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landscapes as a “dialogical self”:
Self-answered questions in German talk-in-
interaction**

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Navigating epistemic and sequential landscapes as a “dialogical self”: Self-answered questions in German talk-in-interaction¹

(Jörg Bückler)

Abstract

In this article, we explore the forms and functions of conversational self-answered questions in order to show that two main types can be distinguished – exposed “unknown-answer” questions which suspend the progression of the course of action and display the search for an answer as it proceeds and unfolds in time, and embedded “known-answer” questions which are integrated into the course of action and lead to an answer which is neither shaped nor treated as the (un)successful or surprising outcome of a search for a certain piece of information. Both types of self-answered questions are deployed as resources to navigate epistemic and sequential “landscapes” in talk-in-interaction.

Keywords

questions, self-talk, dialogism, stance, repair, dissent, rhetoric, narrative

1. Introduction

Conversational questions and answers have a multitude of different forms and functions which can go far beyond a naïve “‘folk model’ of questionhood” (de Ruiter 2012: 1).² Among other things, it has been noticed early that “[o]ne not unusual type of question has the property that its asker knows the specific content of the answer that must be returned to it” (Schegloff 1968: 1091). Even though it is only a little step from this observation to the question of what discourse participants are doing in talk-in-interaction when they not only know an answer to their question but also explicitly answer the question themselves, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the phenomenon of conversational self-answered questions so far. Hence, this study aims to

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² For example, question-like items have been discussed as repair initiators (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977, Weber 1993: 77ff, Selting 1996), “pre-expansions” (Schegloff 2007: 28ff), topic proffers and topic follow-ups (Couper-Kuhlen 2004, 2012: 125f), news receipts and newsmarks (Weber 1993: 187ff), challenges and accusations (Günthner 2000, Koshik 2005), displays of understanding (Deppermann & Spranz-Fogasy 2011), politeness markers (Goody 1978), floor offers (Fitneva 2012: 169) and position offering devices (Bückler 2013a).

analyze the forms and functions of explicitly self-answered questions as a special kind of “self-talk” (Goffman 1981) in spoken conversation.³ In accordance with an empirical approach that starts from observable local phenomena in naturally occurring talk-in-interaction in order to analyze them as sequentially organized and collaboratively accomplished resources to establish and accomplish aspects of social reality (for example, Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2001, 2017), it will in particular address the following questions:

- (i) Which conversational types of explicitly self-answered questions can be distinguished?
- (ii) How do questioners and addressees accomplish the process of self-answering the question?
- (iii) How do questioners position themselves and their addressees by means of self-answered questions?

Taking these questions as a starting point, this study will hold that conversational self-answered questions are deployed by embodied “dialogical selves” (Hermans 2001, Linell 2009: 109ff) as they navigate epistemic and sequential “landscapes” (Heritage 2012a,b, Heritage & Raymond 2012) in spoken talk-in-interaction.

2. A typology of self-answered questions in German Talk-in-Interaction

2.1 Approaching self-answered questions as conversational questions

From a sequential point of view, it has proven to be useful to think of questions and answers as units which are tied together by a relationship of conditional relevance⁴ and type-specification (Schegloff 2007: 78ff). The relationship of conditional relevance between question and answer does not need to be maximally strong or “compelling” but can be weakened up to the point that an answer is not strictly expectable anymore yet constitutes a coherent and well-placed part of the course of action, in terms of a fully-fledged (non-candidate) type-conforming second pair part which is mobilized by features of the question as the type-specifying first pair part.⁵

Against this background, instances such as the following ones can be classified as question-answer sequences – they consist of a first pair part formally being marked as a question

³ The study is based on a total of 105 instances of question-answer sequences which are taken from the “Linguistische Audio-Datenbank (IAuDa)” database at the University of Münster (Germany). The IAUda contains audio recordings and transcripts of telephone conversations and face-to-face interactions (video files are not available). Among the 105 question-answer sequences, 30 instances are self-answered questions which are analyzed in more detail. The examples are anonymized and transcribed following the “Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2” (GAT 2), see Selting et al. (2009).

⁴ See Schegloff (2007: 13ff), Schegloff & Sacks (1973), and Levinson (1983: 303ff).

⁵ Cf. Stivers & Rossano (2010a,b, 2012) who argue convincingly that discourse participants can “mobilize response to varying degrees through action and turn design” (Stivers & Rossano 2012: 77).

and a second part arising as accomplishing a request for information or a request for a decision mobilized by the first part, thereby providing “a ‘second window’ into the landscape of rights and obligations that are projected by question design” (Heritage and Raymond 2012: 192; the full examples⁶ the instances are taken from will be analyzed more comprehensively below):

Example (1) Train [extract]

7 N: =wann bIn ich da noch vorBEIgefahren.
 when did I pass by there

8 geNAU.=
 right

9 =mit_m ZUCH bin ich da vorbEIgefahren.
 I came along there by train

10 als ich vom FLUGha[fen] kAm.
 when I came from the airport

Example (4) Time [extract]

9 K: wIEviel UHR is es?=
 what time is it

10 =ZEHN vOr.
 ten minutes to ...

Example (5) Indiscreet [extract]

8 C: HAB ich ihn noch mal gefrAgt?
 did I ask him again

9 NEIN.
 no

In the following, we will see that conversational self-answered questions such as these can be subdivided into two major groups. The self-answered questions in the first group share the feature that the question-answer sequence suspends the progression of the main course of action and displays the search for a certain piece of information or formulation as it proceeds and unfolds in time, with the subject matter of the question being inaccessible at the time of the utterance and the answering process sometimes displaying if the search is successful or yields a surprising result. Hence, the self-answered questions in the first group will be classified as *exposed “unknown-answer” questions*. The second group contains self-answered questions which share the feature that the question-answer sequence is embedded into the course of action and that the answer is neither shaped nor treated as the (un)successful or surprising outcome of

⁶ The transcript lines of the full examples all start with 1 (cf. the subsequent sections).

a search for information or a formulation. Therefore, the self-answered questions in the second group will be classified as *embedded “known-answer” questions*.

