Structurally Similar Formats are Not Functionally Equivalent across Languages: Requests for Reconfirmation in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

This study is concerned with a cross-linguistic comparison of requests for reconfirmation (RfRCs) in Yurakaré, German, and Low German mundane spoken conversations. We focus on two different RfRC formats, namely token RfRCs (such as German echt? ‘really’) and RfRCs that repeat (part of) another speaker’s prior turn. We show that these RfRC formats are used to accomplish different social actions in the three languages under study, ranging from registering news to challenging prior information. Token RfRCs serve as versatile resources for responding to news in all three languages. Repeat RfRCs, in contrast, are used in divergent ways: In German, they are mainly treated as challenges, while showing only a weak contextualisation of challenges in Low German and virtually no potential for being understood as challenges in Yurakaré. Our study thus demonstrates that structurally similar RfRC formats can be put to use for different actions and sequence trajectories across languages.
Keywords


1 Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the cross-linguistic sequential analysis of polar questions, i.e., utterances that invite a transfer of knowledge from an addressee to a speaker and at the same time prefigure the answer space in that they make responses relevant that affirm/deny or confirm/disconfirm. Languages afford different linguistic resources for formulating polar questions, such as verb position, tags, morphological markers, and prosodic contours (König and Siemund, 2007), which shape the gradient of stances polar questions index and the range of actions they implement (as e.g., the distinctiveness of requests for affirmation and requests for confirmation, Enfield et al., 2010). Concerning responses to polar questions, languages exhibit different profiles in their choice of either repeat formats or conventionalised particle formats to affirm/confirm a prior question (Holmberg, 2016; Enfield et al., 2019).

This paper is concerned with a particular type of polar question, requests for reconfirmation (RfRCs), which ask for the reconfirmation of something another speaker has stated in a previous turn. They can be realised in token format, as in excerpt (1), or in repeat format, as in excerpt (2).

Excerpt (1): German KoMI #14_1

Token RfRC

₀₁ Anna: na dat sieht GUT aus du;=
‘well, this looks very good, you’
₀₂ =elf minuten QUATSchen wir schon; hehe
‘we have been talking for eleven minutes now’
→ ₀₃ Ron: ECHT,
‘really?’
₀₄ Anna: <<laughing> JA;;>
‘yes’

Excerpt (2): Yurakaré YURGVDP04oct06-02

Repeat RfRC

₀₁ Yas: achu anchi lijutũtũti së tappē.
achtũ ana=chi li-ku-tũtũti-y sëë
like_that DEM=DIR VLOC-3SG.OBJ.COM-sit-HAB-1SG.SBJ I ta-pëpē
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1PL.POSS-grandfather
‘Well, I was here with our grandfather.’

→  02 Nur: (0.4) ë anchi liju[tütüjt]im më;
  ë ana=chi li-ku-tütü-jti-m mëë
INTJ DEM=DIR VLOC-3SG.OBJ.COM-sit-HAB-2SG.SBJ you.SG
‘Ah, you were here with him?’

03 Yas: [te:, ]
‘Yeah.’

RfRCs are sometimes pooled with requests for confirmation (e.g. Raymond and Stivers, 2016: 326) as they are “routinely treated as seeking confirmation” (Stivers and Enfield, 2010: 2621). Unlike with requests for confirmation, however, speakers producing an RfRC do not introduce a new proposition to the discourse but operate back on prior talk. Moreover, RfRCs can be routinised in form (Thompson et al., 2015), they merely invite a response rather than making it relevant (Gubina and Betz, 2021), and they favour confirmation over disconfirmation more strongly than requests for confirmation (Marmorstein and Szczepok Reed, this issue). This paper, thus, sets out to study RfRCs separately from other types of polar questions.

In previous research on selected languages, RfRCs have been referred to as “assertions of ritualized disbelief” (Heritage, 1984: 339) or as “show repairs” (Imo, 2009), whose main job is to express astonishment or incredulity. As a starting point for cross-linguistic interactional research, such functional ascriptions can be problematic as they presuppose that RfRCs accomplish comparable actions across languages. Starting from particular forms can be equally challenging as they may not be found in all languages (or not with the same relative frequency). Moreover, each form can come with language-specific ‘collateral effects’ (Sidnell and Enfield, 2012) and may contribute to distinct interactional styles in particular ways (Brown, Sicoli, and Le Guen, 2021). In order to conduct a comparative analysis in line with recent approaches to pragmatic typology (Dingemanse et al., 2014; Rossi, 2020), we start from a sequential definition of RfRCs (see Dingemanse and Floyd, 2014 for this “natural control method”) that ties them to their conversational ecology rather than to a particular function or form.

To date, much research on RfRCs is based on British and American English and a few other spoken standard languages (e.g. Heritage, 1984; Thompson et al., 2015; Gubina and Betz, 2021); there are only very few studies that present comparative analyses (Kaimaki, 2012; Aldrup, this issue; Marmorstein and Szczepok Reed, this issue). This paper aims to expand this research by presenting a cross-linguistic interactional study on RfRCs in German and Low German, two typologically closely related Germanic languages, and Yurakaré,
a language isolate spoken in Bolivia. The sample thus includes a standard language, a non-standard dialect variety, and an Indigenous language. Our study focuses on the sequential environments in which RfRCs occur and the practices speakers deploy to invite minimal or more elaborate responses while also analysing their quantitative distribution. Despite some formal commonalities, we show that the two main RfRC formats – token and repeat RfRCs – accomplish very different actions in the languages under study, i.e. structural similarity does not necessarily imply functional equivalence. Methodologically, we hope to show how a quantitative approach engenders questions for a qualitative analysis, which can help to unravel the functional specificities of RfRCs across languages.

In Section 2, we provide an outline of previous conversation-analytic research on token and repeat RfRCs. After that, we introduce our data and methods used for building our collections in Section 3. Here, we also discuss in more detail how RfRCs can be delimited from other interactional devices such as requests for confirmation. The section furthermore introduces the coding scheme applied in this study. Section 4 presents a quantitative analysis of language-specific formats of RfRCs, their prosodic design, preferred response types and their sequential embeddings, identifying commonalities as well as divergent patterns across the languages. Then, in Section 5, we zoom in on the response trajectories after token and repeat RfRCs following informings, illustrating how they are deployed as different social actions in the three languages by means of a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. We conclude the paper by discussing the results and their implications for comparative and interactional typological research (Section 6).

2 Formats and Functions of RfRCs

Requests for reconfirmation are responsive turns that treat a prior as new and somewhat notable or remarkable information (see Marmorstein and Szczepek Reed, this issue). RfRCs are usually distinguished from change-of-state tokens or news receipts, which also “accept prior talk as informative” (Heritage, 1984: 335) but are routinely treated as closing implicative as they do not ask for additional reconfirmation (Imo, 2009; Heinemann, 2017). However, some studies call into question such a clear-cut distinction: In Finnish, for instance, some change-of-state tokens can be followed by reconfirmation when placed in specific sequential environments (Koivisto, 2015).
RfRCs can implement various actions: They are organised on a continuum of merely registering or acknowledging news (Maynard, 1997), expressing affiliation (Imo, 2011; Gubina and Betz, 2021), framing the news as not yet fully accepted or processed (Thompson et al., 2015), counter to expectation (Robinson, 2009), surprising (Selting, 1996), or challenging the just presented claim (Heritage, 1984; Benjamin and Walker, 2013). Therefore, RfRCs are involved in different sequential trajectories. Much like continuers, they can receive no notable uptake (Thompson et al., 2015) or they can work to expand the sequence by eliciting (at least) a simple reconfirmation (Heritage, 1984), by inviting elaboration on the matter at hand (Gubina and Betz, 2021), or by eliciting accounts that substantiate or explain a previous claim (Raymond and Stivers, 2016). Based on this wide range of opportunities, Gubina and Betz (2021) argue that it is better to think of RfRCs’ conditional relevance on a gradient; they open up a response space in which different forms of uptake are possible and it is up to the addressee to decide which trajectory to follow.

Moreover, responses are fitted to the local contexts in which RfRCs emerge. RfRCs referring to unsolicited informings tend to receive minimal uptake (Thompson et al., 2015) in contrast to RfRCs in contexts in which some kind of trouble (e.g. issues of epistemic primacy, overt disconfirmation of an assumption) has been registered earlier (Gubina and Betz, 2021). Following informings on a person’s behaviour, personal opinions or choices, RfRCs are regularly understood as off-record account solicitations, which do “not initially appear to be soliciting an account at all” (Raymond and Stivers, 2016: 325). In doctor-patient interactions, they can invite further informings and thus work as a minimal and indirect form of resistance to a diagnosis (Stivers, 2011b).

