You know as invoking alignment: A generic resource for emerging problems of understanding and affiliation

Steven E. Clayman [a, *], Chase Wesley Raymond [b]

[a] *Department of Sociology, UCLA, 375 Portola Plaza, Los Angeles, CA, 90095-1551, USA*
[b] *Department of Linguistics, University of Colorado, Boulder, USA*

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The English-language particle *you know* is used so frequently in a diversity of environments that a comprehensive account of its functional import has been elusive. The present study, based on sequential and distributional analyses of a large sample from ordinary conversation, demonstrates that *you know* works as an alignment token invoking a convergent orientation between recipient and speaker. The invoked alignment may come off in context as either intersubjective (recipient correctly grasps speaker's meaning) or affiliative (recipient endorses speaker's action or stance). In support of this analysis, *you know* clusters in action environments where either the recipient's understanding or affiliation has emerged as salient or potentially problematic, but before such problems have risen to the level of overt expression. Correspondingly, the particle engenders confirmatory responses which are interjacently produced in a plurality of cases. The particle is thus implicated in the maintenance of both intersubjectivity and solidarity when these come under strain, and its use is indicative of nascent difficulties in either or both of these areas.

1. Introduction

The linguistic particle *you know* is commonplace in English-language conversation. It appears as a grammatically optional element of turn construction in a diverse range of action-types. Within the turns that deliver such actions, it can crop up at virtually any point and is not confined to turn-constructional or syntactic boundaries. The turn-constructional openness of *you know* thus exceeds that of most other particles and discourse markers,[1] and may inform its popular reputation as linguistic detritus, a vaguely disreputable bit of "filler" lacking much pragmatic or communicative import (Fox Tree 2007).

Scholars of language use, sensing that there is more to this practice than random behavior, have labored to specify what it is that *you know* actually does for speakers and recipients.

Some studies have examined the particle's social demographic correlates with mixed results. It is not age-restricted as even very young children (ages 2—4) deploy the phrase (Östman, 1981). Nor *does you know* appear to be gendered, with early work finding it used by women more than men as a form of powerless speech (Fishman, 1978; cf., Lakoff 1975) contradicted by larger corpus-based studies finding it to be largely gender-neutral (Freed and Greenwood, 1996; Holmes 1986; Stubbe and

---

Holmes 1995). Other studies suggest a class basis for the practice, which has been found more frequently among working class than middle class speakers in several anglophone countries (see Stubbe and Holmes 1995 for a summary).

Other research has focused on how *you know* figures in activities with a more direct bearing on its functional import. The conclusions here are wide-ranging and diverse, but several recurrent themes may be discerned. One is the particle's association with speech production problems (Clark 1994, Clark and Wasow 1998, Erman 1987, Fox Tree 2007; Traugott, 1995, House 2009, Schourup, 1985), with functional accounts that include buying time while the speaker is "fumbling" or engaged in discourse planning (House 2009; see also Erman 1987), and providing an alert for impending repair (Clark 1994; Clark and Wasow 1998). A second theme encompasses a range of epistemic matters such as marking common ground (Schourup 1985) or transformations thereof (Schiffrin 1987), speaker certainty or uncertainty (Lakoff 1975; Holmes 1986), and inviting recipient inferences (Fox et al. 2002, Jucker and Smith, 1988; see also Schourup 1985). A third cluster, receiving less attention, bears on securing the recipient's cooperation in contexts such as overt argumentation (Schiffrin 1987; cf. Östman 1981).

This diversity of theoretical accounts, while inelegant, partly reflects the real-world complexities of a speaking practice that is genuinely multifunctional. Extant studies touch on important pieces of the puzzle of *you know*, but these have not yet been assembled into a coherent whole. This may be due in part to an over-reliance on relatively small samples coupled with a tendency to focus on less than the full spectrum of functions that *you know* can perform. There has also been insufficient attention to varying and particular contexts of use within rather broad categories (e.g., "dysfluencies"), and varying sequential consequences involving the placement and forms of response that *you know* attracts. With these limitations, potential clues arising from the specifics of the particle's deployment and uptake have been obscured.

The present study builds on previous work in pursuit of an analysis that is both more granular and more comprehensive. Using a large sample of cases from ordinary conversation, we propose that *you know* retains a core meaning and functional import together with context-specificity and particularization. It generally operates as an *alignment token*, one that *invokes a convergent orientation between recipient and speaker*. This invoked alignment may come off as either (1) intersubjective (that recipient correctly grasps the speaker's meaning), or (2) affiliative (that recipient supports the action or stance being taken), or both, depending on its realization in context. Indeed, *you know* is recurrently deployed in environments where understanding, or both, affiliation has emerged as salient or potentially problematic, and in such contexts the particle and its confirmatory responses have a compensatory import. The complexity of *you know* thus arises from its role in the accountable maintenance of both intersubjectivity and solidarity at moments when either or both come under evident strain. Conversely its unity resides in the fact that, across both action environments, a state of "being on the same page" is being advanced and often validated.

Our use of "alignment" is purposefully chosen to encompass the duality of understanding and affiliation, and it bears emphasis that our phenomenon differs from others previously analyzed under the same rubric. In studies of interaction, "alignment" has frequently been understood as a property of sequentially responsive actions, namely those that advance a prior course of action (e.g., Stivers 2008). By contrast our phenomenon is, broadly speaking, sequentially initiating in character: invoking a state of alignment in first position without asserting it as such, which prompts validating responses without making them obligatory. Moreover, the particle that thus mobilizes response is understood to reference a relationship between participants (recipient with speaker) rather than actions (response with initiation).

After a brief discussion of data and method, we begin our analysis with general observations about the distribution of *you know* across turns at talk, and the responses it attracts. We then examine its distinct functions in three main action environments: (1) various speech production difficulties where recipient understanding is relevant or at risk, (2) various contentious actions where recipient affiliation is relevant or at risk, and (3) pursuits of response.

2. Database and methodology

Data for this project were drawn from American English conversational corpora, both telephone calls and face-to-face encounters among friends and family. Given our interest in *you know* as a locus of pragmatic choice, we excluded constituents of larger grammatical units and focused on grammatically optional cases – those produced as dispensable additions to turn constructional units or as separate units in their own right. Sampling on form rather than function ensured that the widest range of uses would be subject to analysis, enabling the most general account of the practice with "empirical bite" (Evans and Levinson, 2009: 475) as well as recurrent context-specific particularizations.

To maximize the range of participants in the database, we chose two to three conversations with varying participants from larger well-known telephone corpora (e.g., NB, SBL), plus some smaller datasets and individual recordings, for a total of 22 conversations involving more than 40 different participants. We then sampled up to the first 10 instances of *you know* in each of the shorter encounters (those < 15 min in length; n = 16), and up to the first 15 instances in each of the longer encounters (those ≥ 15 min; n = 6). Since none of these cases occurred during the opening phase of the encounter (e.g., greetings, *how are you* exchanges, etc.), the sample is not biased toward such ritualized activities. This procedure yielded a collection of N = 200 cases, roughly two-thirds from telephone calls and one-third from face-to-face encounters.

Our approach combined conversation analytic sequential analysis with coding and statistical analysis. We began by working case by case through our collection, analyzing each instance within its sequential context. Later, as our sense of its role in varying turn constructional and action environments began to emerge, we developed a coding system to assess its presence in these contexts. Thus, as Schegloff (1993) recommends, our quantitative analysis builds on a prior phase of sequential analysis, which gave us a defensible grasp of the phenomenon and its environments of relevance before we began

to quantify these relationships (see also Robinson 2007; Stivers 2015). All coding decisions were made by the authors working together and required consensus.

3. *You know* in turn construction

Consider, first, the placement of *you know* within turn-constructional units (henceforth TCUs). It is positionally unrestricted, appearing recurrently in TCU-initial (excerpt 1), medial (2), and final (3) positions.

```
(1) [Trip to Syracuse]
1  Ile:          So we'll make it for another ti:me then.
2              (0.5)
3  Ile:    ->   Yihknow jus' let me know when yer g'nna go:.
4  Cha:         .hh Sure .hh

(2) [HG II: 89]
1  Nan:         So 'e ga' me these pills tih ta:ke¿=
2  Hyl:         =What.Tetracyline?
3              (.)
4  Nan:         .PT NO: 'cuz I usetuh take that an' it didn' he:lp so
5              'e ga' me something e:lse.=
6  Hyl:         =Hm:.
7              (0.2)
8  Nan:    ->   He sai:d- yihknow, (0.2) sometimes Tetracycline jus doesn'
9              he:lp.

(3) [Ravioli Dinner: 489]
1  Kim:         D'you wanna go out with those guys Saturday
2              night=er not really.
3              (2.5)
4  Kim:         I'd rather not.
5              (0.5)
6  Kim:    ->   I think I just did too much last weekend you know?
7  Mark:        Mm hm?
```

It can also be produced as a pivot between TCUs (excerpt 4; see Clayman and Raymond 2015), and as a separate unit in its own right (5).

```
(4) [HG II: 62]
1  Nan:         It (js) hu:rt so bad Hyla I wz cry:::ing,=
2  Hyl:         =Yhher khhiddi[:ng.  ]
3  Nan:                       [nNo:]::.He really hurt me he goes I'm sorry,
4              .hh wehh .hh I khho th(h)at doesn't make i(h)t a(h)n(h)y better
5       ->   yihknow he was just (0.4) so, e-he didn't mean to be but he was
6              really hurting m[e.
7  Hyl:                        [.t #w Does it- look all marked u:p?=

(5) [mtrac 60 1-1: 7: 28]
1  RON:         °Yeh° ah love the Villa:ge I love the Village I love the
2              Village.  The Village has cha:nged over the past few
3              y[ears, en i]t's become just a nice place tuh live.  hhhhhh
4  MAR:         [Y e a : h.]
5  RON:    ->   y'know.
6              (1.5)
7  MAR:         W'l it's: e-You really sound good Ro:n.
```

All of these positions are utilized, but not equally so as *you know* tends to appear in the medial position (see Table 1). That position accounts for about half of the cases, roughly equaling all other positions combined.