2.2 Exposed “unknown-answer” questions

2.2.1 *Initiating Repair*. The majority of self-answered “unknown-answer” questions in my data are repair devices with the question initiating repair and the answer being (a part of) the repair outcome.⁷ Repair-indicating self-answered questions can be distinguished with respect to the positions of repairable and repair initiation (prepositioned repair initiation⁸ versus postpositioned repair initiation) and with regard to the question of whether repairable and repair initiation are uttered by the same speaker or not (self-initiated versus other-initiated repair). Since prepositioned repair is always self-initiated, this classification arrives at three different types of repair that can be accomplished by means of self-answered questions: (i) prepositioned & self-initiated repair, (ii) postpositioned & self-initiated repair, and (iii) postpositioned & other-initiated repair. These three types all occur in my data, but they differ concerning their capability to claim space for a self-given answer.

The following example shows a case of *prepositioned self-initiated repair* (cf. Schlenck, Huber & Willmes 1987, Uhmann 2001) by means of a question followed by a self-given answer:

Example (1) Train

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | N: | [jA. JA.]
<i>yeah yeah</i> |
| 2 | J: | [ALso;=
<i>so</i> |
| 3 | | =du musst] DOCH noch mal nach bösensell fahren.
<i>you do have to go to Bösensell again</i> |
| 4 | N: | ((laughs briefly)) |
| 5 | | eine RIE:sensAche.
<i>a really big deal</i> |
| 6 | | (d/h)A BIN ich doch ma.=
<i>I have once</i> |
| 7 | → | =wann bIn ich da noch vorBEIgefahren.
<i>when did I go there again</i> |
| 8 | → | geNAU.=
<i>right</i> |

⁷ See Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks (1977), Weber (1993: 77ff) and Selting (1996) on the relationship between questions and repair.

⁸ A prototypic case of prepositioned repair initiation is word search. Cf. Schlenck, Huber & Willmes (1987) on “repairs” and repairs.

- 9 → =mit_m ZUCH bin ich da vorbEIfahren.
I went there by train
- 10 → als ich vom FLUGha[fen] kAm.
when I came from the airport
- 11 J: [hm.]
hm
- 12 N: da war ich noch gAnz beGEIstert;
I was still quite enthusiastic then
- 13 als ich die (.) WUNderbare agglomeratIOn da gesehen hab von (.)
dem;
when I saw this wonderful agglomeration there from him

Two friends, Julia (J) and Nicole (N), are talking here about a decoration shop in Bösensell. In line (5), Nicole's extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) not only acknowledges Julia's prior turn but also marks a change in footing (Goffman 1981) and projects further "accounts" (Goffman 1971): Nicole moves into the role of a narrator in order to supply further topic-related talk which will embed the remarkably strong assessment of her past visit to Bösensell in the course of talk. Accordingly, Nicole carries on talking and tries to set the temporal and local stage for a "small story" (Bamberg 2007). However, she suspends the emerging turn-construction unit before its syntactic "gestalt" (Auer 2007, Günthner 2011) is completed and substantial temporal and local information has been expressed (line 6). Instead, she carries on by means of a *wh*-question (line 7) which asks for biographical long-term memory information that has to be recalled before she can successfully complete her attempt to set the temporal and local stage for her narrative. Hence, the *wh*-question in line (7) can be characterized as a sequentially expanding means to self-initiate a repair side sequence (Jefferson 1972) which does not refer to an overt prior trouble source as the repairable and which has the self-given answer in lines (9-10) as the repair outcome.

The question-answer sequence in example (1) is remarkable: While "information-driven" questions are usually employed to position the questioner as occupying an "unknowing (K-) epistemic status" in order to receive a response by the addressee which will redress the "K+/K- imbalance" (Heritage 2012a, Heritage and Raymond 2012), Nicole's *wh*-question does not mobilize a response by Julia since both discourse participants orient to Nicole as the one who occupies the knowing (K+) epistemic status regarding the subject matter of the question.⁹ However, that does not mean that Nicole's question is not addressed to Julia. Quite the contrary, the question is a means to show Julia that Nicole is orienting to the role of a narrator who is

⁹ This is also confirmed by the fact that Nicole produces "genau" 'right' prior to the answer and not the other way around. This ordering indicates that Nicole's question was not an attempt to mobilize a response by Julia but rather a display of a mental repair business she is trying to accomplish herself.

accomplishing the conversational task of reconstructing a narratable past event. Unlike an unfilled pause, this unambiguously maintains the narrative “frame” (Goffman 1974, Tannen 1993) and the participant roles associated with it (narrator, audience). Hence, the self-answered question suspends the progression of the conversational narrative on the one hand but simultaneously maintains the narrative frame and its participant roles on the other. This is also displayed by the change-of-state token “genau” ‘right’ (Heritage 1984, Imo 2009) which operates on two different levels of interactional order: It not only shows that the answer satisfies Nicole’s purpose-for-asking (accomplishment of the adjacency pair) but it also indicates that the question-answer sequence as a whole successfully fulfills its function as a part of the superordinate conversational order (accomplishment of the initiation of a narrative).