Concerning their form, previous studies document that RfRCs can be realised as (partial) repeats or in more or less routinised formats, which differ in the strength with which they identify their point of reference. In English, for instance, formats range from particles or lexically fixed expressions to minimal or expanded repeats (Thompson et al., 2015). Across languages, routinised formats are often derived from expressions dealing with the truthfulness, adequacy or veracity of a previous turn, such as English really (Jefferson, 1981; Heritage, 1984; Maynard, 1997), German ehrlich (‘honestly’, Imo, 2009) or Arabic wallāhi (‘by God’, Marmorstein and Szczepek Reed, this issue). Usually studies tend to concentrate on either such routinised formats or on repeat RfRCs (see Aldrup, this issue). With this study, we aim at a comprehensive approach that takes into account the different formats languages recruit for requesting reconfirmation.
Prosody and embodied conduct are important for indexing epistemic stances and scaling emotive involvement in RfRCs. For instance, sustained gaze, raised eyebrows or sudden head tilts can be deployed with RfRCs as expressions of disbelief and surprise (Kendrick, 2015; Thompson et al., 2015; Couper-Kuhlen, 2020; Gubina and Betz, 2021). However, these embodied displays heighten the stances of the verbal action rather than acting as distinctive cues. Prosodic resources, in contrast, seem to play a more important role in the formation of RfRCs. For other-repeats, recent studies show that prosody can help to distinguish RfRCs from other repeat actions (see papers in Rossi, 2020). In particular, repeats expressing surprise or disbelief tend to stand out prosodically (Selting, 1996; Benjamin and Walker, 2013). In other formats such as clausal RfRCs in English (do I?, you did?), too, ‘expressive’ prosody (high pitch register, loudness, rise-fall pitch contours, lengthening) can index “heightened emotive involvement on the part of the responder” (Thompson et al., 2015: 92). However, there is no straightforward mapping of one prosodic cue with a particular function. Rather, an assemblage of varying prosodic resources (pitch contours, pitch range, loudness, lengthening) as well as verbal and contextual factors are used for distinguishing RfRCs from other actions such as repair or news registering (Couper-Kuhlen, 2020).

Concerning final intonation of routinised RfRC formats, studies report differences within and across languages. In English, there is a general tendency for particles with final rising intonation such as oh and really to make a response relevant whereas particles with final falling intonation merely register news (Local, 1996 for a fine-grained phonetic analysis; Thompson et al., 2015: 64–84).2 For German ja (‘yes’) and was (‘what’), Selting (1996) reports instances in which it is solely the prosodic design (pitch peaks, marked length or loudness) that distinguishes RfRCs from other actions such as signalling a problem of hearing or understanding (also see Imo, 2011). For German echt, however, Gubina and Betz (2021) find no systematic link between the token’s final intonation and its uptake. Similarly, for English really and Arabic wallāhi Marmorstein and Szczepk Reed (this issue) report that no patterns could be identified regarding the forms’ prosodic design. To sum up, languages differ not only in the assemblage of prosodic resources used for making reconfirmation relevant but also in how stable this prosodic distinction is in different RfRC formats.

1 Notably, Robinson’s (2013) study does not include prosodically marked other-repeats but does include instances in which the formats target the adequacy of a prior utterance.

2 For the combined oh really, however, Kaimaki (2012) did not find differences in the pitch contour to be decisive.
So far, most studies focus on RfRCs in spoken Indo-European languages such as English or German, and only few take a comparative approach (Kaimaki, 2012; Rossi, 2020). Moreover, studies often look at either repeat (Aldrup, this issue) or (selected) routinised RfRC formats separately (Marmorstein and Szczepk Reed, this issue). It still has to be determined, though, how languages make use of the distinction between routinised token forms and repeats. For English, Thompson et al. (2015: 135–136) note a tendency that particle RfRCs often do not receive any uptake and primarily register something as news while repeat formats tend to manifest some problem with the prior and engender more elaborate answers (also see Heritage, 1984: 343). Moreover, the authors note differences in frequency: Minimal formats are the most frequent in their data while expanded repeat formats are used to a lesser degree (Thompson et al., 2015: 53–54). However, their study – like many others – offers “impressions of frequency” (Thompson et al., 2015: 53) rather than presenting statistical results. This, we argue, calls for a combined qualitative and quantitative cross-linguistic approach. Our quantitative analysis provides valid frequency ratios of RfRCs and the different formats across languages. These distributions give rise to a subsequent qualitative analysis of the actions the different RfRC formats implement and the response trajectories they invite in each language.

3 Data and Methodology

In this paper, we combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in the analysis of RfRC sequences in mundane spoken interaction. In the following, we elaborate the methodological aspects of the study. Section 3.1 introduces the languages under investigation. Subsequently, Section 3.2 presents the procedures for building our collections and discusses our data-driven criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of boundary cases. Section 3.3 delimits RfRCs from similar social actions, while Section 3.4 presents the coding scheme. Finally, the method of comparison is presented in Section 3.5.

3.1 Description of Datasets

Yurakaré [glottocode: yura255, denoted as YUR in this paper] is an agglutinative language isolate spoken by around 1,600 people (INE, 2015: 32) in the Andean foothill area of central Bolivia (see e.g. van Gijn, 2006). The Yurakaré dataset used in this study consists of a subset of the Yurakaré section (van Gijn et al., 2011) of the DobeS archive at The Language Archive (TLA), MPI for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. The data were collected during a
language documentation project (2006–2011) by members of the project team. All data used for this paper contain video-recorded conversations between people who are familiar with each other, in many cases members of the same family. The data were transcribed and translated into Spanish by speakers of Yurakaré in the ELAN annotation tool developed at The Language Archive, MPI Nijmegen, The Netherlands (e.g. Brugman and Russel, 2004).

German [glottocode: stan1295, denoted as GER in this paper] is an inflectional standardised West Germanic language (Haspelmath, 2008). The dataset comprises approximately 24 hours of mundane conversation between friends and family. The speakers come from the northwest of Germany (mostly Westphalia and Rhineland). Data were collected as audio and video as part of a larger corpus project “Korpus multimodale Interaktion (KoMI)” by Pepe Droste in 2016 and 2017. The conversations are transcribed according to the GAT 2 conventions (Selting et al., 2009) in EXMARaLDA (Schmidt and Wörner, 2005).

Low German [glottocode: lowg1239, denoted as LoG in this paper] is an inflectional non-standardised (dialect) Germanic language. Due to the historical kontinentalwestgermanisches Dialektkontinuum (‘continental West Germanic dialect continuum’), Low German is structurally different from (High) German (Goossens, 1980). In line with the general decline of dialects in Germany, Low German is a primarily spoken variety that is losing importance as an everyday language. The Low German data comprise approximately 60 hours of mundane talk-in-interaction and were collected in the north-western part of Germany in the Westphalian language area (for a description of the project see Weber, 2020). All speakers are native Westphalians, who acquired Low German as a first language or in a bilingual fashion with High German. In their everyday talk, they speak both Low German and (regional) High German. The data were transcribed using the GAT 2 conventions (Selting et al., 2009) in EXMARaLDA (Schmidt and Wörner, 2005). They are only available in audio and, thus, cannot be analysed multimodally.

Our datasets for the three languages exhibit important differences regarding the sociodemographic background of the speakers. The German data exclusively contains talk from younger speakers, while the speakers in the Low German collection are mostly over 50 years old. The Yurakaré collection contains a smaller number of speakers covering different age groups (see Section 3.2 for further details). Low German and Yurakaré are both languages that are spoken and acquired in a contact situation. Low German speakers are usually bilingual with (regional) High German and Yurakaré speakers with Spanish. This is not regularly the case for the speakers in the German dataset. Finally, the Yurakaré speakers who participated in the data collection live in small and remote communities, which is not the case for the German and
Low German speakers. This raises questions regarding the comparability of the data, and of possibilities of controlling for these factors. Comparative studies based on near-natural interaction often rely on pre-existing data that have not originally been collected for a comparative endeavour (Kornfeld et al., 2023: 106). This is also the situation in our case: Our study relies on datasets that already existed before we decided to compare them.

However, we still would like to make a case for the validity of observations based on the comparison of our three datasets. While not representing the same age ranges of speakers, the datasets still represent practices that are observable across certain communities of speakers. Moreover, sometimes it is not possible to control for sociodemographic factors, as for instance in the case of Low German, where a break in intergenerational transmission has taken place and young speakers are therefore rare. Moreover, our study constitutes a first cross-linguistic exploration of RfRC sequences in the three given languages. It will be of interest to investigate the role of sociodemographic factors in RfRC formulation in the future.

