hey I been eatin’ a lotta turkey you know” and “you know I don’t have one bitta itching.” In this case, the initial announcement is both highly disjunctive with prior talk and opaque as to its import; the modular pivot provides for additional talk geared to clarifying the point of the announcement.

(10) [NB.IV.13.R, Page 3]
 1 Emm: °°Ril cute °° But uh (0.7) .t.hhh They left early Lottie 'n
 2 then we decideh we j'z we were goin ho::me 'n then we
 3 -> deci:ded it wz so nice'n quiet dow-.hhh HEY I B'N EAT'N A
 4 -> LO:TTA TURKEY YIHKNOW I DON'T HAVE ONE: BITTA ITCHI:NGk?
 5 (1.2)
 6 Emm: .t.hhhh YIHKNOW AH HEARD THET T(h)URKEY WZ GOO:D FOR YUH
 7 with this thi:ng?
 8 (0.3)
 9 Lot: Is that ri:ight?
 10 Emm: eeYah a girl'n the apartm'n tol'me tha:t. Thet the doctor
 11 cured it? An' I'm tellin yuh yin- I've never had s'ch a
 12 healing. I have no(h)o pro(h)blems:.



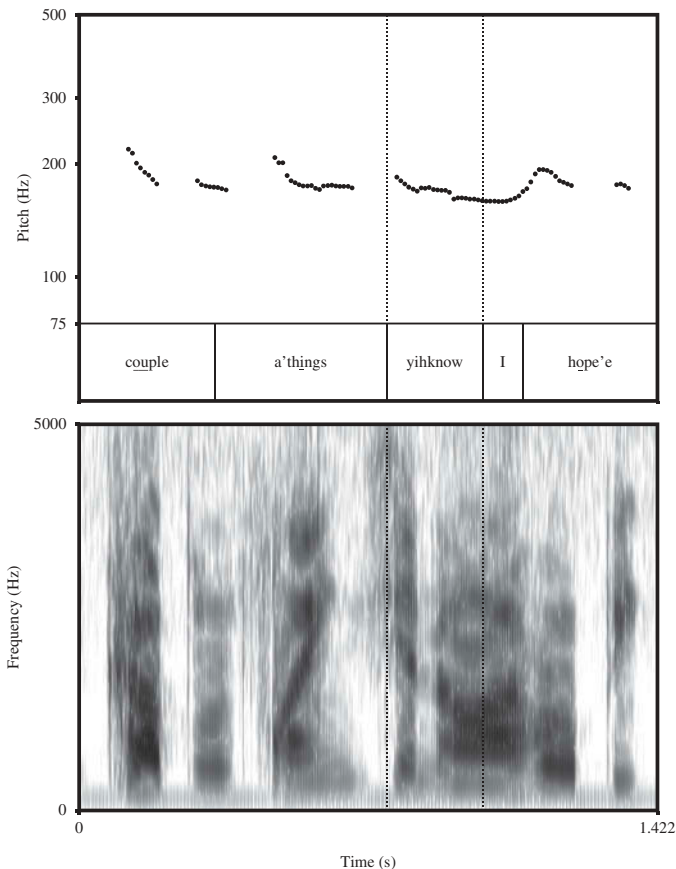
In this case, the speaker raises her pitch toward the end of the first sentential completion, but then begins to drop to her previous level on the second syllable of “turkey.” This downward trajectory is sustained across the pivot’s onset boundary. As evident in the spectrogram, there is also a merging of the final consonant of “turkey” with the initial consonant of “yihknow” across

this juncture, with no break in voicing and a single palatal place of articulation. The pivot itself hosts the continued decrease in pitch, localized within the first syllable of the pivot. The pitch trajectory then levels out for the pivot’s second syllable and remains level across the offset and into subsequent talk.

Another pivotal *you know* appears in the next excerpt, from a conversation about Emma’s recent fight with her husband. Emma pivots between the referentially opaque statement “I said a couple a things” and an illustrative example of one of the things she said, namely “I hope he drop dead”.