Table 1
Turn position.

Turn Position	N	%
TCU-initial	35	17.5
TCU-medial	103	51.5
TCU-final	35	17.5
Pivotal	3	1.5
Separate TCU	24	12.0
TOTAL	200	100.0

A closer look at the medial cases offers further insight into the unrestricted syntax of *you know*. While it may appear at clausal and phrasal boundaries within the turn (e.g. ex. 2 above, lying between a quotative frame and main clause), it is not limited to such boundaries.[2] For instance, here the particle is inserted between an adverb ("just") and verb ("gave"), and is thus sequentially displaced from syntactic junctures elsewhere in the turn (the connectives "and so" earlier in line 5 or "then" in 6).

```
(6) [NB II:2:R: 162]
1   Nan:          …but I tellyuh by the time I got up there after im
2                 whh(h)y(h) everbuddy was so completely wru:ng ou:t.
3                 yuhknow e[nd .hhhhhh]
4   Emm:           [°Mm hm:.° ]
5   Nan:   ->   so quiet'n so: (0.2) uh: (.) .hhh I jus' (.) ↑yihknow (0.2)
6                 gave my short little,h (.) dissertation then everbuddy
7                 wri:tes.
```

And in the next case *you know* is not only displaced from a clausal juncture (the prior connective "and") but also disrupts the production of a lexical item. Just the first sound of what appears in context to be a verb (possibly "can't" or "couldn't") is produced when *you know* is inserted.

```
(7) [Frankel: TC:I:1: 139]
1   Shi:   ->   They offer it three times an' I c=yihknow I wasn't about tih
2                 take it in July:,
3   Shi:       .hhhhh I don'know what I'm g'nna d[o (on this)]
```

Cases like 6 and 7 appear to be organized, not by syntactic boundaries, but rather by phonetic hitches in speech delivery of the sort associated with self-repair (Jefferson 1974; Schegloff et al. 1977).[3] In excerpt 6 the particle is preceded by a micro-pause and earlier sound stretches and pauses (filled and unfilled); in 7 a word is cut off to make way for *you know*. Furthermore, some cases at phrasal/clausal boundaries are also, upon analysis, junctures of self-repair. Returning to excerpt 2, while *you know* lies between a quotative frame and main clause, it also falls within a repair space opened by a prior sound stretch and cut-off. Since repair is positionally unrestricted and can happen at any point within turns and turn-constructional units (Schegloff 1979), any practices associated with repair would be similarly unrestricted and *you know* appears to be one such practice (an association taken up later in this paper).

4. Patterns in response

Turning from positioning to responses, utterances containing *you know* (henceforth YK-marked) receive uptake at a high rate of frequency (see Table 2), with more than three-quarters (78%) getting some form of response by the next transition-relevance place (TRP). Most of these responses appear at the TRP itself (e.g., excerpts 1 and 3 above); others appear earlier and hence interjacently, while the unit of talk delivering *you know* is still in progress (e.g., excerpts 8 and 9 below). Of the remaining cases, some have transition spaces that are compressed or obscured (by rush-throughs, abrupt-joins, or pivots), so only about 13% of cases received no uptake when a space for it was provided.[4]

Table 2
Response frequency by sequential placement.

Response Placement	n	%
Interjacent	48	24.0
Next TRP (if no interjacent)	108	54.0
TRP compressed/obscured	17	8.5
No response	27	13.5
Total	200	100.0

Even though *you know* is often just one component of a larger utterance, it appears to be a key factor in the mobilization of response. Indirect support for this arises from the fact that many YK-marked utterances lack other response-mobilizing design features (see Stivers and Rossano 2010), such as interrogative syntax (present less than 2% of the sample), and final rising intonation (present in less than half of the turn-final and free-standing cases). Conversely, *you know* in itself embodies the epistemic element of turn design known to mobilize response (Heritage 2012; Stivers and Rossano 2010). Insofar as it

---

[2] In this respect, *you know* differs from address terms, another grammatically optional and relatively free-floating item that appears to be organized by grammatical boundaries (Clayman 2012).

[3] Other studies documenting the particle's association with self-repair include, Clark and Wasow (1998), Erman (1987), and Schourup (1985).

[4] Moreover, as we show later in the paper, lack of uptake may in some cases be demonstrably "for cause" as an expression of ongoing discord.

references recipient's understanding or approval, this is something the recipient has primary rights to know about and comment on.

More direct evidence for *you know* as response-mobilizing is the high proportion of "early" or interjacent responses it receives. The particle's potential to elicit such response has been noted previously in single case analyses (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986; Lerner 2013: 120–121); here we add distributional evidence from its association with interjacent uptake, operationalized here as response beginning more than one full lexical item before the current speaker arrives at a syntactic completion point. The rate of interjacent response in Table 2 (24%) is substantial on its face but understates the actual strength of the pattern since it includes turn-final and free-standing cases that virtually preclude early response. For those cases where interjacent uptake becomes feasible − turn-initial and medial − such uptake rises to about one-third of the cases.

Response tokens are the most frequent form of interjacent uptake, comprising almost half of the "early" responses (see Table 3). For instance, the response in this excerpt (arrowed) is launched shortly after the particle and before the sentence's complement is delivered, hence well before the turn-constructional unit is complete.

```
(8) [NB II:2:R:pp. 2-3: assassination impact]
1  Nan:        .hhhhhh Yeah it's been a rough week ah
2       ->     everbuddy: is you know (0.2)
3  Emm:  ->    Mm [hm
4  Nan:            [ta:lkin about it in everbuddy: course
5               I: don't know whether it's that er just that
6               we're jus:t (.) completely bo:gging down et
7               work, h .hhhmh
```

More substantial interjacent uptake may also follow, as in the next case involving entry into an if-then construction (see Lerner 1996). Nancy's intervention (line 4) begins with an interjection ("yeah") and continues with an anticipatory completion of the prior turn-in-progress; "might as well chance it" fits as a coherent then-clause to Hyla's if-clause, and hence a candidate understanding of where Hyla was going with her emerging action.

```
(9)  [HG II: 224: attending a play]
1  Hyl:        =.khhhh Yeah.But anyw'y so the review is pretty goo:d'n so
2       ->     I go oh if it's this goo:d jihknow=
3  Hyl:        =[I'd really [l i k e    [tuh  [see it.  ]
4  Nan:  ->    =[Ye: u h. [Might ez [well [ cha:nc]e it,
5              (.)
6  Nan:        That sounds goo:d,
```

It bears emphasis that in both cases the speaker is talking about matters lying squarely within *their own* epistemic domain (assessing conditions at work in excerpt 8, the speaker's own thoughts in deciding to attend a play in 9); moreover the particle lacks any final intonation contour that might account for the response it receives.[5]

Accordingly, *you know* appears to be a response-mobilizing element of turn construction in itself, one that recurrently supersedes syntactic constraints on response. In practice, though, the particle may be laminated with additional features that license or encourage response. In TCU-medial position, there is the factor of evident speech production difficulties, which have previously been shown to be an environment of heightened recipient engagement (Goodwin 1980) and vocal responses (Jefferson 1984; Goodwin and Goodwin 1986; Lerner 2013). And in TCU-final and free-standing positions the particle may be delivered with final rising intonation that builds pressure for response.

The forms of response it receives (Table 3) offers support for the general import of *you know* as embodying a tacit alignment claim that occasions, but does not obligate, recipient validation. Regardless of their placement vis-à-vis the turn in progress, most responses − head nods, receipt tokens (mostly variants of *mmhm*; e.g. excerpts 3, 6, 8), candidate understandings of various kinds (including anticipatory completions; excerpt 9), and agreements (excerpts 23, 24) − are dedicated to confirming whatever context-specific alignment has been invoked. Other responses may do this embeddedly within talk devoted to other matters, but most (>62% of responses) do so as a primary focus of action.