In terms of the social situations investigated, our corpora are comparable in that for all languages they predominantly consist of informal conversations among family and friends where no other activities were carried out in parallel. Another strand of investigation in the future would be to study RfRCs as they are employed in different types of situations or activities across languages. Recent endeavours of building parallel (or parallax, see Barth and Evans, 2017) corpora such as the Parallel European Corpus of Informal Interaction (PECII, Kornfeld et al., 2023) or the Social Cognition Parallax Interview Corpus (SCOPIC, Barth and Evans, 2017) will play an important role in making such work possible.

3.2 Building the Collections

This study builds on the research of the Scientific Network “Interactional Linguistics”, which conducts a cross-linguistic analysis of approximately 200 instances of request for confirmation sequences in each of 10 languages (cf. König and Pfeiffer, in prep.). The network’s definition of this type of polar question excludes RfRCs as they do not introduce the relevant proposition but rather operate back on a prior speaker’s turn (cf. König, Pfeiffer and Weber, in prep., also see Section 3.3). Our interest to study RfRCs was motivated by this decision, i.e. we wanted to build an additional collection to determine the differences between these two types of polar questions in terms of their linguistic design and the responses they invite. To this end, we decided to use the same stretch of data needed to identify 200 requests for confirmation for collecting RfRCs in Yurakaré, Low German and German. Even though this yields collections of different sizes, it allows us to determine the relative frequency of RfRCs.
in comparison to requests for confirmation. Each of the authors was responsible for building the collection for the language of their scientific expertise: The German collection was created by König, the Low German collection by Weber, and the Yurakaré collection by Gipper.

The network collection was compiled by identifying the first 15 requests for confirmation (or less if the recording did not contain as many) through an exhaustive search of a continuous stretch of interaction starting at the beginning of a given recording until 200 cases were gathered (see König, Pfeiffer and Weber, in prep.). As a next step, we inspected the same stretches of conversation for RfRC sequences. We first cast a very wide net, including all cases that could potentially be identified as RfRCs. Data sessions were conducted to discuss the inclusion of different types of cases. Based on a more detailed sequential analysis, we then iteratively excluded some cases (e.g. those that could be straightforwardly classified as repair) and included others (e.g. change-of-state tokens and continuers that invite reconfirmation as well as instances bordering on other-initiation of repair, see Section 3.3). In this way, iterative qualitative analyses without a pre-set formal focus shaped the data collection process.

For Yurakaré, in the stretch of data in which the 200 RfC sequences were found 167 instances of RfRCs by 11 speakers (aged from approx. 15 to approx. 65) could be identified. The cases come from a total of around 163 minutes of conversational data (10 interactions; 1 multiparty, 9 dyadic). The normalised token frequency for Yurakaré is 61.3 RfRCs per hour. In the German corpus, the 200 RfCs were identified in 569 minutes of talk (14 interactions; 8 multiparty, 6 dyadic). In this stretch of data, 67 RfRCs issued by 25 speakers could be collected. This results in a normalised frequency of 7.1 RfRCs per hour for the German data. The speakers’ age ranges from 19 to 33 years. The 200 RfCs in the Low German data were found in 354 minutes of talk (15 interactions; 11 multiparty; 4 dyadic). Within this stretch of conversation, the corpus yielded a total of 77 RfRCs by 21 speakers. The normalised token frequency per hour is 13.1 in the Low German data. The speakers are between 40 to 80 years of age.

3.3 Delimiting RfRCs
This section presents relevant characteristics of RfRCs that emerged as a result of our collection building process and reports on actions bordering on this understanding. An RfRC has a particular sequential structure as it operates back on
another speaker’s prior utterance. The previous speaker is asked to reconfirm what they have just said, i.e. the RfRC identifies a foregoing utterance (or parts of it) as a reconfirmable. In contrast to requests for confirmation (see König and Pfeiffer, in prep.), the speaker issuing the RfRC does not introduce a new proposition to the conversation. Instead, RfRCs present “known-answer questions” (Steensig and Heinemann, 2013), which invite reconfirmation or commitment (Marmorstein and Szczepel Reed, this issue). Responses to RfRCs usually – but not necessarily – offer a reconfirmation and may be expanded by further talk related to the matter at hand. Consider the sequential structure in excerpt (3).

Excerpt (3): German KoMI #14_1

Basic sequential structure of RfRCs

Context: Anna and Ron want to make sure that the recording device is working properly, Anna has walked up to the camera and now informs Ron about the progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Anna: elf minuten QUATschen wir schon; hehe ‘we have been talking for eleven minutes now’</td>
<td>Informing provides some information that is considered to be news to the addressee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Ron: ECHT, ‘really?’</td>
<td>RfRC identifies prior as reconfirmable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Anna: &lt;&lt;laughing&gt; JA;&gt; ‘yes’</td>
<td>Response treats previous turn as (minimally) inviting a reconfirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Ron: KRASS; ‘crass/wow’</td>
<td>Follow-up deals with initial statement as consequential informing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This sequential structure is similar to that of other-initiated repair (OIR). However, previous research has also noted relevant differences between the two: For instance, Dingemanse and Enfield (2015: 100) exclude routinised RfRCs such as Dutch echt (‘really’) from their collections of OIR as they are not treated as the instantiation of a problem of hearing or understanding (Did you say X? Did you mean X?) but rather as taking issue with the truthfulness, plausibility or credibility of the prior utterance. This, however, also applies to some other-repeats (Selting, 1996; Schegloff, 2007: 151–155; Rossi, 2020; also see Aldrup, this issue), which Dingemanse and Enfield (2015: 100–101) include in their study of OIR due to the format’s similarity to candidate understandings. Kendrick (2015: 181) coins the term ‘pseudo OIR’ for utterances which resemble repair but are used to accomplish a different focal action. Another relevant aspect in which RfRCs can be distinguished from OIR sequences concerns their fittedness to the reconfirmable. Repair is a generic practice for orienting to trouble whenever it occurs. RfRCs, in contrast, regularly follow utterances...
which are framed as informings (Thompson et al., 2015: 60–64), i.e. in contexts in which RfRC-speakers are recognised as being less knowledgeable, for instance as a recipient of tellings or of answers to questions they have previously posed (Maynard, 1997; Robinson, 2013; Thompson et al., 2015).

Crucial for our study is the kind of responsive action that RfRCs call for and regularly receive, a reconfirmation. Such a response accomplishes more than attesting that something holds true, it does more than simply confirm. By virtue of operating back on a prior turn (without altering its content), it offers a reconfirmation and thus a recommitment that something is the case (also see Aldrup, this issue; Marmorstein and Szczepk Reed, this issue). Notably, the design of RfRC responses differs from that of responses to more repair-like practices (Thompson et al., 2015: 60–64). Our collections corroborate this observation: We did not find response tokens which highlight the adequacy of the reconfirmable (such as German genau ‘exactly’, das stimmt ‘that’s right’) but – among others – tokens dealing with askability (natürlich ‘of course’, see Stivers, 2011a). In elaborated responses, speakers usually do not correct, rephrase, clarify or complete their previous turns, as would be expected for OIRs, but rather offer more details or substantiations of their claims. Moreover, we do not find adjustments of articulation in the form of more carefully pronounced repeats that would deal with problems of hearing (Robinso, 2013). Further evidence for the non-repair character of RfRCs can be found in follow-up turns by the RfRC speakers, who often do not offer claims of now-understanding (Koivisto, 2019) but rather assessments (Heritage, 1984), markers of surprise and unexpectedness (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2006), metacommunicative comments on their epistemic position (I did not know that), requests for accounts (Kendrick, 2015: 187), follow-up questions about the matter at hand, news receipts, or additional RRCs. While these observations corroborate that there are functional differences between OIRs and RfRCs, we also came across borderline cases in which no clear-cut distinction could be made (see also Aldrup, this issue). We included such cases in our collections so that they can be related to core cases of RfRCs.

RfRCs open a space for responding to them. In our collections we included formats which regularly receive uptake in the form of a reconfirmation. However, other types of uptake or a lack of uptake are also possible. To be able to determine the proportions of different kinds of uptake, we included all formats that regularly receive a reconfirmation in the respective languages. For German this means that we included all instances of echt, as this form regularly invites the reconfirmation of a prior, even though not all instances receive a verbal response (Gubina and Betz, 2021). Moreover, we included two special formats: (1) change-of-state tokens in all three languages, and (2) the Yurakaré
response token *të*, which is otherwise used as a continuier. For these two formats, we only included cases where a reconfirming response was given.