(11) [NB.IV.10.R, Page 4]

1 Emm: We:ll anywa:y,
 2 (0.3)
 3 Emm: .hhh She siz ah:: (0.2) .hhh I: ca:h:l1-deh Mist'r Bla:ck's
 4 in the hospi:t'l'n we don't know wut's gonna hap'n we ma:y
 5 haft'go: eh Hugh wanssa see 'is mother'n besides if you'n
 6 Dad er havin fi:ght why: Hugh en I: don't wanna be invo:lved
 7 I s'd w'l wir not f:i:ghting she siz well Da:d siz you wanna
 8 -> KILL'I:M in .hhhhhhh a:n' I seh tuh couple a'things yihknow
 9 -> I hope'e dro:p dea:d'n uh:l:
 10 Lot: [Yea:h
 11 Emm: End he's (.) wanniduh kill me'n all'ihknow how yih talk
 12 Lot: Yea:[h?
 13 Emm: [So I didn't au:gment on that I mean it's ul (.) (lo:d
 14 of care) .hhhhh So she siz well we don'twan'come down thez
 15 any prob'm I sid well eyuh- we're not gonna have any
 16 a:rguments I: said it's jis one a'those things ah don'tknow
 17 WHAT'S GONNA HA:ppen.



The pitch contour for this case parallels that of the first *now* example analyzed (Excerpt 6). The speaker's pitch remains level across both the onset and offset boundaries of the pivot, with the preceding break in the pitch track resulting from devoicing of the *s* in "things." Furthermore, as in Excerpt 6, the first syllable following the offset boundary ("I") is produced at this same pitch, and it is not until the second syllable following the pivot's offset ("hope") that the pitch rises to a new peak.

Taken together, the intonational and articulatory features observable in these various pivot-type cases have key implications for the achievement of pivotal turn extensions. The first concerns the pivot's intelligibility as a Janus-faced adjunct to two overlapping TCUs. Since phonetic disjunctiveness tends to be constitutive of a shift in the course of action (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen, 2004; Goldberg, 2004; Local & Walker, 2004), phonetic continuity across pivot boundaries works to affiliate the pivot with both prior and subsequent talk and the action(s) they are implementing. The achievement of such continuity requires specific work when prior and subsequent talk is delivered at substantially different pitch levels (most notably in Excerpt 10, and to a lesser extent Excerpts 7 and 8). In such cases, a pitch shift embedded within the pivot enables its initial and final components to be intonationally fitted to prior and subsequent talk. For two-syllable pivots (e.g., "I guess" in 9, "you know" in 10; see also the pivotal address terms in Clayman, 2012), the fitted components may coincide with distinct syllables, although even a monosyllabic pivot (e.g., "now" in 7) can absorb a pitch shift and be similarly fitted. In these embedded-shift cases, the linguistic adjunct functions as a pivot at the level of intonation, which reinforces its character as a pivot at the level of turn construction. More generally, regardless of whether the pivot carries a level or shifting pitch trajectory, its prosodic continuity with adjacent talk operates in conjunction with syntactic continuity to make it hearable as contributing to both prior and subsequent turns and the actions they are implementing.

Secondly, the phonetic features observed here are also "continuative" in import (Ford & Thompson, 1996; Selting, 1996). In particular, the general absence of pitch contours prior to syntactic completion points, coupled with the prevalence of juncture-spanning pitch trajectories, cancels the relevance of turn transfer at the projected syntactic completions associated with pivot boundaries and thus facilitates the realization of both overlapping units as a single unbroken utterance.

SUPPRESSION OF TERMINAL INTONATION

The recurrent absence of disjunctive prosody at and prior to modular pivot boundaries is a pattern that runs contrary to prosody at other syntactic junctures. Sentential completion points are commonly marked and projected by "terminal" (rising or falling) intonation contours (Ford & Thompson, 1996; Selting, 1996; Walker, 2010). The distinctively seamless realization of modular pivots thus invites explanation. Is the absence of disjunctive prosody an independent product of speakers working to circumvent turn transition and retain the floor? Or is the pivot itself somehow implicated in the maintenance of continuative prosody at transitionally vulnerable syntactic completion points?