Other than their prepositioned counterparts (see example 1), postpositioned repair-initiating self-answered questions are not necessarily cases of self-initiated repair but they can also be cases of other-initiated repair. First, we will take a look at example (2) as a case of *postpositioned self-initiated repair*:

Example (2) Fatih Akin

- 1 H: also fAith* akIN hat den gemacht.=
 well Faith Akin made it*
- 2 → **=heißt der überhaupt FA_ith** oder fAith*?**
 *is he called Faith** or Faith* anyway*
- 3 → **kEIne AHnung.**
 no idea
- 4 °hh
- 5 also KENNS_ja.
 well you know him
- 6 auch gEgen gEgen die WAND.
 “Gegen die Wand”, too
- 7 is: glaub ich derSELbe.=oder?
 he’s the same [movie director], isn’t he
- 8 (1.7)
- 9 kEnns_den GARNich?
 don’t you know him
- 10 D: NÄ.
 nope

* Pronounced like engl. “faith”: [fɛɪθ]

** Pronounced with a syllable boundary between “a” and “i”: [ˈfa.i:t]

Heiko (H) and Dennis (D), two friends, are talking about the German-Italian movie “Solino”. Unlike Dennis, Heiko knows the movie and tells Dennis that it was directed by “Faith Akın”, “Faith” being pronounced [fɛɪ̯θ] in line (1). After that, Heiko initiates a repair side sequence by means of an alternative question which asks if [fɛɪ̯θ] or [ˈfa.i:t] is the correct pronunciation of “Faith” (line 2).¹⁰ However, Heiko does not arrive at a clear answer, (see line 3), and since Dennis does not try to answer the question either (cf. the transition relevance place in line 4), Heiko closes the side sequence by means of an expression of his belief that the correct answer to the question is actually of secondary importance for the conversation (line 5).¹¹ Then he carries on talking about another movie by Fatih Akın (lines 6–10).

Example (2) resembles example (1) inasmuch as a repair-initiating “unknown-answer” question is asked which does not mobilize an answer by the hearer but is nevertheless addressed to him: By means of the question-answer sequence, Heiko adjusts the boundaries of his epistemic authority and expertise vis-à-vis Dennis – he positioned himself in the prior course of talk as someone who knows the movie content but now he reveals that this does not include details of the movie production such as the correct pronunciation of the director’s name. This decreases the face-threatening risk that Dennis could get the impression that he claims too much epistemic authority. Unlike in example (1), the question initiates repair with regard to an overt prior repairable (the director’s alleged name “Faith” as it is pronounced in line 1), and the repair does not arrive at a successful result.

While example (2) shows a case of postponed self-initiated repair, the following example is an instance of *postpositioned other-initiated repair* resulting in a self-answered question:

Example (3) Broadcast channel

- | | | |
|---|------|--|
| 1 | B: | und wAs to[TAL] cool is?
<i>and what is absolutely awesome</i> |
| 2 | A: | [JA;]
<i>yeah</i> |
| 3 | B: | dass ja auf DIEsen neuen sender das auch noch m(al) wieder wiederholt wird.
<i>that it is also repeated on this new broadcast channel</i> |
| 4 | | (.) |
| 5 | | [()] |
| 6 | → A: | [WEL] chem nEU(e)n. |

¹⁰ Actually, both alternatives are wrong since the Turkish film director’s name is Fatih Akın.

¹¹ See also Bergmann (2017) on conversational aspects of “keine Ahnung” ‘no idea’ in German talk-in-interaction.

which new one
 7 → **Ach [SIXX.]**
ah "sixx"
 8 B: [äh-]
eh
 9 JA.
yeah

Beate (B) and Anke (A), two friends, are talking about the American TV series “Gossip Girl”. After Beate expressed her enthusiasm about the fact that “Gossip Girl” episodes are repeated on “this new broadcast channel” (lines 1-3), Anke takes over the turn (in slight overlap with Beate, cf. lines 5-6) in order to ask which broadcast channel Beate meant (line 6). However, she does not stop talking but immediately carries on by means of a change-of-state token and “sixx” as a self-given answer to her question (line 7). Beate’s overlap (lines 7-8) indicates that she was about to respond to Anke’s question as well, and her agreement token (line 9) confirms Anke’s self-given answer.

In contrast to examples (1) and (2), the repair-initiating “unknown-answer” question in example (3) does not occur in mid-turn position but in turn-initial position, and it obviously mobilizes an answer by the addressee even though the questioner is faster in answering. The reason for this difference is that Anke’s question not only overlaps with Beate’s turn (cf. lines 5–6) but also addresses information belonging to a subject matter Beate has been talking about from a position of epistemic expertise. Hence, Anke’s question aligns to a “relative K–/K+ epistemic gradient” (Heritage 2012a, Heritage & Raymond 2012) between questioner and answerer which, in comparison to the prior examples, is much more similar to the distribution of epistemic expertise in question-answer sequences that mobilize a response by the addressee: Anke as the questioner occupies the unknowing (K–) epistemic status and mobilizes an answer by Beate, who occupies the knowing (K+) epistemic status.

In my data, prepositioned repair-indicating “unknown-answer” questions are usually accomplished by means of *wh*-questions while postpositioned repair-initial “unknown-answer” questions do not follow such a clear tendency. This is not coincidental since *wh*-questions have two important advantages over polar questions and alternative questions from an “on-line syntax” point of view (Auer 2005, 2009). First, *wh*-questions are cognitively advantageous since they allow for the asking of a subject matter without having an answer candidate available at the time the question is asked. Second, prepositioned repair-initial “unknown-answer” questions tend to arise in parenthetical positions, i.e. they follow an incomplete syntactic gestalt which makes a certain missing next part expectable. In such a position, answering a *wh*-question

can simultaneously satisfy the purpose-for-asking and provide the missing next part of the suspended syntactic gestalt, i.e. the parenthesis can be closed and the host can be continued smoothly and without a complicated return to it (cf. “Das mit diesen... – Wie nennt man es jetzt? Genau: – ...Spannungen” ‘that [thing] concerning those... – How is it called now? Right: – ...tensions’).