Table 3
Response forms by turn position.

	Interjacent		Transition Space	
	N	%	n	%
Head nod	3	6.25	9	8.33
Receipt token	23	47.92	40	37.04
Candidate understanding	7	14.58	3	2.78
Agreement (>token)	1	2.08	11	10.19
Other response	14	29.17	45	41.67
TOTAL	48	100.00	108	100.00

---

[5] Additional interjacent responses may be seen in excerpts 12, 21, and 22 below. For more extended analysis and discussion of how *you know* enables forward conversational movement before in-progress units of talk are brought to completion, see Clayman and Raymond (2021).

Also evident in these response forms is an initial glimpse into the context-sensitive duality of *you know* as invoking either understanding or affiliation. Setting aside the first two highly indexical response forms (nods, receipt tokens), the latter forms (candidate understandings, agreements) are geared to displaying either understanding or affiliation, respectively, thus fitting the two main environments of relevance in which *you know* is used.

5. Environments where understanding is relevant

You know is associated with speech production difficulties of various kinds, particularly those that can be taken to indicate substantial expressive problems for speakers or that portend interpretive challenges for recipients. In this context the particle operates as an *intersubjective* alignment token that invokes recipient's grasp of the problematic talk. Both the particle and its frequent confirmatory responses are accountable as providing a semblance of mutual understanding in contexts where this might otherwise be cast into doubt.

5.1. Same-turn self-repair

When speaking problems generate an audible hitch in the forward progression of a turn-at-talk (e.g., a phonetic cut-off, sound stretch, filled pause (*uh*), or silence; Jefferson 1974; Schegloff et al. 1977), the use of *you know* by the speaker is recurrent and highly patterned. Distributional evidence (Table 4 below) confirms that hitch-marked self-repair is a prominent locus for *you know*, accounting for almost half of the cases (94/200 or 47%) in our database.[6] Not surprisingly, among those linked to self-repair about 90% fall in the turn-medial position.

Table 4
Self-repair association by TCU position.

	Not Repair		Self-Repair	
	N	%	n	%
Initial	33	31.1	2	2.1
Medial	19	17.9	85	90.4
Final	29	27.4	6	6.4
Pivotal	3	2.8	0	0.0
Separate TCU	23	21.7	1	1.1
TOTAL	106	100.0	94	100.0

Further details of the particle's deployment in self-repair provide insight into its role as an intersubjective alignment token in this context. Consider the placement of *you know* across the repair space. It can appear just "before" repair is initiated via a phonetic hitch in speech delivery (e.g., excerpt 8 above) or just "after" it has been resolved via one or more repair operations (excerpt 18 below).[7] But most appear inside the repair space — after a phonetic hitch but before any repair operation has been implemented. This more commonplace repair-internal positioning may be seen in the next excerpts (arrowed), the first containing two YK cases.

```
(10) [MTRAC 60-1:5]
1  Mar:        .hhhh So uh I haven't uh,hh .hh met Ilene b't,hh
2              (0.3)
3  Erm:        She's a do:ll. ˙hhh The cute thing is thet she's not only
4       ->     pretty but she seems tuh be such a nice girl.She's: uh
5       ->     you know she doesn't seem one of the:se eh::m .t eh::
6       ->     .hhh yihkno:w watch me all the time kind'v kids? ˙hhh
7              Cause she's: gotta very pretty face. . .

(11) [SBL: 1-1-10: 369: nursing work]
1  Ros:        Well they're lu]cky to have you:.
2  Bea:        hh We:ll I don't knhhohhhh hhu hheeuhhh I:uh £somedi:mes
3       ->     I:£ e (.) w:onder if I should uh: hh hh (0.4) ˙uh˙ (1.2)
4       ->     yihknow be working a little mo:re, hh I ˙really don't want
5              to though….
```

As indicated in Table 5, this position is indeed the most frequent, with 80% of the repair-associated cases falling inside the repair space.

---

[6] For further evidence of this association, see Clark and Wasow (1998), Erman (1987), House (2009), Östman (1981), Schourup (1985).

[7] The scare quotes capture the particle's introduction of some fuzziness to repair-space boundaries. It is a syntactically optional alignment token occasioned by the repair, but it does not implement any repair operation nor reliably flag the existence of a repairable trouble.

Table 5
Positioning across the repair space.

Position	n	%
"Before" initiation	9	9.57
Within repair space	76	80.85
"After" resolution	9	9.57
Total	94	100.00

Furthermore, among repair-internal cases there is a moderate tendency (approximately three quarters of those cases) for *you know* to appear *just prior* to the resolution, or at least an attempted resolution, with all or most of the suspension of progressivity (sound stretch, *uh*, silence) occurring *before* the particle. The preceding instances exemplify this positioning (arrowed in excerpts 10, 11), where an extended disfluency precedes each particle, which in turn precedes the resumption of talk. This overall pattern runs contrary to the view that *you know* functions *primarily* as a "pause filler" while the speaker is engaged in discourse planning (Erman 1987; Holmes 1986; House 2009). It is more compatible with a view of *you know* as positionally sensitive, with some instances framing the disfluency, but most framing the repair's resolution (Lerner and Kitzinger 2015) by invoking the parties' convergent understanding as a preface to the resolution's delivery.

Just as the particle is positioned selectively across the repair space, it is also used for a limited range of repair operations (see Schegloff 2013) (Table 6).[8] In the present data *you know* is never used for insertion or deletion repairs, and only rarely for replacement repairs.[9] These are relatively modest repair operations, adjustments to formulations treated by the speaker as on balance unproblematic. Conversely, the particle is used primarily in conjunction with repair operations indexing more fundamental production problems: about half of the cases involve *searching repairs*, and over a quarter involve *TCU restarts* (cf. Clark and Wasow 1998; Erman 1987).

Table 6
Repair type specialization.

Repair Type	N	%
Searching	48	51.06
Insertion	0	0.00
Deletion	0	0.00
Replacement	4	4.26
TCU restart	27	28.72
Repair abandoned	11	11.70
Other	4	4.26
Total	94	100.00

In searching repairs, the particle (arrowed below) generally follows a hitch in the talk's progression (e.g., sound stretch and "eh:m.t eh::" in line 5 below), and precedes a syntactically continuous resumption of the unit of talk previously in progress (line 6). Returning to excerpt 10, the speaker here is in the process of praising a mutual acquaintance, and the search's particle-framed resolution delivers a highly colloquial item of praise (she's not "one of those... *you know* watch-me-all-the-time kind of kids").

(10) [MTRAC 60-1:5]
```
1  Mar:      .hhhh So uh I haven't uh,hh .hh met Ilene b't,hh
2            (0.3)
3  Erm:      She's a do:ll. ʰhh The cute thing is thet she's not only
4            pretty but she seems tuh be such a nice girl.She's: uh
5            youknow she doesn't seem one of the:se eh::m .t eh::
6       ->   .hhh yihkno:w watch me all the time kind'v kids? ʰhh
7            Cause she's: gotta very pretty face. . .
```

In excerpt 11 (seen earlier) the production hitch is more extended (line 3), with several filled pauses (*uh*), aspiration, and silence. But again the resumption of talk (4) is framed with "*you know*" and continues the previously suspended verb phrase, which emerges as self-deprecatory and deflects a prior compliment (line 1).

(11) [SBL: 1-1-10: 369: nursing work]
```
1  Ros:      Well they're lu]cky to have you:.
```

---

[8] The categories in Table 6 are derived from Schegloff's (2013) framework of self-repair operations, with some simplifications to enhance reliability. Thus categories such as "parenthesizing," "reformatting," and "sequence jumping" were largely subsumed under the more generic umbrella category "TCU restarts."

[9] In the few replacement repairs in our sample, *you know* appears tied not to the replacement operation per se but rather the nature of the formulations involved, namely their sub-optimal character. We explore this in the next section (see excerpt 17).

```
2  Bea:       hh We:ll I don't knhhohhhh hhu hheeuhhh I:uh £somedi:mes
3             I:£ e (.) w:onder if I should uh: hh hh (0.4) ˙uh˙ (1.2)
4       ->    yihknow be working a little mo:re, hh I ˙really don't want
5             to though….
```

Additional instances of YK-framed searching repairs may be seen in excerpt 6 (line 5) and excerpt 8 (line 2).