### 3.4 Coding

In order to enable a quantitative analysis which can help to identify language-specific tendencies, we decided to code the data for features concerning the RfRC turn-design, its sequential embedding, and the ensuing response. Part of the coding scheme is based on the categories developed and tested for interrater reliability in the Scientific Network “Interactional Linguistics” (cf. König, Pfeiffer and Weber, in prep.). All coding was gradually adjusted by iterative qualitative analyses and is thus motivated by the data (see also Stivers, 2015). In the data collection process, each of the authors was responsible for coding the language of their scientific expertise. However, through joint examinations of cases in all languages in data sessions, we ensured that we had a shared understanding of the coding categories that was applicable to all three languages. As the Low German dataset does not provide video recordings, we decided to focus on verbal responses only in the coding of responses. To make the datasets comparable, we classified German and Yurakaré cases where only a non-verbal confirming response was given as ‘no response’. Given that these cases are very rare (three for Yurakaré and two for German), this decision does not have a great impact on the analysis. In the following, we list the variables and the values which we coded for.

**RfRC Turn**

- **RfRC format**
  - Values: token RfRC; repeat RfRC; other

We first coded for different types of formats used for requesting reconfirmation. In accordance with the literature (see Section 2), we coded for repeat formats (repeat RfRC), including ‘near copies’ (Rossi, 2020: 496) or partial repeats, and token-like formats (token RfRC). The latter category encompasses short and lexically fixed expressions such as Yurakaré *achama* (‘is that so?’) and German *wirklich* (‘for real?’). The term *token* was chosen explicitly to refrain from an unwarranted grammatical categorisation which might not be applicable to all languages and to capture various linguistic formats that languages recruit to request reconfirmation (which in our data range from verbs, verbs, verbs...)

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4 Of course, this does not imply that embodied conduct does not play a role in RfRC sequences (see Aldrup, this issue). Its function in implementing a response to an RfRC will have to be determined in future research.
adjectives or response tokens to items usually described as change-of-state tokens). The few cases that could not be categorised as either token or repeat RfRCs were coded as other.

- **RfRC format specific**
  Values: *e.g.* echt ‘really’; ja ‘yes’

For non-repeat formats, the language-specific lexical form of the RfRC was noted (*e.g.* echt ‘really’ for German, achama ‘is that so?’ for Yurakaré, or ja/jo ‘yes’ for Low German).

- **Prosodic upgrade**\(^5\) (of RfRC)
  Values: \(0=\text{without prosodic upgrade}; 1=\text{with prosodic upgrade}\)

Following the literature on the prosodic design of RfRCs (see Section 2), we analysed the cases for features of loudness, lengthening, pitch jump, and marked intonation contour which may cluster (*e.g.* Pillet-Shore, 2012: 383) to produce what we call a ‘prosodic upgrade’ (other terms used in the literature are ‘punched-up prosody’ (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2006) and ‘expressive prosody’ (Thompson et al., 2015)). We coded for the presence of one or more of these features in a binary fashion (\(1=\text{with prosodic upgrade}\) (at least one of the features is present); \(0=\text{without prosodic upgrade}\) (none of the features is present)).

- **Final intonation** (of RfRC)
  Values: fall; level; rise

As a second aspect of the prosodic design, we coded for the final pitch contours of the RfRCs in our data following the British-School taxonomy (*fall; level; rise* contours; see Couper-Kuhlen, 2020). Our focus is on the nuclear syllable and its pitch configuration up to the final syllable of the unit.

---

5 Both for the coding of the variable *prosodic upgrade* and *final intonation*, we conducted a Praat analysis of the RfRC when the quality of the recording allowed us to do so (Boersma and Weenink, 2022). In the process, we noted that RfRCs tend to be issued in overlap with other speakers’ turns in varying degrees. Moreover, background noises made the Praat analysis difficult in some cases. In particular, the RfRCs in the Yurakaré recordings overlap with background noises or turns of other speakers in many instances. We noted overlap in 76% of all instances in the Yurakaré data, 56% in the German data and 15% in the Low German data. This observation warrants further investigation.
Sequential Embedding (of RfRC)

Values: informing; responses to information questions; confirmatory responses to some confirmable; contradictory responses to some confirmable; confirmatory responses to RfRCs; other

Following Thompson et al. (2015), we coded the action of the turn preceding the RfRC. In our collections, we found the following actions to regularly precede RfRCs: (1) informing (volunteered or elaborated, i.e. response turns which elaborate on a topic), (2) responses to information questions (i.e. questions which target a specific piece of information), (3) confirmatory responses to some confirmable (i.e. simple, non-elaborated confirmations, which have been invited by polar questions), (4) contradictory responses to some confirmable (i.e. responses which disconfirm or reject a polar question) and (5) confirmatory responses to RfRCs (i.e. reconfirmations which have been invited by an RfRC). We coded cases which do not pertain to any of these domains as (6) other.

Response Turn (to RfRC)

- Response type
  Values: confirmation; disconfirmation; neither; no response

If there was a response to an RfRC, we coded the response type concerning the values (1) confirmation, (2) disconfirmation, and (3) neither. No uptake was coded as (4) no response.

- Response format
  Values: response token; repeat; response token + repeat; response token + elaboration

We coded the format of the responses. These include the following values: (1) response token, (2) repeat, (3) combination of response token and repeat, and (4) response token plus elaboration.

3.5 Method of Comparison

After the data were coded, we first calculated the relative frequencies for all variables to be able to compare them across the languages. Our study is exploratory in nature, hence our quantitative results are not meant to test pre-formulated hypotheses. We report descriptive statistics in the form of relative frequencies of variables and statistical association measurements based on Cramér’s V (see supplementary material: https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.23805855).
As the absolute frequencies of RfRC instances vary across the three languages, and for some categories the absolute numbers are very small, the reported distributions represent tendencies that will need to be statistically confirmed with much larger data sets. We use the quantitative results to generate questions for a qualitative analysis regarding the similarities and differences in functions of the two RfRC formats – tokens and repeats – in the three languages. All statistical analyses were conducted in R version 4.2.3 (R Core Team, 2023), in parts with the package DescTools (Signorell et al., 2023). The plots were generated with the ggplot2 package (Wickham, 2016).

4 Formatting, Sequential Embedding, and Preference Organisation of RfRCs

In this section, we present the quantitative findings on the two main RfRC formats, their sequential embedding, and the response types they solicit. The corpus frequencies reveal substantial differences between the languages which led us to conduct a qualitative analysis that looks into the social actions that RfRCs accomplish in the given languages (Sections 5.3 and 5.4). As Section 3.2 showed, a first general difference is the overall rate of occurrence of RfRCs in the corpora: The Yurakaré collection comprises 167 RfRC sequences compared to 77 cases in Low German and 67 in German. These frequencies become even more relevant when we look at them relative to the time span in which these cases occur: The 167 instances of Yurakaré stem from less than three hours of conversation, whereas the Low German cases occur in almost 6 hours of talk and the German instances in roughly 9.5 hours.

Regarding the typical formats of RfRCs (see variable \textit{RfRC format} in Section 3.4), we find that in all three languages they split into two main categories: More or less routinised short (mostly one-word) formats, and different types of repeats. In this paper, we refer to the non-repeat formats as ‘token RfRCs’, as they are at least to some extent conventionalised for expressing RfRCs. Since our study focuses on token and repeat RfRCs as the most frequent formats in all three languages, formats that deviate from these were removed in a next step. In Yurakaré, six cases were found that take other formats, such as reformulations and self-repeats. Moreover, in Low German, there were three cases where the RfRC contained an explicit evaluation (e.g. \textit{so viel?’that much?’}). These cases are disregarded in the following analysis. This results in 161 RfRCs in Yurakaré, 74 in Low German, and 67 in German that form the basis of our quantitative analysis.

Figure 1 shows the differences in the relative frequency ratios of the RfRC formats (token and repeat) in all three languages. It shows that the proportion
of repeat formats is much higher in Yurakaré,\footnote{This is congruent with the observation that repeat formats are employed for a broad variety of actions in Yurakaré (Gipper, 2020). See also Brown, Sicoli, and Le Guen (2021) for a similar observation regarding the interactional styles of three Indigenous languages from Mexico.} while German and Low German prefer token formats. The statistics in the supplementary material (p. 1) show that there is a large association ($E=0.43; df=2$) between language and RfRC format, which is also highly significant\footnote{In line with statistical conventions, the thresholds for statistical significance are as follows: P-values below $0.01$ denote high statistical significance, p-values below $0.05$ denote weak statistical significance.} ($p<0.01$).