Furthermore, examples (1)-(3) show that some repair-initial “unknown-answer” questions undisputedly lead to self-given answers (example 1) while others compete with concurrent answers given by other discourse participants (cf. example 3). The data this study is based on point towards the following tendency: If a repair-indicating “unknown-answer” question (*i*) is not explicitly addressed to another discourse participant (cf. Stivers & Rossano 2012: 61ff), (*ii*) self-initiates repair (see Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977 on the preference for self-repair), (*iii*) reacts to a covert repairable which is not equally accessible to the other discourse participants, (*iv*) does not interrupt the addressee’s turn, (*v*) maintains a frame with the questioner as the primary speaker, and (*vi*) has as its subject matter an “A-event” (Labov 1972: 254) with a low degree of “recipient epistemic expertise on the topic relative to the speaker” (Stivers & Rossano 2012: 61), it tends to have a low capability to mobilize an answer by another discourse participant. Accordingly, a prototypic context for undisputed self-answered “unknown-answer” questions are narrative settings with the questioner as a narrator who is displaying an attempt to recall non-shared biographic information from his long-term memory in order to be able to carry on narrating (see example 1). In such cases, the questioner usually keeps the floor even if the process of recalling is taking some time. Less prototypic contexts are questioners reacting to an overt prior trouble source in their own turn for which they do not claim epistemic authority (cf. example 2). The least prototypic contexts are situations with a speaker initiating repair by asking for information about a subject matter the addressee is talking about – in such cases, the question usually does not emerge as designed to be answered by the questioner himself. Accordingly, the questioner competes with the addressee for the floor and can only answer his question as the first-starter and/or in collaboration with the addressee (cf. example 3).

2.2.2 Initiating a frame-change. In a few cases in my data, self-answered “unknown-answer” questions do not redress a K+/K– imbalance within a given frame in order to be able to carry on with talk-so-far but precede “a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance” (Goffman 1981: 128). This can be accomplished by means of self-answered “unknown-answer” questions which shift the attention to a (side) activity independent of the frame-so-far and, accordingly, set the stage for the initiation of a new frame:

Example (4) Time

1 J: [<<smile voice> hat_se nIch EINmal?]
she was never

2 K: [(also jetzt überTREIB mal nIch,)]
well don't exaggerate

3 J: hat se nich EIN=nich ANsatzweise Interessiert,=
wasn't even minimally interested

4 dIE DINGer, °h
[in] those things

5 Und DANN?
and then

6 na (die will) ich jEtzt HABen.
"well I want them now"

7 ZACK.
wham

8 K: gEhma WEG.=ey.
go away

9 → **wIEviel UHR is es?=
*what time is it***

10 → **=ZEHN vOr.
*ten to***

11 in FÜNF minuten muss ich lOs.
in five minutes I'll have to go

12 J: NA.
well

13 (2.2)

14 und DANN muss de zum tEnnis noch;
and then you'll also have to go to the tennis club

Example (4) is taken from a conversation between the friends Jochen (J), Kerstin (K), and Nadine. The extract starts with Jochen teasing Kerstin due to her sudden interest in a couple of ornamental stars (= “die Dinger” ‘those things’) that were hanging in Jochen’s kitchen (cf. lines 1, 3-7). Since Jochen does not stop teasing her, Kerstin asks him explicitly to respect her “freedom from imposition” (see Brown & Levinson 1987: 61ff on the notion “negative face”), thereby displaying discontent and uncooperativeness concerning the participant roles provided by the frame-so-far (line 8). Then she carries on talking by means of a *wh*-question immediately followed by a self-given answer (lines 9-10). The quick succession of question and answer does not leave enough transition space for turn-taking and shows that Kerstin’s question was not a means to mobilize a response by another discourse participant (since she asked the time, an other-given answer is quite expectable). This is also confirmed by the fact that

Kerstin carries on talking after the self-given answer in order to announce that she will have to leave in five minutes (line 11).

In contrast to the self-answered questions in the preceding section, the “unknown-answer” question in example (4) does not initiate repair with regard to an overt or covert trouble source. Instead, it precedes an attempt to leave the playful teasing frame and the roles associated with it: Up to line (8), Jochen is the “teasing subject” while Kerstin has the role of the “teased subject” (Günthner 2000: 155ff), but the question-answer sequence in lines (9-10) leaves the playful mode of interaction (Kerstin’s turn does not feature prosodic or lexical cues of a playful mode of interaction) and provides the interactional basis for a topic change and a move into a more agentive role beyond the teasing frame – the role of a visitor who plans to leave (line 11). The initial disfluencies in Jochen’s turn (lines 12-13) show that Kerstin’s attempt to change the frame is in fact a significant break in the course of action. However, Jochen adopts the new frame then in terms of displaying knowledge about Kerstin’s reasons to leave (14).