In TCU restarts, the particle generally follows a similar production hitch, but yields talk that abandons the in-progress unit of talk in favor of a new unit intelligible as a re-doing of the prior. Here the speaker abandons a projected time formulation for her upcoming boat trip (line 4), and after a long pause (5) she uses *you know* to restart the turn (6), which is also reformulated in a way that removes herself as the agent in a more tentative version of the departure's timing (see Raymond and White 2017).

```
(12) [NB I:6:R:92: boat trip]
1  Emm:        You go out Sundee night then.=
2  Lot:        =Yeah.
3  Emm:        Ah ha:h,
4  Lot:        We leave after uh
5              (1.0)
6  Lot:    ->  ˙t u.- Yihkno::w, u.-it prob'ly leaves about
7              midni:gh[t,
8  Emm:               [Mm:hm,
```

And in the next case, after Marcia expresses concern about being unprepared to direct a youth play (lines 1–2), Ron's attempt at reassurance (3–4) is twice cut off and restarted.

```
(13) [Marcia 60: 1-1: 6]
1  Mar:        Ayund ah-ah-ee y'know I was in the theater but I don't know
2              a thing about directing, I'm directing it hhehhh hh hh
3  Ron:    ->  That's: that's yihkno:w u-directing yihkno:w if: if if yih
4              jus' can relate tuh people.
5  Mar:        Ye:a:h.=
6  Ron:        =That's all directing is (          )
```

Both restarts are YK-framed, the latter launching an *if*-clause that attracts confirmation (5) before the *then*-component is delivered (Lerner 1996). Additional YK-framed restarts may be seen in excerpt 7 (line 1), excerpt 10 (line 5), excerpt 21 (line 1), and excerpt 31 (line 8).

The strong clustering of *you know* in these two forms of repair is revealing of the particle' specialized utility for speech production problems. It is not often used for minor adjustments to formulations whose parameters are, for the speaker, already substantially in hand; it is reserved for deeper expressive problems in which the entire formulation, or the turn as a whole, is treated as elusive and still to be determined. Consistent with this pattern, the next most frequent repair outcome, after searches and restarts, is for the repair to be abandoned altogether without any evident resolution of the trouble (12% of the cases in Table 6; for examples see excerpts 21 and 22).[10] Speakers thus invoke alignment at those moments of greatest expressive difficulty. When this is done earlier in the repair space, both the particle and its frequent interjacent confirmatory responses provide a semblance of intersubjective alignment when this might otherwise be cast into doubt (cf., Schegloff 1992).

5.2. Sub-optimal formulations

You know is associated with a second category of speech production difficulty that often co-occurs with self-repair but is analytically distinct and also occurs outside of any repair context. This involves linguistic formulations that are *sub-optimal* from the speaker's vantage point, either falling short of the speaker's expressive aims, or potentially problematic for recipients to grasp as intended, or both of these in combination. The sub-optimal element, whether there by design or not, may be expected to pose interpretive challenges for recipients but are unproblematic insofar as recipients are able to fill in the gap of what remains unsaid in so many words (cf., Garfinkel 1967). Accordingly, speakers treat such talk as less than ideal but nonetheless adequate in context by invoking intersubjective alignment for sub-optimal formulations that can take a variety of distinguishable forms.

YK-marked formulations are frequently offered as imprecise, underdeveloped, or otherwise *typified* characterizations. Such formulations are not meant to be taken in an excessively literal fashion but rather as rough approximations of the states of affairs to which they refer. For instance, after Diane offers general praise for her college dorm room (lines 1–3), she begins to unpack this ("they had-") but cuts off just before providing a specification. Her resumption is both YK-prefaced and overtly hedged with *like* ("y'know like made the beds"), a conventionalized pre-positioned hedge that often co-occurs with *you know* (see also 15 below; Jucker and Smith 1998).

---

[10] Abandoned self-repair is one aspect of a more general phenomenon, the association of *you know* with formulations left incomplete, which we examine in the next section.

```
(14)  [Clacia: 4:18: reminiscing about college dorm life]
1  DIA:        Ih was nice'n it was clean:,=
2  CLA:        =[Right. ]
3  DIA:   ->   =[ih was] new: en they [(had-)] (.) y'know like made the be:ds'n,
4  CLA:                           [Right ]
5                   (0.5)
6  DIA:        (furniture 'n stuff.)
```

Beyond this framing, the ensuing list of features apparently ends with a generalized list completer ("'n stuff") (Jefferson 1990) alluding to other favorable features that remain unspecified. So this formulation is both prefaced and completed with elements rendering it as a rough approximation of what *nice and clean* might consist of, and *you know* figures in this assemblage.

A similarly typified rendering, but without any production hitch, appears in this complaint regarding a friendship on the wane. To document her faltering relationship with the recipient, Shelley asserts (lines 3–5) that they only get together for "like *you know* football things or whatever."

```
(15) [Debbie and Shelley: 188: not getting together]
1  Shelley:     =No I know:, I -ean- a- thats- thats the whole
2                   thing though, I mean I've been trying to: e-your
3                   right haven't seen you becuz: I mea:n the only time
4           ->   we evan- ever: make plans's like you know football
5                   things or whatever.
6                   (1.2)
7  Shelley:     I mean we have'n made alot pla:ns and I-I don't know….
```

Here again, the formulation is both prefaced ("like") and completed ("or whatever") with elements casting it as a typification of a more general state of affairs (i.e., *the sorts of occasions when we do manage to get together*).[11]

YK-marked formulations may also be *lexically non-specific*, couched in terms that are nebulous or vague on their face. Terminological non-specificity can be entirely purposeful (Jucker et al. 2003) and unproblematic when understood in context, and invoking the recipient's extant alignment suggests as much. For instance, a birthday gift proposal (lines 4–5) is couched in somewhat vague terms ("microphone and thing"), and then capped off with *you know*. Its TCU-final position coupled with rising intonation more strongly pursues and mobilizes acknowledgment (6).

```
(16) [Kamunsky: 116:   birthday gift]
1  ALA:        ·thhh I d'n'know what 'e wants. Uhm if you wa:nt you
2                   c'n talk tuh Rob about go[ing in on a gi:ft,=
3  SH?:                                    [(° )
4  ALA:        =·hhh Cuz Rob thought thet they were gonna go in on a
5           ->   gift en get'm a microphone en thing y'know?
6  SHA:        Yea:h,h
```

And in the next case *you know* prefaces a formulation that is not only intrinsically vague ("a little thing"), but appears designedly so given the version preceding it ("an ad"), as well as the production hitch indexing a search before "little thing" is delivered. Evidently the speaker attempted a more precise formulation before settling on this one.

```
(17) [HG II: pp. 3-4: birthday play]
1  Hyla:       The week before my birthda:[y,
2  Nancy:                                [Yea[:h
3  Hyla:                                      [I was looking
4                   in the Calendar section en there was
5           ->   u:n- (.) un a:d yihknow a little:: u- thi:ng,
6                   .hh[hh
7  Nancy:            [Uh hu:h,=
8  Hyla:       At- th— th'theater's called the Met Theater
9                   it's on Poinsettia. . . .
```

This case involves one of the few replacement repairs in our dataset, although here the use of *you know* appears driven not by the replacement operation per se but rather the nebulous and hence sub-optimal character of its outcome. Thus YK-prefaced, the formulation is subsequently acknowledged (7).

Highly abbreviated or *elliptical* formulations also attract alignment tokens. In this exchange from the late 1960s, the speaker's search for the name of a radio broadcast (lines 1-2) is initially resolved with "blast off," apparently an abbreviated reference to an Apollo rocket launch. This formulation is treated by the speaker herself as sub-optimal, as she immediately adds "*you know*" with final intonation, and then despite receiving an continuer (3) offers a revised version ("astronauts" in 5).

```
(18) [SBL 1:1:11:R: 74]
1  Din:        Well I had my television on but I was listening
2           ->   to: uh the blast off yih ↓kno:w.
3  Bea:        Mm hm,
```

---

[11] For another instance of a YK-marked typified formulation, see excerpt 10 above.

```
4              (0.4)
5  Din:  ->   The uh: ah- a[:stro  ]nauts,
6  Bea:                 [Yeah.]
7  Bea:       Yeah.
8  Din:       hh A:nd I:, I didn't ever git any ↑lo:c'l new::s.
```

The revision, although done as an improvement on the prior, is itself elusive (note the prior search) and elliptical, but the recipient's multiple acknowledgments (6, 7) treat it as adequate and license continuation (8).

In the next example, an elliptical reference to the Dory Fleet Fish Market of Newport Beach is YK-marked. Lottie first refers to it as "the Dory", and then offers a slightly expanded version ("Dory Fisherman") that remains abbreviated relative to its official name.

```
(19) [NB II:1:R: 135]
1  Lot:       The smallest ba:ss we kep' was one pou:n' we-we uh we:ll
2              (.) Mondee we we:nt uh went with this: (.) gi:rl Mary en
3              we wen'over on Elmer's do:ck en Faye went with us 'n=
4  Emm:        =[Mm hm
5  Lot:        =[we got a lot'v fish over there .hh en we take'em down
6        ->    to the Dory yihknow Dory fisherm'n down there en
7              they clean'em for yuh.
8  Emm:        Well goo u:::[:d.
```

Lottie herself seems to register the inadequacy of the expanded version, not only by framing it with *you know* but also by appending a spatial reference ("down there") that would aid recognition.