While all three languages employ RfRCs in token format – albeit with different frequency ratios – these are formed with different linguistic resources across the languages. Table 1 shows the formats and frequencies for the token RfRC formats in our collections. In German, we mostly find adverbs such as \textit{echt} ‘really’ and \textit{ehrlich} ‘honestly’, where \textit{echt} ‘really’ serves as the most frequent RfRC format in this language. In Low German, formats that have been described as change-of-state tokens for German (such as \textit{achso} and \textit{aha}, Golato and Betz, 2008; Imo, 2009) are recurrently used as RfRCs and receive a reconfirming response, while this is not frequently observed in German (a single case) and Yurakaré (four cases, but no n-lexicalised forms). In Yurakaré, the most frequent format of token RfRCs are anaphoric expressions, such as the pro-verb \textit{achama} ‘is it so?’, with or without further morphological marking. Finally, while all languages employ response tokens as token RfRCs – in the Germanic languages with the meaning of ‘yes’, in Yurakaré a dedicated continuer – this is done in Low German with a much higher relative frequency.

As already mentioned in Section 3.1, Yurakaré is typologically different from the two Germanic languages. Where German and Low German are inflectional languages, Yurakaré exhibits an agglutinative structure. This typological...
difference may explain the finding that in Yurakaré, ‘token’ RfRCs show a lower degree of conventionalisation and invariance compared to German or Low German. For instance, the German token format *echt?* ‘really?’ is fully conventionalised, whereas the most frequent token format in Yurakaré, the verb *achama* ‘it is like that’, is formally variable in that it can take derivational, inflectional, and propositional morphology. The agglutinative structure of Yurakaré may possibly inhibit a conventionalisation of the form *achama* as an invariant token RfRC format. This typological difference shows that a purely form-based comparative approach is not applicable for these languages.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Low German</th>
<th>Yurakaré</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>echt</em> ('really')</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ja</em> ('yes')</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>was</em> ('what')</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ehrlich</em> ('honestly')</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nein</em> ('no')</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>what</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>wirklich</em> ('for real')</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ach was</em> (change-of-state token + ‘what’)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>47</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>56</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>f_i</em> absolute frequencies</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another comparative difference in RfRC formatting is that the two Germanic languages mostly deliver RfRCs with rising intonation, whereas Yurakaré speakers more frequently employ RfRCs with falling intonation, as shown in Figure 2 (see variable final intonation in Section 3.4). The supplementary material reveals a large association between these variables ($E=0.43; df=4$), which is highly significant ($p<0.01$) (see supplementary material, p. 2). This is basically comparable to previous findings regarding final intonation in information-seeking and assertive content questions in Yurakaré, both of which show a very low frequency of clearly rising intonation with around 5% only (Gipper, 2022). Moreover, in requests for confirmation, the proportion of rising intonation is also low in Yurakaré when compared to other languages (Pfeiffer et al., in prep.). This suggests that in Yurakaré, final rising intonation is not associated with interrogative actions to the same degree as in German and Low German.

Comparing the sequential integration of RfRCs in Yurakaré, German, and Low German (see variable sequential embedding in Section 3.4), informings proved to be the most prominent preceding action in all languages with about 60% of all cases. In these contexts, the RfRCs refer back to informing actions which are not made relevant by a prior turn (volunteered informings, cf. Thompson et al. 2015) or they refer to turns which first respond to a prior but also offer more than the required answer (elaborated informings).

Concerning preference organisation, RfRCs show a similarly strong tendency toward receiving a confirming response in all three languages with a proportion of roughly 75% (see Figure 3; variable response type in Section 3.4), demonstrating a strong cross-linguistic preference for confirmations and a virtual ban on disconfirmations (also see Marmorstein and Szczepek Reed,
The languages differ, however, in the remaining quarter of cases: In German these are mostly made up of instances without any uptake (no response-category). In the other two languages, in addition to cases without any uptake, we found instances where a response is given but is not (fully) oriented toward (dis)confirmation (neither-category). These responses are of very different kinds in the two languages: Whereas in Yurakaré they mostly deal with elaborating the information further, in Low German they often adjust the information given in the turn for which reconfirmation is requested and thus border on ORIs. Especially the language-specific differences in the response types disconfirmation and neither affect a medium association ($E=0.16$; $df=6$) between the variables language and response type, which is significant ($p<0.01$) (see supplementary material, p. 2).

Comparing the preference organisation of RfRCs visualised in Figure 3 with those of requests for confirmation in the respective languages (cf. Pfeiffer et al., in prep.), an important difference becomes apparent: For all three languages, the percentage of RfRCs that do not receive any response is substantially higher than for requests for confirmation where proportions are lower. This reveals that RfRCs do not mobilise responses to the same degree as requests for confirmation. This finding is consistent with Betz and Gubina's (2021) observation that RfRCs invite confirmation rather than making it conditionally relevant. It is therefore warranted to treat RfRCs as not merely a subtype of requests for confirmation, but rather as an action in its own right with specific

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8 In German, there is only one case where a disconfirmation is produced, which is however framed as ironic.
interactional contingencies. Our findings from this section can be summarised as follows:

- In Yurakaré, RfRCs are used with a much higher normalised frequency than in German and Low German.
- The three languages use similar RfRC formats, differing, however, in the relative frequency with which these formats are deployed. Yurakaré shows a preference for repeat RfRCs, while in German and Low German token RfRCs prevail.
- In all languages, RfRCs occur mainly after informings (about 60% of the cases).
- The three languages show striking similarities regarding the RfRCs’ preference for confirming responses. There are almost no disconfirmations; however, Yurakaré and Low German show a certain proportion of responses that neither confirm nor disconfirm the RfRC.

These observations call for a closer quantitative and qualitative sequential analysis which tries to determine whether different RfRC formats are used to accomplish similar or different social actions in the respective languages. In the following section, we will focus on different response formats in RfRC sequences (ranging from minimal to more elaborate responses) and the responsive actions they implement. This ‘next-turn proof procedure’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 15) can be used as a key to determine the actions speakers ascribe to the RfRC turn.

5 Functions of RfRCs Following Informing Actions

To keep the sequential contexts constant across languages, our analyses in this section concentrate on RfRCs following informings, the most frequent preceding actions to RfRCs in all languages (see Section 4). This ensures that differences in the responses do not result from differences in the RfRCs’ sequential embedding. Note that the responses include both cases of confirmation and of responses that are not oriented toward confirmation (the latter in Low German and Yurakaré, see Figure 3 above). In Section 5.1, we first examine the extent to which different RfRC formats have an impact on the response type in the respective languages. We then investigate whether the prosodic design of the RfRC influences the ensuing response behaviour (Section 5.2). Based on the quantitative findings, we then provide a more detailed sequential analysis of the response types following token RfRCs (Section 5.3) and repeat RfRCs (Section 5.4) in each language.
5.1 RfRC Format and Response Format

Figure 4 demonstrates that the languages differ in the degree and type of functional differentiation between the two RfRC formats based on the responses they solicit. In German, the difference between the two formats is particularly evident: Repeat RfRCs trigger confirmations consisting of a response token and further elaborations in about 80% of the cases.

The statistics in the supplementary material (p. 3) confirms a large association (E=0.47; df=1) between the response format Token + Elaboration and RfRC format in the German data, which is highly significant (p<0.01). What is more, repeat RfRCs in German are never responded to with a minimal response in the form of a response token only. Token RfRCs in German, in contrast, are much more versatile: They can trigger elaborations, minimal token confirmations, and also show a relatively high percentage of cases that receive no uptake at all. The statistical association between the response format no response and RfRC format is, however, only small (E=0.25; df=1) and shows no significance (p=0.23) for the German data (see supplementary material, p. 3). The sequential analysis in Section 5.4 will confirm that repeat RfRCs often work as challenges, which elicit further talk in German, while token RfRCs can be employed flexibly for functions from simply registering news to challenging.

**Figure 4** Relative frequency of response format split by RfRC format per language in informing sequences

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https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Another potential source for functional differentiation in the German data is the form chosen within the category of token RfRCs. In 13 out of 16 cases no uptake follows the RfRC token *echt* ‘really’, which is the most frequent RfRC form in the overall collection (31/67 cases, see Table 1). This is consistent with previous research showing that particular tokens can be deployed to simply register news or (especially in mid-telling) as merely a “token of affiliation” (Betz and Gubina, 2021: 380). In German informing sequences, this rather ‘weak’ contextualisation of disbelief or doubt with the ‘default’ RfRC *echt* is also mirrored in sequences with minimal responses: In five of eight instances, speakers use the token *echt* before receiving a simple reconfirmation. This suggests that after informings *echt* is a highly routinised form for registering rather than questioning news, in contrast to other token forms that are more versatile. In Low German and Yurakaré, in contrast, we did not detect any form-based differentiation of token RfRCs.