Self-answered questions preceding a frame-change “instrumentalize” the retrieval of information in order to leave the preconditions and specifications of the frame-so-far, and they provide a sequential “transition area” between old and new frame within which the mode of interaction can be adjusted according to the speaker’s preferred course of talk. Furthermore, they can yield a “surprising” answer (for example, surprise in view of an unexpectedly late time). This can be useful considering the fact that a frame-change, as a voluntary and permanent shift of the main course of action, depends on the willingness of the other discourse participants to accept it: Displaying that a frame-change is caused by the occasional perception of contextual aspects which are accessible to all discourse participants can establish the frame-change as driven by an intersubjectively shared context and increase its acceptability. Furthermore, unanticipated displays of surprise project follow-up accounts which often require a new frame. Hence, they are an efficient means to keep the addressee away from taking over the turn in order to return to the dispreferred prior frame.

2.3 Embedded “known-answer” questions

Examples (1-4) show how exposed self-answered “unknown-answer” questions can be deployed in spoken talk-in-interaction to accomplish repair or to initiate a frame-change. Now we will turn to a second major group of self-answered questions. This group contains question-answer sequences which share the feature that they are fully integrated into the progression of the main course of action and that the answer is neither shaped nor treated as the

(un)successful or surprising outcome of a search for a piece of information or a formulation. Such “known-answer” questions have often been characterized as “rhetorical questions” in rhetoric and linguistic research (see Schmidt-Radefeldt 1977, Frank 1990, Herring 1991, Ilie 1994, Schaffer 2005, and Kleinke 2012, among others).¹² Just like self-answered “unknown-answer” questions, self-answered “known-answer” questions have two main subtypes.

2.3.1 Manifesting a stance-conflict. The examples belonging to the first type of self-answered “known-answer” questions are *other-responsive*, i.e. “they topicalize or highlight implications of prior talk” (Linell 2009: 304) in order to deal with them in subsequent talk:¹³

Example (5) Indiscreet

- 1 C: wenn DU mir () sAgst.
 if you say to me
- 2 (das) is INdiskret,
 that's indiscreet
- 3 dann hab ich doch den MUND gehAlten.
 then I kept my mouth shut
- 4 (-)
- 5 S: NÄ.=haste NICH.
 no you didn't
- 6 (-)
- 7 C: HAB ich dann den mUnd gehalten,
 did I keep my mouth shut
- 8 → **HAB ich ihn noch mal gefragt?**
 did I ask him again
- 9 → **NEIN.**
 no
- 10 S: JA.=aba du bIs dann gleich verLETZT.
 yeah but you are hurt straightaway
- 11 das hast du ja grad D_DEUTlich gemacht,
 you just made it clear
- 12 indEm du dann SACHtest,
 as you said
- 13 dÜ bist INTolerant,
 “you are intolerant”

¹² The majority of the work on “rhetorical questions” either discusses “invented” or literary examples, or it analyzes examples from spoken talk-in-interaction but does not consider explicitly self-answered questions (see Koshik’s 2005 comprehensive study of “assertive questions”, for example). One of the few exceptions is Herring’s study of rhetorical questions in Tamil, which is based on oral narratives she recorded in India.

¹³ Questions of this type correspond roughly to Herring’s class of “Classical Rhetorical Questions (CRQs)” in Tamil (cf. Herring 1991: 257). In contrast to Herring’s study, my examples exclusively arise in dissent contexts, though, and not in narratives.

Christoph (C) and Saskia (S) are arguing here whether Christoph can take criticism or not. In lines (1-3), Christoph refers back to a recent situation where he was criticized by Saskia for being “indiscreet”,¹⁴ and he claims that he “kept his mouth shut” after Saskia’s criticism. Since Saskia challenges this claim (line 5), Christoph carries on talking: He poses two polar questions which are immediately followed by the self-given answer “nein” ‘no’) that explicitly promotes the negated content of his second question to a fully-fledged assertion (lines 7-9).¹⁵ Christoph’s first question in line (7) ties back to his prior claim that he kept his mouth shut (see Goodwin 1990 on format tying), while his second question addresses the issue of whether he carried on asking the housemate about private matters or not (line 8). The questions are not independent of each other but the second question specifies the validity claims of the first question in an important respect: It reveals that Christoph is concerned with the issue if he kept on asking the housemate after Saskia’s criticism or not, which does not include the question of whether he somehow responded to Saskia’s criticism or not. After Christoph’s self-given answer in line (9), Saskia does not challenge Christoph’s claim again. Instead, she slightly recalibrates her line of argument as she holds that he is very sensitive to criticism (line 10), a claim she backs up by reconstructing prior utterances by Christoph (lines 11-14).¹⁶

In contrast to the preceding examples, the question-answer sequence in example (5) does not interrupt the main course of action: It neither suspends a relationship of expectability between a given first part and a missing second part in terms of repair nor abruptly leaves the communicative roles and goals provided by the frame-so-far. Instead, there are three crucial features of the question-answer sequence which reveal that the primary conversational business at hand is *stance-taking* (Kärkkäinen 2006, Koshik 2005, du Bois & Kärkkäinen, 2012) – its sequential position, its shape, and Saskia’s response.

Sequentially, the questions in lines (7-8) deal with a subject matter Christoph has already claimed to be true while Saskia has challenged it (cf. lines 1-3, 5). Nevertheless, the shape of Christoph’s questions lacks any cues of a (non-strategic) concession¹⁷ or an ongoing process of reconsideration as a reaction to Saskia’s dissent. First, there are no prosodic or lexical cues which would indicate that Christoph considers Saskia’s dissent and mitigates his own epistemic

¹⁴ He had asked another housemate about private matters.

¹⁵ Asserting the negated content of the first question would contradict Christoph’s prior turns. Accordingly, only the second question in line (8) is a self-answered question in the strict sense.

¹⁶ See Tannen (1989), Günthner (2002, 2007), Holt & Clift (2006), Deppermann (2007) and Bucker (2013b) on “constructed dialogue”, the “layering of voices”, and “category animations” in spoken talk-in-interaction.