A more acute form of sub-optimality involves language that is, from the speaker's vantage point, *off the mark*. Ostensibly inapposite or incorrect formulations have the potential to mislead and not merely confuse, and these comprise another recurrent locus for *you know*. For instance, here the speaker is having great difficulty specifying the challenges of a nursing job opening. After restarting her turn (line 1), she suspends the revised turn for a lengthy *you know*-framed search (lines 2–3).

```
(20) [SBL 1:1:10, p. 2:  nursing position]
1  Bea:       Well it's a ca:se thet, uh:m (0.4) ↑It ta:kes↑
2        ->   a special ki:nd the:re yuh kno:w to uh::
3             kh hhhh (0.2) uhm (0.9)
4             They like gentleness. hh (.) if I u-tih be
5        ->   plai:n. Yih kno[:w.
6  Ros:                      [Mm[: hm.
```

Another restart delivers the resolution ("They like gentleness" in 4), but the speaker quickly backs off from that formulation ("if I u-to be plain"). In so doing, she retroactively treats the formulation as more blunt than what she was aiming for. This retreat, which receives no uptake, is itself followed by another *you know* (5) which mobilizes an acknowledging response (6).[12]

Yet another manifestation of sub-optimality involves formulations that are left incomplete and hence "abandoned" in favor of other talk. This phenomenon encompasses the abandonment of self-repair before its resolution (noted earlier; see Table 6) but extends as well to incomplete formulations outside of any repair context. Invoking alignment is recurrently implicated in this process, with subsequent abandonment initiated either by recipients or by speakers, or both in collaboration.

For instance, in response to a request for baseball tickets for a mutual friend, the timing of which had previously emerged as problematic, *you know* (line 1) frames a pause and restart, but that revision is itself cut off before the predicate is fully delivered (2). The recipient then intervenes to advance the project without addressing the specifics of the incomplete formulation (3).

```
(21) [Ravioli Dinner: 402]
1  Mark:  ->  I can prob'ly get tickets I just ya know (.) I don't
2             know exactly w- (.)
3  Kim:       I jus' kinda wanta get thuh good seats ya know_
4  Kim:       for her.
```

And the next case, in a defensive response (*I mean*-prefaced; Maynard 2013) to a complaint about a waning friendship, only the first word of a YK-framed formulation is produced ("I" in 5) before the talk becomes accountably elusive, at which point the recipient takes the floor (6) with a claim of understanding ("I know"; Mikesell et al., 2018) and an overt licensing of the abandonment ("you don't have to explain yourself," in 6–7).

```
(22) [Debbie & Shelley: 173]
1   Debb:      …but don't a:lienate me jus becuz I'm friends
2              with Jay:.[I mean it just really seems like i:t.]
3   Shel:               [I'm not try:ing to:, I mean origina]lly
```

---

[12] The positioning of the second instance (line 5) within a separate TCU, and its delivery with falling intonation, more strongly pursues response in a way that is explored further in the last empirical section ("Pursuits of Response").

```
4                I know it seemed liked that but thats not th- thats
5          ->   not i:t, I mean you know I e- hh a- [I   (        )
6    Debb:                                        [»I KNOW YOu
7                don' have to explain« yourself I mean »its-its«
8          ->   [you  know  whate:v]er.
9    Shel:      [No I know but I mean]
10   Shel:      Y:a hhave to understand I mean I need time to be
11              able swallow all this. . . .
```

That the alignment token is not merely incidental to this process is evident in the recipient's own use of the same token in the next unit (7—8). After a production hitch, yet another "*you know*" paves the way for something elusive and/or sub-optimal, but here the speaker herself explicitly gives up on the formulation and the turn altogether with a downwardly-intoned "whatever."

These typified, lexically non-specific, elliptical, off-base, and incomplete formulations illustrate some of the forms of sub-optimality for which an alignment token is recurrently used.[13] As noted earlier, these cases frequently overlap with self-repair but also occur independently, with non-repair cases accounting for 12.5% (n = 25) of the instances in our database. Across these cases the particle, in conjunction with its confirmatory responses and the inferences on which they are ostensibly premised, furnishes a semblance of intersubjective convergence at moments when this might otherwise be cast into doubt. Moreover, the same semblance of alignment may materially impact the development of the talk in progress, licensing forward conversational movement even when the optimal form of words remain beyond reach, and making any subsequent transformative repair efforts redundant and unnecessary (Clayman and Raymond 2021).

6. Environments where affiliation is relevant

A second major environment for *you know* embodies the relevance of affiliation. The particle is used recurrently for actions that make some form of acceptance or rejection relevant in response, such as assessments, recruitment actions and accounts, and misdeeds.[14] Beyond this, in many of these cases an accepting response is plausibly at risk, either because discord is already "in the air," or because of the intrinsic contentiousness of the action itself. In such contexts the particle comes off as an *affiliative* alignment token invoking the recipient's support for an ostensibly "controversial" action or stance. And unlike the turn-medial positioning typically seen in understanding-relevant actions, for affiliation-relevant actions the particle typically appears in turn-initial or turn-final position, the latter at times more actively soliciting response.

6.1. Assessments and evaluative comments

Assessments and other evaluative comments, particularly those that are relatively "extreme," negatively valenced, or have a critical edge, are recurrently accompanied by alignment tokens. To illustrate, here a negative assessment of television coverage of the Robert Kennedy assassination (lines 3—6) is couched in extreme terms ("horrible sad music they keep playing all the time"), and completed with a turn-final *you know*.

```
(23) [NB II:2:R:63]
1    Emm:       Ah won't ev'n turn the tee vee o:n,h
2               (.)
3    Nan:       Well I hed turned it on w'n I firs'got u:p js tuh see:
4               how thin:gs were: progressi:ng but the thing wz so sad'n
5               all that horrible sad music they kep' (.) keep
6    Nan:   ->  [playing] all th' [time yuh] know,
7    Emm:       [Oh::::: ]        [G*o:::d  ]
8    Emm:       They go on en o:n en o:[n with thi]:s
9    Nan:                             [°Y a : h,° ]
```

It is noteworthy that the complaining assessment elicits empathetic but token responses (the prosodically marked "oh:::::" and "Go:::d" in 7), while the addition of "*you know*" elicits a more explicit statement of agreement (line 8) with the last part of the assessment.

The next pair of cases both involve critical comments targeting a third party. Diane is reminiscing about a college dorm resident whom she criticizes for excessively proper dress (lines 1—6), conduct epitomized by her expensive and inappropriate peignoir set (6). Her recipient is faintly nodding throughout this but offers no further reaction to the peignoir observation (7), at which point Diane draws out the upshot via a pointed YK-prefaced denunciation ("*You know*. I mean who goes to college with a peignoir set."). This gets an affiliative response (10) that not only endorses the prior's critical stance but also matches its grammatical form: both denunciation and agreement are interrogatively formatted.

---

[13] For a fuller discussion of varying forms of sub-optimality, and the reflexive import of *you know* for bringing off formulations as sub-optimal, see Clayman and Raymond 2021.

[14] Schiffrin's (1987) examination of argumentative contexts, although narrower and less granular, is partially convergent with the association documented here.

(24) [Clacia: 1]
```
1    Dia:       We had this one girl,=she was from Flo:rida. An' I swear
2               t'Go::d she wanted t'be on the bes'dress'list_
3               (0.4)
4    Dia:       An' 'er parents apparently wern'even that wealthy.='n she
5               wen'out'n she bought tons of clothes so she c'd be on
6               th'bes'dres-she even came t'college in a peignoi:r se:t.
7               (0.2)
8    Dia:  ->   Y'know.<u=mean who goes tih college inna witha
9               [peignoir set.
10   Cla:       [Who even o:wns one.Right?
11              (0.3)
12   Dia:       Tch! We couldn't sta:nd her. . . .
```

In the next case an unsavory character, earlier noted as having been banned from a recreational racetrack for endangering children (lines 1–4), is characterized as a "big burly bastard" (11), the epithet delivered *sotto voce*. This bluntly negative characterization, offered as the sort of person who would endanger young children, is capped off with *you know*.

(25)   [Auto Discussion: 6 (simplified)]
```
1    PHY:       Mike said 'e usetuh::: race
2               go[carts en 'e got barred f'm the go-cart track=
3    MIK:          [He use-
4    PHY:       =be[cuz he ra:n little] kids (h)off the tr(h)a[ck,
5    MIK:          [ over in Tiffen.   ]                      [
6    CUR:                                          [h h h h h ]
7    MIK:                                          [That's a-  ]
8               that's a fact.=
9    PHY:       =[hhh
10   MIK:       =['n-
11   MIK:  ->   D[eWa:ld is a [big burly °bastard° [jihknow,
12   CUR:        [Jesus.     [                     [Mmhm,
13   PHY:                    [.hhhh hhehhhhhhehheh,
14   PHY:       hh[hheh
15   MIK:         [En that's a fact he got barred from runin' go carts
16              o[ver in Tiffen nbecause he usetuh run the little kids=
17   PHY:        [ohhh
18   MIK:       =off the track.=
19   CUR:       =Well you remember when McKuen did that,
```

Perhaps because the main recipient, Curt, launched an acknowledging response simultaneously (12), and had already expressed disapproval of the bullying conduct ("Jesus") but doesn't actually know the person in question (Heritage 2011), no further agreement or affiliation is forthcoming in this case.