In Low German, a different pattern can be discerned: While we see a similar flexibility for token RfRCs, the strong tendency of German towards response elaboration after repeat RfRCs cannot be observed in this language. Rather, it is repeat-format responses that are exclusively triggered by repeat RfRCs in Low German. As we will show in the qualitative analysis in Section 5.4, confirmations in repeat format in Low German only weakly contextualise the RfRC as a challenge, offering explicit recommitment to the information but without providing further substantiations or elaborations. Another observation that can be made for the Low German data is that only token RfRCs receive confirming responses that consist of a response token plus elaboration. This suggests that in Low German, token RfRCs show a higher potential for being understood as challenges, a hypothesis that receives support from the qualitative analysis in Section 5.3. Statistical variation within the Token + Repeat-responses in the different RfRC formats in Low German shows, however, only a small association (E=0.23, df=1), which is not significant (p=0.36) (see supplementary material, p. 4).

In Yurakaré, the differentiation between the two formats is less pronounced: Both formats show a high degree of versatility regarding the responses they receive, and both repeat and token RfRCs receive a high percentage of minimal responses in the form of a single response token (see also the statistics in the supplementary material, p. 4, which shows no association (E=0.03; df=1) between the response format Token and the RfRC format in the Yurakaré data).9

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9 The relatively high frequency of minimal responses in response token format reveals an important difference between RfRCs and requests for confirmation in Yurakaré, as response tokens are not used regularly as confirming responses to requests for
Moreover, in both categories there are cases where no uptake ensues. The statistical analysis reveals a small association between the RfRC format and the response form *No response* for the Yurakaré data, which is weakly significant ($E=0.22; \text{df}=1; p<0.05$) (see supplementary material, p. 5). That is, repeat RfRCs in Yurakaré are statistically more likely to get no response compared to token RfRCs. This supports the idea that repeat formats are the default format for RfRCs in this language, as it is the most frequent format and elicits a response less frequently than RfRCs in token format. Responses offering an elaboration are relatively infrequent for both formats in the Yurakaré data. Moreover, as we will show in the sequential analysis in Section 5.4, these elaborations usually do not treat the RfRC as a challenge, but rather as an invitation to continue talking about the topic. This suggests that Yurakaré speakers do not regularly employ and treat RfRCs as challenges. The status of RfRCs is thus different in Yurakaré compared to the two Germanic languages.

5.2 Prosodic Design of RfRCs and Response Format

Prosodic design including final intonation can be an important resource for achieving a differentiation of interactional functions in repeats (Selting, 1996; Benjamin and Walker, 2013) and other formats (Local, 1996; Imo, 2011; Thompson et al., 2015: 64–84, 92). Nevertheless, there does not seem to be a clear-cut form-function mapping of prosodic formats to interactional functions. Moreover, prosodic design does not seem to be relevant for all RfRC formats; no functional differentiation based on prosody is reported e.g. for English *oh really* (Kaimaki, 2012), German *echt ‘really’* (Gubina and Betz, 2021), as well as Arabic *wa’llāhi* and English *really* (Marmorstein and Szczepk Reed, this issue). Given this mixed picture of the relevance of prosodic design to the functional differentiation of RfRCs, we conducted a quantitative analysis where we tested a link between the RfRC’s prosodic design and final intonation with the following response format. Figure 5 shows the relative frequencies of responses given to RfRCs with and without prosodic upgrade for the three languages.

Lengthened utterances, utterances with a larger pitch span, and with a higher intensity (or combinations thereof) were classified as showing a prosodic upgrade (see Section 3.4), where we may expect that they indicate a non-neutral stance and do something more than RfRCs without a prosodic upgrade. The statistical analysis in the supplementary material reveals, however, that neither of the response formats show a large or medium association with the prosodic design in any of the languages (see supplementary material, confirmation. In that context, repeats constitute the default format for confirming responses (see Gipper, in prep.).
Thus, there is no observable categorical influence of the prosodic design on the response behaviour in RfRC sequences.

Regarding the role of final intonation, we observe that it does not influence the response to the same degree in all languages. Consider Figure 6.10 RfRCs with rising and falling intonation show similar relative frequencies of following response formats in German and Yurakaré. Much like for prosodic upgrade, the statistical measurements in the supplementary material show no considerable effect size or significance level for final intonation and different response types in all three languages (see supplementary material, p. 8–9). However, we observe that in Low German, only RfRCs with rising intonation elicit responses with a response token plus elaboration format, which points to a higher potential for RfRCs with rising intonation to be understood as challenges in this language (see excerpt (6) in Section 5.3).

We excluded cases with level intonation from Figure 6 as no quantitative statement could be made due to scarcity of the cases in all three languages (see supplementary material, p. 8–9 for absolute numbers). We excluded 3 cases for German, 3 cases for Low German, and 26 cases for Yurakaré.
To summarise, the quantitative data analysis of the lexical and prosodic resources demonstrates that the three languages differ as to the resources they employ for the functional differentiation of RfRCs. In German and Low German, the RfRC format has an impact on the following response behaviour, with repeat RfRCs being strongly (German) and token RfRCs being weakly (Low German) associated with elaborated responses. In Yurakaré, the differentiation between the RfRC formats based on the following response type is much less pronounced. In particular, RfRCs in Yurakaré are rarely treated as invitations for response elaboration. These findings, we argue, suggest that Yurakaré employs RfRCs in a different way from the two Germanic languages. In Sections 5.3 and 5.4, we substantiate these findings with a qualitative sequential analysis of trajectories following the different RfRC formats.

5.3 Response Formats after Token RfRCs
A common response format in all languages is that of a confirming response in the form of a response token only (see Figure 4 above). This is exemplified in excerpt (4) from Yurakaré, where Paulina tells Manfredo that her husband brought a peccary home from a successful hunt in line 01. This is met with the
token RfRC *achama* ‘is that so?’ by Manfredo, which in turn receives a minimal response in the form of the response token *otte* ‘yes’.

**Excerpt (4):** Yurakaré 160906_conv; see also Gipper (2011: 65–66)

**Minimal response to token RfRC**

01 Pau: lëtta wejshe bobo(j) (.) [kawi ]ta;=
    lëtta wejshe bobo-ø=ja ka-wita-ø
    one collared_peccary kill-3SG.SBJ=PC 3SG.OBJ-arrive.SG-3SG.SBJ
    ‘He brought a peccary home that he had killed.’
→ 02 Man: [achama.]
    achama-ø
    be_like.That-3SG.SBJ
    ‘Is that so?’

03 Pau: =o[tt ]e.
    ‘Yes.’

04 Man: [suerte.]
    suerte-ø
    good_luck(SP)-3SG.SBJ
    ‘That’s lucky.’

Token RfRCs can also trigger more elaborate responses of different types in all three languages. For instance, in German two token RfRCs are followed by accounting actions that treat the RfRC as requesting further substantiation. The other cases of response token plus elaboration routinely deal with repeating or reinforcing the news (*ja; VOLL;* ‘yes, totally’). They offer additional commitment rather than substantiation of an earlier claim. An example for a case where the news is repeated and re-asserted is excerpt (5), in which three friends play a game of cards. They have just finished a round, which Gesa won. In a playful mood, Dana gets het up about the fact that she has to repeat one particular move again and again (line 01). Her marked accentuation “zum !VIER!ten mal” (‘for the fourth time’) frames the utterance as affectively loaded. Gesa’s singing expresses her joy about winning again.

**Excerpt (5):** German KoMI #33_2

**Non-minimal (token + elaboration) response to token RfRC**

01 Dana: [ey ich mach jetzt (0.5)] zum !VIER!ten mal die siebenerfolge;
    ‘oi I am doing the row of seven for the fourth time now’

02 Steffi: [oh: MA:N; ]
    ‘oh man’

03 Gesa: [(singing))

04 Dana: das is nich euer] ER[NST; ]
    ‘you can’t be serious’
In line 05, Gesa issues an RfRC which relates back to Dana's initial statement in line 01. The token wirklich (‘for real’) is prosodically marked as it is realised in a rise-fall-rise intonation contour. It also stands out in terms of its overall loudness. This does not, however, contextualise that Gesa doubts Dana's claim; it rather offers a token of sympathy (which in the given context, in which Gesa is celebrating her victory, has an ironic tone). Dana's response does not treat Gesa's RfRC as a challenge. Following a confirmation token, she simply repeats her utterance. Gesa does not pursue additional information or an account and thus treats this response as sufficient. Rather, in her next turn (line 08), she moves on with the game, asking whether they should count the points of her losing co-players.