¹⁷ See Kotthoff (1993) on “strategic” types of concession in disputes.

expertise on the subject matter as a part of a reconsideration process (for example, modal particles or initial change-of-state tokens such as “echt” ‘really’). Second, the self-given answer “Nein” ‘no’ does not show any features of a candidate answer. Taken together, this reveals clearly that Christoph maintains an opposite stance against Saskia without any reconsiderations or concessions. This goes well with Saskia’s response in lines (10-14) which shows that she treats Christoph’s question-answer sequence as a fully-fledged opposing stance, i.e. as a substantial epistemic and argumentative point of reference for her own turn in the main course of action.

Self-given answers to stance-driven questions emerge as “known answers” in my data, i.e. they are not only instantly available for the questioner but also expectable for the addressees due to the shape of the questions they belong to (note that self-given “known-answers” like the one in example 5 are never followed by change-of-state tokens by the addressee in my data). Due to this, they unambiguously establish a fully-fledged stance and cannot be treated as a question by the addressee.

As a means to manifest a stance-conflict between two conversational parties, stance-driven self-answered questions are typically deployed as counter-challenges in dissent contexts and reveal that the questioner claims to have at least the same degree of epistemic expertise and authority on a shared “stance object” (du Bois & Kärkkäinen 2012) vis-à-vis the addressee but assesses it differently. This goes well with the fact that stance-driven self-answered questions tend to be accomplished by means of polar questions answered with “nein” ‘no’ – polar questions are an effective resource to set the stage for a categorically different assessment of an issue, and “nein” ‘no’ is the German default marker of disagreement. Accordingly, stance-driven self-answered questions do not attempt to redress an emergent K+/K– imbalance with regard to the subject matter of the question. Instead, both the sequential position and the shape of the question-answer pair reveal that (i) the questioner claims to know the addressee’s stance he is asking for and that (ii) the question actually arises as a reaction to the addressee’s alleged stance in order to “make a show” (Antaki & Wetherell 1999) of taking a contrary stance.

Even though stance-driven “known-answer” self-answered questions are similar to other-initiated repair-initial “unknown-answer” questions (example 3), they are fully embedded in the course of talk since, in dissent contexts, disagreeing and correcting does not interrupt the conversational business at hand but *is* the conversational business at hand. Furthermore, they do not lead to a first-starter competition for the floor in my data. This shows that both the sequential position and the shape of such questions reveal in due time (i.e., up to the point the

answer is finished in the emerging turn) that the question at hand is actually a “known-answer” question which does not position the questioner as requiring an answer from the addressee.

2.3.2 *Establishing a local climax.* The second group of self-answered “known-answer” questions are non-responsive “known-answer” questions which arise in mid-turn position and establish a slot for a self-given answer as an argumentative, narrative, or jokey climax, i.e. they highlight follow-up talk and create suspense:¹⁸

Example (6) Hippies

- 1 I: =tUn sie_s für SICH,
do you do it for yourself
- 2 (.)
- 3 K: was hEIßt für MICH,
what does that mean, “for myself”
- 4 ich tÜ_s (.) für MICH,
I do it for myself
- 5 für SIE?
for you
- 6 für ALLe;
for everyone
- 7 (--)
- 8 I: wAs glauben sie habe ich per[SÖNlich von von-]
what do you think I personally gain
- 9 K: [was MACHen LEUte,]
what are people doing
- 10 die Ihr °h die von zuhause WEGlaufen und °h in pArks leben und
°h HIPpies sind;=
who run away from home and live in parks and are hippies
- 11 =wIE man SAGT.=
like they say
- 12 =dIE WIRKlichen.
the real ones
- 13 wAs MACHen die.
what are they doing
- 14 → **für wEn TUN die das.**
for whom are they doing it
- 15 → **für SICH.=nich?**
for themselves, right

¹⁸ Herring (1991) discusses such question-answer sequences in Tamil narratives and characterizes them as “Thematicizing Rhetorical Questions (TRQs)”. She shows that in Tamil, question-answer sequences of this type are common and not restricted to initiating a “dramatic” climax. Instead, they can introduce all kinds of focused new information (i.e. “themes” or “topics”, see Herring 1991: 265ff). In German, in comparison, such self-answered questions are much more restricted.

- 16 → **fÜR SICH,**
for themselves
- 17 → **fÜR die ANderen, °h**
for the others
- 18 → **mit dEne_n_se zuSAMmen sind, °h**
with whom they hang out
- 19 → **für dAs was sie erKANNT haben.**
for what they realized
- 20 → **TUN sIE_s;=nich?**
they are doing it, right
- 21 I: was HAben sie konkret erkAnnt;
what did they realize
- 22 K: jah:--das man SO nich wEIterleben kann.
well that you can't go on living like that

Example (6) is taken from an interview between Ingrid (I) as the interviewer and Karl (K) as the interviewee. Karl is a German actor who, at the time of the interview, is preparing to go on tour with a recitation program. After Ingrid asked Karl if he plans to go on tour for himself (line 1), Karl emphasizes that he wants to go on tour for everyone (lines 3–6). While Ingrid takes Karl's answer as sufficiently satisfying her purpose-for-asking and initiates another question (line 8), Karl overlaps with her turn and continues to elaborate his point (see lines 9-22).