6.2. Recruitment actions and accounts

Alignment tokens also figure in requests, proposals, and other recruitment actions (Kendrick and Drew 2016), particularly when these take the form of accounts for a course of action that has already met with at least tacit resistance. Correspondingly, YK-marked accounts also appear in subsequent rejections.

Consider, first, accounts for recruitment actions. Here a wife's proposal to her husband that they take a pass on getting together with "those guys Saturday" (line 4) receives no verbal response (5), prompting her to defend her proposal to skip the event (6). Her account is brought to completion with an upwardly-intoned *you know* (arrowed) that successfully elicits response, but only a minimal acknowledgment (7) and then a somewhat ambiguous comment (9).

(26) [Ravioli Dinner: 489]
```
1    Kim:       D'you wanna go out with those guys Saturday
2               night=er not really.
3               (2.5)
4    Kim:       I'd rather not.
5               (0.5)
6    Kim:  ->   I think I just did too much last weekend you know?
7    Mark:      Mm hm?
8               (0.4)
9    Mark:      I thought thuh plan was (to hang out.)
```

A similar sequence of events (initiating action -> resistance -> YK-marked account) transpires elsewhere in the same encounter, seen earlier, following Kim's request (data not shown) for baseball tickets to entertain an out-of-town visitor. When Mark projects some difficulty (lines 1–2), Kim accounts for her interest in "good seats" (3) while appending the same alignment token, here delivered without a final pitch contour as a prelude to a further increment (4) casting her motives as altruistic. This fails to overcome the previous resistance (6).

(27) [Ravioli Dinner: 402]

```
1  Mark:        I can prob'ly get tickets I just ya know (.) I don't
2               know exactly w- (.)
3  Kim:    ->   I jus' kinda wanta get thuh good seats ya know_
4  Kim:         for her.
5               (0.5)
6  Mark:        Well, (3.5) free seats are good seats.
```

Alignment tokens also figure in accounts for rejecting recruitment actions. Bea has been trying to convince a reluctant Ros to accept a nursing position, but when she reveals the job's location (line 4), Ros comments on the distance (5–6) before delivering a *you know*-framed rejection on the basis that "seven days a week is just too much for me" (6–7).

```
(28) [SBL 1:1:10:R: 1]
1   Bea:        hh And, uh:m (0.3) It, isn't, hard wo:rk,h[ hhhh[hh
2   Ros:                                              [(0.3) [I see.
3   Ros:        Ennu where is th*is,
4   Bea:        <Out'n Montecit*o. *On Alst'd Roa:[d.h
5   Ros:                                         [Oh::. An' that's
6       ->      quite a drive froa heeuh too: hhh Well you know eh
7               seven days a week is jus'too much for me, I can't do it
8               with (.) children. hh Eh es you say if I: c'd find
9               some(b'ddy) to relieve me on the weekend.
11  Bea:        Mm-hm?
12  Ros:        But that's the troub*le.
13  Bea:        Ye*aw.
```

Her YK-marked rejection account receives no uptake from a recipient who appears reluctant to take no for an answer (see also line 11), and indeed continues to keep the issue alive long after this excerpt.

6.3. Misdeeds

Finally, consider speakers who are engaged in or reporting misdeeds, that is, acts that may be regarded as mischievous or in breach of societal norms. At such moments, when the recipient's affiliation may be seen as at risk, *you know* invokes support for the questionable action and often elicits confirmation.

Here the victim of a recent house burning, Pat, is reflecting on the condition of her cat whose whiskers were singed in the fire (lines 3–4). After an initial sympathetic response to this news (5), Pat begins to make light of the situation, first with a laughter-infused confirmation that the cat is okay (6), and then a comment that "she wasn't meant to have whis(h)ers" (8–9). This quip, also laughter-infused, is marked as a possible misdeed at the cat's expense (Haakana 2001; Jefferson 1984). It is also YK-prefaced, and receives responsive laughter (10) that mirrors the speaker's stance and shows the parties to be "laughing together" (Glenn 2003: Ch. 3, Jefferson et al. 1987).

```
(29) [House Burning: 2]
1   PAT:        An' even: >then=I felt bad about Arle:ne, b't (0.2) hh b't
2               somehow the dogs en: Meow (w')/(wz) the:re, en then w'n
3               Brad found Meow this morning I just .hhh her- her
4               whiskers'r all sin:ged bu[t-
5   PEN:                                 [.hhh O:h but she's ohhkhhay.=
6   PAT:        =Y(h)ea(h)h,=
7   PEN:        =hhy(h)ea(h)h?, .hh[hh
8   PAT:   ->                      [Yihknow she wasn't meant tih have
9               whisk(h)ers .un[hh!
10  PEN:                       [Yihh!=
11  PAT:        =Th'dog pulled out o:ne,[ihhh
12  PEN:                                [ihh Yeah (h)right. [.hhhh
13  PAT:                                                    [So now 'e's
14              got singed whisk(h)ers.
```

While the previous misdeed is enacted in the here-and-now, the next is recounted from the past. Relating a painful dermatology treatment, Nancy's initial complaint (line 1) receives a disbelieving response from Hyla (2), prompting Nancy to document her discomfort by re-enacting an exchange (3–4) wherein the doctor offers an apology but Nancy flatly rejects it ("I go that doesn't make it any better").

```
(30) [HG II:2:62]
1   Nan:        It (js) hu:rt so bad Hyla I was cry:::ing,=
2   Hyl:        =Yhher khhiddi[:ng.]
3   Nan:                      [nNo:]:.He really hurt me he goes I'm sorry,
4               .hh wehh .hh I khho th(h)at doesn't make i(h)t a(h)n(h)y better
5       ->      yihknow he was just (0.4) so, e-he didn't mean to be but he was
6               really hurting m[e.
7   Hyl:                        [.t #w Does it- look all marked u:p?=
```

She infuses her blunt rejection with laughter which, again, treats it as a possible misdeed (Haakana 2001; Jefferson 1984), and then exits the enactment to defend her conduct toward the doctor (5–6). Here *you know* not only caps off the blunt rejection but also prefaces its defense, in effect pivoting between a recounted misdeed and the account that justifies it. Despite these efforts but consistent with her earlier disbelief, Hyla declines to affiliate and shifts from Nancy's treatment experience to her current condition (7).

6.4. On the convergent relevance of repair and affiliation

Environments of affiliation-relevance may, of course, overlap with those of self-repair. Given that self-repair is often geared to attaining a formulation better fitted to the action in progress (Drew et al. 2013), this may entail the management or pursuit of affiliation. Such environments embody the convergent relevance of both repair and affiliation, and hence are doubly apt for *you know*.

The permutations of this phenomenon are many and complex, so an illustration will suffice: an extreme comment that is subsequently restarted so that it is both YK-framed and rendered less extreme. Recounting a couple's conflict over an antique car restoration project, the male teller expresses ritualized disbelief at the wife's vandalism (line 4), and then launches an extreme denunciation with "I'd kill…" (8). It is not brought to completion, however, being aborted and then restarted with agent deletion and a more hypothetical portrayal of violent intent.

```
(31) [Auto Discussion: 748]
((At line 1, Curt is relaying a husband's suspicions regarding the
   wife's efforts to vandalize an antique car restoration project.))
1    CUR:        Said I'm afraid m'wife will get to it again I gotta
2                sell it.
3                (0.3)
4    CUR:        ·hho(h)h Je[(h)sus Chri:st yer kiddin me.
5    ???:                   [(hh hh)
6    GAR:        She'd get-
7                (0.2)
8    CUR:   ->   [I'd kill yihknow that that'd be enough tuh,]=
9    GAR:        [She'd end up with (                )]=
10   MIK:        =Yea:h.=
11   CUR:        =That'd be enough t'go after a shotgun with.
```

The modulated redesign is ostensibly less objectionable than the original version, and the speaker also invokes alignment as a preface to this transformation. This, in turn, receives an interjacent token of agreement (10).

Setting aside such cases where affiliation-relevance overlaps with repair, and free-standing alignment tokens examined in the next section on pursuits, affiliation-relevant actions by themselves account for 18% (n = 36) of the cases in our database (Table 7). As evident in the preceding array of instances (excerpts 23–30), and confirmed in Table 7 for all cases, the particle's turn positioning for actions seeking affiliation is the direct obverse of that for self-repair. It is concentrated in TCU-initial and final positions, the latter at times more strongly soliciting response with final rising intonation.

Table 7
Affiliation relevance by TCU position.