Both factors may of course contribute to this outcome, but here we consider evidence that the pivot itself plays a role in the suppression of terminal intonation. Consider the contrasting

intonational patterns characteristic of the turn extensions achieved by modular pivots (documented in the previous section) versus those achieved by rush-throughs and abrupt-joins. Both rush-throughs and abrupt-joins generally contain pitch movement prior to the rushed/abrupt juncture (Local & Walker, 2004; Schegloff, 1987; Walker, 2010). In those cases, even when speakers are otherwise working to compress the transition space and circumvent turn transfer (e.g., by speeding up prior to the juncture, continuing to vocalize across the juncture, eliding the onset of subsequent talk, etc.), they nonetheless persist in producing the type of pitch movement characteristic of TCU completion. Walker (2010) provides the most systematic evidence for this persistence. Focusing on rush-throughs, which operate primarily on the talk prior to syntactic completion, Walker's auditory and acoustic analysis of 20 cases finds a terminal pitch contour in every instance. In contrast, turn extensions achieved through modular pivots recurrently maintain a seamless pitch trajectory across both of the pivot's syntactic junctures.

Modular pivots are thus distinctively associated with continuative intonation at syntactic completion points, but what is the causal mechanism underlying this association? How might such pivots facilitate the suppression of terminal intonation? We propose a hypothetical explanation involving the impact of modular pivots on the experience of speech production. This explanation derives from two empirically grounded theoretical premises. First, in the production of utterances, speakers anticipate their content and trajectory in advance of articulation (e.g., Jefferson, 1974; Levelt, 1993; Levinson, 2013; Magyari, Bastiaansen, De Ruiter, & Levinson, 2014; Schegloff, 1984). Second, in the production of utterances' syntactically marked completions, pitch contours are a deeply habituated element, so much so that speakers recurrently produce such contours even when otherwise acting in advance to circumvent turn transition (Walker, 2010).

Given these production conditions, modular pivots may aid speakers in breaking the terminal-intonation habit because the anticipation of a Janus-faced contribution to the unit in progress fundamentally transforms the speaker's perception of impending completion. Since the pivot can be perceived as integral to the prior syntactic unit, it may be easier for speakers to maintain continuative intonation because another bit of talk within that same unit is anticipated. The same logic may apply to the suppression of other phonetic harbingers of impending completion prior to the pivot (e.g., diminished tempo and amplitude), as well as their suppression toward the end of the pivot. Since the pivotal item of talk may also be perceived as launching a new TCU, that perception may make it easier for speakers to maintain continuative prosody throughout the pivot in the service of progressing the turn constructional unit that it projects.

This explanation is speculative, but it is consistent with a range of documented prosodic patterns beyond the aforementioned seamlessness of modular pivots versus disjunctive rush-throughs and abrupt-joins. It is also consistent with the prosodic seamlessness of nonmodular pivots at their transitionally vulnerable offset boundaries (Walker, 2007). And far more generally, it is consistent with the internal seamlessness of turn constructional units *per se* and explains why TCUs with multiple syntactic completion points are recurrently delivered with terminal intonation restricted to only the final syntactic completion (Ford & Thompson, 1996).

Insofar as modular pivots are implicated in the suppression of terminal intonation, this provides further evidence for the subjective reality of the modular pivot phenomenon itself as

a turn-extensional practice, one that is oriented to by speakers as distinct from other turn-extensional practices, and yields a distinct outcome in the form of overlapping rather than discrete turn constructional units.