Karl's follow-up talk consists of two *wh*-questions followed by a self-given answer. The first question in lines (9-10, 13) asks what "real hippies" are doing, while the second question in line (14) asks for whom they are doing what they are doing. Since neither question leaves the interview frame with Karl as the primary speaker, and due to the fact that Karl is talking about a point for which he has the primary epistemic expertise (he is still concerned with his reasons and motivations for going on tour with a recitation program), his questions do not mobilize an answer by Ingrid. Instead, Karl answers the second question himself (accordingly, the first question is not a self-answered question in the strict sense) as he claims that "real hippies" do what they do for themselves, for the people they are around with, and for something they have realized (lines 15-20). Karl's answer has the shape of a list (Jefferson 1990) with the turn-construction unit in line (15) as the "pre-detailing component" (Selting 2007)¹⁹ and the turn-construction unit in line (20) as the "post-detailing component". The list comprises three list items (lines 16-19), the first item in line (16) being a repetition of the pre-detailing component in line (15). After Karl has closed the list in line (20), Ingrid takes over the turn again: She asks Karl to specify the third list item of his list (line 21) and is answered in line (21).

¹⁹ The tag question "nich" 'right' and the sequential complexity of the preceding questions together project more follow-up talk.

Unlike responsive self-answered “known-answer” questions (example 5), non-responsive self-answered “known-answer” questions such as the one in example (6) do not occupy a turn-initial position, they do not arise as a contrary reaction to a prior turn by the addressee, they are not broadly restricted to dissent contexts, and they are not typically accomplished by means of polar questions. Instead, they tend to arise when the questioner is the primary speaker (as a narrator or interviewee, for example), and they project a *local “climax”* in the speaker’s line of argument, thereby creating suspense and preventing turn-taking before the answer is given. Due to this, they are predominantly accomplished by means of *wh*-questions which do not entail answer candidates and, hence, do not reveal the climax untimely but maintain the tension until the answer arises.

Non-responsive self-answered “known-answer” questions can have a socio-stylistic function which tends to become all the more obvious as the affirmativeness of the answer and the complexity of the question-answer sequence increase (for example, in terms of lists): As non-responsive self-initiated displays of an epistemic gradient in favor of the questioner, they have the potential to emerge as more or less blatant demonstrations of conversational and/or epistemic dominance. Hence, it could be revealing to study self-answered questions of this kind in classroom talk or in “teachings” (Keppler & Luckmann 1992) in order to find out if, when, and how they are used and treated as making a show of displaying conversational and/or epistemic power.

3. The “dialogical self” in self-answered questions

The examples have shown that self-answered questions cannot be taken as an argument to reinforce the traditional distinction between monologue and dialogue (in terms of accomplishing a question either monologically or dialogically). Instead, the “self” involved in self-answering a conversational question is a *“dialogical self”* in the sense of Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans 2001) and Dialogism (Linell 2001, 2009, Linell & Marková 1993, Marková 2003), i.e. a “self, contextually interdependent with others and with contexts, moving between different positionings but still part of continuities” (Linell 2009: 113). There are at least three important respects in which the “self” involved in self-answering a question is a “dialogical self”:

- (i) When asking and answering, the “self” is *addressee-oriented*, i.e. self-answered questions are not simply an externalization of a Platonic “soul’s conversation with itself” (cf. Plato’s dialogue “Theaetetus”, Cooper 1997: 288). Instead, they are oriented to a particular “other” (the addressee) in terms of “a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and

sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants” (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: 727). For example, the subject matter, the wording, and the sequential positioning of repair-related self-answered questions are selected depending on what the addressee is supposed to know or hold and his participant role within the frame at hand (non-competitive listener, non-competitive narrator, competitive antagonist, etc.).

- (ii) When asking and answering, the “self” is not oriented to a particular “other” (the addressee) in isolation but rather to an *emerging dialogical relationship* in order to redress a conversational problem emerging from a gradient of epistemic and sequential claims of access, expertise, and authority between the participants of this relationship. Since questions imply the “other” as the addressee but not necessarily as the answerer, they can naturally lead to a self-given answer, depending on the question’s shape and its integration into the sequential context. Questions can be grasped this way as a specific instantiation of “the triad Ego-Alter-Object/representation” as the “basic unit of dialogical epistemology” (Marková 2006).
- (iii) When asking and answering, the “self” can be *heteroglot* and *polyphonic* in the Bakhtinian sense (cf. Bakhtin 1982), i.e. the speaker can layer distinct “ideological” claims (heteroglossia) and prior talk (polyphony) in the turn when producing a self-answered question. The most obvious cases are stance-driven questions which entail a certain claim the questioner ascribes to a particular “other’s” prior talk, while the self-given answer embodies the questioner’s contrary “ideological” point of view (see excerpt 5, for example). In such cases, the self-accomplished question-answer sequence makes it possible to distribute conflicting “ideological” claims and “voices” over discrete yet closely connected parts of the utterance.