	Self-Repair		Affiliation Relevance	
	N	%	n	%
Initial	2	2.6	15	41.7
Medial	70	90.9	6	16.7
Final	5	6.5	12	33.3
Pivotal	0	0	3	8.3
TOTAL	77	100.0	36	100.0

7. Pursuits of response

The analysis thus far has focused on *you know* in action environments that are potentially problematic for recipients to either understand or endorse. Consider, next, the particle's use in a subsequent unit of talk when the prior has received minimal or no response. At this point, whatever was *potentially* problematic about the prior utterance becomes accountable as a source of *actual* difficulty for the recipient, although manifest tacitly rather than through overt expression (Pomerantz 1984). Correspondingly, *you know* is used at this point as well, sometimes with additional talk, to address the incipient problem and elicit some display of alignment from the recipient.

When the token is free-standing in its own unit of talk, it is nonetheless intelligible as pursuing either understanding or affiliation by virtue of the sequential context. Here the prior context (lines 1—3) is plainly one of affiliation relevance, as a subjectivized favorable assessment ("I love the Village") is repeated three times, and then elaborated with a more objectivized specification ("just a nice place to live") (Potter et al. 2020). None of these assessments receive any uptake from the recipient, who responds (4) only to a more factual observation sandwiched inbetween them.

```
(32) [mtrac 60 1-1: 7: 28]
1   RON:        °Yeh° ah love the Villa:ge I love the Village I love the
2               Village.   The Village has cha:nged over the past few
3               y[ears, en i]t's become just a nice place tuh live.   hhhhhh
4   MAR:        [Y e a : h.]
5   RON:  ->    y'know.
6               (1.5)
7   MAR:        W'l it's: e-You really sound good Ro:n.
```

After an extended inbreath (end of line 3) during which the lack of response becomes increasingly evident, the speaker then mobilizes an alignment token (5), which is unelaborated but transparent in context as pursuing affiliation, although in this case it is not successful (6—7).

In other pursuits the token prefaces additional talk underscoring the type of alignment being sought. Pursuits of understanding may have additional talk geared to clarifying what the speaker said previously. For instance, recounting her classroom presentation, Nancy briefly characterizes the response to her speech ("then everybody writes" in 6—7). When this gets no uptake, she adds "*you know*" plus an increment clarifying the referent of "everybody writes," although in this case the particle itself is sufficient to elicit the sought-after claim of understanding (8).

```
(33) [NB II:2:R: 162: college course presentations]
1    Nan:       …but I tellyuh by the time I got up there after im
2               whh(h)y(h) everbuddy was so completely wru:ng ou:t.
3               yuhknow e[nd .hhhhhh]
4    Emm:               [°Mm hm:.° ]
5    Nan:       so quiet'n so: (0.2) uh: (.) .hhh I js (.) ↑yihknow (0.2)
6               gave my short little,h (.) dissertation then everbuddy
7         ->    wri:tes. (.) yihknow. a[bout what the]y:
8    Emm:                              [° M m h m, ° ]
9               (.)
10   Nan:       fee:l towards you en . . .
```

While YK-framed pursuits of understanding may have additional clarifying talk, YK-framed pursuits of affiliation have material geared to intensifying or justifying the prior action. Many of the accounts for action examined in the previous section have this character (excerpts 26—28; cf. 1 above).

Finally, the distinction between pursuing understanding and pursuing affiliation is not always clear-cut (see Bolden et al. 2012), and indeed both may be at issue in YK-framed pursuits, further underscoring the duality of *you know* as an alignment token. Consider the task of seeking appreciation of a story telling, which encompasses both comprehension of the story and affiliation with the speaker's stance toward it (Sacks 1974). Here Shirley is telling Geri an intendedly funny story about her rambunctious dog's encounter with Geri's mother; but the story has been contaminated by extraneous details (not shown) that mislead Geri into thinking that the story's centerpiece is meeting Shirley's boyfriend rather than her dog. Geri's boyfriend-focused question (line 6) reflects her misread of the story, engendering Shirley's brusque response treating the question as beside the point (8) (Stivers 2011) before returning to the dog story (10).

```
(34) [TC I:1: 36: rambunctious dog story]
1    Shi:       [.hh So 'e tried tih jump in the'car.
2    ( ):       'hh
3               (.)
4    Ger:       Oh: boy,h=
5    Shi:       =cuz I was jus' getting ou:t.=
6    Ger:       =S[o didju]interdu:ce 'er?
7    Shi:         [(     )]
8    Shi:       Of COU:rse.
9    Ger:       e-Ye::h,
10   Shi:       .hh- So: yihknow she said hi: ez- ez he tried tih yank'er
11              up'n down the blo:ck.
12        ->    .hhhh Y'know ih'wz kind'v a funny way
12              t'say hello.
13   Ger:       Ye::h,=
14   Shi:       =.hhh Suh how'r you?
```

The resumption (10—11), casting the greeting against an exaggerated portrayal of the dog's wild behavior ("yank her up and down the block"), appears built as the story's climax and punch line. When this receives no uptake, Shirley pursues response (12) with an overt explication of the story's point ("a funny way to say hello"). This pursuit is YK-prefaced and gets a minimal acknowledgement but no laughter or any other sign of affiliation (13), at which point Shirley offers an other-attentive topic shift (14).

8. Discussion

In studies of human interaction, understanding and affiliation have been examined primarily as enacted by *recipients*, whose responsive actions routinely display these forms of alignment (or their absence) with prior initiating actions. What has been missing from this analytic framework is an appreciation of how understanding and affiliation can also be tacitly claimed by *speakers* on behalf of recipients, as a feature of the design of initiating actions. *You know* is largely dedicated for this purpose.

Accordingly, notwithstanding its sheer frequency and reputation for "promiscuousness" in use, *you know* is in fact a highly patterned language practice. Table 8 summarizes the main action environments documented here and provides distributional evidence for their explanatory power.[15] Expressive difficulties portending understanding challenges stand out in accounting for the largest proportion of cases ($\approx 60\%$). Actions establishing the relevance of affiliation are the next most frequent, followed by pursuits. Overall, this framework accounts for almost 90% of the cases in the present database.

Table 8
Action environments for *You Know*.

Response Relevance	Turn Position (typical)	Action Type	N	%
Understanding	Medial	Self-repair operations	94	47.0
		Sub-optimal formulations	25	12.5
Affiliation	Initial or final	Assessments & evaluations	14	7.0
		Recruitment actions & accounts	14	7.0
		Misdeeds, etc.	8	4.0
Context dependent	Separate unit	Pursuits	24	12.0
Other			21	10.5
		TOTAL	200	100.0

This usage pattern, and confirmatory response pattern (seen in Tables 2 and 3), enacts the particle's core function as an interpersonal alignment token adapted for various relationally problematic moments. The particle, together with its validating and at times interjacent responses, has a compensatory and remedial import, fostering the maintenance of intersubjectivity and solidarity when either or both come under evident strain.

This functional analysis of *you know* suggests that the phrase retains a trace of its literal meaning, while being stretched considerably to encompass alignment along dimensions of stance and cooperation with a course of action, as well as understanding of matters *not previously known* to the recipient. The apparent semantic bleaching of the phrase, as well as the residue of literal meaning that remains, are both consistent with what has been found for other linguistic particles and discourse markers that have undergone a process of grammaticalization through expanded pragmatic use over time (Traugott 1995).

It bears emphasis that the particle is typically used when understanding and affiliation difficulties remain in an embryonic state. We found few positive signs of recipient confusion or misunderstanding, and few overt expressions of disagreement or rejection. Nevertheless, the potential for trouble was frequently "in the air" given the problematics of the talk itself, or prior suggestions of discord, or both of these in combination. *You know* is thus an early intervention on nascent interpersonal difficulties. Moreover, insofar as it elicits responses that validate whatever context-specific form of alignment is being invoked, such difficulties will be rendered as transient and relatively inconsequential.

This view of *you know* as a remedial alignment token has a methodological corollary. For analysts of language use in human interaction, the ubiquitous particle can serve as an early warning sign, a "canary in the coal mine" for interpersonal trouble before it has risen to the level of overt expression. Its appearance in a spate of talk suggests that a tear in the fabric of social relations — some emergent difficulty of communication or affiliation that might otherwise escape analytic notice — may be on the horizon for the participants. Since the particle is so ubiquitous in ordinary conversation, a grasp of its relational import makes it a useful addition to the interaction-analysis toolkit.

References

Bolden, Galina B., Jenny, Mandelbaum, Wilkinson, Sue, 2012. Pursuing a response by repairing an indexical reference. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 45 (2), 137−155.
Clark, Herbert H., 1994. Managing problems in speaking. Speech Commun. 15, 243−250.
Clark, Herbert H., Wasow, Thomas, 1998. Repeating words in spontaneous speech. Cognit. Psychol. 37, 201−242.
Clayman, Steven E., 2012. Address terms in the organization of turns at talk: the case of pivotal turn extensions. J. Pragmat. 44, 1853−1867.
Clayman, Steven E., Raymond, Chase Wesley, 2015. Modular pivots: a Resource for extending turns at talk. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 48 (4), 388−405.
Clayman, Steven E., Raymond, Chase Wesley, 2021. An Adjunct to Repair: You Know in Speech Production and Understanding Difficulties. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 54: in press.
Clift, Rebecca, 2001. Meaning in interaction: the case of actually. Language 77 (2), 245−291.