In Low German, token RfRCs are deployed in two different ways: (a) as an index of merely registering news and a display of weak surprise and (b) as an index of a challenge to a prior turn. The frequency of token RfRCs that are treated as challenges is somewhat higher compared to the other languages: In seven cases, token RfRCs receive more elaborate responses consisting of response particles like jo/ja ‘yes’ and additional informing which substantiate the proposition targeted by the RfRC (see Figure 4). These RfRCs are treated as challenging actions. This is clearly shown by the next actions after the reconfirmations, which contain either (a) an additional informing to support and substantiate the first action like in the following excerpt (6), or (b) an adjustment of the proposition, which is thus bordering on OIRs. In excerpt 6, Alfred and Bernd talk about a senior citizens' group in their village. Alfred informs Bernd that the group consists exclusively of women except for him, since all the other men had already died (lines 01–02). In reaction to Bernd's token RfRC JA!? ‘yes’ (line 03), which is deployed with a prosodic upgrade and final high rising intonation, Alfred responds with the Low German response token jo ‘yes’11 and then starts a list (Selting, 2007) by naming the first man of the group who is already dead (line 05). The response format (response...

---

11 Excerpt 6 reveals that there is a difference in the use of the formal resources ja ‘yes’ (High German) and jo ‘yes’ (Low German). While RfRCs in Low German are deployed almost exclusively with the High German variant ja ‘yes’ (see Table 1), responses to requests for confirmation show functional variation between both forms (cf. Weber, in prep).
token + elaboration (in the form of a list)) shows that the RfRC/ja ‘yes’ is not only treated as registering the prior informing as news but also as a challenging action. In response to the RfRC, the speaker provides recommitment but also further substantiation for his previous informing.

Excerpt (6): Low German GEL01_02 (00:31–00:44 sec)
Non-minimal (token + elaboration) response to token RfRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alfred</th>
<th>Bernd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ø1 Alfred:</td>
<td>Ø2 Bernd:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un mir (.) jett sItt ik do b10S mit FRAUlü tousammen;</td>
<td>de men (.) mAnnslü sin Alle DAUD;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘and we (. ) I only meet with women now’</td>
<td>‘all men are dead’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→ Ø3 Bernd:</td>
<td>Ø4 Alfred:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.3) JA!?</td>
<td>jo;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘yes’</td>
<td>‘yes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø5 Alfred:</td>
<td>Ø6 Bernd:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meiers Peter-</td>
<td>↑ JA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘(last name) (first name)’</td>
<td>‘yes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø7 Bernd:</td>
<td>Ø8 Alfred:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑ JA.</td>
<td>(0.4) hä,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘yes’</td>
<td>‘what’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø9 Bernd:</td>
<td>Ø10 Alfred:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.3) ja meiers PEter,</td>
<td>[noch MEHR,]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes ‘(last name) (first name)’</td>
<td>‘(are there) any more’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Alfred:</td>
<td>12 Bernd:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UND [ä:::h, ]</td>
<td>müllers PAUL is uk daud,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘and’</td>
<td>‘(last name)(first name) is also dead’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sum, in all three languages token RfRCs are versatile resources that elicit a broad range of different response formats as well as lacking any uptake. The potential for use as a challenge of token RfRCs is highest in Low German, where marked prosodic design and final rising intonation make an important contribution to the action formation.

5.4 Response Formats after Repeat RfRCs
When it comes to repeat RfRCs, we observe more substantial differences across the three languages: In informing sequences in German, most responses to repeat RfRCs are of the format ‘response token plus elaboration’, and there is no transfer of High German resources into Low German is therefore more pronounced in the area of RfRCs.
repeat RfRC which only receives a minimal response (see Figure 4, Section 5.1). Moreover, the elaborations differ from those after token RfRCs in that repeat RfRCs frequently receive accounts as elaborations in German, which shows that they are treated as challenges.

In excerpt (7), Sandy is telling her friends Jana and Conny about her sister’s 18th birthday, which ended with her being in hospital with alcohol poisoning. Jana has just told them that it is no longer customary to pump someone’s stomach. Jana and Sandy agree that nowadays doctors rather let patients throw up (lines 01–02). Sandy then mentions that patients also get nappies and continues her turn in a list contour. So, the fact that one has to wear nappies in the procedure is not introduced as focal information. Jana’s loud repeat RfRC (line 06), which is issued in a rise-fall contour, both, topicalises the information and marks it as noteworthy and surprising.

Excerpt (7): German KoMI #04_1 (N_12)
Non-minimal (token + elaboration) response to repeat RfRC

01 Jana: lassen einfach AUSkotzen;[^ne, ] he
   ‘(they) just let (them) throw up, right?’
02 Sandy: [HM_hm;]
   ‘uhu’
03 kriegst ne WINdel [um?]
   ‘(you) get a nappy’
04 Jana: [°h ]
05 Sandy: SCHÜssel dav[or?]    
   ‘a bowl in front of you’
→ 06 Jana: [<<f^WIN]del?>
   ‘nappy?’
07 Sandy: jaJA,
   ‘yes_yes’
08 falls du: ne () irgendwie\ 
   ‘in case that you somehow’
09 keine AHnung;
   ‘I don’t know’
10 kann ja mal SEIN- 
   ‘it is possible’
11 dass das nach HINTen losgeht;[^ne,
   ‘that it backfire, you know’
12 Jana: [((laughter))]  
13 Conny: [((laughter))]  
14 Sandy: [man kann ja n][ie WISsen;] 
   ‘you never know’
15 Jana: [he ] [oh NEI:N; ]
   ‘oh no’
16 ja äh da::s ist WAHR; 
   ‘yes uhm that is true’

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In her response, Sandy first reconfirms her previous utterance with an epistemically upgraded *jaja* (Golato and Fagyal, 2008) and then gives an account of why it is sensible to wear nappies in this situation. She offers more than additional commitment to her previous utterance, as she backs up her claim. Following shared laughter and a response cry (line 15), Jana concedes Sandy’s account and thus displays that her initial incredulity is now resolved. This example illustrates that German repeat RfRCs serve to register doubts about what another speaker has presented earlier. Addressees are prompted to not only reconfirm and re-commit to their previous informing but also to elaborate on it by providing additional evidence.

In Yurakaré, in contrast, repeat RfRCs do not differ substantially from token RfRCs in the responses they receive. Moreover, they do not regularly elicit elaborations as responses (and if they do, they usually do not treat the RfRC as a challenge). The most frequent response type is a minimal response in the form of a response token. Excerpt (8) shows a case where two repeat RfRCs accompany a longer telling and receive minimal responses in the form of the response token *otte* ‘yes’. Paulina is telling Asunta about a thunderstorm that caught her and her husband while they were on their way home.

Excerpt (8): Yurakaré 250906_{conv}III

**Minimal response to repeat RfRC**

01 Pau:  
kan:sa shëwëññu*tì wiwitu  
koma[dre.]
ka-n-saa-ø shëwë-nñu-ø=tì
3SG.OBJ-BEN-finish-3SG.SBJ become_dark-DIM-3SG.SBJ=PS
wiwi-tu komadre  
arrive.PL-1PL.SBJ comadre(SP)
‘We arrived when it was already getting dark, comadre.’

→ 02 Asu:  
[wita]m [komadre lati-]  
wita-m komadre 1-ati
arrive.SG-2SG.SBJ comadre(SP) REF-DEM
‘You arrived, comadre, then.’

03 Pau:  
[otte. ] (0.3)
‘Yes.’

04  
bë kamalanbëntubënjaj ta*ju*madre atibu kansati kuti  
lat[ij mijumpadre-]  
bë ka-ma-la-n-bëwë-ntu=bë=naja
DM 3SG.OBJ-3PL.OBJ-MAL-BEN-close-INT:1PL=MOM=already
[a-komadre a-tiba-w
1PL.POSS-comadre(SP) 3SG.POSS-domestic_animal-3PL.SBJ
ka-n-saa-ø=tì
ka-n-saa-ø=tì ku-ta-y

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In line 01, Paulina states that they arrived when it was already getting dark. In line 02 and in overlap to this informing, Asunta produces an RfRC in the form of a partial and slightly modified repeat. Paulina’s response consists of the response token *otte* ‘yes’ (line 03), again delivered in overlap. Paulina then goes on to tell Asunta what happened next in line 04: She suggested to her husband that they should take their comadre’s animal in (probably in order to protect them from the thunderstorm and to prevent them from running away). This informing does in no way react to the RfRC in line 02, it just provides the continuation of the telling. It is met with another overlapping repeat RfRC by Asunta in line 05, which again receives a minimal response in the form of the response token *otte*. The telling is continued in lines 07 and 08 where Paulina states that they took in the animals and also put the ducks inside. Like before, we do not see any uptake of the RfRC. The close succession of RfRCs in this sequence and the overlaps between initial turn, RfRC and response token point to a high degree of routinisation of these kinds of sequence trajectories. Moreover, we can conclude that repeat RfRCs in Yurakaré do not generally introduce challenges or expressions of doubt as in German; they commonly work to register information as news and thereby collaboratively build common ground.
Yet another pattern can be observed in Low German informing sequences, where repeat RfRCs do not receive responses that treat the RfRC as challenging – or if they do so then only in weak form. In addition to minimal confirmations consisting of a response token only, they are frequently met with repeat-format reconfirmations. In Low German repeat-format reconfirmations only weakly contextualise the RfRC as challenging, as respondents offer a recommitment to the information by repeating it, but without providing further substantiations or elaborations of the claim. Consider excerpt (9). In the preceding context, Alfred elaborates a longer stretch of talk about the work on their farm and that the fourteen-year-old grandson is already showing interest in taking over the business. Yet, the grandson is not allowed to participate, since most vehicles on the farm have a maximum speed of 50 km/h, which in Germany, however, may not yet be driven at this age. From 16 years, however, a vehicle with 40 km/h maximum speed may be driven, about which Alfred informs Bernd in lines 01–03. In line 04, Bernd reacts with a repeat RfRC.