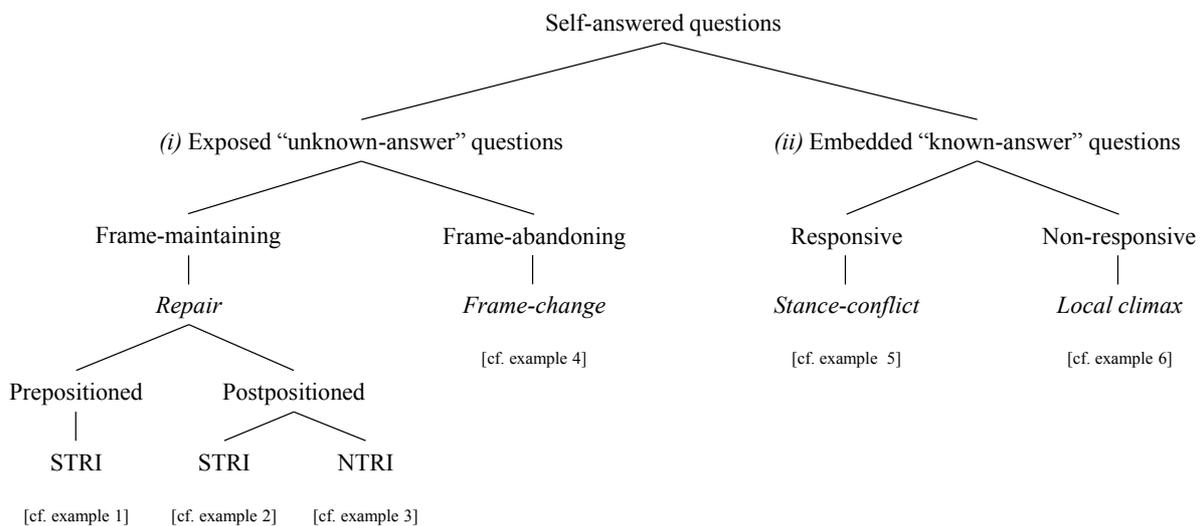
4. Conclusion

This study has shown that conversational questions in German talk-in-interaction can be accomplished as self-answered questions, i.e. as sequential units which consist of two distinct parts uttered by the same speaker, the first part formally being marked as a question and the second part treating the first part as type-specifying in a question-characteristic sense. German conversational self-answered questions can be subdivided into two main types. Exposed “unknown-answer” questions share the feature that the question-answer sequence interrupts the progression of the main course of action and displays the search for a certain piece of information as it proceeds and unfolds in time, with the subject matter of the question being

(probably) inaccessible at the time of the utterance. Embedded “known-answer” questions share the feature that the question-answer sequence is fully embedded into the course of action and that the answer is neither shaped nor treated as the (un)successful or surprising outcome of a search for information.

Both types of self-answered questions can be subdivided further. The two major subtypes of exposed “unknown-answer” questions are repair-accomplishing self-answered questions and self-answered questions preceding a frame-change, while the two major subtypes of embedded “known-answer” questions are responsive self-answered questions manifesting a stance-conflict and non-responsive self-answered questions establishing a climax.

Figure (1) Typology of self-answered questions in spoken German talk-in-interaction²⁰



In sum, this study has provided evidence that self-answered questions are not simply monologically accomplished questions in accordance with traditional distinctions between monologue and dialogue. Instead, they are dialogical by nature and show a heteroglot and polyphonic “self” orienting to an emerging dialogical relationship between himself and a particular “other” as it proceeds and unfolds in time. Nevertheless, much work still needs to be done before a more or less comprehensive picture of self-answered questions will be available. For example, studies on the impact of different linguistic systems and cultures on the forms and functions of self-

²⁰ “STRI” stands for “same-turn repair initiation”, “NTRI” for “next-turn repair initiation” (left branch of the tree in figure 1). Repair-characteristic displays of exposedness in my data are *frame-maintaining* inasmuch as they do not weaken the prospective relevance of the participant roles provided by the frame-so-far. *Frame-abandoning* displays of exposedness, in contrast, significantly weaken the prospective relevance of the participant roles provided by the frame-so-far.

answered questions can be expected to reveal further important insights into the conversational practice of self-given answers (cf. Herring’s 1991 inspiring study on rhetorical questions in Tamil as an example). Furthermore, additional work on the relationship between self-answered questions and specifics of the participation frame is needed (for example, studies on the role self-answered questions play in child-directed talk or in conversations with non-native speakers).

5. Transcription Conventions

The examples cited in this study are transcribed according to the standards set out in the “Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2” (GAT 2, cf. Selting et al. 2009). The following list comprises only those transcription conventions which occur in the samples:

Table (1) Selective list of transcription conventions following GAT 2

(i) Sequential features	
[]	Two or more pairs of brackets mark a temporal overlap among turns produced by two or more speakers
=	The equal sign marks the end and the beginning of two intonation units which follow each other without an intervening gap (“latching”)
(ii) Pauses	
(1.8)	Time specifications enclosed in parentheses indicate a timed pause measured in seconds and deciseconds
(.)	A period enclosed in parentheses indicates a micropause of less than 0.25 seconds
(-)	One or more hyphens enclosed in parentheses indicate a pause ranging from 0.25 to 0.75 seconds (the length of the pause is indicated by using one, two, or three hyphens)
(iii) Pitch contour and pitch change	
,	A comma indicates a slightly rising pitch contour at the end of an intonation unit
?	A question mark indicates a rising pitch contour at the end of an intonation unit
;	A semicolon indicates a slightly falling pitch contour at the end of an intonation unit
.	A period indicates a falling pitch contour at the end of an intonation unit
-	A hyphen indicates a neither rising nor falling pitch contour at the end of an intonation unit
(iv) Accentuation and volume	
GRANDfather	Capitalization of a syllable indicates that the syllable carries the primary accent within the respective intonation unit
grAndfather	Capitalization of the nucleus of a syllable indicates that the syllable carries the secondary accent within the respective intonation unit
(v) Further conventions	
°h	A degree sign followed by an “h” indicates an audible inhalation of breath (the length of the inhalation is indicated by using one, two, or three “h’s”)

:	Colon(s) indicate a sustained enunciation of a syllable (the length of the sustained syllable is indicated by using one, two, or three colons)
<< operator> scope>	Greater than/less than signs are used to define an operator which is valid for a stretch of talk within its scope; the operator “dim”, for example, indicates a voice which is continuously turning down (“diminuendo”)
—	An underscore character indicates two turn-constructural units which follow each other without an intervening gap within an intonation unit
→	Horizontal arrows indicate important lines in the transcript

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