DISCUSSION

The preceding analysis of English language data substantially broadens our understanding of pivotal turn constructions and the syntactic pivot itself as a method of circumventing turn transition. Speakers seeking to pursue a pivotal or overlapping transition from a current unit of talk to the next unit are not restricted to building the pivot out of linguistic material that precedes the upcoming syntactic completion; they may also utilize certain postcompletion syntactic adjuncts for this purpose. Such adjuncts, when delivered with the prosodic features associated with continuation, can simultaneously extend the unit in progress while also launching a new unit. Since this type of pivot was not recognized in most prior work in this area, this study suggests that pivotal constructions are substantially more commonplace than previously appreciated and thus more analytically central to the study of talk-in-interaction. Scholars seeking to parse complex and ostensibly multiunit turns at talk into components of turn construction and action may benefit from an appreciation of the potential for both discrete and overlapping units and hence both “normal” and methodically obscured turn extensions and their pragmatic implications.

Beyond expanding and elaborating on the turn constructional pivot concept itself, this study has broader implications for the various linguistic entities of which pivots are comprised. Most of the literature on linguistic adjuncts focuses on their semantic functions, that is, how they affect the sense or reference of the grammatical units with which they are associated (e.g., Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). At the semantic level, various adjunct types appear highly specialized and distinct from one another, adding causal, consequential, temporal, gradational, or other information to the talk in progress. Beneath the variable semantic surface, however, many such adjuncts can have common turn-holding ramifications, both suppressing turn transfer and facilitating the extension of the turn in progress. Such turn extensions can far exceed the duration of the adjunct itself, with corresponding semantic and pragmatic ramifications for the action in progress.

Three areas of future research are suggested by this study. First, the modular pivot types examined thus far (*now*, *I guess*, and *you know*, plus address terms in Clayman, 2012) are not intended to be exhaustive for the case of English; other linguistic entities may be deployed for this purpose. Moreover, this analysis suggests specific hypotheses regarding the linguistic entities that are used in this way and may guide data collection and analysis in this area. Specifically, any syntactic adjunct that normally appears in both turn-initial and turn-final positions may hypothetically be deployed in the service of pivotal turn extensions. Conversely, adjuncts that are more restricted in their syntactic positioning would not be expected to function as pivots.

Cross-linguistic research may also be informed by this analytic framework. If turn taking is a universal structural feature of conversational interaction (Sacks et al., 1974; Stivers et al., 2009), motivated circumventions of this structure may also be universal, as may be at least some of the methods for accomplishing such circumventions. Of course, the present framework is derived from and fitted to the syntax of English and cannot necessarily be applied elsewhere without

taking into consideration cross-linguistic syntactic variation. As Norén and Linell (2013, p. 10) have noted, different languages and grammatical systems provide distinct structural constraints and resources for pivotal constructions. Correspondingly, we would hypothesize that within any given grammatical system, linguistic items that are (a) relatively context-independent, and (b) can occur in both turn-initial and turn-final positions, would be candidates for use as modular pivots. In English, these context-independent items are linguistic adjuncts; in other languages, they may have a different grammatical categorization. In Japanese, for instance, particles are central to the production of many elementary categories of action (e.g., assertions, questions, etc.), and at least some of these (e.g., the particle *ne*; Tanaka, 1999) may both initiate and complete turns at talk. Such particles are not precisely equivalent to English-language adjuncts in their syntactic status, but at least some share the same properties of context independence and variable positioning. More generally, the present analytic framework, if suitably adapted to the particulars of a given language, may serve as a guide for future research into modular pivot candidates, pivotal turn constructions, and the dynamics of turn taking.

Finally, beyond the domain of turn taking, there are implications for the study of action and its construction in real time. As we have noted in each of our examples, pivotal turn extensions do things in relation to actions being implemented, in some cases modulating the action in progress (Clayman, 2012; Walker, 2007), in other cases refocusing or shifting to a different course of action (cf., Betz, 2008; Norén, 2013). Specific modular pivot types may be associated with highly specialized tasks. Pivotal address terms, for instance, are routinely deployed in the context of vulnerable claims and in the service of further talk geared to shoring up such claims (Clayman, 2012). Other modular pivot types may have a less specialized bearing on the action in progress. In any case, the selection of a specific modular pivot (e.g., *you know* vs. *I guess*) may carry semantic meaning that both constrains and enables what can be done to the action being developed, so that different pivots may be associated with specifiable operations on the action in progress.

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