Excerpt (9): Low German GEL01_02 (28:03–28:09 sec)
Repeat response to repeat RfRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alfred:</th>
<th>Bernd:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>KIEK;</td>
<td>VETTich drAff_he főhrn,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Look’</td>
<td>‘forty is he allowed to drive’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>äh VEETich kilomEter;</td>
<td>dE DRAFF he ja főhrn mit sEssthein;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘ah forty kilometers’</td>
<td>‘this one he is allowed to drive with sixteen’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>dE: DRAFF he ja főhrn mit sEssthein;</td>
<td>→ 04 Bernd:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘this one he is allowed to drive with sixteen’</td>
<td>VETTich drAff_he főhrn,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Bernd:</td>
<td>‘forty is he allowed to drive’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>dE DRAFF he főhrn.</td>
<td>Alfred:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘this he is allowed to drive’</td>
<td>un (.) un EEN ANhänger;=wa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Bernd:</td>
<td>‘and with a trailer, right?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>o:h;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>‘oh’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Bernd:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prosody of the repeat RfRC in line 04 with a high pitch register and final rising intonation is crucial in cueing its interpretation as a challenging action. However, in contrast to excerpt (6), where Alfred reacts to this challenge with an elaborated response giving further substantiation to his informing, here, he responds to the affective display of the RfRC action by only reconfirming the informing with a repeat (line 05). There is no second response slot (Raymond, 2013) dealing more explicitly with a possible challenging action. While the repeat does offer a recommitment, it only weakly contextualises the potential
challenging function of the RfRC. Furthermore, there is no change in the prosodic design of Alfred’s first informing in his reconfirmation that might justify other actions than reconfirmation e.g., a display of epistemic agency (see Stivers, 2005).

In sum, for repeat RfRCs, we see a clear functional differentiation between the three languages: In German, they are mostly used as challenges, frequently eliciting a substantiation or an account of the claim to which the RfRC refers back. In Yurakaré, repeat RfRCs are not regularly used as challenges. Rather, both token and repeat format RfRCs work to register news in interaction and build common ground. In Low German, repeat RfRCs trigger a higher number of repeat answers but no further substantiations or accounts, which constitute a weak contextualisation of the challenging character of the prior RfRC.

6 Conclusion

For a cross-linguistic comparison of requests for reconfirmation in German, Low German, and Yurakaré, we took a sequential format as a point of departure, in which a speaker is invited to reconfirm something he/she stated in a previous turn. The paper set out to unravel the particularities of RfRCs that (unlike requests for confirmation, see König and Pfeiffer, in prep.) do not introduce a proposition to the discourse but rather operate back on a prior speaker’s turn which is framed as remarkable news. They thus invite reconfirmation (rather than repair, confirmation or disconfirmation), resulting in a particular sequential structure that can be put to use for identifying relevant formats across languages. This sequential anchoring allowed us to avoid previously proposed functional action ascriptions such as “show repairs” (Imo, 2009) or “assertions of ritualized disbelief” (Heritage, 1984: 339).

While all three languages make use of structurally similar formats (token and repeat RfRCs) that tend to follow informings, we discovered substantial differences regarding the social actions implemented and the sequential trajectories set in motion by RfRCs in German, Low German, and Yurakaré. The quantitative analysis reveals that the three languages differ in terms of the relative distribution of the two RfRC formats in mundane conversation: The two Germanic languages prefer token RfRCs over repeat RfRCs, which is in line with the results of Thompson et al. (2015). In Yurakaré, however, repeat RfRCs prevail. In addition, in Yurakaré, RfRCs are much more pervasive than in the two Germanic languages with regard to the normalised token frequency per hour. We argue that this relates to differences in the interactional import of RfRCs: In Yurakaré, RfRCs are not employed for expressing a challenge or doubt regarding the information, as became clear from both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis.
Rather, they are predominantly used as highly routinised forms to register information as news. The high rate of occurrence suggests that RfRCs constitute a pivotal practice for performing this action in Yurakaré.

Our data also show that token RfRCs are used as versatile resources to accomplish different actions triggering different response formats in all three languages. Moreover, we see a functional differentiation between the two RfRC formats (token and repeat) in that they regularly differ in the response formats they receive in German and Low German, but not in Yurakaré. This functional differentiation, however, is not the same for the two languages. In German, repeat RfRCs are mainly used for challenging a prior, as elicitation of further commitment, or as a request for further evidence or accounts. They mainly receive non-minimal, mostly token plus elaboration responses. This finding on repeat RfRCs in German is consistent with the findings on English repeat newsmarks after informings in Thompson et al. (2015). In contrast, repeat RfRCs in Low German frequently receive repeat format confirmations which only weakly contextualise the RfRC as challenging, as they offer a recommitment to the information by repeating it, but without providing further substantiations or elaborations of the claim. Token RfRCs in Low German can be deployed for simply registering information as news and for displaying moderate surprise, however, they can also serve as resources indexing a challenge to the prior turn. In general, token RfRCs indexing a challenge are more strongly conventionalised in Low German than in German or in Yurakaré. In sum, this paper shows that the sequential practice of requesting reconfirmation is involved in very different sequential trajectories across the three languages.

The prosodic design of RfRCs was not found to impact to a large extent on the interpretation of the RfRC (see also Gubina and Betz (2021) for German echt and Marmorstein and Szcepek Reed (this issue) for English really and Arabic waļļāhi). Only in Low German there seems to be a weak association between rising intonation and elaborated responses. However, this tendency has to be confirmed by a larger dataset in future research.

Methodologically, our study demonstrates the usefulness of a comparative approach where the focus lies on a sequential structure (RfRC) rather than a particular lexical format or type: Focussing on token RfRCs only would mean that we lose sight of the most prominent format in Yurakaré, whereas a focus on repeats would blank out the importance of token RfRCs in the Germanic languages. Moreover, starting from an action can be just as challenging, as action descriptions/ascriptions are notoriously fuzzy. Departing from a sequential structure also allowed us to detect RfRCs that would not have been included under a form-based approach, e.g. change-of-state tokens that receive a reconfirming response. This also opens up new perspectives on categorical demarcations which are not as clear-cut across languages as one might expect.
We see that generic statements about interactional functions of token or repeat RfRCs cannot be made on the basis of data from selected standard (and mostly Indo-European) languages. Only a comparative and interactional typological approach can unravel the functional spectra of the different formats used in the given sequential ecology in standard languages as well as non-standard and non-written dialects, Indigenous languages, or sign languages. Our data show that across languages structurally similar formats (token and repeat RfRCs) are not necessarily functionally equivalent. Rather, they can be put to different interactional uses and be involved in different interactional trajectories. They form part of complex interactional styles, which may reflect specific historical contingencies, but also particular value systems (see also Brown, Sicoli, and Le Guen, 2021). For instance, in Yurakaré, a higher overall rate of RfRCs suggests that in this language, recipients practise higher degrees of involvement than recipients in German and Low German. We need further empirical and comparative research to uncover such complexities.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the design and implementation of the study as well as the writing of the manuscript. K.K. was responsible for the German data, K.W. for the Low German data, and S.G. worked on the Yurakaré data. All three authors are first authors of the paper, the order is alphabetical.

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Glosses in Yurakaré Excerpts

BEN benefactive; CAUS causative; COM comitative; DEM demonstrative; DIM diminutive; DIR directional; DM discourse marker; HAB habitual; INT intentional; INTJ interjection; MAL malefactive; MOM momentaneous; OBJ object; SBJ subject; SG singular; PC perspective continuation; PL plural; POSS possessive; PS perspective shift; REF referential; SCE source; (SP) Spanish; VLOC verbal locative.

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Requests for Reconfirmation in Comparative Perspective


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