---

[15] To avoid double-counting of cases, those in overlapping environments were resolved so that (1) self-repair trumped other categories, and (2) pursuits were counted as either understanding-relevant or affiliation-relevant when YK was joined with other clarifying talk, leaving only free-standing cases for the "pursuits" category here. These decisions impact some absolute frequencies but not the relative ranking of explanatory power accorded to understanding relevance, affiliation relevance, and pursuits.

Drew, Paul, Walker, Traci, Ogden, Richard, 2013. Self-repair and action construction. In: Hayashi, Makoto, Raymond, Geoffrey, Sidnell, Jack (Eds.), Conversational Repair and Human Understanding. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 71—94.

Erman, Britt, 1987. Pragmatic Expressions in English: A Study of You Know, You See, and I Mean in Face-To-Face Conversation. Doctoral dissertation, Department of English, Stockholm University.

Evans, Nicholas, Levinson, Stephen C., 2009. The myth of language universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science. Behavioral and Brain Sciences 32 (5), 429—492.

Fishman, Pamela M., 1978. Interaction: The Work Women Do. Social Problems 25 (4), 397—406.

Fox Tree, Jean E., Schrock, Josef, C., 2002. Basic meanings of you know and I mean. J. Pragmat. 34, 727—747.

Fox Tree, Jean E., 2007. Folk Notions of um and uh, you know, and like. Text Talk 27, 297—314.

Freed, Alice F., Greenwood, Alice, 1996. Women, Men, and Type of Talk: What Makes the Difference? Language in Society 25 (1), 1—26.

Garfinkel, Harold, 1967. Studies in Ethnomethodology. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Glenn, Phillip, 2003. Laughter in Interaction. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Goodwin, Charles, 1980. Restarts, pauses, and the achievement of a state of mutual gaze at turn-beginning. Socio. Inq. 50, 272—302.

Goodwin, Charles, Goodwin, Marjorie, 1986. Gesture and coparticipation in the activity of searching for a word. Semiotica 62, 51—75.

Haakana, Markku, 2001. Laughter as a patient's Resource: dealing with delicate aspects of medical interaction. Text 21, 187—219.

Heritage, John, 2011. Territories of knowledge, territories of experience: empathic moments in interaction. In: Stivers, Tanya, Mondada, Lorenza, Steensig, Jakob (Eds.), The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 159—183.

Heritage, John, 2012. The epistemic engine: sequence organization and territories of knowledge. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 45, 1—29.

Holmes, Janet, 1986. Functions of you know in women's and men's speech. Lang. Soc. 15, 1—21.

House, Juliane, 2009. Subjectivity in English as lingua franca discourse: the case of you know. Intercult. Pragmat. 6, 171—193.

Jefferson, Gail, 1974. Error correction as an interactional Resource. Lang. Soc. 2, 181—199.

Jefferson, Gail, 1984. On the organization of laughter in talk about troubles. In: Atkinson, J.M., Heritage, J.C. (Eds.), Structures of Social Action. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 346—369.

Jefferson, Gail, 1990. List construction as a task and Resource. In: George, Psathas (Ed.), Interaction Competence. University Press of America, Lanham, pp. 63—92.

Jefferson, Gail, Sacks, Harvey, Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1987. Notes on laughter in the pursuit of intimacy. In: Lee, Graham Button & John R.E. (Ed.), Talk and Social Organisation. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, England, pp. 152—205.

Jucker, Andreas H., Smith, Sara W., 1998. And people just you know like 'wow': discourse markers as negotiating strategies. In: Jucker, A.H., Ziv, Y. (Eds.), Discourse Markers: Descriptions and Theory. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 171—201.

Jucker, Andreas H., Smith, Sara W., Lüdge, Tanya, 2003. Interactive aspects of vagueness in conversation. J. Pragmat. 35, 1737—1769.

Kendrick, Kobin, Drew, Paul, 2016. Recruitment: offers, requests, and the organization of assistance in interaction. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 49 (1), 1—19.

Lakoff, Robin, 1975. Language and Women's Place. Harper, New York.

Lerner, Gene, 1996. On the "Semi-Permeable" character of grammatical units in conversation: conditional entry into the turn space of another speaker. In: Ochs, E., Schegloff, E.A., Thompson, S.A. (Eds.), Interaction and Grammar. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 238—276.

Lerner, Gene, 2013. On the place of hesitating in delicate formulations: a turn-constructional infrastructure for collaborative indiscretion. In: Hayashi, Makoto, Raymond, Geoffrey, Sidnell, Jack (Eds.), Conversational Repair and Human Understanding. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 95—134.

Lerner, Gene, Kitzinger, Celia, 2015. Or-prefacing in the organization of self-repair. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 48, 58—78.

Maynard, Douglas W., 2013. Defensive mechanisms: I-mean-prefaced utterances in complaint and other conversational sequences. In: Hayashi, Makoto, Raymond, Geoffrey, Sidnell, Jack (Eds.), Conversational Repair and Human Understanding. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 198—223.

Mikesell, Lisa, Bolden, Galina B., Mandelbaum, Jenny, Robinson, Jeffrey D., Romaniuk, Tanya, Bolaños-Carpio, Alexa, Angell, Beth, 2018. At the intersection of epistemics and action: responding with I know. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 50 (3), 268—285.

Östman, Jan-Ola, 1981. You Know: A Discourse Functional Approach. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Potter, Jonathan, Hepburn, Alexa, Edwards, Derek, 2020. "Rethinking attitudes and social psychology — issues of function, order, and combination in subject-side and object-side assessments in natural settings. Qual. Res. Psychol. 17 (3), 336—356.

Pomerantz, Anita, 1984. Pursuing a response. In: Maxwell Atkinson, J., John Heritage (Eds.), Structures of Social Action. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 152—164.

Raymond, Chase Wesley, White, Anne Elizabeth Clark, 2017. Time reference in the service of social action. Soc. Psychol. Q. 80 (2), 109—131.

Robinson, Jeffrey D., 2007. The role of numbers and statistics within conversation analysis. Commun. Methods Meas. 1 (1), 65—75.

Sacks, Harvey, 1974. "An analysis of the course of a joke's telling in conversation." In: Bauman, R., Sherzer, J. (Eds.), Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 337—353.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1979. The relevance of repair for syntax-for-conversation. In: Givon, Talmy (Ed.), Syntax and Semantics 12: Discourse and Syntax. Academic Press, New York, pp. 261—288.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1992. Repair after next turn: the last structurally provided defense of intersubjectivity in conversation. Am. J. Sociol. 97, 1295—1345.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1993. Reflections on quantification in the study of conversation. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 26 (1), 99—128.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 2013. Ten operations in self-initiated, same-turn repair. In: Hayashi, Makoto, Raymond, Geoffrey, Sidnell, Jack (Eds.), Conversational Repair and Human Understanding. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 41—70.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., Jefferson, Gail, Harvey, Sacks, 1977. The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. Language 53, 361—382.

Schiffrin, Deborah, 1987. Discourse Markers. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Schourup, Lawrence C., 1985. Common Discourse Particles in English Conversation. Garland Publishing, New York.

Stivers, Tanya, 2008. Stance, alignment and affiliation during story telling: when nodding is a token of affiliation. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 47 (1), 31—57.

Stivers, Tanya, 2011. "Morality and question design: "of course" as contesting a presupposition of askability." In: Stivers, Tanya, Mondada, Lorenza, Jacob, Steensig (Eds.), The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 82—106.

Stivers, Tanya, 2015. Coding social interaction: a heretical approach in conversation analysis? Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 48 (1), 1—19.

Stivers, Tanya, Rossano, Federico, 2010. Mobilizing response. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 43, 3—31.

Stubbe, Maria, Holmes, Janet, 1995. You know, eh, and other 'exasperating expressions': an analysis of social and stylistic variation in the use of pragmatic devices in a sample of New Zealand English. Lang. Commun. 15, 63—88.

Traugott, Elizabeth C., 1995. The Role of the Development of Discourse Markers in a Theory of Grammaticalization (Paper presented at ICHL XII, Manchester).

Steven E. Clayman is professor of sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. His research addresses the interface between human interaction and social institutions, with an emphasis on media and politics. He has published in sociology, communication, and linguistics journals, and is the author (with John Heritage) of *Talk in Action: Interactions, Identities, and Institutions* (Wiley-Blackwell) and *The News Interview: Journalists and Public Figures On the Air* (Cambridge University Press).

Chase Wesley Raymond is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Colorado, Boulder. His interests lie at the intersection of language and social life, in both ordinary and institutional interaction, with an emphasis on grammar. He has published articles in journals spanning Linguistics, Communication Studies, Sociology, and Medicine, with most recent publications appearing in *Language in Society, the Journal of Sociolinguistics, and Social Psychology Quarterly*.